Corporation of the City of
NEW WESTMINSTER

REPORT
Planning and Development

To:	Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council	**Date**:	January 20, 2025
From:	Jackie Teed, Director, Planning and Development	**File**:	13.2610.01 #2588287
		Item #:	2025-26

Subject: **Affordable Housing Acceleration Initiative**

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *THAT Zoning Amendment Bylaw (Non-Profit Housing Development) No. 8502, 2025 be forwarded to the January 27, 2025 Regular Meeting of Council for first, second, and third readings.*

2. *THAT no Public Hearing be held for Zoning Amendment Bylaw (Non-Profit Housing Development) No. 8502, 2025 following circulation of notice, in accordance with the* Local Government Act*.*

PURPOSE

To present the proposed Zoning Amendment Bylaw intended to facilitate the delivery of affordable housing; to request that Council forward the proposed Zoning Amendment Bylaw for consideration; and to request Council endorsement for no Public Hearing be held following circulation of notice in accordance with the *Local Government Act*.

SUMMARY

In June 2024, Council directed staff to proceed with the two-phase work plan for the Affordable Housing Acceleration (AHA) initiative. Building on the previous City-Wide Crises Response Bylaw Amendments, the current initiative would allow affordable housing to be built as-of-right on sites owned by registered non-profit housing providers or non-profit housing co-operatives.

This report focuses on Phase 1 of the initiative, which proposes amending the City's Zoning Bylaw to allow affordable rental housing projects without rezoning if they meet the following criteria:

- No more than six storeys;
- The property is owned and operated by a registered non-profit housing provider or non-profit housing co-operatives;
- The units will be rental only;
- The project's long term affordability and rental only tenure are secured via a legal agreement; and,
- The property is currently designated Residential – Multiple-Unit Buildings in the Official Community Plan.

The proposed Zoning Amendment Bylaw also sets out the regulations with which the project must comply, including: building regulations (e.g. site coverage, setbacks), permitted accessory uses, and parking and access requirements.

Phase 2 of the initiative will explore OCP amendments to allow affordable rental housing projects to achieve higher density than the subject site is currently designated to permit, and review and propose updates to the Development Variance Permit approval process to ensure efficiency for the approval of non-profit housing applications.

BACKGROUND

Need for Affordable Rental Housing

2024 Interim Housing Needs Report

In December 2024, Council endorsed the City's 2024 Interim Housing Needs Report. The Housing Needs Report estimates that New Westminster will need 8,137 new units for 2024-2029, with 2,311 of the units needing to be affordable rental housing.

Housing Target Order

In August 2024, the Province issued a Housing Target Order for New Westminster. The order requires the City to approve occupancy permits for 4,432 net new units from August 1, 2024 to July 31, 2029. Accompanying guidelines specify that this should include 1,189 below market rental units.

City-Wide Crises Response Bylaw Amendments

In December 2021, Council approved amendments to the Official Community Plan (OCP) and Zoning Bylaw to allow the City to respond quickly to crises, including affordable housing and homelessness. These amendments allow projects to forego rezoning or OCP amendments if they: are owned by the City or other government; are funded by government; are operated by a non-profit organization or public agency; and, address needs identified through a Provincial emergency declaration or crisis publicly

recognized by multiple Metro Vancouver municipalities. The AHA initiative further enables affordable housing by removing barriers to building on sites owned and operated by registered non-profit housing providers or non-profit housing co-operatives.

Municipal Scan

Victoria, Saanich and Squamish have implemented a similar pre-zoning approach to facilitate affordable housing. Attachment 3 details the approach taken by each, including:

- A broad definition of affordable housing is used to ensure funding eligibility.
- Legal agreements are used to secure long term affordability.
- Pre-zoning has been broadly applied in areas that permit residential use.
- Parking requirements are eliminated or reduced.

Phases of the Affordable Housing Acceleration initiative

This report focuses on Phase 1 of the initiative, which proposes amending the City's Zoning Bylaw to allow affordable rental housing projects without rezoning if they meet proposed criteria, including that the subject site is currently designated to permit the increased density.

The Phase 2 of the initiative will:

- Explore OCP amendments to allow affordable rental housing projects to achieve higher density than the subject site is currently designated to permit. For example, a site designated to allow a townhouse could be permitted to build up to a six storey affordable rental apartment building, if the project meets proposed criteria. This is an approach the City already uses to help incentivise the retention of heritage assets; and,
- Review and propose updates to the Development Variance Permit approval process to ensure efficiency for the approval of non-profit housing applications, such as options for expanding the types of minor variances that are delegated to the Director of Planning and Development for approval.

DISCUSSION

City Affordable Housing Initiatives

New Westminster, like other Metro Vancouver municipalities, is experiencing a housing crisis. This includes an inadequate supply of affordable rental housing. In the next five years it is estimated the city will need 2,311 additional affordable rental housing units. Meeting this need poses challenges as achieving these units require senior government funding, which is limited and oversubscribed. The City has been acting within its jurisdiction and financial capacity for many years to address housing affordability. Recognizing no one program can address the scope of housing need, the City has implemented a range of policies and initiatives. This includes the City's renoviction

regulations, Tenant Relocation Policy, rental bank, and Secured Market Rental Policy. These actions work to create and preserve affordability.

The AHA initiative is specifically designed to enable affordable housing projects that are entirely owned and operated by non-profit housing providers, which are dependent on senior government funding. This initiative is distinct from the City's Inclusionary Housing Policy, which requires private developers to provide a percentage of affordable housing units in market-rate housing developments. The Inclusionary Housing Policy is best positioned to deliver units of low to moderate subsidies. The AHA initiative is intended to facilitate, in part, the deeper subsidy units that need to be delivered through funding from senior levels of government. Based on the current senior government funding programs, it is anticipated that these projects would include a mix of affordability levels to support the ongoing financial viability of project operation.

History of City Affordable Housing Approvals

It is the City approach to streamline development applications for affordable housing, and pursue partnerships with BC Housing to deliver the housing needed, including the deepest subsidy units. Historically, City Council has approved virtually 100% of all zoning applications for including market/affordable rental and supportive projects. The AHA initiative would further streamline the approval of these projects by removing the requirement for rezoning. Comprehensive staff review would still take place through other development approvals (e.g. Development Permits, Works and Services Agreements, Building Permit, Development Variance Permits).

Impact of Rezoning Timelines to Affordable Housing Funding

Most properties in New Westminster require a rezoning to allow the land use and density envisioned in the OCP. The rezoning process has historically been an important tool for municipalities to negotiate development contributions for the infrastructure and amenities needed to support the new population resulting from development. For non-profit housing providers, which rely on senior government funding to realize their projects, the time required to proceed through a rezoning can put necessary senior government grant funding at risk. Of the seven applications from non-profit housing providers received in the past 10 years, 100% have required streamlining in order to meet funding timelines. Under the current approval process, this streamlined approach requires additional staff resources which can mean resources are diverted from other development applications.

PHASE 1: PROPOSED PROVISIONS

The proposed Phase 1 Zoning Amendment Bylaw amendment, included as Attachment 3, would allow affordable rental housing projects to forego rezoning if they meet the following criteria:

- No more than six storeys;
- The property is owned and operated by a registered non-profit housing provider or non-profit housing co-operatives;

- The units will be rental only;
- The project's long term affordability and rental only tenure are secured via a legal agreement; and,
- The property is currently designated Residential – Multiple-Unit Buildings in the Official Community Plan.

The amendment also will require the following:

- *Project eligibility*: Projects would need to meet the new definition of Non-Profit Housing Development, which includes a non-profit housing cooperative.
- *Accessory Uses*: Projects would be permitted to have accessory child care, home based businesses, and place of worship. Home based businesses and child care are already permitted for equivalent market projects. A small scale place of worship has also been included to enable the redevelopment of existing places of worship seeking to provide affordable housing on their property, while retaining a small congregation space.
- *Building Regulations*: Site coverage, density, building height, and setbacks suitable for buildings of up to six storeys have been included.
- *Site Access Requirements*: Projects are only permitted as-of-right when there is vehicular street access from a lane or local road; and would require a rezoning where access can only be taken from an arterial, major road or collector, to allow appropriate analysis of that condition.
- *Parking Requirements*: Reduced parking regulations are proposed for sites within 250 metres of frequent transit. For other projects, the parking rate would be the same as a market-rental project. This approach is based car ownership data for market-rental projects. These rates would not apply to areas inside Transit Oriented Development Areas, were residential parking is no longer required.

These projects would continue to be subject to other City approvals (e.g. Development Permits, Works and Services Agreements, Building Permit, Development Variance Permits).

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

The proposed Phase 1 Zoning Bylaw Amendment approach is based on findings from the municipal scan, and from community and non-profit housing operator consultation, including:

- *Be Heard Project Page*: launched in June 2024 with information, a discussion forum, and a questions tool. A total of eight discussion forum responses and eight questions were received.
- *Virtual Community Session*: held in September 2024, and open to the community and key interest groups. Via small group discussions the session provided opportunity for participants to hear about the work, ask questions, and share

thoughts on how the City can better integrate affordable rental housing. 35 participants attended the session.

- *Interest Group Interviews*: held throughout September 2024 with non-profit housing providers. The purpose of these interviews was to understand the challenges in delivering and operating affordable rental housing, collect input to inform proposed Zoning Bylaw changes, and learn how to better integrate affordable rental housing into neighbourhoods. Nine non-profit housing providers participated in the interviews.

Details of the feedback received through community and interest group consultation is included in Attachment 2, which included:

- *Support:* General community support for the initiative. The approach would make it easier to deliver affordable rental housing.
- *Infrastructure and Amenities:* Need for infrastructure and amenities to keep up with housing development.
- *Broader Applicability:* Expand eligibility beyond non-profit providers. Housing providers encouraged consideration of greater heights and densities to increase opportunities.
- *Parking Requirements:* Balance the need for parking (particularly for family households) with economic viability of affordable rental housing projects. Preference for reducing, but not complete elimination of minimum parking requirements, as demand still exists.
- *Complimentary/ Accessory Uses:* Child care, community spaces, commercial use, medical services, and public spaces welcomed alongside affordable rental housing, as they can provide benefits to and meet existing needs of the community. Additional funding is required to deliver these uses.
- *Education and Awareness:* Desire for the City to discuss, raise awareness of, and share more learnings from affordable housing projects in New Westminster.

NEXT STEPS

Phase 1: Zoning Bylaw Amendment

The next steps are:

1. Council consideration of First, Second, and Third Readings of Zoning Amendment Bylaw No. 8502, 2025 (January 27, 2025). In accordance with the *Local Government Act*, staff recommends that a Public Hearing not be held as the proposed Zoning Bylaw amendment bylaw is:
    - Consistent with the Official Community Plans;
    - Generally aligned with and/ or exceeds City policy and/ or Council Strategic Priorities; and,

- Responds to consultation feedback, to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning and Development.

2. Referral of Zoning Amendment Bylaw No. 8502 to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (January 28, 2025); and,
3. Council consideration of adoption of Zoning Amendment Bylaw No. 8502 (February 10, 2025).

Should the proposed approach be approved by Council, as part of the ongoing work of the Land Use and Housing work plan, staff would monitor implementation, making minor/clarification amendments as part of the annual Zoning Bylaw report, and bringing any substantive updates to Council as needed.

Phase 2: Official Community Plan and Development Variance Permits

The second phase of the initiative will explore OCP amendments to allow affordable rental housing projects to achieve higher density than the subject site is currently designated to permit, and review and propose updates to the Development Variance Permit approval process to ensure efficiency for the approval of non-profit housing applications. Proposed OCP amendments would be incorporated into the OCP update scheduled for end of 2025 as part of fulfilling provincial housing legislation requirements.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The City was awarded an $11.4 million grant from the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) program, established by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). This program provides financial support that enables the City to advance initiatives aimed at improving the housing approval process, increasing housing supply, and expanding housing choice. The Affordable Housing Accelerator was an initiative identified in the City's HAF application. The project costs will be 100% offset by this funding.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

The Planning and Development Department works in close collaboration with other City departments to advance housing policy, including: Electrical, Engineering, Finance, Office of the CAO, Intergovernmental Relations, and Parks and Recreation. Interdepartmental representatives continue to be engaged on AHA's development.

OPTIONS

The following options are presented for Council's consideration:

1. That Zoning Amendment Bylaw (Non-Profit Housing Development) No. 8502, 2025 be forwarded to the January 27, 2025 Regular Meeting of Council for first, second, and third readings.

2. That no Public Hearing be held for Zoning Amendment Bylaw (Non-Profit Housing Development) No. 8502, 2025 following circulation of notice, in accordance with the Local Government Act.

3. That Council provide staff with alternative direction.

Staff recommends options 1 and 2.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Zoning Bylaw No. 6680, Amendment Bylaw (Non-Profit Housing Development) No. 8502, 2025
Attachment 2 – Affordable Housing Acceleration Initiative: What We Heard Report
Attachment 3 – Municipal Scan Findings

APPROVALS

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Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer

Corporation of the City of
NEW WESTMINSTER

Attachment 1

Zoning Bylaw No. 6680, Amendment Bylaw (Non-Profit Housing Development) No. 8502, 2025.

CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF NEW WESTMINSTER

ZONING BYLAW NO. 6680, 2001, AMENDMENT BYLAW (NON-PROFIT HOUSING DEVELOPMENT) NO. 8502, 2025

A Bylaw to Amend Zoning Bylaw No. 6680, 2001.

WHEREAS the Local Government Act authorizes a municipality to zone areas of land and to make regulations pursuant to zoning;

WHEREAS the Council has adopted a zoning bylaw under Part 14 of the Local Government Act, and wishes to amend the bylaw;

NOW THEREFORE THE CITY COUNCIL of the Corporation of the City of New Westminster in open meeting assembled ENACTS AS FOLLOWS:

1. This Bylaw may be cited for all purposes as "Zoning Bylaw No. 6680, 2001, Amendment Bylaw (Non-Profit Housing Development) No. 8502, 2025".

2. Zoning Bylaw No. 6680, 2001 is hereby amended as follows:

    a) Adding the following under Section 120 (Definitions):

    120.136.0.1 **NON-PROFIT HOUSING DEVELOPMENT** means a housing development that is subject to a legal agreement securing affordability and is either:
    a) Providing *Residential Rental Tenure* housing that is owned and operated by a non-profit organization registered under the *Societies Act*, or government agency; or
    b) Providing housing that is owned and operated by a housing cooperative, within the meaning of the *Cooperative Association Act*, that is not-for-profit.

    120.201.1 **STREET AND TRAFFIC BYLAW** means City of New Westminster Street and Traffic Bylaw No. 7664, 2015, as amended or replaced from time to time.

    120.204.1 **SUBDIVISION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROL BYLAW** means City of New Westminster Subdivision and Development Control Bylaw No. 7142, 2007 as amended or replaced from time to time.

b) Adding the following under Section 190 (General Regulations):

Non-Profit Housing Development

Permitted Uses

190.54.1 Notwithstanding any other provision of this Bylaw, *non-profit housing development* is a permitted principal use on all parcels designated as (RM) Residential – Multiple Unit Buildings in the City of New Westminster's Official Community Plan, as amended.

190.54.2 The following uses are permitted as accessory uses to a *non-profit housing development* if they meet the Conditions of Use outlined in Sections 190.56 and 190.57 of this Zoning Bylaw:

a) *Child Care* in accordance with Section 170.13 of this Zoning Bylaw*;*

b) *Home based businesses;* and,

c) *Place of Worship*.

Conditions of Use

190.54.3 Accessory uses listed in Section 190.54.2 of this Zoning Bylaw shall be limited to ground floor only.

190.54.4 Notwithstanding Section 190.54.2, a *place of worship* shall be limited to ground floor only, and a maximum seating capacity of 50 seats.

190.54.5 A *non-profit housing development* fronting a major road network, arterial, or collector road, as designated in the *Street and Traffic Bylaw*, is permitted only if the site has access to:

a) A local road; or

b) A lane that meets the design standards in the *Subdivision and Development Control Bylaw*.

Site Coverage

190.54.6 All buildings, in total, shall not cover more than seventy percent (70%) of the site area.

Density

190.54.7 The floor space ratio shall not exceed 2.75.

Building Height

190.54.8 The height of a building shall not exceed six storeys.

Front Yard

190.54.9 A front yard shall be provided of not less than 4.5 metres in depth.

Rear Yard

190.54.10 A rear yard shall be provided of not less than 6 metres in depth.

Interior Side Yard

190.54.11 An interior side yard shall be provided of not less than 3 metres in depth.

Exterior Side Yard

190.54.12 An exterior side yard shall be provided of not less than 4.5 metres in depth.

c) Amending the table in Section 140.9 (Residential Off-Street Parking Space Requirements) by adding the following rows after the row "***Multiple Dwellings*** – *Sites* located within 250 metres of a *Frequent Transit Network*":

140.9

Non-Profit Housing Development – *Sites* located within 250 metres of a *Frequent Transit Network*	0.5 spaces per *dwelling unit* 0.1 spaces per *dwelling unit* for visitor parking
Non-Profit Housing Development	0.6 spaces per studio and *dwelling unit* with one bedroom 0.8 spaces per *dwelling unit* with two bedrooms 1.0 space per *dwelling unit* with three or more bedrooms 0.1 spaces per *dwelling unit* for visitor parking

d) Amending the table in Section 145.4 (Accessible Off-Street Parking Space Requirements) by adding the following row after the row "***Multiple Dwellings***":

145.4

Non-Profit Housing Development	1 per 1-15 *dwelling units* 2 per 16-39 *dwelling units* 3 per 40-69 *dwelling units* 4 per 70-100 *dwelling units* 1 additional *accessible off-street parking space* required for every 30 *dwelling units* in excess of 100

e) Amending the table in Section 150.3 (Residential Bicycle Parking Requirements) by adding the following row after the row "***Multiple Dwelling Uses*** for ***Elderly Citizen's Homes*** and ***Supportive Housing***":

150.3

Non-Profit Housing Development	1.0 space per *dwelling unit*	0-19 units: 2 spaces 20-59 units: 6 spaces 60-99 units: 9 spaces 100 or more units: 12 spaces

f) Amending the table in Section 160.3 (Required Number of Off-Street Loading Spaces) by adding the following row after the row "***Multiple Dwelling***":

160.3

Non-Profit Housing Development	One loading space per *building* for *buildings* with more than 30 *dwelling units*. <u>Exception</u>: An off-street loading space is not required if the *non-profit housing development* has *off-street parking spaces* provided adjacent to each *dwelling unit*.

g) Amending Section 160.4 to state the following:

160.4 Notwithstanding the requirements above, an off-street loading space for *multiple dwelling* and *non-profit housing development* uses can be shared with a visitor parking space, provided the property owner can demonstrate access and functionality to the satisfaction of the Director of Engineering.

PUBLIC HEARING NOT HELD; NOTICE GIVEN this _____ day of

_____, 2025 and _____ day of _____, 2025.

GIVEN FIRST READING this _____ day of _____, 2025.

GIVEN SECOND READING this _____ day of _____, 2025.

GIVEN THIRD READING this _____ day of _____, 2025.

ADOPTED this _____ day of _____, 2025.

_____
MAYOR PATRICK JOHNSTONE

_____
HANIEH BERG, CORPORATE OFFICER

Corporation of the City of
NEW WESTMINSTER

Attachment 2

Affordable Housing Acceleration Initiative: What We Heard Report

City of New Westminster

Affordable Housing Acceleration Initiative

Pre-Zoning for Non-Profit Housing

October 2024



What We Heard Report

NEW WESTMINSTER

Land Acknowledgment

We recognize and respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsurrendered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. We acknowledge that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. As a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

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1.0 Engagement Snapshot

HOW WE INFORMED

927 Be Heard page visits

8 Social media posts



4 Citypage e-newsletters





26 posters distributed to non-profit housing providers and residents' associations



2 Be Heard e-newsletters

14 invitations and information sheets sent to non-profit housing providers



HOW WE ENGAGED

2 online discussion forum questions, with 8 responses



35 participants at our virtual community discussion





8 questions from the community (received by City staff)

9 interviews with non-profit housing providers



50+ comments and questions collected throughout virtual community discussion



2.0 Background

In response to the affordable housing crisis, the City of New Westminster (the City) is launching the Affordable Housing Acceleration Initiative (the initiative). Through this initiative, the city-wide Zoning Bylaw and Official Community Plan (OCP) will be amended to reduce some of the regulatory barriers to delivering non-profit housing projects.

Project structure and timeline

Two phases are proposed for the Affordable Housing Acceleration Initiative:

- **Phase 1 – launched Spring 2024** – exploring city-wide changes to the Zoning Bylaw to identify "pre-zoned" sites. This phase will include consultation and outreach through the summer and fall, and council consideration of the proposed changes in early 2025. This is the scope of the City's current project work.
- **Phase 2 – early 2025 onwards** – exploring potential changes to the OCP to further increase the viability of affordable housing.



Communication and engagement objectives

Throughout Phase 1, engagement with key interest groups and the broader community was carried out. To allow more meaningful engagement, different tactics and objectives were used for engagement with these key audiences.

The following communication and engagement objectives were designed to activate collaboration and meaningful engagement with each audience. The key objectives were to:

Interest Group Engagement

- Consult and involve non-profit housing providers, including Indigenous non-profit housing providers, to understand barriers and challenges they face in facilitating the delivery and operation of affordable rental housing to help refine the Zoning Bylaw changes.

Community Engagement

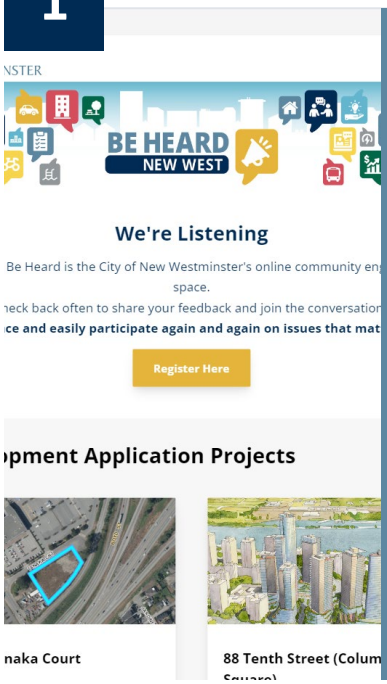
- Consult with community members to understand any questions and/or concerns they may have about affordable rental housing projects.

Overall Engagement

- Inform non-profit housing providers and the community about the initiative, its purpose, and the changes being proposed through timely and **accessible** communications.
- Ensure non-profit housing providers and the community have sufficient understanding to provide **informed** and meaningful input into the engagement process.
- Consult with non-profit housing providers and the community on how to better integrate affordable rental housing projects into neighbourhoods in New Westminster.
- Gather input that represents the **diversity** of interests and opinions in the community, within the resources and time available.
- Maintain a **transparent** and **responsive** process by reporting what has been heard through the engagement and actively responding to requests for information.

3.0 How We Informed

1



Be Heard Page

A dedicated project webpage was launched on the City's public engagement platform, Be Heard New West, on June 7, 2024. The webpage featured an overview of the initiative, details on the opportunities to get involved, and FAQ section. There were 927 visits to the Be Heard page between June 7 and October 1, 2024.

Six (6) newsletters featured information about the initiative: two (2) Be Heard Newsletters (on June 28 and September 11, 2024, sent to those who signed up for this newsletter on the Be Heard Page), and four (4) Citypage Newsletters (on June 13, and September 13, 20, and 27, 2024). The newsletters provided an overview of the initiative, promotion of the virtual community session, and calls for input via the Be Heard page.

2

Social Media

The initiative was also promoted on the City's social media platforms. Information about the initiative and the virtual community discussion session was shared on three (3) Facebook posts, three (3) Instagram stories, and two (2) X (formerly Twitter) posts.



3



Posters

Posters promoting the virtual community discussion session (described below) were distributed to 12 residents' associations and 14 non-profit housing organizations.

4

Information Sheets

Information sheets were distributed to 14 non-profit housing organizations, providing background information about the initiative and a list of proposed interview questions. The information sheets were intended to help prepare members of the organizations for interviews (described below).



4.0 How We Engaged

Be Heard Page – Questions Tool and Discussion Forum

The Be Heard page featured a questions tool, allowing community members to submit questions about the initiative to be answered by members of the project team. Three (3) questions were submitted and answered through the tool.

A discussion forum was also available on the Be Heard page, allowing people to share their thoughts and ideas about the initiative for other community members to "like" or comment on. There were two (2) discussion threads on the forum, one (1) open from June 7 until July 7, 2024, and one (1) from September 6 until October 1, 2024. While the discussion threads are now closed for further comment, the questions and answers are publicly available to view.

DISCUSSION THREADS

Discussion forum – thread 1

Discussion forum – thread 2

Interviews

A total of 14 non-profit housing providers across New Westminster were invited to share their thoughts through virtual interviews. Throughout September 2024, nine (9) individual, virtual interviews were held with non-profit housing providers, including several Indigenous non-profit housing providers.

Virtual Community Discussion

A virtual community discussion was held on September 17, 2024, via Zoom. The session was open to the community and key interest groups, including the non-profit housing providers invited to interview, and New Westminster residents' associations. There were 35 attendees, including three (3) representatives of non-profit housing providers.

The session provided information about the initiative, its purpose, and the changes being proposed. There was also an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback, through a Q&A component and during small-group breakout discussions (documented on Mural boards). During the breakout discussions, community members were consulted on how to better integrate affordable rental housing projects into New Westminster neighbourhoods.

5.0 What We Heard

Key Themes Summary

Several key themes were heard across engagement methods:

- Common **barriers to delivering affordable housing projects** include:
  - Limited land;
  - Securing funding;
  - and the long rezoning process making it difficult to meet funding deadlines.
- There is broad **support for the initiative** from non-profit housing providers – pre-zoning would make it easier to deliver affordable housing projects.
  - The proposed definition of affordable housing development makes sense.
  - The proposed eligibility criteria would be helpful.
- There is strong interest from non-profit housing providers in going beyond 6-storeys - **greater heights and densities** are generally considered more viable.
- Proximity to **transit, services, amenities, and greenspace** are key locational considerations for integrating affordable housing projects into neighbourhoods.
- There is general interest in **reducing minimum parking requirements**, but there is still some demand for parking in affordable housing projects, especially family households, and projects far from transit.
- There is also some demand for **bike storage**, but a need for flexibility in those requirements (i.e., storage spaces should accommodate bikes and other personal items).
- Housing providers and the community share an interest in **additional complimentary uses** such as daycares, healthcare services, and community spaces being included on the ground floor of affordable housing projects.

Be Heard Page – Questions Tool and Discussion Forum

Questions Tool

Three (3) questions were submitted through the questions tool, two (2) were answered publicly and one (1) privately. The first publicly answered question related to higher density areas identified in the Official Community Plan, and whether they would include areas designated for townhomes or ground-oriented infill. The second asked how many buildings are currently owned and operated by non-profit housing providers in New Westminster – as of June 2024, there were 55 buildings.

Discussion Forum

Two (2) questions were posted for general discussion and engagement with the public on the discussion forum. The first discussion question, available here, was:

> "New affordable rental housing allows existing residents to keep living in New Westminster while welcoming new ones, supports job creation and retention, and contributes to a healthy mix of housing options.
> Despite this, the City has heard some concerns from community members. **As such, how can we integrate new affordable housing projects so that they can add to the qualities and character of your neighbourhood, while addressing your concerns?"**

The City received six (6) responses to this discussion question, including general support for the initiative, and thoughts around balancing the protection of heritage buildings with the need for affordable housing.

The second discussion question, available here, was:

> "New affordable (non-profit) rental housing allows existing residents to keep living in New Westminster while welcoming new ones, provides economic opportunities and growth, and contributes to a healthy mix of housing options.
> **How can we make sure these projects align with the qualities you appreciate about your neighbourhood, and what potential challenges should be addressed in the process?"**

There were two (2) comments in response to this discussion question, one (1) noting the importance of infrastructure keeping up with housing development, and one (1) suggesting broader pre-zoning eligibility criteria. The commenter noted that limiting the initiative to non-profit housing providers could be too restrictive, especially given the challenges that these providers face in securing funding for affordable housing projects.

Interviews

Nine (9) non-profit housing providers participated in virtual interviews. The purpose of the interviews was to:

- Understand the barriers and challenges that non-profit housing providers face in facilitating the delivery and operation of affordable rental housing,
- Collect input that will inform the Zoning Bylaw changes being explored,
- Learn how to better integrate affordable rental housing projects into various neighbourhoods in New Westminster, while addressing the concerns of existing residents.

Common themes heard throughout the interviews have been summarized below.

Barriers and challenges in delivering affordable housing

Generally, interviewees described their relationship with City of New Westminster positively, noting appreciation for the work they do and their advocacy for accelerating affordable housing. However, interviewees described several common challenges working with existing City policies and processes surrounding the delivery of affordable housing.

Interviewees noted that **limited available land is a significant barrier** to achieving the action needed to meet the City's Housing Needs Report targets. Several interviewees noted **challenges securing funding and aligning financing with arduous processes**. Rezoning is a time-consuming process, and long timelines can make costs accrue. Additionally, some interviewees noted **challenges around engineering or transportation requirements being uncertain until later in the development process**, when their funding model has already been established.

Other strains on housing providers included an apparent slowdown in affordable housing projects being approved both provincially and federally, the rising cost of concrete and mass timber, and the need for flexibility to accommodate creative engineering solutions.

Definition and eligibility criteria for affordable housing development

There was general agreement among interviewees that the initiative is valuable, the definition of affordable housing development makes sense, and that the proposed eligibility criteria would make it easier to deliver affordable housing. It was noted several times that any/all pre-zoning would be helpful.

Height and density

Most interviewees considered developments up to 6-storeys to be economically viable. However, they also suggested that 6-storeys as a maximum could be too restrictive. There was clear **appetite for greater heights and densities to be considered**, with some expressing interest in building up to 30 storeys or

higher in areas where higher densities are supported, including around rapid transit stations. Some providers noted such projects were already underway in other municipalities .

Many interviewees expressed that limiting development to 6-storeys would be restrictive and would miss out on opportunities across the City. One interviewee noted that there are several parts of the city characterised by mid- and high-rise development, and limiting to 6-storeys in these areas would be missing out on considerable opportunity.

Floor Space Ratio (FSR) is a measure of density, determined by dividing the gross floor area of a building by the total lot area.

For projects up to 6-storeys, most interviewees noted 90-100 units as the minimum required for feasibility, with 120-150 units or more noted as more viable. When asked about the most viable base density in the form of **Floor Space Ratio (FSR)** for such projects, developers interviewed suggested 2.5 – 3.0 FSR.

Generally, interviewees expressed that affordable housing projects become more viable when greater densities and building heights are achieved. Due to the cost of concrete and mass timber, affordable housing developers noted that buildings with heights between six (6) and 30 storeys have limited economic viability.

Length of affordability

Some interviewees noted the proposed length of legal agreements (60 years) could be challenging for some providers, particularly when needing to maintain affordability over such a long time-period. Additionally, a few interviewees noted that the 60-year term is not well aligned with some of the existing CMHC funding programs, which could limit access to funding programs most housing providers rely on. Adjusting that detail could provide more flexibility.

Locational considerations – site characteristics

Interviewees noted Sapperton, Uptown, near 22nd Street Station, near Columbia Station, and the corridor towards the Royal Columbian Hospital as particularly promising areas for expansion. Generally, **anywhere near transit, schools, or community centres were considered ideal areas to expand pre-zoning for affordable housing projects.**

Most interviewees noted the importance of proximity to transit, services, and amenities when considering affordable housing projects. Schools, community centres, childcare, and medical services were noted as critical.

Access to or inclusion of greenspace in affordable housing developments was also noted as very important. Some interviewees noted the inclusion of shared gardens and rooftop gardens in existing projects, if there are no nearby parks or greenspaces available to tenants.

Parking requirements

There was general appetite for reducing minimum parking requirements, particularly considering the significant cost of parking. Some noted that in existing rental buildings , only 50% of the available parking was being used by tenants. There was **some interest in supporting car share programs, particularly for lower income tenants who may not be able to afford a personal vehicle.** One interviewee noted they were working towards providing accessible parking only. EV parking was also a consideration for some, though demand for this type of parking is lower and the cost significant.

Most interviewees were generally opposed to eliminating parking requirements altogether. Many noted there is still demand and competition for parking in some contexts, including housing for seniors, families, and people with disabilities, and housing further away from transit.

Only a few interviewees were in favour of eliminating parking requirements altogether. They noted that providers generally have the best sense of what demand for parking will be in their particular context, so minimum requirements are not necessary.

Several interviewees noted a need for bike storage, but that there is an apparent surplus – the bike storage space provided in some existing projects has exceeded demand and is also context dependent. For example, demand for bike storage in housing for seniors would be far lower than in housing for families or younger demographics. **Flexibility in these requirements was considered key, with some interviewees suggesting that general storage, suitable for bikes and other personal items, would be the best solution.**

Complimentary uses

There was general interest and support among interviewees for including additional, complimentary uses on the ground floor of affordable rental housing projects. Complimentary uses that would be considered by interviewees, given their importance to residents, included:

- Daycares and preschools
- Healthcare and counselling services
- Food banks
- Community halls
- Places of worship

Some noted that such uses (particularly daycare) have already been included in existing projects.

However, despite the general interest, common challenges were discussed. Complimentary uses are challenging to include, both legally and financially, and so can impact the viability of affordable housing projects, particularly when funding is already a constraint. **Funding for these projects often does not cover non-residential uses, so additional funding is required.** However, there are limited potential partnerships or clients that could provide this additional financial support.

Collaboration and engagement

Some interviewees expressed the importance of collaboration with residents in the development of affordable housing projects. Public engagement was considered key to understanding needs across the housing continuum.

However, many interviewees expressed that too much community engagement can hinder progress. More engagement often means more opposition, but public opinion can have little impact on project outcomes, given the funding and procedural constraints. **Some interviewees observed that most pushback is often related to built form, so good urban design and building maintenance is critical for integrating projects into local neighbourhoods.** Ensuring building operators act as "good neighbours" once projects are established was considered more important than asking the public whether projects should go ahead. Delivering affordable housing was considered higher priority than community opposition.

Other suggestions from interviewees included partnering more with Indigenous organizations or local First Nations and providing more clarity around the potential phased approach to the initiative.

Virtual Community Discussion

There were 35 attendees at the virtual community discussion, including three (3) representatives of non-profit housing providers. The discussion provided the community an opportunity to:

- Hear directly from City planners about the initiative, its purpose, and proposed zoning changes
- Ask questions about the initiative
- Share their thoughts on how the City can better integrate affordable rental housing projects into neighbourhoods in New Westminster.

The virtual community discussion session included a Questions and Answers (Q&A) segment, and small group breakout discussions. During the virtual community discussion session, participants were invited to submit questions through the Zoom Q&A tool. Questions were answered by facilitators as they were submitted. General themes heard throughout the session included:

- Education and awareness
- Parking requirements
- Locational considerations
- Complimentary uses

Education and awareness

Participants were asked how the City can better integrate affordable rental housing projects into their neighbourhoods. One suggestion was to discuss, raise awareness of, and learn from the success of recent affordable housing projects (e.g., 841 Sixth Street). Another was to expand existing 3-4 storey multi-unit housing complexes up to the initiative's maximum height of 6-storeys. Another suggestion was to present information at residents' association meetings

Parking requirements

One breakout group discussed the importance of providing parking in affordable rental housing projects. A participant expressed the need for multiple parking spaces in family households. Another participant, representing a non-profit housing provider, described how building off-street parking in these projects can be extremely costly, which can impact the economic viability of the project. This highlighted the importance of affordable housing projects being in transit-oriented areas, where greater heights and densities can be achieved (increasing the economic viability of the project), and residents can rely more on transit than personal vehicles.

Locational considerations

Other suggestions for ways to integrate affordable rental housing projects into local neighbourhoods included:

- Locate projects close to existing commercial areas, services, and amenities.
- Incorporate these projects into neighbourhoods with ownership-housing, to foster a mix of home ownership and rental housing.
- Determine rents and revenue streams before development.
- Include a mix of housing types (affordable rental housing, market rental housing, and homeownership).

Complimentary uses

When asked what additional, complimentary uses could be helpful alongside affordable rental housing, common suggestions included:

- Cafes and restaurants
- Childcare facilities
- Medical services, such as doctors' offices
- Greenspace
- Community spaces

Generally, participants did not express any concerns with the addition of complimentary uses. Some expressed that having "attractive" and "well-utilized" public spaces near affordable housing projects would be desirable.

Other questions that arose throughout the breakout discussions were:

- Will affordable housing be considered within transit-oriented areas?
- Does this initiative address supportive housing as well?
- How will the City engage with residents as individual applications are brought forward?
- What is the revenue stream? Figuring out rents before the development starts would be beneficial.
- What possibilities are there for developments that have heritage churches?
- Could you build on top of an existing building?

Answers to these questions have been published on the FAQ section of the project Be Heard page. A full list of the questions asked during the Q&A is available in **Appendix A** – Virtual Community Discussion Q&A.



6.0 Next Steps

This What We Heard report will be published on the Be Heard page and shared with City Council. The input gathered throughout engagement will help refine the Zoning Bylaw changes.





Appendix A

Virtual Community Discussion Q&A

Questions submitted through the Zoom Q&A tool during the Q&A portion of the Virtual Community Discussion. Questions have been edited to correct spelling errors only.

- How do we define Affordable?
- Please define affordable?
- Why are there parking values for rentals. I was told the government removed all parking requirements.
- How are rents determined.
- Is there consideration for redeveloping or converting existing multifamily properties?
- In the slide with the setbacks. There were two different internal and external side setbacks. Can you define them, I do not understand the difference.
- When you speak of a legal agreement being needed, is that a Covenant on the titles? Or are these separate agreements specifically with the organization running the housing?
- Why excluding areas near Skytrain? Doing so will only increase traffic congestion that is already bad due to cross-roads nature of New West in Lower Mainland.
- Are proposals designed and presented by the Non-Profit; Government entity or Co-op? Or is CNW preparing some initial properties and then searching for these entities to assume/take over?
- Considering the high cost of construction and permitting, who would be building rental units?
- Underground parking in each of the buildings built? and who monitors that the non profits to make sure they are on the up and up. I live near London Place and most of the residents have more than 1 vehicle
- Will Translink bus service improve to match the new higher density areas?
- Is part of this exercise to look at area outside of the TOA, that include new areas that are not currently zoned as such. IF that is the case what is the process liaising with existing neighbourhoods
- You said there is a need to add a certain number of units per year. What was the number? And is there a backlog/pent-up demand?
- RGI doesn't help a Developer assess the affordability of the project, how do we estimate the potential revenue to cover costs?
- How many affordable rental units are currently in New West?
- How are school taxes calculated in the rental agreements with builders/ non profits or is this burden going to be put on home owners because as the Example of London Place there are many children going to our local schools .

NEW WESTMINSTER

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NEW WESTMINSTER

Attachment 3

Municipal Scan Findings

MUNICIPAL SCAN FINDINGS

Pre-zoning for Affordable Housing Zoning Bylaw Amendments

	City of Victoria Fast Track for Affordable Housing (2022)	**District of Saanich** Rapid Deployment of Non-Market Housing (2023)	**District of Squamish** Affordable Housing & Public Service Bylaw Amendments (2023)	**Takeaways for the Affordable Housing Acceleration Initiative**
Definition of Affordable Housing	Affordable Housing Development • Subject to legal agreement securing affordability and/ or rental tenure for a minimum period of 60 years. • Wholly owned and operated by a non-profit housing provider, housing co-operative, charitable society, government agency. • Total costs for rent or mortgage plus taxes (including a 10% down payment), insurance and utilities must equal 30% or less of a household's annual income.	Non-Market Rental Housing Development • Subject to legal agreement securing affordability and/ or rental tenure. • Wholly owned and operated by a non-profit organization or government agency. • No specific restrictions on rent levels.	Affordable Housing • Subject to legal agreement securing affordability and/ or rental tenure for a minimum period of 60 years. • (Pre-zoning) No difference if housing is provided by developer or non-profit; Only requirement being units cannot be stratified. • Non-market (and core needs) housing available at rental rates and purchase prices below market rates and prices, to those of low and moderate incomes.	Peer municipalities used fairly permissible and broad definitions of affordable housing. Different takes on including housing co-ops as part of definition, based on context. Desire to streamline development process for any affordable housing projects, instead of imposing specific affordability criteria – which can differ between funding programs.
Legal Requirements to Secure Long-Term Affordability	Legal Agreement (Zoning Bylaw) • Housing Agreement in practice.	Legal Agreement	Legal Agreement (Affordable Housing Strategy) • Housing Agreement in practice.	Peer municipalities rely on a housing agreement in practice. However, a more flexible criteria of requiring a legal agreement provides municipalities the option to choose which legal tool, depending on the individual circumstances of each affordable housing project.
Geographical Extent & Base Zoning Conditions	Supported up to the maximum density permitted in the Official Community Plan without a rezoning, where residential use is already permitted.	Supported up to the maximum height and density prescribed in the Official Community Plan without a rezoning. Supported on institutional, commercial, or residentially zoned sites within the Urban Containment Boundary. Provisions for mixed use projects included in Zoning Bylaw, whereby accessory commercial and institutional uses allowed for qualifying projects under: • *Institutional or Commercial Zones:* Permitted to incorporate uses listed in property's underlying zoning, provided min 50% of gross	Supported in any zone where residential is a principal use, except in high-hazard areas.	Pre-zoning applies: • Where residential use is permitted in the OCP, supported up to maximum density allowed; or, • Across institutional, commercial, and residentially zoned sites, supported up to maximum density and height allowed; or, • Across residential zones. Accessory uses to affordable housing are permitted dependent on municipality's vision and goals (e.g. Saanich – OCP sustainability foundations via 15 minute communities).

	City of Victoria Fast Track for Affordable Housing (2022)	**District of Saanich** Rapid Deployment of Non-Market Housing (2023)	**District of Squamish** Affordable Housing & Public Service Bylaw Amendments (2023)	**Takeaways for the Affordable Housing Acceleration Initiative**
		floor area of a site is of non-market residential use. • *Residential Zones:* List of compatible accessory commercial and institutional uses has been developed. Uses must be accessory to a non-market residential use and have limited floor area.		
Parking Requirements	Reduced parking rates dependent on unit size: • Lower base rates for affordable rental housing than market rental. • City is supportive of variances.	Elimination of parking requirements for non-market housing projects. It is trusted that non-market housing providers would still provide on-site parking in accordance with the needs of the particular development.	Elimination of parking requirements for non-market housing projects.	Complete elimination or reduced parking requirements, based on municipal contexts.
Servicing & Road Dedication Requirements	Bill 16 provides tools to address road dedication through Development Permit.	Bill 16 provides tools to address road dedication through Development Permit.	Bill 16 provides tools to address road dedication through Development Permit. Servicing requirements achieved through development bylaw that has broad authorities.	Overarching use of new local government tools via Bill 16 to secure servicing and road dedication, which were previously secured through Rezoning process.
Delegated Approvals & Processes	Delegated Development Permit and Development Permit Variances to staff where the projects meet affordability criteria. • Consistent with Design Guidelines. • Still go Advisory Design Panel for additional insight and feedback.	Delegated Development Permit to staff depending on scale of proposed project. • Bylaw being established to delegate DVP to staff as well.	Delegated Development Permit to staff for smaller projects of less than 25 units.	Overarching use of delegated approvals process for pre-zoning affordable housing.
Uptake	Four projects – will result in the delivery over 500 new non-market housing units.	Program in early stages (Since July 2023).	Program in early stages (Since November 2023).	N/A