



BC HOUSING

Early Engagement Summary Report

Supportive Housing in Vancouver Renfrew Street at East 14th Avenue

February 2022





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Purpose

This Early Engagement Summary Report provides an overview of community and stakeholder engagement activities completed to date. It includes a summary of feedback that was received during the early planning stages for the proposed supportive housing at Renfrew Street at East 14th Avenue in Vancouver.

BC Housing, the City of Vancouver and project partners, began early engagement in June 2021. This early engagement will inform the development of the rezoning application, which is expected to be submitted to the City of Vancouver in early 2023.

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. When a rezoning application is submitted to the City of Vancouver, a further City-led public consultation process will take place.

This report includes a summary of key themes that have emerged from the early community engagement process which included two 90-minute Neighbourhood Dialogues, a four-week Public Comment Period, an ongoing comment form 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 2930 Renfrew Street. 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 would offer approximately 50 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 reducing 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 Mayor and Council, construction is expected to begin in early 2023.





Early Engagement Program Goals

The goals of the early engagement program for Renfrew Street at East 14th Avenue were to:

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



8 community members attended two 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 July 1 until the end of the day on July 31, 2021. Community members had an opportunity to submit feedback about the proposed supportive housing directly to 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 comment form on the project webpage. BC Housing staff continue to receive input through this comment form.

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 submit comments and questions on the project and receive responses from BC Housing. BC Housing continues to accept calls and emails through the Community Liaison.



Engagement Activities and Timeline

The table below describes engagement activities related to the project.

Date	Activity	Description
June 23, 2021	BC Housing and the City of Vancouver delivered postcards to site neighbours	BC Housing and the City of Vancouver hand-delivered 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 Dialogue meetings hosted in July.
June 23, 2021	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. Community organizations and stakeholders included local schools, faith groups, community centres, and non-profit housing associations.
June 23, 2021	Let's Talk Housing Renfrew Street webpage launch	BC Housing launched a webpage to receive input from community members and to share project information https://letstalkhousingbc.ca/vancouver-renfrew
June 28, 2021	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.
June 28, 2021	Fact Sheets delivered to businesses neighbouring the project	BC Housing sent Fact Sheets about the housing proposal to residents and businesses neighbouring the project to ensure the community had accurate information.
June/July, 2021	Meetings with local organizations	BC Housing and the City of Vancouver met with representatives from key stakeholder groups to discuss the supportive housing project and hear questions, concerns and feedback.
July 1 to July 31, 2021	Public Comment Period	A four-week Public Comment Period was hosted on the BC Housing Let's Talk webpage where community members could submit feedback about the proposed supportive housing. As part of the Public Comment Period, a self-guided presentation with information about the development proposal was available for review.
July 20 and 21, 2021	Neighbourhood Dialogue Sessions	Two virtual Neighbourhood Dialogues were held with neighbours. BC Housing and City of Vancouver staff provided information about supportive housing and pathways to homelessness. Community members had the opportunity to ask questions about the proposed project 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 through a process that is robust, fair and equitable, aligned with BC Housing's best practices for community engagement and precedes the public consultation requirements of the City of Vancouver's rezoning process.

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

8

people
participated
in

2

Virtual
Neighbourhood
Dialogue Sessions



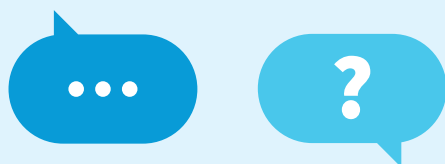
7

people shared
their comments as
part of the Public
Comment Period



9

comments and questions were
submitted through through the
BC Housing Community Liaison
phone and email and the Let's Talk
Housing website



Local
representatives
and organizations
shared input
at small-group
stakeholder
meetings



Guidelines for Respectful Dialogue

BC Housing wants to hear from everyone who wants to share their perspective in a safe and respectful way.

All conversations — in person, over the phone, and/or online — are meant to be a place where people can share and listen.

We expect everyone will refrain from using language or acting in a way that is discriminating, threatening, abusive, racist or otherwise disrespectful. Discrimination or abusive language of any kind is not tolerated.



Summary of Feedback

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

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

- This housing would be a wonderful addition to the neighbourhood, and one that is very much needed
- This is a decent location for supportive housing given it is close to transit and not too far from a library and community centre
- The proposed development is well-suited and appropriate for the neighbourhood

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

- Consideration for how the programming at Renfrew community centre might be added to or changed to help serve the people in this building better
- Suggestion to provide meals to residents in the building
- Concern that there are not enough community events in the neighbourhood to help residents connect to their community
- Concern over lack of amenities and services for new residents

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

- Suggestion to include a green roof
- Consider Passive House certification and other energy saving standards
- Include outdoor furniture and high-quality landscaping to make outdoor space functional and enjoyable for residents
- Suggestion to increase density as the proposed building would be located on a prime transit-oriented route



Next Steps

Upcoming phases of the community engagement process include:





Appendix: Frequently Asked Questions and Responses

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

Questions about **who would live in the building**



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The homes are proposed to be permanent supportive housing which is designed for adults who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. They can be young people, seniors, people with disabilities and anyone who has experienced trauma, poverty or struggled with the high cost of housing.

The non-profit housing operator, Lu'ma Native Housing Society, 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.

All residents in supportive housing have made a choice to live there, pay rent, and are able to access the supports provided by non-profit housing operators, health care professionals and other community-based programs.

Questions about **support services**



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The building's supportive housing program for residents would be managed by Lu'ma Native Housing Society. Lu'ma brings professional building management experience and expertise providing customized supports tailored to meet the unique needs of each resident. The 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.

Supportive housing offers residents a vital connection to programs and services to support their health and wellbeing. Supportive housing is for young people, seniors, people with disabilities, and anyone who has experienced trauma, poverty, or struggled with the high cost of housing.

Some supports may be offered in the building, while others are offered in the local community.



Questions about **building height**



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BC Housing and partners aim to make the most efficient use of space at any given site and provide housing to as many people as possible when building supportive housing. Six storeys was determined to be the best use at this site. This site requires a rezoning through the City of Vancouver. Once a rezoning application is submitted to the City of Vancouver, there will be a further City-led public consultation process.

Questions about **location of the proposed building**



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There are more than 2,000 people experiencing homelessness in Vancouver. When funding is available, BC Housing and partners look for locations to build supportive housing in neighbourhoods all across the city. This location is a good option for supportive housing as it is close to transit, services and amenities – all of which promote community and connection that supportive housing residents need in order to lead healthier lives.