



# Early Engagement Summary Report

## **Supportive Housing in Vancouver East King Edward Avenue**

July 2021





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## Purpose

The purpose of this Early Engagement Summary Report is to provide an overview of community and stakeholder engagement activities that took place during the early planning stages for the proposed supportive housing at 1406 and 1410 E King Edward Avenue in Vancouver.

BC Housing and the City of Vancouver, the project partners, conducted this early engagement between February 11 and April 30, 2021, before the proposed project is submitted to the City of Vancouver for review through the City’s rezoning application process.

This level of early engagement is aligned with BC Housing’s best practices for community engagement and exceeds the public consultation requirements of the City of Vancouver’s rezoning process.

This report includes a summary of key themes that emerged from the early community engagement process which included three 90-minute Neighbourhood Dialogues, a four-week Public Comment Period, an ongoing online question and comment forum on the BC Housing Let’s Talk webpage, and a Community Liaison available to receive feedback and answer questions by phone or email.

Frequently asked questions and corresponding responses provided by BC Housing during the engagement period have been included as an Appendix to this report.

## Background

BC Housing is working with the City of Vancouver on a proposal to build new supportive housing at 1406 and 1410 E King Edward Avenue. Prior to submitting a rezoning application to the City of Vancouver, BC Housing engaged with neighbours, local groups and the community to introduce the proposed project and listen to feedback.

BC Housing is proposing a building that will offer up to 90 studio homes with supports for adults, seniors and people with disabilities who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness in the local community. Supports may include mental health care, medical care, education and training, reconnecting to culture, life skills training, substance use services, and help accessing income assistance, disability benefits, pensions, identification or setting up a bank account.

BC Housing is committed to bringing people inside and reduce the number of people outside struggling to survive. When a person chooses to live in supportive housing, they have a warm, safe place to call home, can access the necessities of life such as food, washrooms and laundry, can begin to heal from the damage caused by living outside and can strengthen community connections.

If approved by the City of Vancouver Mayor and Council, construction is expected to begin mid-2022.





# Engagement Program

## Goal and Objectives

The goals of the early engagement program for East King Edward Avenue were to:

1. **Provide a variety of opportunities for neighbours, local groups and the community to learn** about the proposed housing, participate in dialogue and provide feedback



2. **Build awareness** of the need for housing with supports for people experiencing homelessness in Vancouver.



3. **Explore ways to build an inclusive community** where everyone has an opportunity for a safe and healthy place to live.



4. **Collect feedback** on the proposed design of the site to inform the rezoning application.





## Opportunities for Community Feedback

BC Housing reached out to engage residents early in the planning process using a variety of channels to ensure the community had the opportunity to learn about the project and provide comments.

Community members were invited to ask questions and provide input to the project through:

### Virtual Neighbourhood Dialogue Sessions



32 community members attended three 90-minute sessions where they viewed short presentations on the topics of homelessness, learned about supportive housing and the project details, and engaged in roundtable discussions with project staff.

### Small-group Meetings with Local Organizations



BC Housing and City of Vancouver staff met with members of local organizations to discuss the proposed supportive housing project and listen to questions and feedback.

### Public Comment Period



BC Housing provided a Public Comment Period that was hosted on its webpage from March 1 until the end of the day on March 31, 2021. Community members submitted questions about the proposed supportive housing and received responses from the project team. As part of the Public Comment Period, a self-guided presentation with information about the development proposal was available to review.

### Let's Talk Housing Webpage



BC Housing invited public feedback through Let's Talk Housing, an online question and comment forum on the project webpage. The BC Housing staff continue to receive input through this question and comment forum.

### BC Housing Community Liaison Email and Phone



A Community Liaison was available Monday to Friday from 9:00am to 4:00pm, for community members to contact via phone or email. The Community Liaison's contact information was included on all notification and presentation materials so that community members could send comments and questions on the project and receive responses from BC Housing. BC Housing continues to receive calls and emails through the Community Liaison.



## Engagement Activities and Timeline

The table below describes engagement activities related to the project.

Date	Activity	Description
<b>February 10, 2021</b>	BC Housing and the City of Vancouver delivered Postcards to site neighbours	BC Housing sent notification postcards to residential and business neighbours within a 2-block radius of the proposed site to introduce the project. The postcards included a link to the Let's Talk Housing webpage, the Community Liaison contact information and an invitation to the Neighbourhood Dialogues hosted in March.
<b>February 10, 2021</b>	BC Housing and the City of Vancouver reached out to local organizations	BC Housing and the City of Vancouver reached out directly to community organizations and other stakeholders to provide information about the projects and offer virtual meetings with BC Housing and the City of Vancouver staff.
<b>February 10, 2021</b>	Let's Talk Housing East King Edward webpage launch	BC Housing launched an online Question and Comment Forum to receive input from community members, to share project information and invite public feedback <a href="https://letstalkhousingbc.ca/vancouver-king-edward">https://letstalkhousingbc.ca/vancouver-king-edward</a>
<b>February 11, 2021</b>	Joint site announcement by BC Housing and the City of Vancouver	A news release was issued to inform the public about the plan for the new permanent purpose-built supportive housing site.
<b>February/March, 2021</b>	Stakeholder Meetings	BC Housing and project partners met with representatives from key stakeholder groups to discuss the supportive housing project and hear questions, concerns and feedback.
<b>March 1 to March 31, 2021</b>	Public Comment Period	A four-week Public Comment Period was hosted on the BC Housing Let's Talk webpage where community members could submit comments and questions about the proposed supportive housing and receive a response from the Project Team.
<b>March 16, 17 and 18, 2021</b>	Neighbourhood Dialogue Sessions	A total of three virtual Neighbourhood Dialogues were held with project neighbours. BC Housing and the City of Vancouver staff provided information about supportive housing and pathways to homelessness. Community members had the opportunity to ask questions about the projects and provide input.

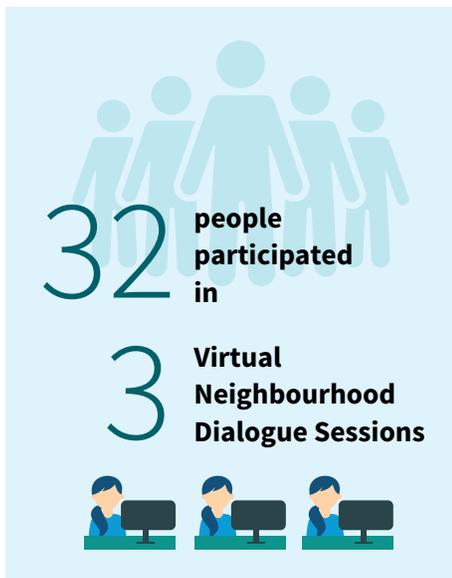


## What We Heard

### Participant Snapshot

BC Housing and the City of Vancouver worked together, to ensure meaningful early engagement with neighbourhood residents, to develop a process that is robust, fair and equitable, aligned with BC Housing’s best practices for community engagement and exceeds the public consultation requirements of the City of Vancouver’s rezoning process.

Community members and key stakeholders participated in the engagement program in a variety of ways:





## Summary of Feedback

The following themes have emerged from community feedback on the project to date:

**Many community members expressed a desire to maintain the character of the neighbourhood.**

Comments included:

- The area is becoming too dense
- The community will begin to feel like downtown
- This development is too much too quickly for our neighbourhood
- How can you ensure this development won't cause the neighbourhood to become unsafe?
- This site will be in close proximity to daycares and schools

**Many community members expressed general support for the project.** Comments included:

- This is a great opportunity to provide support to our community
- Other housing sites that do not offer supports are not as effective. All housing should be supportive housing
- There is a need for more of this type of housing
- Could we create a community garden to connect the residents with the community?

**A few community members expressed an interest in learning more about who the residents would be.**

Comments included:

- How many of the residents will have addiction issues?
- What is the ratio of drug-users to other tenants?
- Will this site include people who are currently homeless in our community?

**A few community members expressed an interest in receiving more information about the supports provided to residents.** Comments included:

- Do you have metrics on how many people use the available supports?
- Are managed alcohol programs included in the supports?
- Will there be a safe injection site in this building?

**A few community members provided suggestions and comments related to the design of the building and the outdoor space.** Comments included:

- There should be a trail or set back on the south side of the site as it backs onto the park
- The design of the building should be softened so it can fit in with the neighbourhood
- There needs to be more space between the building and the bus stop as it is already quite narrow
- Will you ensure that the trees around the site are protected?

**Some community members expressed a desire to be more fully consulted and engaged in project planning prior to the rezoning application process.** Comments included:

- There needs to be further community engagement opportunities before this site is approved
- Many people in the community are not aware of this proposal

**A few community members expressed an interest in how the project will be operated.** Comments included:

- What is the difference between supportive housing and an SRO?
- What support services will be going into the proposed site?
- Do you survey how many people actually use the supports?
- How do you identify the not-for-profit society that would operate this site?



## Considerations

**A few people asked for steps to be taken that would violate human rights and/or federal and provincial laws including the BC Residential Tenancy Act.** These included requests that BC Housing screen potential residents for drug and/or mental health issues and conduct criminal record checks. Responses to these comments included:

- It is important to be aware that residents of supportive housing have the same housing rights as all citizens.

**A few people made comments and asked questions that confused supportive housing with SROs and/or shelters.**

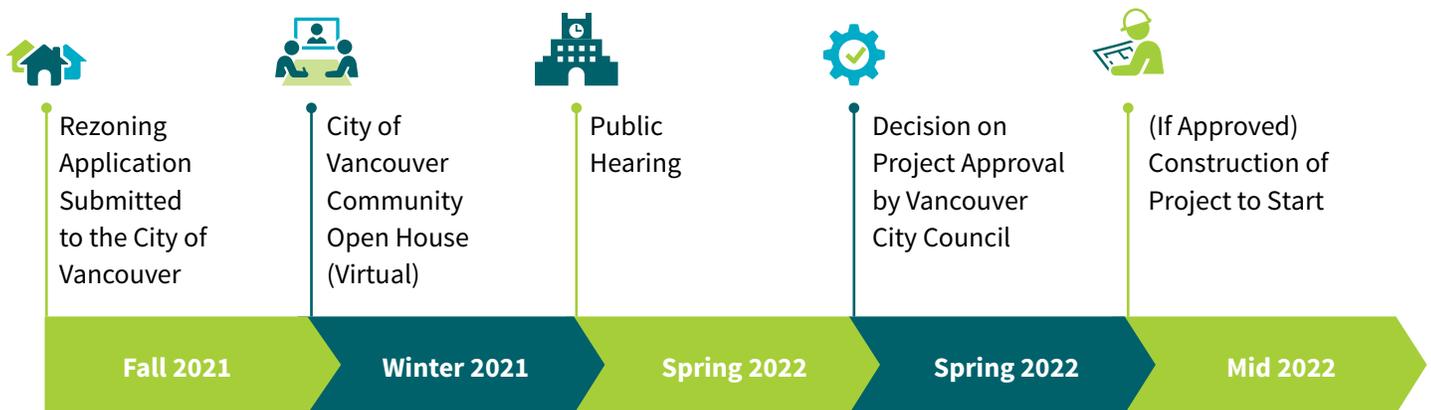
Responses to these comments include:

- Supportive housing is housing with supports. It is distinct from other forms of housing offered in British Columbia. Depending on the needs of the resident, this may include mental health care, substance use services, education, life-skills training, help assessing income assistance, disability benefits, pensions or any other service that support a safe, secure and positive future.
- Each resident at East King Edward would receive a customized combination of services and programs to support their health and wellbeing.

**A few comments were built on stigma, misinformation and misunderstanding.** These comments were discriminatory, disrespectful and reinforce the false notion that people experiencing or at risk of homelessness pose a risk to neighbourhood safety. Those comments have not been repeated here.

## Next Steps

Upcoming phases of the community engagement process include:





## Appendix: Key Themes and Responses

The following questions emerged throughout the early engagement period. The responses from BC Housing are provided below.

### Questions about **supervised consumption services on site**



A

BC Housing takes a harm reduction approach, which means staff are available to support any residents who are in various phases of substance use. When tenants are ready to make a change, staff on-site will connect them with the appropriate support services.

### Questions about **proposed building height**



A

The proposal includes a 12-storey building because there is an immediate and urgent need to create warm, safe homes with supports for people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. These new homes could provide a vital connection to programs and services for 90 people in need.

The project is in early stages and BC Housing has not yet submitted a rezoning application to the City of Vancouver. Once BC housing submits a rezoning application to the City, there will be a City-led consultation that will include an online Open House and Public Hearing, where building design elements such as height, will be considered.

### Questions about **examples of other supportive housing sites**



A

There are supportive housing projects in communities across British Columbia. For some examples, please visit: <https://www.bchousing.org/news/community-stories>

BC Housing also has a research centre that can be publicly accessed here: <https://www.bchousing.org/research-centre>



### Questions about **why supportive housing was chosen at this location**



A

BC Housing works in partnership with the private and non-profit sectors and community groups to develop a range of housing options.

We work to address critical gaps across the housing continuum, which range from emergency shelter and rent assistance in the private market to affordable home ownership. The homes at East King Edward are proposed to be supportive housing which is designed for adults who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. BC Housing is also creating thousands of new homes across the province for families, women fleeing violence, seniors and people with disabilities.

For more information on the range of housing BC Housing builds, please see the summary of homes created here: <https://www.bchousing.org/about/our-organization>

### Questions about the **number of accessible units in the building**



A

Having 5% of all units being accessible is BC Housing's minimum standard for all projects. Any additional accessible units will be determined through the design process and through consultation with the building operator. However, all units will be designed to meet Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) universal design guidelines, making all units adaptable for people with disabilities.

### Questions about the **supports in supportive housing**



A

This proposed housing is a commitment by BC Housing and the City of Vancouver to take collective action to address the critical needs of people experiencing homelessness in Vancouver. The building's supportive housing program for residents would be managed by a non-profit housing operator that brings professional building management experience and expertise providing customized supports tailored to meet the unique needs of each resident.

Depending on the needs of the resident, this may include mental health care, substance use services, education, life-skills training, help assessing income assistance, disability benefits, pensions or any other service that support a safe, secure and positive future.



### Questions about the **rezoning application**



A

The project is in early stages and BC Housing has not yet submitted a rezoning application to the City of Vancouver. Once BC housing submits a rezoning application to the City, there will be a City-led consultation that will include an online Open House and Public Hearing, where building design elements such as height, will be considered.

### Questions about the **Community Advisory Committee (CAC)**



A

The purpose of the CAC is to:

- facilitate information sharing and dialogue
- build and maintain positive relationships amongst neighbours, the building operator and program partners
- identify and resolve any issues, opportunities and concerns related to the housing site
- explore ways to build and strengthen community connections

If the new homes are approved, a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) would be established in the months leading up to the building opening and the first meeting is typically held approximately one month before the building opens.

Community member representation (5 seats) is filled through an application process with preference given to a person who:

- is willing to abide by the Committee Terms of Reference and required time commitment
- is currently affiliated with multiple community organizations
- has experience representing their community on other committees/boards, etc.
- lives and/or works within a five-block radius of the housing site

Invitations to apply will be sent out to the neighbourhood before the building opens.

### Questions about **tenant background**



A

It is important to know that people who live in supportive housing are not all the same. They can be young people, seniors, people with disabilities, people who have experienced trauma or poverty, and people who have struggled with the high cost of housing.

The non-profit housing operator and its partners will work together to create a healthy and inclusive community inside the building and ensure future tenants are connected with supports that best meet their needs.