



Early Engagement Phase Summary Report

Supportive Housing in Vancouver Renfrew Street at East 14th Avenue

May 2023





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Background

BC Housing, Lu'ma Native Housing Society and the City of Vancouver are proposing to build a new 12-storey building with 76 supportive homes at 2930 Renfrew Street. This proposal replaces an earlier version to build a six-storey building with 50 supportive homes that was shared with the community in June 2021.

Prior to submitting a rezoning application to the City of Vancouver, BC Housing, Lu'ma Native Housing Society and the City of Vancouver engaged with the local community to introduce the proposed project and listen to feedback.



Purpose

The following Early Engagement Phase Summary Report shares the engagement activities and community feedback received as part of the early engagement about the 12-storey proposal for supportive housing at 2930 Renfrew Street.

BC Housing, Lu'ma Native Housing Society and the City of Vancouver began early engagement in April 2023. The feedback in this report will inform the development of a rezoning application, which BC Housing expects to submit to the City of Vancouver in late May 2023.

This report includes a summary of key themes that emerged from the early community engagement process. Activities included two virtual Community Conversations, an online Public Comment Period, emails to local organizations to meet with the project team, a business walkabout, a comment form on the BC Housing Let's Talk webpage and a Community Liaison available to receive feedback and answer questions by phone and email.

This type of early engagement is aligned with BC Housing's best practices and exceeds the public engagement requirements of the City of Vancouver's rezoning process. When BC Housing submits a rezoning application to the City of Vancouver, a further City-led public engagement process will take place.

Frequently asked questions and corresponding responses provided by BC Housing during the engagement period have been included as an Appendix to this report (page 10).



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.



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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, ask questions and share comments.

Community Conversations



23 community members attended two one-hour Community Conversations where the project team shared information on the housing proposal and answered questions.

Small-group Meetings with Local Organizations



BC Housing and City of Vancouver staff emailed local organizations with an offer to meet with the project team to discuss the proposed supportive housing, respond to questions and listen to feedback.

Let's Talk Housing Webpage



BC Housing created a project webpage on its Let's Talk Housing platform. The webpage included an online comment form where community members could submit feedback. BC Housing staff continue to receive input through this comment form.

Public Comment Period



A Public Comment Period was hosted on the project webpage from April 4 to April 28, 2023. Community members could review the housing proposal and submit their feedback through an online comment form.

BC Housing Community Liaison Email and Phone



A Community Liaison was available Monday to Friday from 9 am to 4 pm for community members to submit feedback or ask questions by phone or email. BC Housing continues to accept calls and emails through the Community Liaison.

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Engagement Activities and Timeline

The table below describes engagement activities related to the project.

Date	Activity	Description
April 4, 2023	BC Housing and the City of Vancouver reached out to local organizations	BC Housing and the City of Vancouver emailed community organizations and other stakeholders to provide information about the project and offer virtual meetings with the project team. Community organizations and stakeholders included local schools, faith groups, community centres and non-profit housing associations.
April 4, 2023	BC Housing launched the Let's Talk Housing project webpage	BC Housing launched a webpage at letstalkhousingbc.ca/vancouver-renfrew to receive input from community members and to share project information.
April 4 to April 28, 2023	The Public Comment Period was open to community members	A Public Comment Period was hosted on the BC Housing Let's Talk webpage where neighbours could review the housing proposal and submit their feedback through an online comment form.
April 5, 2023	BC Housing, City of Vancouver and Lu'ma Native Housing Society visited local businesses	BC Housing, City of Vancouver and Lu'ma Native Housing Society did a walkabout to neighbouring businesses to drop off a project fact sheet and answer any questions about the housing proposal.
April 18 and April 20, 2023	BC Housing hosted Community Conversations	BC Housing hosted two virtual Community Conversations with Lu'ma Native Housing Society and the City of Vancouver. The project team shared a presentation and answered questions from community members in attendance.

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What We Heard

Participant Snapshot

BC Housing, Lu'ma Native Housing Society and the City of Vancouver worked together to ensure meaningful early engagement with neighbours.

Community members and stakeholders participated in a variety of ways:

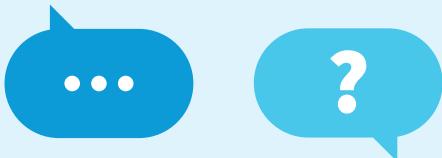
23 people participated in
2 Community Conversations



13 people shared their comments as part of the Public Comment Period



6 comments and questions were submitted through the BC Housing Community Liaison phone and email



Emails were sent to community organizations with an offer to meet with the project team to learn more about the proposed supportive housing



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Summary of Feedback

The following themes emerged from early engagement on the housing proposal to date:

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

- Support for housing developments that prioritize Indigenous Peoples.
- Support for supportive housing located near transit and services.
- Suggestion to build this housing as quickly as possible to address the urgent need.

Some community members expressed general opposition for the project. Feedback included:

- Concerns that there are too many supportive housing buildings on the east side of the city.
- Concerns about crime and community safety.

A few community members shared feedback on the building design. Feedback included:

- Concern that a 12-storey building is too tall for the neighbourhood and out of context.
- Suggestion that the building should be taller as it's located near a transit station.
- Suggestion to reflect the neighbourhood in the building design, possibly through public art.

A few community members shared comments on building management and support for residents.

Feedback included:

- Wanting to ensure the operator could successfully manage a building of this size.
- Wanting to ensure the building would be staffed 24/7 by Lu'ma Native Housing Society.
- Wanting to ensure that appropriate supports are available to residents and that feedback from the building's residents is taken into consideration.

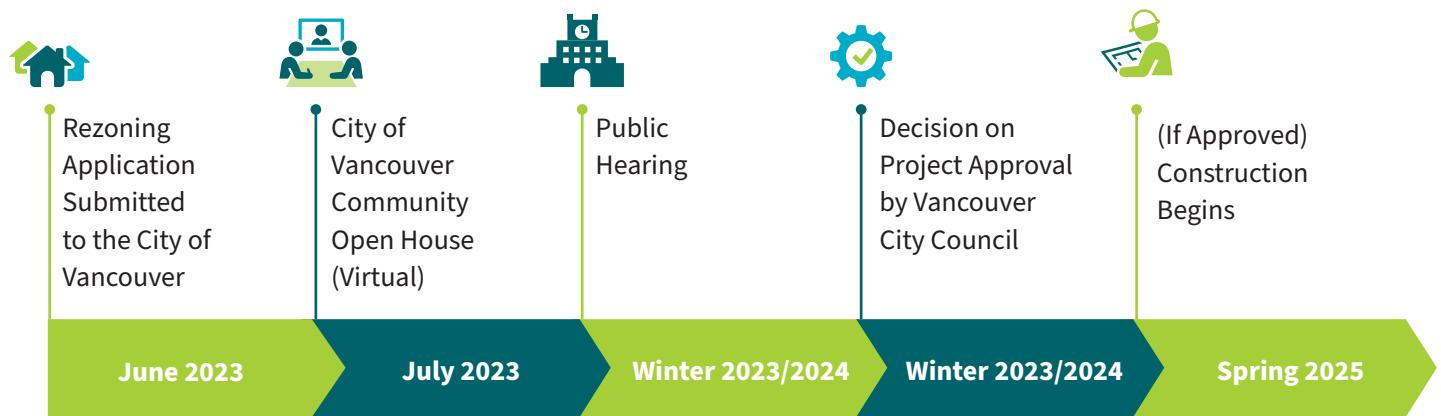
A few community members shared comments on the development process. Feedback included:

- Desire for future engagement to have in-person participation options.
- Suggestion that the City expedite the review and approval for this housing as much as possible.

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Next Steps





Appendix: Frequently Asked Questions and Responses

Questions related to the topics below emerged throughout the early engagement period. The responses from BC Housing are provided below.

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

A

This building would contain 76 permanent studio homes with services to help prevent people from experiencing homelessness and support their well-being. BC Housing, Lu'ma Native Housing Society, and other service providers would 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 **how the building will be managed**

A

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 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.

Lu'ma Native Housing Society would maintain the property and have staff at the building 24/7.

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Questions about **building height**

A

When developing supportive housing on City-owned land, BC Housing and the City of Vancouver seek to maximize opportunities to build supportive housing to address the critical need for housing in Vancouver.

For this reason, the original proposal for 2930 Renfrew Street has been updated from a six-storey building with 50 homes to a 12-storey building with 76 homes. The change aligns with the direction in the Vancouver Plan to consider mid-rise buildings, especially for social and supportive housing, close to rapid transit stations.



Questions about the **proposed location of the building**

A

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 City-owned, close to transit, services and amenities – all of which promote community and connection for residents in the building and the greater community.



Questions about **crime and neighbourhood safety**

A

Community safety is a priority we all share. When people live in supportive housing, they benefit from having a stable and reliable place to call home and can access health supports and services.

We recognize that the Renfrew neighbourhood is changing rapidly. We also understand that building homes for people experiencing homelessness may be a new and uncomfortable idea for some. In this case, we encourage neighbours to learn more about the causes of homelessness and the important role supportive housing plays in helping to create safe, inclusive communities for everyone.

Based on experience in Vancouver and in other communities, there is no reason to expect an increase in neighbourhood safety issues when supportive housing is built.

