

WHAT WE HEARD

Vancouver's Social Housing Initiative

Engagement Summary

January 2024



Acknowledgement

The City of Vancouver is on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̓x̓ wú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. The Nations have a spiritual, cultural, and economic connection to the land since time immemorial. The term unceded acknowledges the dispossession of the land and the inherent rights that the Nations hold to the territory. The term serves as a reminder that xʷməθkʷəy̓ əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̓x̓ wú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (TsleilWaututh) have never left their territories and will always retain their jurisdiction and relationships with the territory.

City of Vancouver

Vancouver City Council endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2013 and has designated Vancouver as a City of Reconciliation. To achieve its goals, the City established the Reconciliation Framework in 2014, which was reaffirmed by the City in 2022. In October 2022, Vancouver City Council adopted the UNDRIP Strategy for Vancouver. In June 2024, the UNDRIP Action Plan was approved by the Councils of all partners. All City activities including implementation of the Broadway Plan will align with, and advance, the UNDRIP Strategy's calls-to-action.

Learn More

There are a number of resources available to learn more about the historical and current relationship the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̓x̓ wú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations have with the land now known as the City of Vancouver. Their websites contain information about their histories, cultures, governance, and ways of affirming their continuity on these lands:



Musqueam Indian Band: www.musqueam.bc.ca



Squamish Nation: www.squamish.net



Tsleil-Waututh Nation: www.twnation.ca

Please visit the City of Vancouver website to learn more about the designation as a City of Reconciliation, the City of Vancouver's United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) Strategy, the City's UNDRIP Action Plan, and the City of Vancouver's First Peoples: A Guide for Newcomers.

[Read the City of Reconciliation webpage here](#)

[Read the City of Vancouver's UNDRIP Strategy here](#)

[Read the City of Vancouver's UNDRIP Action Plan here](#)

[Read First Peoples: A Guide for Newcomers here](#)

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1. Introduction

Project Overview

Making Vancouver more inclusive and equitable is a key priority of Vancouver Plan, the city’s long-term land-use strategy.

Vancouver’s Social Housing Initiative works toward the critical need for affordable housing by simplifying and changing zoning regulations to allow for mixed-income social, supportive, and co-operative housing to be built without a rezoning in all Vancouver neighbourhoods.

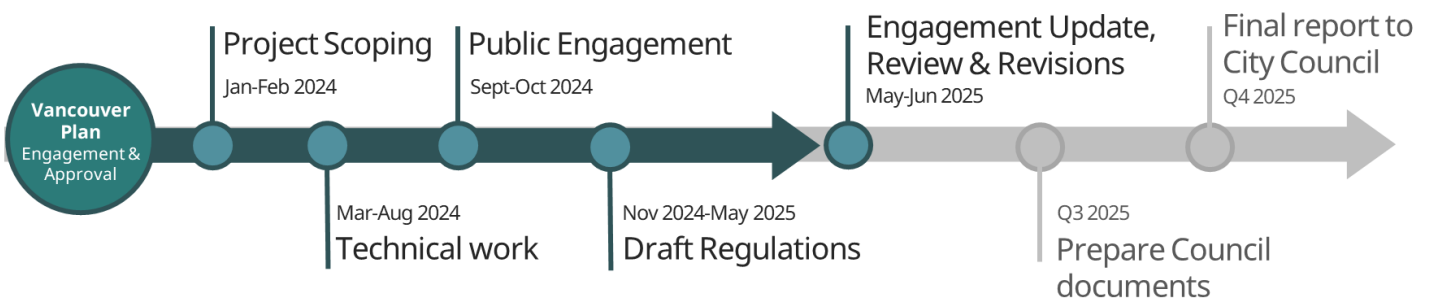
Taking direction from Vancouver Plan’s approved land use vision, this initiative would permit non-profit and government organizations to build social housing buildings from 6 to 18 storeys, depending on neighbourhood type, with a focus on areas close to transit and commercial centres.

New buildings will have the opportunity to include local-serving retail and childcare alongside social housing.

These proposed changes would allow social housing projects to be built faster with less cost, giving priority to providing homes for people who need them most and working toward maintaining diversity in the city.



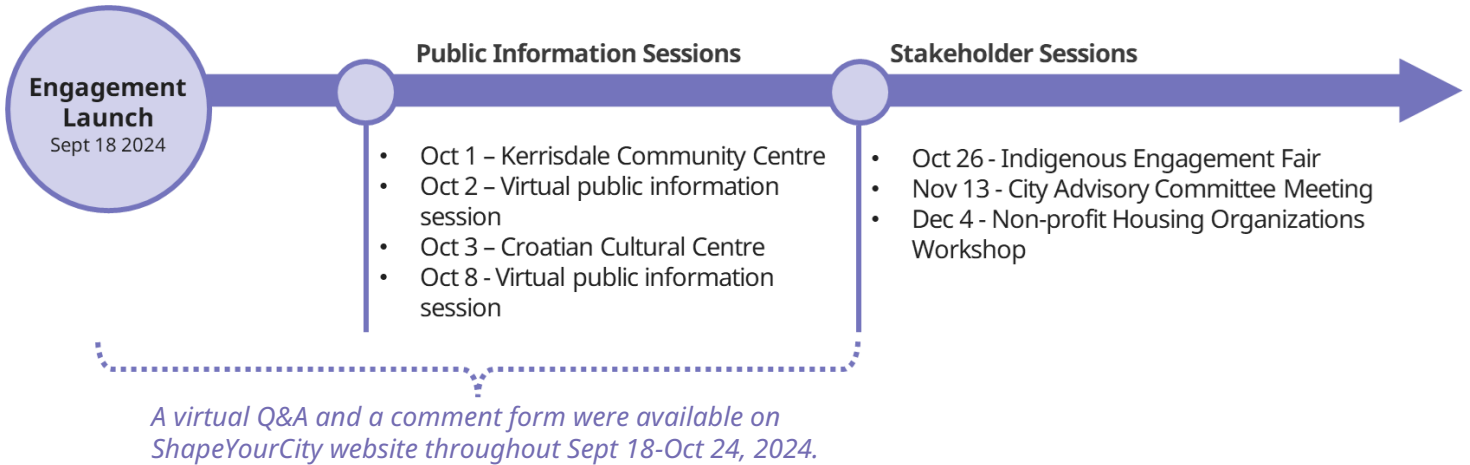
Timeline



*Note the timeline has been updated to target bringing this proposal to City Council in Q4 2025 rather than Q2 2025.

2. Engagement Process

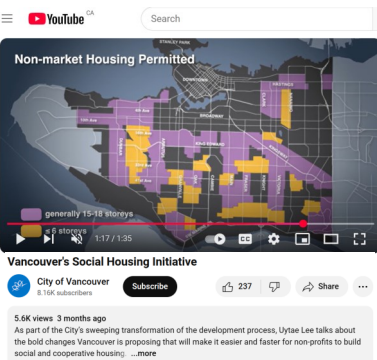
This report is a summary of what was heard through a process that involved in-person and virtual public information sessions, an online comment form, and targeted stakeholder workshops.



Engagement Activities

From September 18 to December 4, 2024, staff carried out a series of outreach and consultation efforts aimed at increasing awareness and introducing key elements of Vancouver's Social Housing Initiative. The combined activities generated approximately 121,500+ engagement touch points, including both the public and stakeholders.

Event/Platform	# of Touchpoints
In-person Info Sessions	80 Attendees
Online Info Sessions	115 Attendees
Indigenous Engagement Fair	55 Attendees
City Advisory Committee	10 Attendees
Non-profit Workshop	17 Attendees
Shape Your City Website	11,000 Visitors
Online Comment Form	232 Forms Received
Social Media	10,001 Interacted (200,249 Views)
Project Summary Video	100,000+ Views
Total	121, 500 +



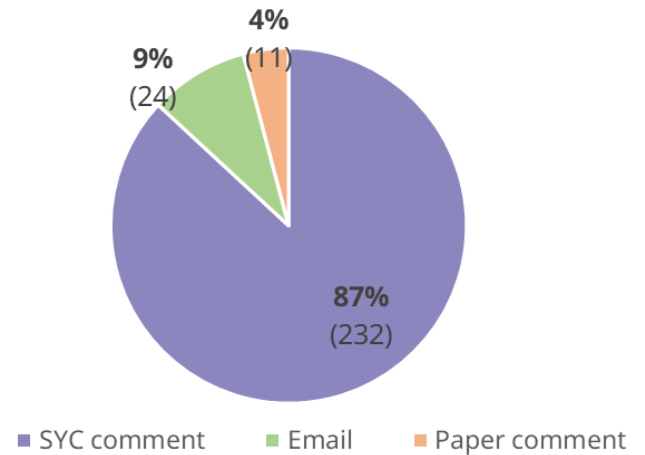
3. What We Heard

Staff received a total of 267 direct comments on the initiative from the public:

- 232 from the ShapeYourCity page comment form;
- 11 paper comment forms;
- 24 emailed comments.

Staff coded the comments received via the Shape Your City Page by level of support and high-level themes to learn about the general attitudes towards the initiative and the key areas of interest.

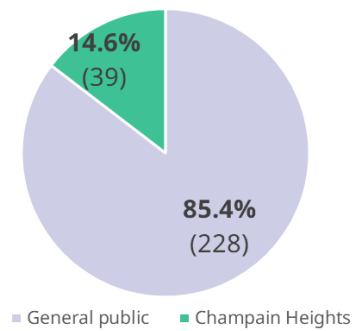
Source of Comments, by format (n=267)



A Note on Champlain Heights

A notable portion of comments were from the Champlain Heights neighbourhood and specific to that area. This feedback has been summarized in a separate section below in recognition of the area-specific nature of the comments.

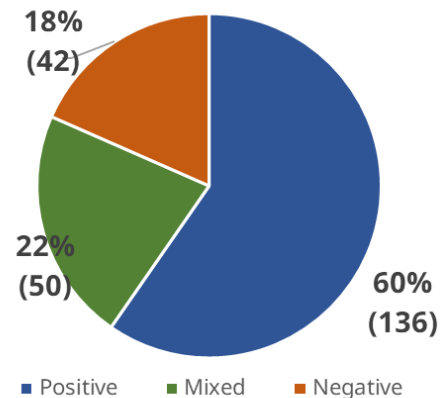
Source of comments, by groups (n=267)



How do people feel about the initiative?

Overall, 60% of the comments were positive and supportive. 22% were mixed, expressing some concerns but not opposing the initiative. 18% were opposed to the initiative.

Level of support from general public comments (n=228)



Key Feedback Themes

Supportive/Positive Comments Key Themes Quotes

Support for streamlined application process

- General support for removing the rezoning requirement for social housing projects.
- Acknowledges the difficulties non-profit housing providers face and values the time and cost savings, which help boost social housing supply.

Cool! It's good to see such a dramatic improvement in rezoning time. Knocking 12-18 months off of the process will make a lot of projects viable that otherwise wouldn't have been. This is a great step and is very encouraging!

Overall, a great looking proposal. I think the proposal will increase availability of affordable housing for a variety of residents and distributed across the city. I really like that it does so by relaxing zoning restrictions, making it possible to put more resources toward providing housing rather than spending them on potentially navigating a long and complicated rezoning process.

City-wide social housing

- Support for enabling social housing across all neighborhoods, not just downtown.
- Seen as an equitable approach that spreads densification costs and opportunities, adding diverse housing options city-wide.

I'm glad to see this initiative brought forward as one of many ways to address the housing shortage in Vancouver. I would fully support expanding the areas where this updated zoning would apply to the entire city.

Need housing outside of DTES-working as a nurse at Saint Paul's I see a lot of indigenous women looking for options that won't exacerbate addiction issues and environmental triggers.

Affordable housing

- Positive recognition of increased affordable housing.
- Accelerating the approval process will benefit those in need the most.

More housing is great, more social housing is extra great. I think this will allow affordable housing to be built in more neighbourhoods and Vancouver desperately needs more....

I strongly support measures such as this that remove barriers to producing affordable housing...If anything, I wish the proposed areas could be expanded.

Densification

- Support for more density across the city to add more housing supply through a streamlined application process.
- We heard suggestions for pre-zoning market rental as well as social housing to increase the overall supply of rental housing.

Too much of Vancouver is single family housing, we need to spread density out across Vancouver and cut the red tape that makes building so laborious. This is a great step towards a more inclusive city that can grow to meet demand.

Be bold with density: allow 18 storeys anywhere if they're non-profit owned. There are so few chances to get the funding for projects like this: we should be optimistic and take every chance we get.

Diverse population

- Mixed-income social housing helps retain a diverse population, including families, young professionals, and low-to-moderate income workers.

I expect positive downstream effects including (but not limited to) a healthier age distribution within the local population, more families, and greater ability to attract skilled young professionals.

Being able to fast-track projects that emphasize housing designed for people of various income levels is critical for the functioning of any major city. We need people that are able to live here and do the jobs that keep our society functioning. We can't simply allow the city to become a playground for the rich, and import our labour.

Mixed Comments Key Themes

Infrastructure needs

- Acknowledgment of the importance of social housing but concerns about the need for better infrastructure (roads, schools, amenities) to support population growth in lower-density neighborhoods.

We agree we need social housing, but we are very concerned by increasing the population in these areas, where is the other required support? Doctors offices, schools to house the new children, community centres?

While improving access to affordable housing is needed, there is no mention of how the city will address lack of services such as schools, community centres, pools, and parks. Schools in the city of Vancouver are old and can barely handle the numbers they have and now you want to increase density into already strapped areas...

Towers should remain in high-density zones

- Preference for keeping towers in high-density areas like transit corridors and main streets to maintain neighborhood character and a sense of community.

I believe 15-18 stories is too high for some of the purple zones you highlighted, especially where they are currently quiet residential streets. I believe there should be more on or near some of the current transit like the Broadway SkyTrain line...

Keep towers on main streets where mixed-use developments including towers and other tall buildings already exist, and where transit and other amenities are easily accessible.

Oppose towers but accept 6-storey buildings

- Support for pre-zoning 6-storey buildings but opposition to 15-18 storey towers due to concerns about infrastructure and livability.

6 storey social housing should be allowed everywhere in Vancouver, including current single family neighbourhoods. 18 storeys, however, is not human scale. It is obtrusive and unnecessary.

I am all for supportive housing, however 15-18 stories in former single family neighbourhoods that aren't close to frequent transit (i.e. Mountainview) is not appropriate for this area. It should be max 6 stories.

Concerns around displacement

- Some renters living in social and co-op housing are worried about the displacement impacts of redevelopment of their building.
- Residents want to see a robust implementation and enforcement of the City's Tenant Relocation and Protection policy.

One critical issue is the lack of emphasis on the right of first refusal for tenants when older buildings are sold.

While I think this is a good initiative, my question is regarding existing tenant protection policies that currently address the displacement of tenants...does removing the need to rezone to develop non market social housing create a situation where tenant protections are not applicable?

Negative/Opposition Comments Key Themes

Opposition to density

- General opposition to increasing density, especially 15-18 storey towers, due to infrastructure and neighborhood character concerns.

Quotes

I absolutely don't agree with putting 18 storey buildings in all the side streets throughout the City. The City has already changed the zoning for 6 storey buildings and Multiplexes near transit and retail centres. There has been too many changes for density without providing any new schools, green space and community centres.

NO towers of 15-18 stories for social housing in my neighbourhood (between Burrard and Granville, south of Broadway). The spirit of my neighbourhood is being destroyed already by the "broadway plan", TOO MANY HUGE TOWERS. PLEASE, reduce the building height to 8 stories MAXIMUM to preserve these beautiful walkable neighbourhoods...

Loss of community input

- Concerns about removing the rezoning process, which could limit community input and hinder the democratic process.
- We also heard dissatisfaction with the level of public input and length of engagement period for this initiative.

That approval of this initiative sanctions to the removal of Public Hearings under the guise of "making it faster and easier for non-profits and co-op housing organizations to build this much-needed housing." is truly negligent. Such removal can undermine accountability as the City would not to seek community input.

Each community in Vancouver has built their unique character from individuals who bring diversity from different backgrounds to share their life experiences and journey. We cannot afford to lose this diversity and allow individuals to continue to have a voice and continue to feel valued and shape our future. Each community deserves the specific attention to what is best for that community. This does not happen through a broad general all purpose view with no community voice.

Social housing definition

- Questions about the adequacy of the 30% Housing Income Limits (HILs) threshold for social housing.
- Questions about whether the rest of units will be at low-end market rate as proposed; concerns about land lift and speculation.

I oppose the social housing initiative. "Social housing" as defined in the Initiative is only 30% social housing - with as little as 30% social housing and up to 70% market (not affordable) housing considered "social housing" under this Initiative..

I am opposed to this initiative simply because there are no guarantees the 70% of market rental units will actually be "low end of market."

Social housing safety concerns

- Negative perceptions of social housing associated with homelessness, substance use, and crime.

Supportive housing - should 100% be clustered in isolated locations. No neighborhoods should have to live with the fear and problems associated with those homes.

I DO NOT support social housing in areas with any sort of school or recreational centre nearby.

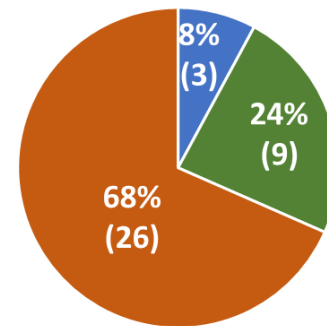
Findings from Champlain Heights

How do people feel about the initiative

Although staff received some positive feedback, most of the comments from Champlain Heights residents expressed concerns and opposition towards the initiative.

The most popular themes that emerged from the comments are as followed:

Champlain Heights Sentiments, (n=39)



■ Positive ■ Mixed ■ Negative

- **Need to consider ecosystems:** concerns over the negative impact on green space, mature trees, trails and overall habitat loss from potential redevelopment; highlighting the ecological importance of Champlain Heights.
- **Not enough infrastructure and amenities in the neighbourhood:** concerns over the lack infrastructure, schools, and public amenities to support an increased population .
- **Towers are not good for community building and are out of scale for the neighbourhood :** concerns about proposed towers forms making it difficult to build a sense of community and negative impacts of adding towers in an area that is predominantly townhouse forms.
- **Tenant relocation concerns:** concerns over the potential tenant relocation and displacement as a result of potential redevelopment in the neighbourhood; concerns about losing current affordability.
- **Not enough information provided:** residents felt that they were not informed during the Vancouver Plan engagement period, specifically the future land-use and zoning changes resulting from the approved policy.
- **Oppose towers but accept 6-storeys:** Many respondents were supportive of 6-storey forms as opposed to the towers, believing that low-to-medium density align better with the character of the neighbourhood.

Quotes regarding Champlain Heights

I hope that the city considers keeping the green spaces (parks, trails, and other areas) that provide not only oxygen, clean air, respite from urban spaces, improved mental health, and also adequate drainage into soil from atmospheric rivers, tree cover for shaded space from heat. I am concerned about the Champlain Heights Trail area in particular and the last remaining 4% of green spaces in Vancouver. I worry about the coyotes, eagles, owls, migratory birds and other pollinators that help with food sustainability. I am also concerned that the infrastructure (water supply, school access, community centre access, etc.) is not aligned with development planning.

I am very excited about non market housing, and I believe in almost all of this proposal. However, the Champlain Heights trail system is an incredibly important urban ecosystem and community gathering place, and it should not be included in the land for rezoning and development. It's unique in Vancouver and it would be absolutely antithetical to this project if it were destroyed.

I think this is an awful plan. Our neighborhood is quaint and beautiful. The paths are used by everyone young and old to get around in our neighborhood and feeling we are in true beauty...Tall buildings and stores will ruin this neighborhood. The river district is steps away and that's all we need. Stop making neighborhood congested and busy. Stop taking away greenery and trees. Champlain heights is a beautiful area that shouldn't be ruined by building towers.

Champlain Heights Trail System

On October 30, 2024, the staff team received a petition signed by 329 people (332 on secure.avaaz.org website) organized by Champlain Heights residents and Free the Fern Stewardship Society. The petition expressed opposition to high-rise towers (not against low-rise social housing) and advocacy to the City to maintain and protect the Champlain Heights Trail System as a sensitive ecological corridor. The petition highlighted the important ecological, cultural, social, and recreational functions that the Trails provide for the community.

Staff corresponded via email and over the phone with representatives from Free the Fern Stewardship Society to discuss the proposal and listen to concerns about the potential for development in the Champlain Heights Trail System.

Staff acknowledge the particular concerns that were raised by residents in Champlain Heights and will be including a closer look at the area in the next phase of work.

Quote from Petition

We, as a community wishes to preserve our diverse, livable neighbourhood from development and protect our forested spaces.

Indigenous Engagement Fair

On October 26, 2024, the project team attended an Indigenous Engagement Fair organized by the City's Indigenous Relations group. The fair had several purposes:

1. To update Indigenous community on City projects that are happening or coming up;
2. Let Indigenous people know how they can be involved moving forward; and
3. Collect their feedback on the project

This event supported the development of Engagement Framework which is being developed by the Indigenous Relations team as one of the deliverables of UNDRIP Action Group #2. Read more about this project here: shapeyourcity.ca/undrip-engagement

The session opened with a communal lunch and an Urban Indigenous Elder's blessing, followed by a welcome by the session speaker and knowledge holder from Squamish Nation. Each project team provided a brief oral 'pitch' before participants were invited to circulate between project booths to engage in conversation with the project teams and provide feedback on the projects. 55 total participants attended the fair, of those the Social Housing Initiative project team engaged in in-depth conversations with approximately 30 participants. Other participants contributed their written insights at the project booth. A summary of what was heard is summarized on the next page.



Key themes

General support for adding more social housing across the city

- Support for the idea of adding more social housing in all neighbourhoods of Vancouver to address the significant community need
- Desire for social housing options for Indigenous people outside of the Downtown Eastside where people may not feel safe
- Support for non-profit ownership and avoiding corporate/private sector ownership of social housing
- Desire to see internal City resources and support to help non-profit housing societies to navigate through the planning and permit process

Need for population-specific affordable housing

- General need for more social housing targeted to Indigenous people, as well as population-specific housing, such as:
 - * Indigenous women from other territories
 - * Larger, multi-generational families
 - * Single dads and elder men
 - * Indigenous elders
 - * Youth and students; including youth treatment/supportive housing
 - * Trans people and people who identify as 2SLGBTQI+

Learn from Indigenous housing examples

- Importance of visible representation of Indigenous people on the land
- There are good examples of major Indigenous housing projects which act as anchor points in the city, e.g. Seńákw (Skw̓xwú7mesh (Squamish)), ʔə́yalməx^w/Iyálməxw/Jericho Lands and Heather Lands (x^wməθk^wə́yəm (Musqueam), Skw̓xwú7mesh (Squamish), and sə́lilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) (MST)
- Partner with Indigenous housing societies and organizations e.g. Lu'ma Native Housing Society, Aboriginal Land Trust, BC Indigenous Housing Society (formerly Vancouver Native Housing Society)
- Learn from existing well-run Indigenous society housing projects such as the Aboriginal Mother Centre, which provides wrap around services with housing

Other ideas to address housing unaffordability

- Need a regulator at the Provincial level for housing to control land values and cost escalation
- The Empty Homes Tax is good to address too many empty homes in the city
- City permitting processes need to move faster to make social housing more feasible to build
- Need to also address housing for moderate incomes/working professionals who do not have a downpayment

City Advisory Committee Workshop

On November 13, 2024, the project team hosted a virtual workshop with 10 representatives from City Advisory Committees including: Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee, Women's Advisory Committee, Older Persons and Elders Advisory Committee, Renters Advisory Committee, Children, Youth and Families Advisory Committee, Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity Advisory Committee, Urban Indigenous Peoples' Advisory Committee, and 2SLGBTQ+ Advisory Committee, etc. A summary of what was heard is summarized below:

Strong support for more non-market housing in Vancouver

- Strong support for the initiative to address housing affordability and suitability challenges, with a need for more affordable housing options, especially for seniors.
- Support for a mix of unit types including family-sized units which are needed in the city
- Encourage celebrating/promoting the good examples of social housing in the city

Simplified regulations

- Support for avoiding overregulation of design elements to reduce costs and improve project viability for non-profits.

Mixed views on proposed heights/densities

- Some preference for 6-storey buildings for community building and services, while others support towers to increase the number of social housing units.

Accessible units

- Need for more accessible units and concerns about the cost burden on low-income households for making homes suitable to their needs.

Amenities and infrastructure

- Importance of supportive amenities and infrastructure, such as schools and childcare, to accompany new non-market housing.
- Better coordination between the City and School Board is needed.

Other housing needs

- Need for affordable rental housing between market rental and social housing to help people save for ownership housing.

Non-Profit Housing Sector Workshop

On December 4th, 2024, the project team hosted a virtual workshop with members of the non-profit housing sector. 17 participants from 14 non-profit housing organizations and development consultants who work with non-profits attended . A summary of what was heard is summarized below:

Strong support for this initiative

- Participants believe the initiative will help non-profits deliver more non-market housing faster and prioritize non-market housing in Vancouver.

Draft regulations Feedback

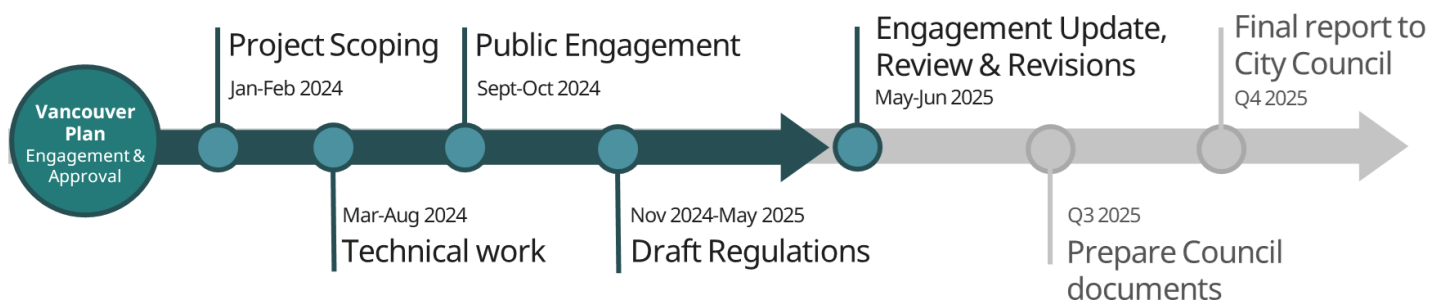
- Emphasis on creating an enabling regulatory framework.
- Concerns about the negative impact of reducing storeys/units on affordability.
- Need for larger floor plates and relaxation on elements like tower forms and frontage.
- Suggestions for relaxing solar access policy and increasing maximum FSR for social housing.
- Interest in allowing non-residential uses above the ground floor to integrate social services and community facilities.

Implementation Feedback

- Appreciation for collaboration with the Engineering department and the need for early information on upgrades.
- Importance of timely staff comments on development applications.
- Interest in plans for in-stream projects post-adoption.
- Support for expedited processes for non-profit social housing, with caution against overpromising on timelines.

4. What's Next

Feedback collected during this phase of engagement will be used to refine the proposal before being brought to City Council for consideration. A second round of public engagement will be held in June to present and receive comments on the refined proposal. Stay involved and up to date with the project by visiting the project website: shapeyourcity.ca/social-housing or contacting the project team at housingpolicy@vancouver.ca.



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