



# Communications and Engagement Summary Report

502 Twentieth Street, New Westminster, BC  
Transitional Housing with Supports

February - May 2026

# Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION ..... 2

PROJECT OVERVIEW..... 2

PROJECT COMMUNICATIONS ..... 2

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENTS ..... 4

COMMUNITY RELATIONS INBOX ..... 5

WHAT WE HEARD ..... 5

COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES ..... 13

NEXT STEPS.....15

## Introduction

This report provides an overview of communications and neighbourhood engagement from February to May 2026 regarding BC Housing’s plan to build 30 units of transitional modular housing with supports at 502 Twentieth Street (at River Drive) in New Westminister, B.C. It shares:

- How project plans were communicated to site neighbours and the wider community
- How equitable, accessible and inclusive outlets were provided for community questions, concerns and feedback about the project
- Key themes that emerged
- Responses to common questions and concerns
- Engagement outcomes and project updates

This report was submitted to the City of New Westminister on June 12, 2026.

## Project Overview

This 30-unit transitional modular housing project is funded provincially through the Province’s [Homeless Encampment Action Response Temporary Housing](#) (HEARTH) program.

Residents will be adults (19+) from New Westminister who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and need support services to maintain stable housing. This can include seniors and people with disabilities.

The site was chosen in collaboration with the City of New Westminister. BC Housing has negotiated a lease with the private landowner for three years, with an option to renew for a second, three-year period.

The project proposal falls under the City of New Westminister’s Crisis Response uses in their Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw. As such, this project does not require an Official Community Plan amendment, rezoning, a temporary use permit, nor a public hearing. The project will comply with life safety, servicing, off-site upgrades and other municipal standards. A provincially funded transitional housing project is a stated need in the City’s *Housing Needs Report (2024-2044)* and is supported by their Crises Response Pilot Project (2024-2026).

## Project Communications

### **Letter to immediate neighbours**

On February 18, 2026, BC Housing hand-delivered a [letter](#) and [FAQ](#) to the 28 owners/occupants of properties that are located adjacent to the subject site, along River Drive.

The letter and FAQ were also emailed on the same day to the three (3) businesses also located along the River Drive corridor (Southern Railway, Fraser River Pile and Dredge, Kruger Products).

This communication included:

- An introduction to the project and location
- A description of the proposed housing and the services to be provided
- An invitation to register for one of two small-group information sessions, organized specifically for immediate neighbours to the site
- A link to BC Housing’s project webpage
- A direct email address for questions

On March 16, 2026, a second notice was hand-delivered to the same group of River Drive residents, with a reminder about the March 19 community open house.

### **Letter to area neighbours (within 250 metres of site, across Stewardson Way)**

On February 25, 2026, BC Housing mailed a [letter](#) to the 29 households in the contained residential area immediately across Stewardson Way, up to approximately 250 metres from the project site.

This letter included:

- An introduction to the project, including location
- A description of the proposed housing and the services to be provided
- An invitation to attend/register for the March 19 Community Open House
- A link to the BC Housing project webpage
- A direct email address for questions

### **Email to Residents' Associations**

On February 25, 2026, BC Housing emailed the same letter (as above) as an attachment to the West End Residents Association and the Connaught Heights Residents' Association. In the email introduction, BC Housing requested that the letter be shared with their memberships to ensure members knew about the project, as well as the Community Open House, and were aware of the invitation to attend.

This email included:

- An introduction to the project, including location
- A description of the proposed housing and the services to be provided
- An invitation to attend/register for the Community Open House to be held on March 19 at the Anvil Centre in New Westminister
- A link to the BC Housing project webpage
- A direct email address for questions

### **Project Webpages**

- On February 18, 2026, BC Housing published a project webpage at [letstalkhousingbc.ca/new-westminster-20th-street](http://letstalkhousingbc.ca/new-westminster-20th-street). This webpage has been regularly updated with the latest information about the project.
- On March 13, 2026, the City of New Westminister published a project webpage at <https://www.newwestcity.ca/planning-building-and-development/projects-on-the-go/bc-housings-tiny-homes-village>. This webpage includes information related to City processes, policies, and compliance. This webpage links to the BC Housing page referenced above.

### **City of New West Communications**

The City of New Westminister shared BC Housing's Community Open House notification widely in the weeks leading up to the March 19 Community Open House:

[Citypage Electronic Newsletter](#)

- Shared in the [February 26 edition](#)—28% of email recipients who opened the newsletter clicked on the link—165 total clicks.
- Shared in the [March 19 edition](#)—36% of email recipients who opened the newsletter clicked on the link—224 total clicks.

#### What’s Happening webpage information

- Posted February 24, 2026, with link to BC Housing’s project webpage and Community Open House information.

#### Projects on the Go webpage

- Posted on March 13, 2026, with information regarding the Community Open House on the project webpage.

## Community Engagement Events

### **Small-Group Information Sessions**

*Thursday, March 5, 2026, 5:00 – 6:15 p.m. & 7:00– 8:15 p.m. – Anvil Centre, New Westminster*

- **Purpose:** To provide an opportunity to share project details, answer questions and hear feedback about the project proposal from neighbours who live in close proximity to this project.
- **Attendance:** 5:00 p.m. session – **15** / 7:00 p.m. session – **17**

The sessions included a [PowerPoint presentation](#) followed by a Q&A.

Representatives from BC Housing and the City of New Westminster presented at both sessions. A third-party facilitator was present to guide conversations, ensure voices were heard, and foster a respectful and inclusive environment.

Attendance at these sessions was by invitation only to the 28 residents/occupants and three (3) businesses along River Drive.

**Additional note:** An estimated 28 additional people arrived at the small-group information sessions wanting access. None were River Drive owners, occupants or businesses. As the sessions were at capacity, BC Housing staff engaged with these community members outside the meeting space and answered general questions about the project. These interested parties were also invited to register instead for the Community Open House on March 19.

### **Community Open House**

*Thursday, March 19, 2026, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. – Anvil Centre, New Westminster*

- **Purpose:** To provide an opportunity to share project details, answer questions and hear feedback about the project proposal from members of the wider New Westminster community.
- **Attendance:** **185** neighbours and community members

During this session, community members were invited to view information on poster boards and speak one-on-one with project representatives. Throughout, BC Housing representatives and City of New Westminster staff shared project details, answered questions and heard feedback about the project from attendees.

[The poster boards](#) from this event were also made available for download via the project webpage. Other materials provided at the event included information from BC Housing and the City of New Westminster:

- [Community Benefits of Supportive Housing](#)
- [Modular Supportive Housing Resident Outcomes - Interim Report](#)
- [The Crises Response Pilot Project](#)
- [Who To Call Cards](#)

**Additional note:** The event attracted an approximately 60-person protest on the sidewalk outside the Anvil Centre. Protestors came from New Westminster and neighbouring municipalities. The protestors were opposed to supportive housing in general, and/or are concerned about substance use and community safety around supportive housing projects. The call to protest at the event was posted on social media in a WhatsApp group. A petition was also circulated by this group.

## Community Relations Inbox

BC Housing's Community Relations inbox ([communityrelations@bchousing.org](mailto:communityrelations@bchousing.org)) received a total of **57** email inquiries between February 18 and March 31, 2026. BC Housing responded to 91% of inquiries within 5 business days, 96% within 10 business days, 100% within 20 business days.

BC Housing's community relations team continues to respond to all inquiries regarding this project. Common themes, questions and feedback received via this inbox have been documented and included in the What We Heard section of this report (below).

## What We Heard

The following provides a summary of the main topics and themes that arose during this communications and engagement period and our responses to them. These topics were gathered via email inquiries, at the small group information sessions and at the Community Open House.

### Lack of Community Consultation and Environmental Review

Community members expressed concern that:

- The project had progressed too quickly and without sufficient opportunity for public input or early engagement in selection of the location
- An environmental assessment should be conducted to determine if the site is suitable for residential use

**Response:** BC Housing's site selection process involves consulting with different levels of government and First Nations. Available land is in short supply in New Westminster. This site is privately owned and available for lease. Land availability, along with a site's physical characteristics, is a major factor in choosing a location.

In 2021, the City of New Westminster included “Crisis Response” land uses in all designations within the Official Community Plan and matching uses throughout its zoning bylaw. The intent of those amendments was to allow projects which respond to publicly declared emergencies to be implemented quickly and take advantage of funding opportunities. This transitional housing project qualified as a “crisis response” use. As such, the site does not require an Official Community Plan amendment, rezoning, a temporary use permit, or a public hearing. The project will comply with life safety, servicing, off-site upgrades commensurate to the project’s scale, and other similar municipal standards.

BC Housing completed an environmental assessment on the proposed site with no contamination found and no further investigation required.

We recognize that many neighbours would like to be informed in advance of BC Housing selecting a site. However, it is not possible to disclose or publicize real estate transactions until they are concluded. There are several reasons for this, but the most important is that it could potentially jeopardize the real estate transaction. This would inhibit BC Housing’s ability to do our work of providing safe, quality, accessible, and affordable housing options to British Columbians.

We also recognize that BC Housing projects tend to generate much interest and questions from neighbours. Because of this, we strive to meet with neighbours and engage with communities beyond municipal requirements. For this project, we published project information online and reached out to neighbours and other community members by letter and email as soon as we were able. On March 19, 2026, we hosted a Community Open House to share information and hear feedback. We will also publish this Engagement Summary Report on the project webpage and share it with the City of New Westminster, to be shared through its channels.

BC Housing will continue sharing project updates with neighbours and online and answering questions throughout the development process, which is anticipated to last until the end of the year 2026.

### **Safety and Potential for Crime**

Community members raised concerns about:

- The location of the housing and potential impacts on the safety of the community
- The site attracting drug traffickers to the neighbourhood jeopardizing resident safety
- Public drug consumption
- Potential safety impacts on nearby Grimston Park and 22nd Street Skytrain Station and bus hub
- Potential increases in crime and vandalism in the adjacent area, and impact on immediate neighbours

**Response:** Homelessness affects people, families, neighbourhoods and communities. Housing with supports is an important part of community safety. Having more housing in a community means there are fewer vulnerable people staying in temporary shelters or sheltering outdoors. This increases people’s personal safety and well-being and contributes to community safety overall.

BC Housing has developed various types of housing with supports across the province. A great majority operate successfully without safety and security issues affecting the community. The Rhoda Kaellis Residence in New Westminster’s downtown is a local example.

The Province is investing in projects like this because research shows that people who live in housing with supports:

- Have an **incarceration rate** that was over **six times less** than people identified as experiencing homelessness
- **Access the emergency department 46.9% less** than people identified as experiencing homelessness
- Have a **31.8% lower rate of hospital admission** than people identified as experiencing homelessness<sup>1</sup>

Additional safety-related research findings from BC Housing and third-party organizations:

- Research supports that residents of supportive housing usually do not perpetrate criminal activity, but public perceptions that are rooted in the stigma associated with homelessness often erroneously assign blame to residents due to negative perceptions of homelessness.<sup>2</sup>
- Research demonstrates that incidents involving first responders generally do not increase with the presence of supportive housing projects, and in fact, have a tendency to decrease over time.<sup>3</sup>
- Residents of supportive housing are more often the victim of crime due to the vulnerabilities associated with people who have experienced homelessness, and residents of supportive housing often appreciate and request robust security features to ensure their safety.<sup>4</sup>
- Studies have shown that residents of supportive housing often have long term goals of housing stability, employment and remaining healthy, and perceive their residency as part of the process of achieving these goals and express a desire to stay on track and not return to their "past lives" or to a state of homelessness.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> British Columbia, Ministry of Housing. 2025. [Differences in Hospital Admission Rates for Supportive Housing Residents and Individuals Experiencing Homelessness \(2019–2022\)](#). Preventing and Reducing Homelessness: Integrated Data Project.

<sup>2</sup> Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness. 2019. [Creating Homes: A Community Guide to Affordable and Supportive Housing Development](#).

<sup>3</sup> BC Housing. 2018. [Overview of Strategies from Case Studies of Supportive Housing Sites in BC](#); BC Housing 2022. [Community Benefits of Supportive Housing](#); Lens. 2013. [Subsidized Housing and Crime: Theory, Mechanisms, and Evidence](#). *Journal of Planning Literature*, 24(8), 352-363.

<sup>4</sup> Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness. 2019. *Creating Homes: A Community Guide to Affordable and Supportive Housing Development*; Miterko, Peter, and Sean Bruna. 2021. *Resident identified strengths and challenges of project-based permanent supportive housing program implementation in a small metropolitan county*. *Housing and Society*, 48(3), 239-260.

Curry, Susanna R., and Robin Petering. 2017. *Resident Perspectives on Life in a Transitional Living Program for Homeless Young Adults*. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*.

<sup>5</sup> Burgess, Heather, et al. 2021. *Supportive Housing Building Policies and Resident Psychological Needs*. *Housing Studies*.

Regarding site safety: BC Housing Design and Construction Standards apply Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) practices in all building projects. This includes security measures such as fenced grounds, controlled access, 24/7 staffed reception, security cameras and lighting.

We would share direct contact information for the housing with neighbours, once an experienced non-profit housing operator is selected and begins operating the housing units. Housing staff would be on site 24/7 to support residents and provide a point of contact for neighbours. BC Housing will ensure operational staff as well as BC Housing staff commit to working with residents and the surrounding community on an ongoing basis to address any concerns quickly and collaboratively.

Regarding resident behaviour: As at all BC Housing sites, residents will sign and be expected to abide by a program agreement. This agreement includes a crime-free addendum, and addresses expectations about appropriate and respectful behaviour, especially as it relates to the health and safety of residents and others in the surrounding community.

BC Housing and the future housing operator would work closely with neighbours and other interested parties to ensure the smooth integration of the housing into the neighborhood. Staff would be on site 24/7 to support residents and provide a point of contact for neighbours. Staff commit to working with residents and the surrounding community on an ongoing basis to address any concerns quickly and collaboratively.

Regarding safety in the wider neighbourhood: BC Housing and our operators are committed to being good neighbours. Neighbourhood safety must also be a collective effort. We are committed to working with partners who are best positioned to address safety issues beyond our housing sites. These include bylaw, law enforcement, or other emergency services for whom public safety is their mandate.

As in all neighbourhoods, in an emergency of if you see suspicious or illegal activity, neighbours should call 911 and wait for help to arrive.

***OUTCOME: Safety and Aesthetics***

*Following community feedback, BC Housing will explore the possibility with the City of New Westminster to add opaque slats to the chain-link fence surrounding the site. BC Housing will also add landscaping along the southern edge of the site to deter access to the train tracks as well as increase site aesthetics and neighbourhood privacy.*

**Infrastructure Upgrades**

Community members raised concerns about:

- Narrow street, lack of sidewalks and low levels of street lighting which is not conducive to increased traffic or pedestrian activity
- Using public money to provide infrastructure upgrades to a privately owned piece of property that would benefit the landowner at the time of sale in the future
- Overall accessibility of the site to commercial and service areas of the city, and the possibility of residents jaywalking across Stewardson Way (rather than using designated pedestrian overpasses to the east and west of the site)

***OUTCOME: Enhanced pedestrian safety and accessibility***

*Following community feedback, BC Housing will work with the City of New Westminster to*

*explore potential options to encourage safe and appealing resident access throughout the neighbourhood, which could include upgrades to such to sidewalks and lighting.*

**Additional note:** The proposed infrastructure upgrades on-site will be temporary and will be limited to the installation of landscaping and shallow utilities. Unlike on a permanent construction site where utilities (water, sewage, and drainage) are dug deeply into the ground, the installation of shallow utilities require a minimum of digging.

**OUTCOME: Site Access Review**

*Following community feedback, BC Housing will explore with the City of New Westminster the possibility of locating resident/staff site access in a way that balances a pedestrian-focused location while providing some distance from neighbouring residential properties. This will take into consideration safety of the intersection and rail crossing at River Drive and Twentieth Street.*

**OUTCOME: Building Location on the Site**

*Following community feedback, BC Housing will explore with the City of New Westminster the possibility of positioning the housing and service buildings toward the western end of the site. This will create distance between the new transitional housing units and existing housing on River Drive. Consideration will need to be given to adjacency with commercial operations and traffic in that area as well.*

**Housing Model, Residents & Operations**

Community members asked questions about:

- Resident selection for these sites and how resident mixes are determined
- Implementation of program model at the site
- The length of time a resident can stay in transitional housing and the transition from temporary to permanent housing
- If the Residential Tenancy Act will apply at the site
- Policies guiding such things as guests, loitering, pets and eviction/relocations from site for problem residents
- Consequences for tiny-home residents who are not abiding by expectations or program agreements

Community members raised concerns about:

- A lack of detail shared about the supportive housing programming, residents and policies

**Response:** BC Housing uses a community-based process to offer homes to people based on their individual needs and supports available, such as life skills training, employment assistance, and help with accessing a range of social and health care services This process helps ensure residents are set up for success and more likely to remain housed.

Regarding the housing program and supports: Support services are designed to meet residents' immediate and long-term needs. Supports include 24/7 onsite staffing, daily meals, life-skills training

and employment assistance, access to health care, connections to community and social supports, and pathways to permanent housing when available.

Regarding length of stay: Eligible residents can stay in this housing as long as they need, provided that they need the housing and services and adhere to their program agreement. Others may move on to other independent or market housing as they stabilize their living situation and continue along their housing journey.

Regarding the Residential Tenancy Act: This type of housing will not fall under the Residential Tenancy Act because it is crisis-based, government funded and transitional/short term in nature.

Regarding resident policies: All transitional housing residents pay rent and sign program agreements that outline behavioural expectations. These program agreements give residents clear expectations related to their roles and responsibilities as part the community. Housing staff monitor how residents are adapting to their new homes.

Policies regarding guests and pets would be developed by the operator with resident input. They typically follow best practices, such as visitors checking in at the front desk with staff.

This housing will have secure, monitored indoor and outdoor common areas for resident use. This typically prevents loitering in public areas and the need for loitering policies, which the operator could implement if needed. BC Housing and the operator will follow all New Westminister bylaws and work to ensure that staff, residents, and visitors do the same.

Regarding consequences and/or evictions: Ending a program agreement is a last resort. Our housing operators make every effort to work with residents to help them integrate successfully within the supportive housing and wider community. Eviction usually happens only in cases where there is a health or safety concern. If an operator ends a program agreement and evicts a resident, they will also work with the person to find more appropriate housing or shelter options, so they will not become homeless again.

The future housing operator's policies will outline program agreement requirements more specifically. We will be able to share more information on this topic after we select the non-profit housing operator and introduce them to the community.

Ending a program agreement is the last step in an unsuccessful tenancy. The housing operator would make every effort to work with the individual to help them integrate successfully within the supportive housing and wider community.

## **Railway Safety**

Community members raised concerns about:

- The site's closeness to the river, industrial businesses and train tracks, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive safety plan to protect tiny home residents

**Response:** Residents of transitional housing are adults who safely navigate sidewalks, streets and public spaces just like anyone else. Transitional housing increases peoples' safety and stability; it does not make risky behaviour more likely.

**OUTCOME: Railway safety planning**

*To open discussions about railway safety concerns, representatives from BC Housing and the City of New Westminster met with railway operators (Southern Railway/Canadian National/Canadian Pacific-Kansas City, and the Railway Association of Canada) on April 9 and May 1, 2026.*

*Following these initial discussions, BC Housing agreed to collaborate with the non-profit operator (when chosen) to draft a railway safety plan and follow up with the railway operators. This plan will be in addition to the Operations Management Plan.*

### **Substance Use and Overdose Prevention Space**

Community members asked questions about:

- The policy on drugs and alcohol at the transitional housing (“wet” vs “dry” housing)

Community members raised concerns about:

- The inclusion of overdose prevention space at the site
- Potential increases in open drug use in the area and neighbourhood safety

**Response:** BC Housing does not use terms like “wet” or “dry” as they contribute to stigma against people in need. It is important to note that not all transitional housing residents use substances. Housing is crucial in a person’s health journey. After a person can access a warm bed, washrooms and meals, they are in a much better position to improve their well-being, including accessing health care including substance use treatments.

It is important to note that not all transitional housing residents use substances. If a resident chooses to use substances onsite, the operator would provide harm-reduction services and linkages to stabilization and recovery services as is appropriate based on the person’s health and wellness goals.

The design of this site includes a space where staff can offer various health-related services to residents. These can include harm reduction and overdose prevention services. This space would be supervised and available to residents only. It would not be open to the public. Housing staff will not supply illicit or illegal substances to residents.

[Harm reduction](#) is an important life-saving health care practice, especially in the current toxic drug crisis. People using substances alone or outside does not benefit communities and often leads to tragic outcomes Harm reduction programs and services have also been proven to increase social and professional functioning and to reduce public disruption.

### **Non-Profit Housing Operator Selection**

Community members asked questions about:

Who the operator would be, and how they would be held accountable for issues arising on-site?

**Response:** BC Housing will select an experienced non-profit operator for this site through a fair, open and public Request for Proposals process. Once an operator has been selected, we will work closely with them to confirm the specifics of the project’s operations.

We will reach out to the community again when an operator is chosen to introduce them and share more details about the housing operations.

BC Housing conducts annual financial reviews and periodic operational reviews of all our non-profit housing operators. These reviews assess budget compliance as well as service delivery, property

management and community relations among other requirements. Any feedback from residents or neighbours about an active housing program can be sent to [feedback@bchousing.org](mailto:feedback@bchousing.org).

### **Transitional Housing/Tiny Homes Residents**

Community members raised concerns about:

- BC Housing potentially offering the transitional housing units to people from other communities in BC

**Response:** New Westminister urgently needs more supportive housing, for people who live in New Westminister. The last [Point-in-Time Homeless Count](#) in March 2025 identified 217 people experiencing homelessness in New Westminister.<sup>6</sup> BC Housing has committed the units in the village to people who already live or are sheltering in New Westminister. Some factors used to identify someone's connection to New Westminister, when they do not have a permanent address in the city, include:

- Regularly engaging with supports and services in New Westminister, including engagement with outreach
- Having resided in New Westminister for considerable length(s) of time in their lives
- The presence of informal supports (such as family) in the community

From surveys done in conjunction with previous Point-in-Time Homeless Counts, we know that many people who are experiencing homelessness in New Westminister (approx. 35%) have lived in the community for longer than five years. Many have called New Westminister “home” their entire lives. The residents who will be living in these tiny homes are already experiencing or at risk of homelessness in New Westminister.

### **Impact to Property Values**

Some community members voiced concerns about:

- The negative impact that the tiny homes village may have on property values reduced rents for rental properties

**Response:** Research completed by BC Housing in 2019 of 13 BC supportive housing sites showed that property values immediately surrounding 10 sites either kept pace or surpassed municipal trends.<sup>7</sup> Property values for the other three sites were not notably different compared to municipal trends. It is also important to note that communities are healthier, safer and more vibrant when all residents are housed and have their basic needs met.

Other independent research has shown that properly managed and funded supportive housing helps reduce crime rates and homeless encampments which also promotes safe communities and preserves property values.<sup>8</sup>

A 2021 study of five neighbourhood supportive housing projects in Alberta demonstrated that the introduction of supportive housing had no significant negative effects on local property values, and

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<sup>6</sup> Homelessness Services Association of BC. 2025. [Point-in-Time Homeless Count in Greater Vancouver: Final Report](#). Prepared for Lu'ma Native Housing Society.

<sup>7</sup> BC Housing. 2018. [Building Knowledge Case Study: Exploring the Impacts of Non-Market Housing on Surrounding Property Values – Overview Report](#).

<sup>8</sup> Nelson Committee on Homelessness. 2019. [Reaching Home: Long-Term Solutions for Homelessness – 11th Annual Report Card on Homelessness for Nelson](#).

the new builds improved the aesthetics of the neighbourhoods by reducing the rates of homelessness and rejuvenating aging and declining housing stock.<sup>9</sup>

### **Evidence and Success Stories**

Community members raised concerns about:

- Lack of data that shows project success and positive outcomes for residents who live in transitional housing and supportive housing sites
- The Caledonia project in Victoria and its impact on the surrounding neighbourhood

**Response:** We know that housing with supports works in stabilizing people's lives. A [2019 BC Housing study](#) on modular supportive housing outcomes showed that:

- 94% of survey respondents remained housed six months after moving in
- 84% of survey respondents reported improvements to their overall well-being
- 54% of survey respondents reported improved access to employment opportunities and employment support services
- While not everyone who moves into supportive housing has a substance use disorder, 39% of all survey respondents reported improvements in addiction issues six months after moving in

Regarding the Caledonia project in Victoria: This project closed due to permits expiring and permanent housing coming on-stream in the city. The project's Temporary Use Permit had been extended three times, the legislated time limit for this site. Residents were located in alternative housing. This is a similar timeline and exit strategy as proposed for the New Westminster transitional housing.

This transitional housing in New Westminster will differ from the Victoria Caledonia housing in various ways, including additional amenity buildings and spaces onsite, a different non-profit housing operator, and additional health, wellness and community-services resources than in Victoria.

### **Housing Integration Approach and Participation**

Community members requested:

- More information about BC Housing's new Neighbourhood Inclusion Planning approach including how Letters of Commitment and Operations Management Plans function, and an explanation of why BC Housing no longer engages in Good Neighbour Agreements (GNAs)
- Direct involvement on the Transitional Housing Inclusion Table from businesses and residents in the immediate neighbourhood to the project

**Response:** BC Housing is working to more effectively promote the inclusion of new supportive housing, Complex Care Housing, and shelters into communities. This new Housing Inclusion Planning approach recognizes that each community has unique needs, interests and challenges. This approach also aims to centre collaboration and relationships in working towards comfort and safety for housing residents, staff, and neighbours alike.

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<sup>9</sup> Civida. 2021. [Affordable Housing, Crime, and Social Disorder: Myth vs. Fact.](#)

Good Neighbour Agreements between municipalities and housing providers have historically been used as a tool to promote accountability and foster collaboration around housing with supports. BC Housing's new Housing Inclusion Planning approach has shifted to using Letters of Commitment to offer greater clarity and transparency and sustainability around this kind of collaboration. This approach:

- Ensures community inclusion commitments fall within a non-profit operator's contracted scope and funding
- Upholds privacy standards to protect client/resident information
- Respects channels of oversight and assessment between BC Housing and non-profit operator
- Ensures real estate transactions remain distinct from other community agreements

Housing Inclusion Planning is done in collaboration with the municipality and local partners. Letters of Commitment provide strong, detailed commitments from BC Housing and opportunities for collaboration. These letters can include commitments in areas such as building design (i.e. security features), operational matters (i.e. property maintenance, resident policies) and good neighbour expectations (i.e. complaint resolution, issues response).

BC Housing has provided a [Letter of Commitment](#) regarding the 24/7 shelter at 502 Columbia Street in New Westminster, and we have committed to collaborate with the City of New Westminster on a similar letter for the 502 Twentieth Street transitional housing.

Housing Inclusion Planning can also include customizable, collaborative initiatives to promote inclusion of a new housing or shelter project in the community. As part of this Housing Inclusion Planning process, the City of New Westminster has requested that BC Housing facilitate a Transitional Housing Inclusion Table.

- Participation in this Transitional Housing Inclusion Table would include representatives from BC Housing and the non-profit operator as well as other local organizations that are mandated and funded to respond to homelessness and/or promote safety in the community. While not open to general community members, table membership could include representatives of strata councils or business or neighbourhood associations as agreed upon with the municipality.
- A third-party facilitator would launch this table following the opening of the transitional housing (tiny homes village). BC Housing would fund the facilitation for this table for up to four online sessions (i.e. monthly for four months or quarterly for one year).

## Communications and Engagement Outcomes

The combination of direct communication to neighbours and the surrounding community, a publicly accessible webpage and email inbox, two small group sessions for immediate neighbours, and an open house-style information session gave New Westminster residents an opportunity to access accurate, up-to-date information about this transitional housing project, ask questions and provide feedback.

Overall, BC Housing produced communications and shared information about this project that was simplified in format and language. We also facilitated equitable, accessible and inclusive opportunities for community members to obtain accurate project information, ask questions and

share feedback. These communications and engagement efforts have allowed BC Housing to open the lines of communication about the project and its ongoing development to neighbours and the surrounding community.

### **In Total**

- We reached out to **31** immediate neighbours (residents/occupants/businesses) – either by email or hand-delivered letters – with project information and direct invitations to our small group information sessions and our open-house style information session. These invitations resulted in **32** people attending our two small group information sessions on March 5 to ask questions or voice concerns about the project.
- We reached out to **29** households who live within an additional 250 metres of the site by mail with project information and direct invitations to our March 19 open-house style information session.
- We reached out by email to the presidents of the West End and Connaught Heights Residents' Associations with project information and direct invitations to our March 19 open-house style information session with a request that the information be shared with membership.
- As of May 25, 2026, the Let's Talk Housing BC project webpage has logged approximately **3,800** visits.
- As of May 25, 2026, BC Housing's Community Relations inbox ([communityrelations@bchousing.org](mailto:communityrelations@bchousing.org)) has received emails relating to the project from **68** community members. Some of the emails are supportive of the project, some neutral and inquisitive, and others unsupportive or critical.

### **Engagement Outcomes**

Throughout this communications and engagement period, we committed to implement feedback where possible. The following project updates are outcomes of this community engagement:

#### **Outcome #1 – Safety and Aesthetics**

During engagement, BC Housing heard from neighbours that they didn't want to look into the site. To this end, BC Housing will explore the possibility with the City of New Westminster of adding opaque slats to the chain-link fence surrounding the site. This would increase privacy for both site residents and neighbours. BC Housing will also add landscaping along the southern edge of the site to deter access to the train tracks as well as increase site aesthetics and neighbourhood privacy.

#### **Outcome #2 – Enhanced Pedestrian Safety and Accessibility**

Following community feedback, BC Housing will work with the City of New Westminster to explore potential options to encourage safe and appealing resident access throughout the neighbourhood, which could include upgrades to such to sidewalks and lighting.

#### **Outcome #3 – Site Access Review**

Following community feedback, BC Housing will explore with the City of New Westminster the possibility of locating resident/staff site access in a way that balances a pedestrian-focused location with greatest distance from neighbouring residential properties. This will take into consideration safety of the intersection and rail crossing at River Drive and Twentieth Street. Access must also prioritize the need for safe access to existing transit connections.

#### **Outcome #4 – Building Location on the Site**

BC Housing will explore with the City of New Westminster the possibility of positioning the housing and service buildings toward the western end of the site. This will create distance between the new transitional housing units and existing housing on River Drive. Consideration will need to be given to adjacency with commercial operations and traffic in that area as well.

#### **Outcome #5 – Railway Safety**

Representatives from BC Housing and the City of New Westminster met with railway operators (Southern Railway/Canadian National/Canadian Pacific-Kansas City, and the Railway Association of Canada) on April 9 and May 1, 2026.

During community engagement, we heard concerns about resident and railway employee safety expressed by the Railway Association of Canada, Southern Railway of BC, Canadian National and Canadian Pacific-Kansas City. In response, BC Housing and the City of New Westminster have met directly with these parties. Following this initial discussion, BC Housing agreed to collaborate with the housing operator (when chosen) to create a railway safety plan (in addition to their Operations Management Plan) and follow up with the railway operators.

### **Next Steps**

BC Housing community relations will continue to respond to inquiries by email throughout the development of this project, until approximately end of year 2026

We plan to reach out to the community again in fall 2026, after selecting a non-profit operator for this transitional housing/tiny homes village. When an operator is chosen, we will introduce them to the immediate neighbours.

We will share updates with neighbours at project milestones, such as construction start and when the housing opens. We also look forward to sharing an opportunity to celebrate the completion of this housing together.