

Housing For All – An Exploratory Review of Social Housing Models in Vienna



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Contents

- 1. Executive Summary 1**
- 2. Background 2**
- 3. Methodology 5**
- 4. Case Studies 6**
- 5. Key Participant Interviews 11**
- 6. Application to Vancouver 15**
- 7. Future Research 22**

- Appendix A: Images References 24**
- Appendix B: References 25**
- Appendix C: Interview Questionnaire..... 27**
- Appendix D: Interviewee Profiles..... 28**

1. Executive Summary

This exploratory research project aims to study the social-economic impacts of social housing models in Vienna to assess their applicability to Vancouver. In particular, how these models are contributing to a more diverse society, inclusive of equity-seeking groups such as those with disabilities, immigrants, LGBTQ+ and racialized communities.

Our research attempts to address three questions:

1. How do Vienna's social housing projects impact and benefit equity-seeking groups?
2. What do housing experts in Vienna see as lessons learned and opportunities for growth?
3. How are the learnings from Vienna applicable to future housing projects in Vancouver?

Methodology

This research is concerned with understanding how Vienna addresses social-economic outcomes for future residents of social housing. Through our research, we aim to understand how these processes benefit various equity-seeking groups to determine their viability in a Vancouver-based context.

Key Insights and Recommendations

Case Studies showcase examples of how Vienna is approaching social housing by creating affordable spaces through efficient housing design, providing supportive amenities for various groups, and enabling opportunities to create organized spaces that reflect their identities.

Key Participant Interviews were used to gather first-hand perspectives from Vienna's social housing sector. We had the opportunity to meet with seven key participants with varying expertise and experience that were broken into three categories for further analysis: Barriers, Opportunities, and Areas for Growth.

Applications to Vancouver presents Vienna-based initiatives highlighted during our interview process and explores their relevance to a Vancouver-based context. In addition, calls to action are presented to explore future possibilities for Vancouver.

Future Research

Further research topics have been outlined for future research:

1. Housing Equity and Refugee Settlement
2. Community-Led Housing Development
3. Missing Middle – Social Housing for Everyone

2. Background

This research project aims to study the social-economic impacts of social housing models in Vienna to assess their applicability to Vancouver. In particular, how these models are contributing to a more diverse society, inclusive of equity-seeking groups such as those with disabilities, immigrants, LGBTQ+ and racialized communities. The research is conducted under the supervision of BC Housing, a provincial Crown agency under the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing that develops, manages and administers subsidized housing options across the province of British Columbia.

Previous Work

Our research project builds upon existing work and collaborations between BC Housing and its counterparts in Vienna. The Cities of Vancouver and Vienna signed a Memorandum of Understanding in early 2018 to strengthen their collaboration to rapidly advance green building innovation in their respective municipalities. As a cornerstone of this collaboration, each city is developing a showcase low-carbon, affordable housing project. Through these two projects (Vienna House and Vancouver House), professionals and organizations in the two cities will exchange knowledge and experiences.

BC Housing issued a Request for Proposals for its showcase project (Vienna House) in June 2018 to non-profit housing providers, or for-profit firms that partner with housing societies, seeking to develop and operate new rental housing units. The target residents are independent seniors and families in British Columbia who qualify under the new Community Housing Fund (CHF) program. This program will provide mixed-income housing, with rents affordable for low and moderate-income households. Over the summer of 2020, SCIUS Advisory organized design charrettes for BC Housing to move forward with the design of a high performance, mid-rise, mass timber, social housing scheme in Vancouver.

Research Objective

During discussions between housing representatives from Vienna and Vancouver, a notable gap for further research was identified. While the two showcase housing projects focus heavily on building techniques and innovative methods for sustainability, Vienna's extensive history with social housing provides much broader opportunities for Vancouver to learn from. This research project aims to study the often overlooked and currently unknown social and economic impacts of social housing in Vienna to understand their applicability to Vancouver. In particular, we will research how these models can contribute and adapt to a more inclusive, diverse society.

Research Questions

Our research attempts to address three questions:

1. How do Vienna's social housing projects impact and benefit equity-seeking groups? (Chapter 4)
2. What do housing experts in Vienna see as lessons learned and opportunities for growth? (Chapter 5)
3. How are the learnings from Vienna applicable to future housing projects in Vancouver? (Chapter 6)

Relevance

The Cities of Vancouver and Vienna are both growing metropolitan areas, ranking high among international peers on livability, economic opportunities, recreation, education, health services and public transit. With population growing and housing demand increasing substantially, challenges have emerged for ensuring an inclusive, equitable society. We expect this research to uncover new and relevant learnings as both cities face similar issues, while also having vastly different approaches.

Relevance to Vancouver

The City of Vancouver has historically attempted to improve its shortage of social housing through government-assisted housing plans, established as early as the First World War. The City's housing stock comprises approximately 26,000 units of non-market housing units, which represents eight per cent of the total housing stock (City of Vancouver, 2017). Despite past investments, the problem has carried through to the extent of Vancouver consistently being listed among the least affordable cities in the world (Demographia, 2021). Affordable housing deficits have increased in recent years, with demand outweighing supply, and housing costs outpacing household income growth. As Vancouver continues to address its ongoing housing crisis, Vienna's model of municipal housing may offer a source of inspiration.

Housing pressures continue to bear heavily down on Vancouver's most vulnerable residents. The 2020 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count identified 3,634 people as experiencing homelessness in the region (HSABC, 2020). Intensifying the impacts of homelessness today are the dual health crisis of the poisoned drug supply and COVID-19. Vancouver's Indigenous residents have unique housing challenges and needs. Statistics demonstrate ongoing inequities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents, which is more prominent in Vancouver than the metropolitan region as a whole (Vancouver Housing Strategy, 2018). Other groups that are of particular concern include single-parent mothers, as well as a growing number of refugees escaping areas of conflict and oppression (e.g. Syria and Afghanistan).

Relevance to Vienna

The housing system in Vienna is composed of a complex network bridging national, regional, and local authorities. Traditionally, social housing in Vienna includes a leading role for non-profit developers, direct subsidies from the state, rent control for the old housing stock, and cost control for new construction (Reinprecht, 2014). The City owns 220,000 housing units and indirectly controls 185,000 units, which are built and owned by limited-profit private developers. Combined, this represents about 39 per cent of total housing stock (HUD, 2014). To fund projects, 75 per cent of housing subsidies come from federal transfers to regional authorities who handle, disseminate, and implement housing policy. With tight control and regulation on public land, Vienna facilitates ease of access for its social housing stock.

Vienna's social housing system has traditionally recognized the specific challenges of those with disabilities, single-parent families, seniors in need of care, the LGBTQ+ community and more. Several new and retrofit projects give special attention to these equity-seeking groups (IBA Vienna, 2021). Over the past decades, migration has shaped the development of the City of Vienna. At the beginning of 2020, more than 36 per cent of Vienna residents were born abroad, and between 2010-2019 immigration from Syria and Afghanistan totalled over 46,000 people (City of Vienna, 2020). As a result, the public discussion about housing inequities has pivoted towards the unique situation of (non-EU) immigrants, and how the existing support systems can best address their needs.

Quick Comparison

Metric	Vienna	Vancouver
Population (City / Metro)	1,9 mln / 2.8 mln (2021)	0.7 mln / 2.6 mln
Density (City)	4,620 people / km ² (2020)	5,493 people / km ² (2018)
GDP per Capita (City)	CAD\$78,119 (2019)	CAD\$56,159 (2016)
Income Inequality (GINI index)	≈0.3 (2018)	≈0.5 (2016)
Poverty Rate	8% (2018)	20% (2016)
Non-Market Housing (# / %)	405,000 units / 39% of total (2014)	26,000 units / 8% of total (2017)

Limitations

Our exploratory research confronted various limitations in its scope. In discussing issues pertaining to the social-economic impacts that social housing may have on individuals, the project would have benefited from speaking with residents directly. However, without relationships with organizations or representative groups in Vienna, it became unrealistic for this project to engage with residents. Other research limitations included:

1. Lack of translation ability between English and German for community outreach
2. Lack of primary resources (statistics) on social-economic impacts of Vienna's social housing
3. Time constraints to be able to reach a large sample size among research participants
4. Time constraints due to this research project being completed in partnership with one of the researcher's Master's Capstone requirements

As a research team, we decided it would be most feasible and effective to speak with policy professionals that had been involved in the Vancouver-Vienna Partnership previously, while additionally asking if there were other professionals in their networks that we could speak with. We hope that with additional time, resources, and outreach personnel, a future project would be able to provide a research environment that is more balanced and reciprocal between researchers, professionals and residents.

3. Methodology

This research is concerned with understanding how Vienna addresses social and economic outcomes for future residents living in social housing. We aim to understand how these processes benefit various equity-seeking groups to determine their viability in a Vancouver-based context. The research was carried out in a three-stage process: Data Collection, Impact Analysis, and Local Application.

Stage 1: Data Collection

A literature scan was conducted to contextualize the current landscape of social housing in Vienna, and to identify three existing Vienna social housing projects that are likely to contain valuable insights related to how housing contributes to the social-economic wellbeing of citizens.

Stage 2: Impact Analysis

To acquire a primary-source account of Vienna's social housing and how it relates to socio-economic impacts, our research team approached key stakeholders in Vienna's social housing sector to conduct interviews. The interview participants included city planners, architects, policy makers, and social service providers. Connections were established through existing relationships between BC Housing and the City of Vienna, as well as through direct outreach by the research team.

An interview guide was developed for 30-60 minute open-ended interviews. Participants were asked about the social and economic priorities considered during the housing development process, any required compromises that could not be accounted for, and innovative ideas that are supportive to vulnerable and equity-seeking groups.

Stage 3: Local Application

The research team gathered the data and insights collected from the Vienna case studies and expert interviews, and considered how they may be applicable to Vancouver's context. The research findings were organized into overarching themes, and defined into tangible calls to action for future research or implementation.

4. Case Studies

We have researched three case studies to better understand some of the unique social-economic qualities present in Vienna's social housing projects. The projects are: Podhagskygasse, An der Schanze, and Que[e]rbau Seestadt. These projects highlight recent examples of how Vienna is approaching social housing by creating affordable spaces through efficient housing design, providing supportive amenities for various groups, and enabling opportunities to create organized spaces that reflect their identities..

Podhagskygasse



Key Insights:

- › Podhagskygasse showcases a recent project that has implemented a financial model to provide affordable housing in perpetuity through temporary buildings and sites.
- › By implementing the SMART model, housing can be made more affordable for young families.
- › Ground floor units and spaces are designed barrier-free, providing accessibility for people with disabilities.



Podhagskygasse (English: Podhagsky Street) is one of the pioneering projects from the Instant Housing Program launched by the City of Vienna in 2016 (City of Vienna, 2020). The developer competition Podhagskygasse, organized by the Vienna Housing Fund, sought construction projects that offer new and contemporary approaches to cost-effective living. The project promotes low-cost housing on currently unzoned or barred plots of land. Buildings are temporarily erected and dismantled after 10 years but can be re-erected at another location.

Pilot studies conducted by the City of Vienna in 2017-2018 indicated that the Podhagskygasse site is suitable for a temporary housing development due to current zoning conditions. The construction was completed in nine months. Subsidies supported the efficiency required for the project timeline, allowing developers to save on labour cost fees.

The developer of Podhagskygasse - Wohnbund Consulting - provided a breakdown of the costs associated with the project. The developer competition aimed to provide low-cost, high-quality subsidized housing. Podhagskygasse is comprised of 325 subsidized apartments, of which 118 are considered standard apartments, 124 are considered SMART apartments, and 83 are subsidized condominiums. SMART apartments are characterized by their optimal use of space and compact apartment floor plans, paired with efficient appliances that will lower monthly costs. SMART apartments are intended to supplement standard apartments as an innovative and affordable housing model for smaller families. These apartments will support the requirements of single-parent families, and the needs they have as a growing demographic with limited options for affordable, appropriate housing.

Facilities available for residents of the complex include a kindergarten, a doctor's office, and 32 units for commercial usage. The total subsidized area of the complex is 240,646 sqft (22,356 sqm). Construction costs are estimated at a maximum of EUR 60/m² (CAD ~87.5/m²). Estimated maximum monthly operating cost, excluding heating and hot water, are EUR 7.50/m² (CAD ~11/m²).

An der Schanze



Key Insights:

- › An der Schanze is an example of a planned neighbourhood that identifies a demographic need for an area and addresses that need through housing and socially supportive programs.
- › Local residents are actively involved in the development process, through a cross-discipline dialogue, workshops and self-organized working groups.
- › Student residences and special housing offerings for single parents are included in the program in response to community needs.



An der Schanze is a neighbourhood characterized by a variety of housing offerings. The quarters will provide more than 1,500 apartments in the coming years, of which 95 per cent are subsidized. The An der Schanze properties were tendered by Wohnfonds Wien and IBA Vienna in 2021. The aim of the project is to incorporate the innovations of current social developments into the planning process to target the local needs of community groups.

One group of particular interest are single parents as this was determined to be in demand for the area. In cooperation with various institutions, apartments have been allocated to meet the needs of residents. For example, selected apartments are offered specifically allocated through the single parents' association, JUNO. In addition, adjacent apartments can be allocated to divorced parents or to single parents with family members. Furthermore, Volkshilfe Vienna is providing in-home daycare.

The buildings will provide a mix of local amenities, community facilities across all building sites, and open spaces that are built for long-term use, with a focus on creating livable residential areas for current and future residents. As part of the design, the new neighbourhood will contain the largest contiguous green space in the project area. It will create a natural transformation, to alter the current farmland usage towards "Urban Wilderness," with open meadows and tree-shaded areas. The development of a cross-neighbourhood rainwater management system is also being considered.

Que[e]rbau Seestadt



Key Insights:

- › The Que[e]rbau project is an example of community planning by an equity-seeking group.
- › Through the process of developing their own housing, the LGBTQ+ community has been able to provide safe and inclusive spaces for themselves.
- › Online platforms facilitate the building of community, social fabric and support systems. The Que[e]rbau community project started with the concept of communal planning.



The Que[e]rbau community project started with the concept of communal planning.

Completed in 2017, it is one of the first projects in Vienna that focuses on providing those that identify as LGBTQ+ with community housing through a co-housing project including 33 units. The project is inclusive for all generations, singles and partners, different types of families and shared apartments: rainbow families, blended families, foster families.

Que[e]rbau is part of a larger social housing project, Seestadt Aspern. It plays an active and visible role in the progressive quarter built at the neighbourhood level (similar to the An der Schanze district). Que[e]rbau will work in close cooperation with other co-housing groups and local inhabitants to intentionally be a safe haven for sexual and gender minorities among refugees. Que[e]rbau has introduced a social concept of roles for residents to create a welcoming environment for refugees in the development. These roles vary from being friends with new residents to experts who ensure that legal documents are reviewed for refugee settlement.

Que[e]rbau is currently working with a planner to support the residents through the development process. The development uses a model of subsidised rental apartments with options to purchase the units at a later date. The model provides financial security for the development, while maintaining affordability for residents that require support. Residents are encouraged to take part in joint decision-making processes to discuss the planning of their respective apartments and communal areas.

Que[e]rbau's homepage encourages contributions to community building through shared activities, seminar rooms, recreation rooms, wellness spaces, and roof-gardens. Online platforms allow community members to plan activities and cultivate a supportive LGBTQ+ network. The intent is to integrate communal planning concepts through a bottom-up development process fueled by future residents. The Que[e]rbau community housing planning project started in 2017 and will be completed in 2022.

5. Key Participant Interviews

To gather first-hand perspectives from Vienna's social housing sector, we had the opportunity to meet with seven key participants with varying expertise and experience. These participants provided insights from various backgrounds including:

- › Architects
- › City Staff
- › European Union Network
- › Housing Innovation Experts
- › Social Service Providers

From the interviews, thematic areas have been broken up into three categories: Barriers, Opportunities, and Areas for Growth. The Barriers category speaks to notable problems that experts have identified as lacking a clear solution. The Opportunities category relates to innovations that experts are working on to address issues that Vienna is or has been facing. The Areas for Growth category refers to ideas and innovations that address identified problems requiring further development.

Barriers to Social Housing

Cost of Development

Vienna is currently facing a land shortage as it is surrounded by a mix of agricultural lands and preserved natural areas. The shortage of land is impacting Vienna's ability to affordably build social housing for its residents, as it competes with other private and public land uses. Furthermore, the cost of building materials has increased by 20 per cent within the last year, further placing social housing projects under pressure. Although Vienna has historically had access to wood as a building material, these resources are now increasingly exported and wood prices are rising as a result.

It is beneficial for all groups involved in Vienna's social housing, whether public or private, to be invested in limiting construction costs. In order to maintain affordable housing, rent is controlled for residents to pay 7.5 EUR per sqm (~\$11 CAD per sqm) monthly — in order to provide housing at this rate, all parties are required to consider efficient and effective solutions through building methods and designs. New developments are required to highlight the projects' quality to a jury at the City of Vienna, with a commitment to fulfill everything as promised. Once the development is granted, projects have previously been required to demonstrate feasibility over an amortization period of 20-25 years. However, to maintain affordability, Vienna is now increasing the amortization periods to 50 years.

Access to Social Housing

New immigrants and refugees experience greater challenges when accessing social housing than those who have resided in Vienna for an extended period of time. Such groups are often unable to access social housing due to eligibility criteria and are left to find housing in the private housing market instead. They also face additional challenges by incurring costs within the private market when seeking the services of a real estate agent and needing sufficient funds for a security deposit.

Restrictive Bylaw Requirements

In order for Vienna to continue providing affordable housing to its residents, certain building restrictions may need to be reconsidered. For example, currently, buildings are forced to provide one parking space per 100 sq^m of floor area. Architects expressed that mobility behaviour is currently shifting from personal cars towards shared car usage, bikes, or public transport. Zoning can reduce parking requirements by 70 per cent but it is not a sufficient reduction to sustain affordability.

Climate Change

In the past decade, Vienna has experienced its hottest temperatures in recorded history. Staff at the City of Vienna involved in climate change adaptation have mentioned that equitable housing needs to consider how to provide homes that are both comfortable and affordable. They suggest that housing design solutions must provide proper airflow in order to release heat from units. Staff are concerned with how urban heat island effects will compound with improper housing designs, affecting the health of residents over time. Many existing social housing units are within older buildings from before the 1970s with no insulation, rendering them unable to retain nor keep out warmth.

Missing Middle Social Services

Currently, Vienna's social housing system is designed to house individuals so that they can ultimately care for themselves — initially, counselling will be provided to residents until they are able to be independent. For those residents unable to manage on their own, they will be assigned a social worker to help support their lives. However, it was identified that there is a gap in the middle where folks who do not qualify for support outright, still require help with finding affordable housing and other types of continued assistance.

Opportunities

Urban Renewal Offices

Urban renewal offices are a core component in Vienna's people-centred approach towards social housing. These offices are located in all 23 districts of Vienna, providing residents with a welcoming place to discuss problems that they may be experiencing while living in social housing.

Within urban renewal offices, neighbourhood networks can be formed where residents and stakeholders are able to meet with each other. Neighbours can discuss planned renovations as well as future housing developments, providing feedback and expressing demands specific to their demographic. The low-barrier nature of these offices makes the urban planning process more transparent and inclusive.

Within these offices, conflict resolution practices are used to support social interactions and decrease friction, with a focus on bringing people together. It is the aim of these offices to provide amenities for people who need them and to organize community events. Included in their programming are urban gardening spaces, cooperative common spaces, language classes, and spaces for celebration.

Temporary and Transformative Land Use

In Vienna, new projects are required to be built within the city and outside of the preserved (agricultural) areas. This challenges developers to look beyond typical development sites. One opportunity provided by an interview participant was highlighting

the transition of former industrial and military land into residential housing. Examples include former airfields such as “Seestadt Aspern”, and the former train stations “Sonnenwendviertel”, and “Nordbahnhof”. Although these lands are not permitted for long-term use, developers are not required to process a rezoning application and are able to place prefabricated residential housing for preset intervals.

Emotional Sustainability

Vienna’s social housing developments often consider the environmental sustainability of new projects. This sustainability typically focuses on lowering energy consumption or choosing building materials that limit the carbon footprint of a building. However, one of the participants mentioned that we should be designing buildings for emotional sustainability as well. Emotional sustainability encompasses the design of homes that residents would love, care for, clean, and repair perpetually. It was noted that when buildings focus exclusively on affordability or meeting sustainability goals, there is little room for creating a building that people would draw sentimental value from.

Community Amenities

Social housing projects in Vienna are not limited to certain demographics. Rather, there is a deliberate attempt to try to accommodate as many different types of people in one building, and to avoid segregation and stigmatization of community groups. At Vancouver House in Vienna, there are programs for single parents, programs for the elderly, and kindergartens that would provide some of the most beneficial amenities for everyone in the building.

Areas for growth

Finding Community

In its current state, new immigrants who have yet to access public housing are often reliant on clusters of communities that have immigrated to Vienna previously. For those from Non-Western countries or those fleeing persecution, there is often little knowledge of Vienna, or the Viennese people and culture. These immigrant communities often help each other find housing, employment, and community.

It is difficult for new immigrants to attain and maintain housing. The waitlist for public housing is lengthy, leading new immigrants to look for housing within the private sector. When people are newly immigrated, they are provided a housing subsidy and allowance. Although many immigrants manage to obtain a space, there are few protections in place that would provide adequate housing, as the private market is not monitored for occupancy density or habitability of space. Often, in order to find a home suitable for their needs, newly immigrated residents depend on the communities they meet upon arrival, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation.

Compact Living

SMART housing units are an example of an innovative housing scheme that provides affordable housing for young families. Architects identified an issue in typical flats, where the focus is on providing additional living space for tenants. However, recently introduced SMART housing units provide an option for compact living that focuses on providing an additional room for privacy instead. To reduce the overall price of each unit, SMART housing offers smaller bedroom and living room square footage. In addition, learning from the experiences of COVID-19, architects are now further identifying that there may be an additional need for segregated home office spaces.

Social Sustainability

An architect in the City of Vienna explained that proposed social housing projects and sites are assessed on criteria of a four pillars model: architecture, economy, ecology, and social sustainability. They noted that out of the four pillars, social sustainability is simultaneously the most difficult and most important pillar to measure and attain. This is due in part to the complexity of addressing social challenges, as there are no definitive solutions. The way in which a project addresses social sustainability makes each project differ greatly.

6. Application to Vancouver

Each section presents a Vienna-based initiative highlighted during our interview process and explores their individual relevance to a Vancouver-based context. The projects we examined from Vienna provide learning opportunities for Vancouver to explore future applications. Finally, we provide high-level calls to action to explore such future possibilities for Vancouver.

Courtyards For Community Impact

As density and affordability are closely related, it becomes increasingly challenging to find spaces for community gathering, recreation, and play. A full rethink of courtyards on private property can bring relief and add value.

What We Learned From Vienna

Vienna's urban form has historically included mid-rise blocks with private courtyards. More recent projects have challenged the status quo and incorporated courtyards that are amenities to the whole neighbourhood. The design invites people into the interior of the block, while ensuring that through traffic stays on public streets. Both building residents and community members are encouraged to spend time within the block and meet with others.

Relevance To Vancouver

Courtyards are a less common sight in Vancouver's urban core, but could present a way to stimulate social interaction and achieve higher community value of scarce land. Public-private courtyards, secluded from vehicle access, can be a means to maintain green space within building blocks, both for market and non-market projects. These spaces can be flexible and provide opportunities for urban gardens, playgrounds, meeting spaces, or exercise.

Figure 2. Courtyards with one entrance and no exit on the other end, ensure that pedestrians and cyclists don't disappear off public streets.



Figure 3. Places to meet, play and relax can be featured within the block, catering both residents and the broader community.



Calls To Action

Design Guidebook

An illustrated guidebook can be created and shared with Vancouver's development community, featuring inspiring international best practices for courtyard design, community use and maintenance.

Legal Framework

Public access to private spaces may present legal issues and liability concerns. A roundtable with building operators, and legal and housing professionals could help assess what framework would make this possible.

Development Incentives

Municipalities and provincial governments can consider incentives to encourage a better community use of courtyards, including waiving community amenity charges, increased density and reduced land costs.

People-Centred Housing

Figure 4. Image from presentation on People-Centred Housing in Vienna via Dr. Bauer



Urban revitalization projects can impact the housing rights, security and affordability of existing residents. To tackle such risks, the City of Vienna created a program called Gentle Urban Renewal. This program focuses on preserving existing housing stock and creating informed programs that alleviate the possibility of renovicted residents.

What we learned from Vienna

The City of Vienna is working to ensure that residents do not face renovictions from their homes and neighbourhoods. When considering new developments, residents are informed and encouraged to participate at the early phases of construction. In order to mitigate some of the building construction limitations to contractors or developers, the City of Vienna allows for rent to be increased by a small margin while the City provides a subsidy to residents for the increased percentage.

Relevance to Vancouver

On July 1st, 2021, British Columbia passed Bill 7 updating changes pertaining to renovictions. Previously, tenants could be renovicted if a landlord were to indicate “Four Months' Notice to End Tenancy For Demolition, Renovation, Repair or Conversion of a Rental Unit.” With the amendment to the bill, landlords are required to provide proof of permits and applications for builds. However, although this bill provides some barriers against renovictions, additional protection remains necessary.

Calls to Action

Anti-Renoviction Policy

Building on Bill 7, housing advocates and professionals could push for stronger anti-renoviction policies, following the City of Vienna’s example of providing subsidies to residents to remain in their homes post-renovation.

Social Housing Typology

The City of Vancouver and social housing developers could directly engage equity-seeking groups to co-create a shared understanding of their desired housing unit needs, and translate these into a development typology to inform the social housing plans.

Urban Renewal Offices

Vienna's Urban Renewal Offices engages the community, and contributes to improving the quality of life in a district as it transforms. These offices provide opportunities for a diversity of residents to actively participate in housing issues; empowered and with agency.

Figure 5. Example of Urban Renewal Office conducting public engagement and collecting information on how the Office can ameliorate life in the neighbourhood.



What we learned from Vienna

Urban renewal offices are a core component in Vienna's people-centred approach towards social housing. These offices are located in all 23 districts of Vienna, providing residents a welcoming place they can approach to discuss problems that they may be experiencing while living in social housing. Within urban renewal offices, neighbours can discuss planned renovations as well as future developments to provide feedback and express specific demands. Their low-barrier nature makes the urban planning process more transparent and inclusive.

Relevance To Vancouver

Metro Vancouver has a similar program through the Association of Neighbourhood Houses B.C. Its mission is "to build healthy and engaged neighbourhoods by connecting people and strengthening their capacity to create change" (ANHBC, 2020). There is an opportunity to explore what role Vancouver's neighbourhood houses could play in helping residents discuss and address their housing needs, especially in transforming neighbourhoods.

Calls to Action

Community-Level Engagement

Community-level engagement with equity-seeking and marginalized groups can provide more in-depth perspectives on their housing needs, as well as close trust and knowledge gaps between community and authorities.

Recruit Neighbourhood Houses

While fewer in number compared to Vienna's Urban Renewal Offices, Metro Vancouver's neighbourhood houses provide a possible starting point for community-level engagement on broad housing needs across the region.

Pilot Urban Renewal Office

City of Vancouver, BC Housing and other community partners can emulate an urban renewal office as a pilot project to assess its value and applicability to Vancouver's affordable housing context.

Retrofit-Ready Parkades

Parkades use space that can otherwise provide for housing, amenities or commercial uses. Designing parkades for adaptability, unlocks future opportunities to use such spaces for more important uses than private vehicles.

Figure 6. Kulturgarage seestadt aspern – an example of a flexible space that was previously a parking garage.



What we learned from Vienna

Certain parkades are now being created with the intention of adjusting the building use at a later date. One example provided is Kulturgarage, which is part of a larger project called More Than a Housing Project. Kulturgarage provides space for readings, exhibitions, concerts, film screenings, lectures, etc. as an additional neighbourhood benefit.

Relevance To Vancouver

In a 2018 study conducted by Metro Vancouver (The Regional Parking Study), it was indicated that Vancouver's current parking supply exceeds its use by 42 per cent in Strata apartment buildings. This significant surplus of parking spaces may indicate that costly, often centrally located spaces can be used for alternative purposes of higher community value.

Call to Action

Flexible Zoning Policies

Allow for flexibility in zoning policies to reduce (up to 100 per cent) the amount of required parking for affordable housing projects, or allow for future amendments for alteration of parking spaces.

Retrofit Studio

Architects, engineers, industrial and interior designers, and residents could come together in a creative studio session to explore how existing parkades can be converted into community amenities.

International Learning

With Vienna being an international leader in social housing innovation, there are opportunities to learn from their yearly exhibition that iterates on the fine and tightly meshed system surrounding housing in Vienna.



Examples of developments that have been showcased at IBA conferences.

What we learned from Vienna

IBA Vienna (Internationale Bauausstellung Wien) hosts international conferences to discuss housing matters and innovation. IBA explains that Austria has been able to benefit reciprocally from neighbouring countries with similar interests in social housing. However, IBA does more than discuss housing issues during conferences. Tangible projects are not only planned but they are subsequently implemented, showcased and evaluated for lessons learned.

Relevance To Vancouver

BC Non-Profit Housing Association hosts an annual conference to discuss affordable housing in our province. The conference provides opportunities for education and networking but is mostly focused on local housing issues. A conference or exhibition with a broader scope, could help B.C.'s housing professionals and advocates learn about global trends and international innovation.

Calls to Action

Partnership with IBA Vienna

A partnership can be developed between IBA Vienna and its peers and stakeholders in Vancouver, including co-organizing (online) seminars to learn with countries at an international level, and attending and participating in IBA Wien exhibitions.

North American Platform

North America is lacking a platform to navigate innovations in social housing and collaborative tools for implementing future projects. BC could become a leader in this front by creating opportunities for these discussions to unfold.

7. Future Research

Considering the limitations of our research project, we have uncovered several important topics that could not be fully investigated within this report, and would require further research and exploration. We recommend BC Housing to pursue further research of these topics together with its partners and peers in Vancouver and Vienna.

Selection Criteria

The relationship between the social-economic impacts of social housing, and the diversity and inclusivity of society, is a particularly complex and broad subject matter. Many dimensions of this topic are not well understood at present, and it would take considerable efforts to develop a detailed comprehension. To funnel limited resources towards the most relevant study areas, we propose the following criteria for selecting opportunities for future study:

1. **Synergies and contrasts:** Vienna and Vancouver would benefit most from research where there are similarities in the kind of challenges that both cities face, while there are also major contrasts in their approach to such problems. When both these conditions are met, the most opportunities arise for synergy, learning and comparison.
2. **Growing and urgent needs:** considering that in Vienna and Vancouver the dialogue on diversity and equity is in full process, and that both communities are receiving large numbers of immigrants from unsafe regions, it would make sense to focus future research studies on these demographics whose housing challenges and inequities are most urgent and growing.
3. **Tangible applications:** a key objective of the Vancouver-Vienna Partnership on social housing is to advance housing development through the practical application of new, innovative ideas. We propose for upcoming research to focus on tangible application in the short to mid term, in new projects or existing ones that are still in their early planning stages.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the above criteria and the key insights from our research, we recommend the below topics for future research:

Topic 1: Housing Equity and Refugee Settlement

Recent developments in Afghanistan have, once again, created an increase in refugee immigration that is impacting Vancouver and Vienna. Our engagement with Vienna stakeholders underlines that the housing challenges of refugees are equally high on the agenda of either city, and that both Vienna and Vancouver have significant inequities to address. It would be beneficial to approach this problem collaboratively, and share experiences, data and solutions.

Key research questions could be:

- › What unique housing inequities do refugees face in Vancouver and Vienna, and what are their root causes? What are differences and similarities between both cities' approaches?
- › How can housing and neighbourhood development contribute to successful refugee settlement? What does this mean for resident engagement, typology, design and amenities of new projects?

- › How can housing authorities work more effectively with settlement and social services (e.g. MOSAIC, SUCCESS, YWCA, ISSofBC, PIRS, Muslim Food Bank and Community Services, neighbourhood houses etc, and their Vienna counterparts)?
- › What are quick-wins to improve the housing experience of refugees during their first years of settlement in either Vancouver or Vienna?

Topic 2: Community-Led Housing Development

An emerging approach to housing equity is to empower marginalized communities to initiate, develop and operate their own housing developments. Both Vienna and Vancouver have recent pilots and successes* to share on this topic, which would be interesting to compare. It can be expected that both cities are facilitating this type of community-led housing differently with incentives and policies, which could inspire the exchange of innovations and best practices.

Key research questions could be:

- › What do equity-seeking groups see as the key benefits of leading their own housing developments? Why could regular social housing not provide for their needs?
- › What incentives, support and funding do Vancouver and Vienna uniquely provide to marginalized and underserved community groups as they pursue their own housing projects? Which ones work well, and which not so much?
- › How do the initial expectations of community groups compare to the actual experience of community-led housing? What challenges did they face and how were they addressed?

* Vancouver examples include housing projects by/with the Shon Yee and Lee Societies in the Downtown Eastside, the May Wah Hotel in Chinatown, Hogan's Alley Trust in False Creek North, and SI Housing for women by women

Topic 3: Missing Middle – Social Housing for Everyone

One observation from Vienna's social housing is the extent to which it is accessible to everyone. Many housing projects target middle-income households throughout all life stages, and policymakers emphasize the importance of mixing demographics to avoid stigmatization and the formation of ghettos. This is in stark contrast with Vancouver, where non-market housing is mostly geared towards vulnerable groups and excludes middle-income households.

Key research questions could be:

- › What is Vienna's rationale for providing social housing for middle-income demographics who are not in immediate need? How is this economically and politically sustainable?
- › What are Vienna's current challenges and emerging innovations to secure a large and accessible middle-income rental housing rental stock?
- › How could we learn from Vienna's approach, and what are Vancouver's learnings from its recent pilots with middle-income rental housing (Moderate Income Rental Housing Pilot Program)?

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Appendix C: Interview Questionnaire

Context:

As we have mentioned during our outreach email, we are two Vancouver-based research consultants working with BC Housing interested in studying the social-economic impacts of social housing models in Vienna to assess their applicability to Vancouver.

We will be taking notes during this session – which we will be sharing for your review. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes.

*Ask if the participant has any additional questions and indicate that they are free to skip any questions or finish the interview without any consequences.

Interview:

In a couple of sentences, what do you do in your role?

What are some limitations with existing social or economic approaches to the social housing model in Vienna?

Think of specific projects you have had involvement in, if possible

Have you heard of any new or innovative social and/or economic models that you would like to see implemented into new social housing projects?

How can we make it easier for equity-seeking groups to access social housing?

Keep in mind that we're interested in social / financial models

Are there opportunities that you believe are attainable that are not currently being taken advantage of?

Do you have any additional thoughts you would like to include?

Can you think of any additional planners, policy professionals, architects, or additional experts that might be able to inform our research?

Thank you so much for participating in our interview!

Appendix D: Interviewee Profiles

Oliver Sterl

Oliver is the CEO of Rüdiger Lainer + Partner in Vienna.

Jakob Dunkl

Jakob is an owner at Querkraft Architectural Firm in Vienna.

Kurt Hofstetter

Head of IBA Wien - International Building Exhibition.

Stefan Sattler

Works as an Engineer at the City of Vienna in Renewable Energy Building.

Daniel Glaser

Daniel is an architect and spatial planner who works in housing promotion at the City of Vienna. His department is responsible for housing promotion, subsidies, and renovations.

Susanne Bauer

Susanne is a senior housing researcher at the City of Vienna. She is also the Chair of Eurocities Working Group for Housing.

Nina Andresen

Nina works for the Fonds Soziales Wien: FSW (Vienna's Social Fund).



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