

This guide supports local governments across British Columbia as they create healthy and thriving places for all people.

What you'll find in this Action Guide:

- Information about healthy housing and its co-benefits
- Actions and examples from B.C. communities
- Funding opportunities and strategies
- A checklist of healthy housing actions
- Further reading and resources
- Local and provincial housing legislation
- A glossary of terms

Village of Warfield
Source: Province of BC



Healthy People



Healthy Society



Healthy Environments

Healthy Housing in B.C.

What is healthy housing and why is it important?

More than just a basic need

Housing is both a basic need and a human right.¹ Housing that is good quality, accessible, appropriate and affordable can support the health and well-being of individuals and communities, contributing to an increased sense of safety, decreased crime, greater social well-being and improved quality of life.²

What is an equity lens?

Equity is the fair distribution of opportunities, power, and resources to meet the needs of all people, regardless of age, ability, gender, culture or background.

Applying an equity lens means asking who will benefit from a policy, program, initiative or service, but also who may be excluded from the benefits and why. How might some population groups be unfairly burdened today or in the future?

An equitable planning and development process reaches community members who may not contribute regularly to local planning and decision-making, and will therefore result in strategies that are more responsive to local needs.

There are several tools and resources available to help apply an equity lens to planning work. Here are a few to consider:

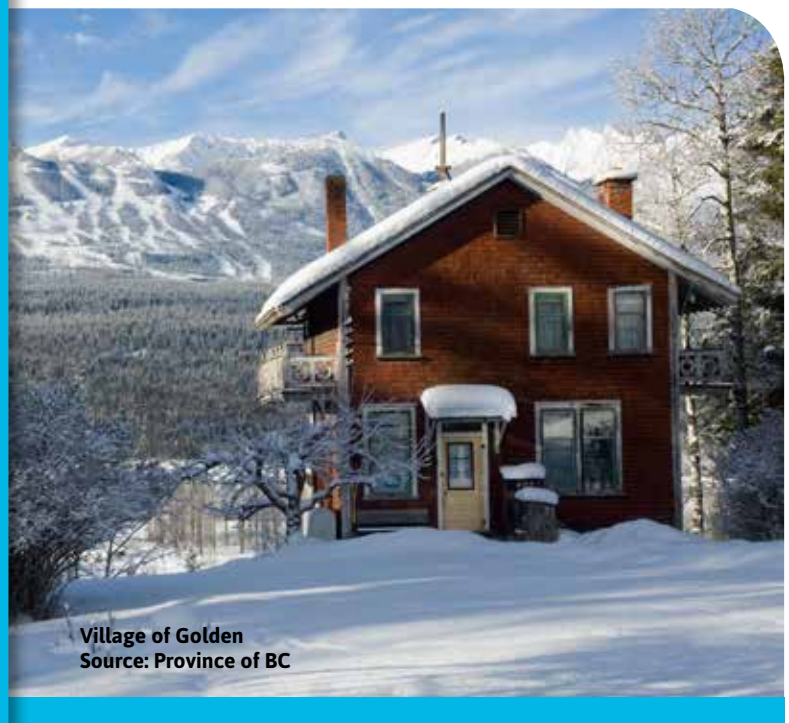
- [Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities](#)¹¹
- [Health Equity and Community Design: What is the Canadian Evidence Saying?](#)¹²
- [Health Equity Guide: A Human Impact Partners Project](#)¹³
- [Supporting Health Equity Through the Built Environment](#)¹⁴

Healthy housing strategies can also support climate action objectives. They can do this by encouraging climate-friendly design and energy-efficient buildings, as well as by linking land use and zoning policies to transportation planning in order to support active transportation.³ A diverse supply of healthy housing options can even maximize labour force productivity and flexibility, contributing to a community's economic vitality.⁴

Impacting communities of all sizes

Across communities of all sizes in B.C., there is a growing need for housing that is affordable, appropriate, accessible and of good quality. Affordable housing refers to housing that costs less than 30 percent of a household's gross income, inclusive of taxes, utilities and other fees.⁵ A household's ability to attain basic needs—such as food and clothing—may be compromised when housing is unaffordable.⁶

Approximately 45 percent of renter households⁷ and 20 percent of owner households⁸ across B.C. are living in unaffordable housing. Close to one-quarter (23 percent) of renter households are spending more than 50 percent of their gross income on housing costs, classifying them as unstably housed.⁹





Victoria Towers in Prince George is the largest affordable housing development in the city, providing 91 new affordable apartments for low- to moderate-income individuals, seniors, families and persons with disabilities. It was substantially renovated in 2014 through a partnership between provincial and federal levels of government.

Source: Province of BC

Affordability is just one piece of the puzzle

Healthy housing goes far beyond the affordability of a home; the ability to navigate the housing system in order to access quality and appropriate housing is equally important. Systemic racism makes it difficult for some population groups, particularly Indigenous peoples, to gain access to healthy housing options. To ensure culturally safe housing is available to all, everyone involved in the housing process must acknowledge and seek to understand the ongoing impacts of colonization and racism.

Healthy housing:

- Is made up of diverse forms and tenure types (rent, freehold, strata, co-op sharehold)
- Is suitable and appropriate for all family sizes and for all ages and abilities
- Offers specialized supports for those who need such services
- Is located in areas that are safe and free of environmental hazards
- Is located near transportation networks, green space, education and employment opportunities, and essential community services and amenities¹⁰

Indigenous peoples and housing

In the Canadian context, the term Indigenous peoples includes First Nations, Métis and Inuit.¹⁵ While some First Nations people live on-reserve, more than 70 percent of the Indigenous population in B.C. lives off-reserve in urban and rural communities.

Recognizing that Indigenous peoples should have control over their housing, B.C. became the first province to transfer the management of Indigenous social housing back to Indigenous communities.¹⁶ To further support Indigenous control over housing, the Government of B. C. has invested \$550 million over the next 10 years to build and operate 1,750 new units of social housing both on- and off-reserve. BC Housing will develop this housing in partnership with the Aboriginal Housing Management Association, Indigenous housing societies and First Nations.¹⁷ The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) also provides housing programs for on-reserve housing renovations, accessibility adaptations and emergency repairs.¹⁸

To learn more about First Nations in B.C., visit the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations:

<http://bcafn.ca/>

To learn more about Métis history, culture and traditions, visit Métis Nation British Columbia:

<https://www.mnbc.ca/>

To learn more about Inuit history, culture and traditions, visit Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami:


<https://www.itk.ca/>

The Housing Wheelhouse


Source: Kelowna Healthy Housing Strategy

In contrast to the more traditional housing continuum, the Housing Wheelhouse is a representation of how people may move across—not just along—categories of housing throughout their lives. Developed as part of the Kelowna Healthy Housing Strategy, the Wheelhouse promotes equity and inclusivity, recognizing that home ownership is not the end goal for all people. Diverse housing options are required to meet the socioeconomic and demographic needs of all community members.


EMERGENCY & TRANSITIONAL SHELTER

Non-profit providers offer temporary shelter, food and other supportive services. Stays are typically 60 days or less. 


TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

Non-profit housing providers offer stable housing as a step between shelters and long-term housing. Stays are typically 2-3 years, with supportive services aligned with need. 

OWNERSHIP HOUSING

Home ownership can be fee simple, strata ownership or shared equity (ie. mobile home park, cooperatives) and includes multi-unit and single detached housing. 


RENTAL HOUSING

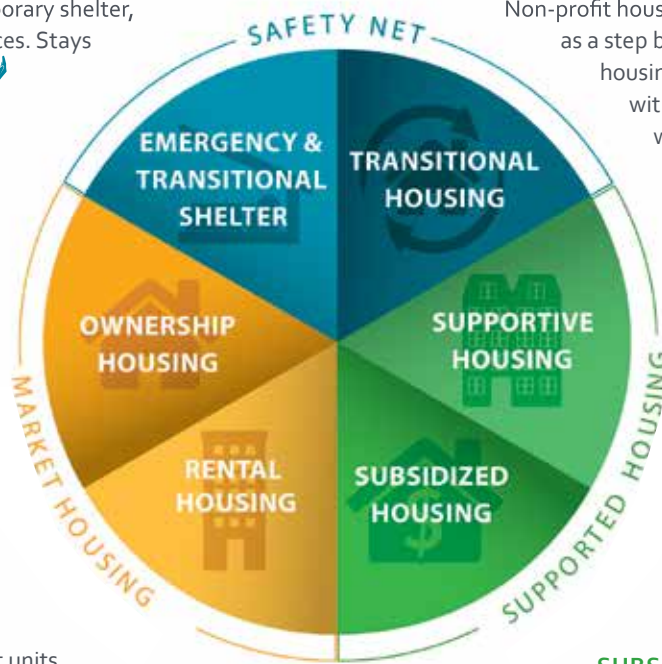
Primary market: 5+ purpose built units constructed for the purpose of long-term rental tenure, typically in apartments or townhomes *Secondary market:* private housing also contributes to the rental market and can include many forms of housing such as apartments, townhomes, secondary suites, carriage homes and single-family dwellings. 

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Housing providers offer long-term housing with ongoing supports aligned with need. The level of support varies in this category from supportive (low support), to assisted living (minor support) to residential care (full support).  

SUBSIDIZED HOUSING

Operated by non-profit housing providers, BC Housing and cooperatives who provide supplemented rents through ongoing government subsidies for low income households. 



 = supportive services  = financial support

“ By investing in housing programs, policies, regulations, and partnerships, the community as a whole can create a healthy housing system — one that will benefit not just the residents of today, but future generations as well. ”

— Kelowna Healthy Housing Strategy

Actions Local Governments Can Take

Supporting healthy housing in our communities

Local governments have an important role to play when it comes to developing healthy housing. They work in partnership with diverse sectors and other levels of government, serve as community leaders and advocates for their residents, and establish policies that determine how land can and should be used to benefit both current and future generations.

The following sections provide a list of actions that local governments can take to support healthy housing.

Legend



Rural or Small Community



Urban or Mid-sized Community



Resource

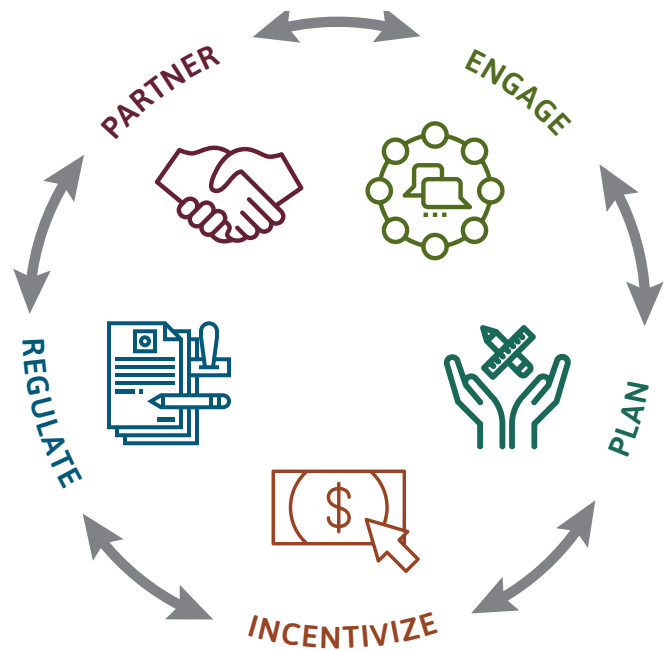


PARTNER

Partner with regional health authorities or the First Nations Health Authority by inviting a representative to participate in your official community plan update process or to join a housing advisory committee. Health authorities can provide important health and equity considerations to support the development of policies and plans that better meet the housing needs of the community. They can also play an important role in funding and providing health services in supportive housing developments.



Resource The [Healthy Built Environment Linkages Toolkit](#) provides helpful information about the links between community planning, design and health, including a section on healthy housing.¹⁹



Example The Town of Creston worked closely with Interior Health during their 2017 Official Community Plan (OCP) update, titled [Freshly Picked Future](#).²⁰ Creston's OCP won the silver award for *Excellence in Policy Planning - Small and Rural Areas* at the 2018 Planning Institute of BC and Yukon conference.



Example Staff from Fraser Health are members of the City of Surrey [Homelessness and Housing Task Force](#), ensuring health is considered throughout all Task Force initiatives.²¹

Partner with [BC Housing](#) to facilitate strengthened partnerships with other organizations and businesses in the community. BC Housing supports the development of new subsidized housing. They also offer a range of funding opportunities to support development, including grants for Indigenous communities. See the [BC Housing Hub](#) for more information.



Example Esk'etemc First Nation partnered with the Government of Canada, the First Nations Health Authority, Interior Health, and BC Housing to fund and develop the [Letwilc Ren Semec Centre](#) in Alkali Lake.²² It is the first Net Zero Ready building to be built on First Nations land in a northern Canadian climate. The Centre features five supportive recovery beds and culturally appropriate recovery and stabilization services for Indigenous people in the Thompson-Cariboo region.

Actions Local Governments Can Take



Example BC Housing is supporting the [development of social housing](#) in the Nigel Valley area of the District of Saanich. This project will see the redevelopment of nine acres of land, currently owned and operated by a collection of five housing and care operators that serve the needs of a variety of populations, including seniors, families, adults recovering from a mental illness, and adults with developmental and physical disabilities.²³ The Nigel Valley Steering Committee set out the following vision to guide the project: *“To create an inclusive neighbourhood of housing and care that seamlessly integrates a variety of uses to transform lives, offering an environment for all and a hub of social activity, which connects with the wider community.”*

Partner with community and Indigenous organizations to secure funding for new affordable housing developments.



Example Local governments can partner with organizations to develop culturally appropriate housing options in the community. For example, local governments can partner with an organization such as [M'akola Housing Society](#), which provides safe, affordable and appropriate homes for Indigenous people and families.²⁴



Example The [Kiwanis Towers](#) and [Storeys](#) projects in the City of Richmond are two examples of how the municipality is leveraging innovative affordable housing policies and partnerships to develop affordable housing.^{25, 26} Kiwanis Towers provides 296 affordable rental apartments to support Richmond's low-income seniors, and is funded by the Richmond Kiwanis Senior Citizens Housing Society (\$21 million), the City of Richmond (\$24.1 million), the Government of B.C. (up to \$16.3 million in long-term financing) and the Government of Canada (\$100,000). Storeys is providing 129 affordable homes and is a social service hub with supportive programming for Richmond households at risk of homelessness. This partnership includes funding from five non-profits (\$1.95 million), the City of Richmond (\$19.8 million), the Government of B.C. (up to \$30.7 million in long-term financing) and the Government of Canada (approximately \$5 million).

Establish or participate in cross-sectoral working groups or inter-municipal collaboratives, such as advisory committees and community coalitions. This can build the capacity of communities to improve well-being and prioritize healthy living conditions.

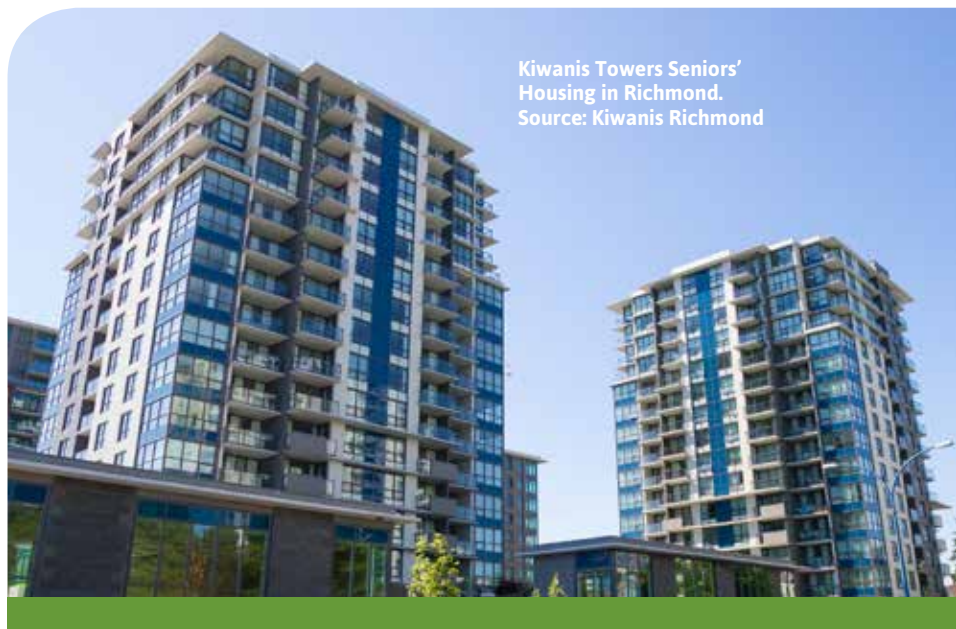


Example Bowen Island Municipality established a [Housing Advisory Committee](#) to provide council with advice and recommendations on housing issues with the goal of improving the quality of life, livability and working environment for residents. In addition to community members, the committee includes two councillors and a staff liaison as links between the community and local government.²⁷



Example Several communities across B.C. have convened a Mayor's Task Force on Affordable Housing, including the [City of Victoria](#) and [City of Vancouver](#).^{28, 29} A Task Force should include members from various sectors who have an impact on housing, including planners, architects, designers, builders, non-profit organizations, apartment owners, academics, and private and public sector property developers.

Partner with other levels of government to support the development and implementation of a Housing First program. A Housing First program can support those who are experiencing homelessness by prioritizing the provision of permanent housing.³⁰



Kiwanis Towers Seniors' Housing in Richmond.
Source: Kiwanis Richmond

Actions Local Governments Can Take



Example The Hope and Area Transition Society conducted a [readiness assessment](#) to understand if a Housing First model could work in the small community of Hope, which has a unique homelessness situation due to its location and socioeconomic conditions.³¹ The assessment was presented to council and a motion was carried that council would provide a letter of support “in principle” for a low-barrier housing project/Housing First support team.³²



Example The City of Kamloops received funding from the [Homelessness Partnering Strategy \(HPS\)](#)³³ to support the prevention and reduction of homelessness within the City. The HPS program provides direct support and funding to 61 designated communities and to organizations that address Indigenous homelessness across Canada. The City of Kamloops is responsible for administering, managing and distributing the federal HPS funding in the City.



ENGAGE

Engage community members to understand their lived experiences and to see a clearer picture of community housing needs and priorities.

Engagement is not just a process for gaining community support for projects; it is important to engage community members early and regularly to build trust and to understand what housing needs and priorities exist. Use a variety of methods to expand your reach, and choose approaches that are intentional and appropriate for diverse population groups.



Example In January 2018, the [Strathcona Community Health Network](#) conducted a Housing Needs Assessment for the Strathcona region.³⁴ Using a mix of traditional and non-traditional data sources, the study allowed for a deeper understanding of the housing challenges faced by those living in the region and made sure harder-to-reach populations were authentically engaged in the process. The [full report](#) provides a summary of the process and the outcomes of the study.³⁵



Resource [Healthy Communities Link Ontario](#) has rounded up over 40 resources on healthy community engagement.³⁶

Housing in natural resource communities

Housing challenges are exacerbated in natural resource extraction communities. Resource development has been linked to reduced availability and affordability of housing.^{74, 75} The influx of non-resident workers and industry activities often leads to higher costs of living for residents of the community due to increased costs for goods, services and transportation.⁷⁶

In remote communities where transportation, utility and construction costs are higher, and where specialized construction equipment and workers are hard to obtain, it can be even more challenging to ensure healthy housing options are available.⁷⁷ These challenges should be anticipated and mitigated before development projects begin and community members should be engaged to ensure their needs and priorities are being addressed.⁷⁸


A report by Northern Health identified promising practices that communities can employ to measure and mitigate the effects of resource extraction on community well-being, including:


- Developing a community-wide monitoring and indicator system
- Developing and implementing a community-specific wellness plan (CWP) prior to project implementation
- Integrating qualitative methodologies (participatory methods, regional forums, community meetings, focus group discussions, interviews, ethnographic studies, for example) into monitoring plans


See the [full report](#) on Northern Health’s website.⁷⁹

Actions Local Governments Can Take

Engage community members early on in the planning process to educate, build consensus and manage opposition to projects. Generating community support for housing projects and engaging citizens around healthy housing as a community goal is vital to success. Meaningful engagement should convene Indigenous governments and organizations, public and private developers, community groups, and those with lived experience navigating the housing system.

 **Resource** [The Frameworks Institute](#) offers a variety of resources with information about how to reframe the affordable housing discussion and tailor messages to gather community support.³⁷


 **Resource** The Government of B.C. released a [guide](#) to help organizations and local governments gather community support and work towards more inclusive neighbourhoods.³⁸


 **Example** The [Whistler Centre for Sustainability](#) developed a creative and effective strategy to engage citizens in the [Town of Canmore, Alberta](#) in a discussion about the importance of affordable housing for all.³⁹ The Whistler Centre held several engagement events to discuss various types of affordable housing and to examine how housing impacts the overall livability of the community. Activities included citizen-led conversations, workshops involving housing experts, background briefs to inform the public and the conversations, and housing stories to increase awareness of the need for more housing. A [report](#) was published to summarize the engagement activities.⁴⁰

Renovations at Sparwood's Lilac Terrace provided 12 additional units of affordable housing for seniors.
Source: Province of BC




Use a range of data sources and engagement techniques when conducting housing needs assessments. Statistics Canada and CMHC can provide useful information about housing supply and demand; however, data from these sources are often suppressed for smaller communities and do not tell a complete housing story. Use key informant or lived experience interviews to learn about the experiences of diverse community members. Look at utility, food and transportation costs to get a clearer picture of community affordability. See the [Province's Planning & Policy Tools for Housing](#) for more information about housing needs reports and other planning tools for local governments.⁴¹


 **Example** The City of Nelson conducted a [housing needs report](#) to inform an update to their [Affordable Housing Strategy](#).^{42,43} The research and engagement report included traditional data sources (such as Statistics Canada and CMHC), but also included data pertaining to youth services, mental health and addictions, and the prevalence of homelessness. Data are more than just numbers; in this case, many of the "alternative data" collected were specifically qualitative, from community organizations as well as interviews, community consultations and observations.

 **Resource** The [Tamarack Institute](#) maintains a collection of community engagement resources suitable for a range of settings and audiences.⁴⁴


Include affordable housing provisions in regional growth strategies, official community plans and other policy documents.⁴⁵ Local governments should consult their regional health authority or the First Nations Health Authority, or conduct a [Health Impact Assessment](#)⁴⁶ to ensure their strategies are equitable and will achieve positive health and well-being outcomes for all community members.


 **Example** The District of Wells includes special needs and affordable housing provisions in their [OCP](#),⁴⁷ encouraging a diverse range of housing types and tenures, and ensuring special needs housing is available. The District aims to balance the maintenance of neighbourhood character with the provision of affordable and special needs housing.

Actions Local Governments Can Take

 **Example** The [City of Fort St. John](#) includes affordable housing policies in their OCP, and defines affordable housing as “housing that does not cost greater than 30 percent of 80 percent of the median household income.”⁴⁸ The OCP also emphasizes the importance of partnerships in providing affordable housing.


Align land use, housing and transportation planning to reduce local government costs and improve community affordability. Having affordable transportation options close to housing—including transit, active transportation infrastructure or car sharing—can help to improve affordability for both local governments and residents. Infrastructure costs can also be reduced by choosing compact developments and avoiding sprawl. However, it is important to use an equity lens when planning these types of developments to ensure residents are not displaced if property values rise.


 **Resource** The Government of B.C.’s [Community Lifecycle Infrastructure Costing \(CLIC\) Tool](#) can help local governments better understand the long-term cost implications of land use decisions and estimate lifetime costs associated with compact versus lower-density land use patterns.⁴⁹

 **Example** In 2017, Metro Vancouver collaborated with the BC Non-Profit Housing Association and the Real Estate Foundation of BC to conduct a [Transit-Oriented Affordable Housing Study](#). The study examined opportunities and barriers for promoting and preserving affordable rental housing options in transit-oriented locations throughout Metro Vancouver. For phase two of the project (2018–2019), the partners will undertake detailed research about the effectiveness and applicability of specific policies and financial tools.⁵⁰


INCENTIVIZE


Streamline planning and approval processes, reduce or waive parking requirements and development cost charges (DCCs), or use property tax exemptions to encourage the development of affordable housing.^{51, 52} Costs associated with planning and approval processes can significantly increase the cost of development. Streamlining these processes helps to lower development costs and encourage the development of affordable units.

 **Example** The [City of Parksville](#) waives 100 percent of the city portion of DCCs for developments that meet their bylaw’s definition of affordable housing, which guarantees the affordability of the development for at least 15 years through a housing agreement.⁵³


 **Example** The City of Prince George [Bylaw no. 8679, 2015](#) provides a tax exemption for developments that meet the eligibility requirements set out in the Bylaw.⁵⁴ In addition to the tax exemption, projects that are for non-profit housing or that have reduced environmental impacts can receive waived or reduced DCCs.

Create a housing development guide for your community to standardize and provide clarification around the approval process, and to outline preferred and acceptable development types.

 **Example** The District of Central Saanich developed [Residential Applications Evaluation Guidelines](#) to standardize how decisions are made and to improve clarity for the District, the public and the development industry regarding preferred and acceptable developments.⁵⁵

 **Example** An [Affordable Housing Developers’ Package](#) for the North Okanagan region was developed collaboratively by the Land Trust, Community Futures North Okanagan, the Social Planning Council for the North Okanagan and the City of Vernon. Funded by the Community Foundation for the North Okanagan and the Vancouver Foundation, the Package was developed to provide potential developers of affordable housing with a guide to the programs and incentives available to them in the North Okanagan region.⁵⁶

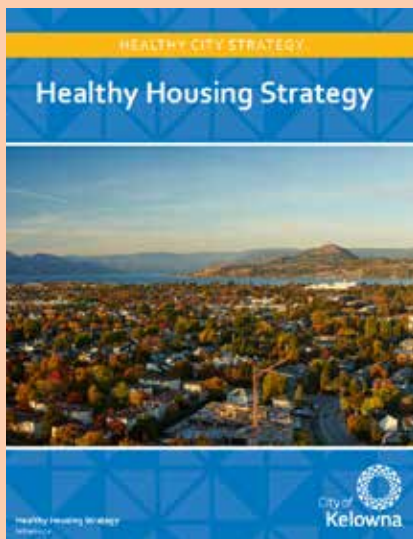
Use density bonus zoning to incentivize the development of affordable housing. A developer can choose to develop to the permitted base density with no additional contribution or build additional bonus density in exchange for a contribution to the local government.

 **Example** In smaller communities where extra density may not be a concern or priority, local governments may choose to adopt Community Amenity Contribution (CAC) programs, like in the [Town of Ladysmith](#).⁵⁷ A developer and local government, as part of a rezoning process

Actions Local Governments Can Take

Case Study

City of Kelowna Healthy Housing Strategy




With support from Interior Health, city staff and numerous community organizations and community members, the City of Kelowna developed a [Healthy Housing Strategy](#) in 2018 as a component of their broader [Healthy City Strategy](#).^{80, 81} The Healthy Housing Strategy is a five-year plan that works to address the community's most pressing housing issues. A [Journey Home Strategy](#) was also developed to support those experiencing homelessness.

The Healthy Housing Strategy includes 19 actions within four key directions:

1. Promote and protect rental housing
2. Improve housing affordability and reduce barriers for affordable housing
3. Build the right supply
4. Strengthen partnerships and align investments


Above: Cover of the City of Kelowna's Healthy Housing Strategy document. Source: City of Kelowna



initiated by the developer, may negotiate and agree to amenity contributions. CACs can take several forms including community amenities, affordable housing units and financial contributions towards infrastructure.⁵⁸

 **Example** The City of Burnaby has a [Community Benefit Bonus Policy](#) for affordable housing and amenities in Town Centre areas. The policy allows developers to achieve extra development density in return for providing a community benefit that meets the social, cultural, recreational or environmental needs of people living and working in Burnaby.⁵⁹

REGULATE

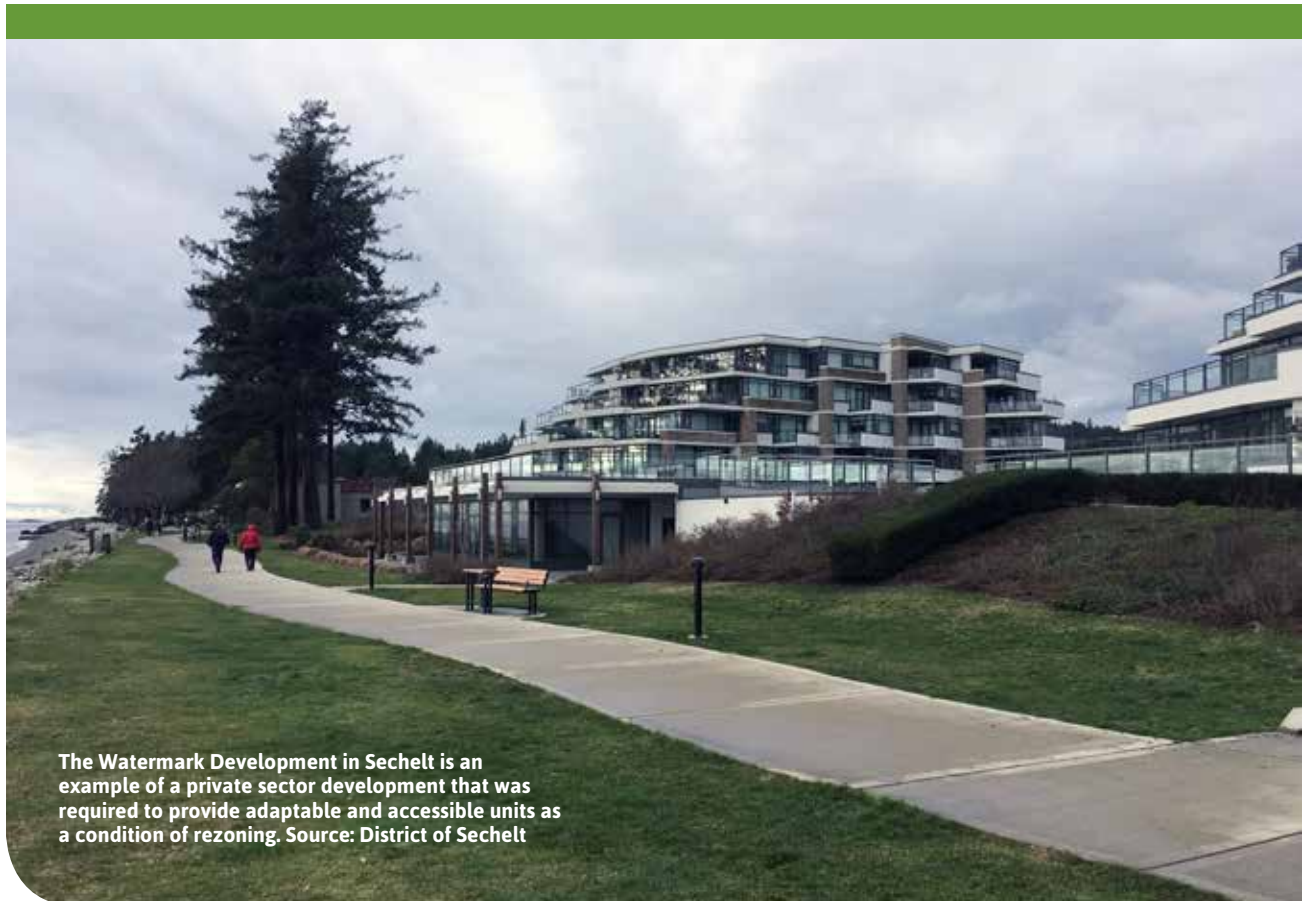
Use community plan policies and zoning bylaws to encourage the development of a range of housing options, particularly for under-served populations, including older adults and individuals with mental health and/or addictions challenges.

 **Example** The District of Sechelt [OCP](#) includes policies to support the development of affordable, accessible and special needs housing. Policies include “support[ing] initiatives to create more accessible and adaptable housing to accommodate aging in place and for people with permanent or temporary mobility issues,” and “[using] the tools provided by the Local Government Act to guarantee the long-term affordability of affordable, special needs and accessible/adaptable housing acquired from new developments.” They also use the development permit process to require that a portion of all multi-unit housing developments be adaptable.⁶⁰

  **Example** Innovative co-housing options, such as [HomeShare](#),⁶¹ allow homeowners to provide accommodation within their home in exchange for help around the house. This option can provide homeowners with social benefits while also filling housing gaps, such as affordable housing options for students.

Use zoning and business license bylaws to regulate short-term vacation rentals and protect the long-term rental stock.⁶² Local governments can also advocate to the provincial government to enact regulations that make it easier for local

Actions Local Governments Can Take



The Watermark Development in Sechelt is an example of a private sector development that was required to provide adaptable and accessible units as a condition of rezoning. Source: District of Sechelt

governments to manage short-term rental units. Under the *Strata Property Act*, strata property owners also have the authority to establish and enforce rental bylaws around short-term vacation rentals.



Example The Village of Pemberton held several [engagement sessions](#) with community members to discuss how to regulate short-term rentals in the Village. After public input, the Village is considering allowing up to 30 short-term rentals in single-family homes only. Enforcement of regulations will be funded through business licenses.⁶³



Example To obtain a business license to rent a property to tourists in the [Resort Municipality of Whistler](#), the property's zoning must state that tourist accommodation or temporary accommodation is a permitted use. In Whistler, the term "residential" means a fixed place of living, to which a person intends to return when absent;

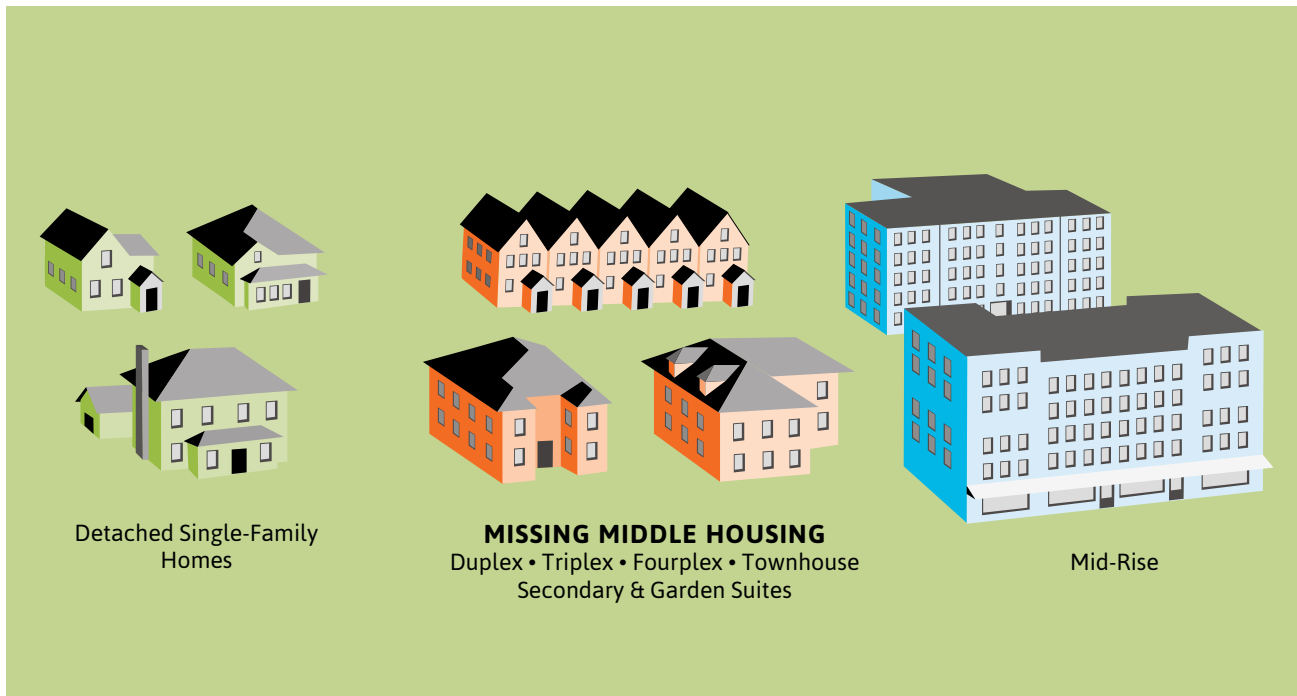
therefore, regardless of the length of stay, tourist accommodation is not permitted in most residentially zoned areas.⁶⁴

Use zoning bylaws to allow for the development of infill housing that supports "missing middle" housing options, such as duplexes, townhouses, secondary and garden suites, and other medium-density housing.⁶⁵ Infill housing fits within an existing neighbourhood without significantly altering character or appearance. When developed in a healthy and equitable way, infill housing can increase rental and ownership options for diverse family types, help to reduce sprawl and encourage investment in infrastructure such as public transit.⁶⁶




Example The City of Fernie's [zoning bylaws](#) allow for the development of single-detached residential units with the option of developing a secondary residential dwelling unit in the form of an attached or detached residential unit.⁶⁷


Actions Local Governments Can Take




Use comprehensive development zoning to create flexibility in the allocation of densities and zoning uses, encouraging mixed-use developments that include affordable rental and ownership units.⁶⁸

 **Example** The [Northern Rockies Regional Municipality](#) used comprehensive development zoning to accommodate and regulate the development of six duplexes of affordable housing, including accessory uses such as secondary suites.⁶⁹


Use rental tenure zoning or strata conversion guidelines to prevent affordable rental stock from being replaced with unaffordable options.


 **Example** The City of Cranbrook [Strata Conversion Guidelines](#) (under Bylaw 3633) protect rental stock by limiting the conversion of rental units to strata titles. Applications will not be approved if the City's rental vacancy rate is less than five percent.⁷⁰

 **Example** The City of Burnaby adopted an amendment to their [zoning bylaw](#) that requires all redevelopment of current rental sites to include replacement of the current units at affordable rental rates. Current and future

redevelopments of market rental buildings will also include a non-market or social housing component.⁷¹

Adopt a Standards of Maintenance bylaw to set minimum maintenance and repair requirements for landlords to follow. These bylaws apply to rentals, such as apartment buildings, detached houses, secondary suites and condominiums, and require all units to meet basic standards of health, safety and comfort. While the BC Building Code provides minimum standards for new builds and some alterations of existing builds, they do not establish maintenance standards.

 **Example** The District of Kitimat [residential rental housing maintenance bylaw](#) (Bylaw No. 1873) requires building owners to remedy, in a timely manner, specific conditions that create unsafe or unhealthy living accommodations. Subjects addressed in *Kitimat Municipal Code* s.13.3.4 include water, heat, electrical service, plumbing, bathroom facilities, ventilation, moisture build-up, structural integrity and exterior finishes.⁷²

 **Resource** The Government of B.C. developed a [guide](#) to support local governments who wish to develop a Standards of Maintenance bylaw.⁷³

Healthy Housing Checklist

The following checklist can help assess the ways that healthy housing is supported in your community and provide insights into next steps. How many boxes can be checked off for your community?

Does your local government:

- Partner with regional health authorities or the First Nations Health Authority in the development of community plans or housing strategies?
- Partner with BC Housing and/or community and Indigenous organizations to secure funding for new affordable housing developments?
- Engage community members to understand their housing needs and priorities?
- Use a broad range of data sources and engagement techniques when conducting housing needs reports?
- Align land use, housing and transportation planning to reduce local government costs and improve community affordability?
- Streamline planning and approval processes, reduce or waive development cost charges, or use property tax exemptions to encourage the development of affordable housing?
- Provide housing development guidelines to standardize and provide clarification around the approval process, and to outline preferred and acceptable development types?
- Use community plan policies and zoning bylaws to encourage the development of a range of housing options, particularly for under-served populations?
- Use zoning bylaws to allow for the development of infill housing that supports “missing middle” housing options?
- Conduct health impact assessments prior to implementing new policies, plans or programs?

Resources

British Columbia:

- Aboriginal Housing Management Association. [Aboriginal Housing Providers Resources](#).
- BC Centre for Disease Control. [Healthy Built Environment Linkages Toolkit: Making the links between design, planning and health, Version 2.0](#).
- BC Climate Action Toolkit. [Diverse zoning strategies for diverse communities](#).
- BC Housing and Centre for Sustainability Whistler. [Building Knowledge and Capacity for Affordable Housing in BC Small Communities: A Scan of Leading Practices in Affordable Housing in Small Communities](#).
- BC Housing. [Housing Hub](#).
- BC Non-Profit Housing Association. [BC Rental Housing Index](#).
- Government of British Columbia. [Housing – Role of Government](#).
- Government of British Columbia. [Housing Resources for Local Governments](#).
- Metro Vancouver. [What Works: Municipal Measures for Sustaining and Expanding the Supply of Purpose-Built Rental Housing](#).
- Union of BC Municipalities. [A Home for Everyone: A Housing Strategy for British Columbians](#).

Canada:

- Alberta Urban Municipalities Association. [About Affordable Housing in Canada](#).
- Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. [Canadian Housing First Toolkit](#).
- Canadian Institute of Planners. [Planning Healthy Communities Housing Resources](#).
- Canadian Mortgage and Housing Association. [A Guide for Canadian municipalities for the development of a housing action plan](#).
- Homeless Hub. [Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada](#).
- Homeless Hub Report Series. [Housing Vulnerability & Health Canada’s Hidden Emergency](#).
- National Collaborating Centre for the Determinants of Health. [Housing as a focus for public health action on equity: A curated list](#).

International:

- Academic-Practitioner Partnership. [Delivering healthy housing](#).
- Center for Active Design. [Active design: Affordable designs for affordable housing](#).
- Center for Housing Policy. [The positive impacts of affordable housing on health: A research summary](#).
- ChangeLab Solutions. [Preserving, protecting, and expanding affordable housing: A policy toolkit for public health](#).
- ChangeLab Solutions. [Under one roof: Model healthy housing policies for comprehensive plans](#).
- Enterprise Community Partners and FrameWorks Institute. [You don’t have to live here: Why housing messages are backfiring and 10 things we can do about it](#).
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District of Mackenzie
Source: Province of BC

Funding Opportunities and Strategies

External funding opportunities to support the development of healthy housing:

- BC Housing. [Funding opportunities for partners.](#)
- BC Housing. [Build BC: Indigenous Housing Fund.](#)
- Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. [Funding and financing opportunities.](#)
- CivicInfo B.C. [Grants.](#)
- Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. [National Housing Strategy Funding.](#)
- Columbia Basin Trust. First Nations Housing Sustainability Initiative.
- Columbia Basin Trust. [Grants](#) and [Programs Directory.](#)
- PlanH. [Grants.](#)
- PlanH. [Other Funding Opportunities.](#)
- UBCM. [Community to Community \(C2C\) Forum](#)



Incentive and funding strategies to support the development of healthy housing:

- Parking requirement and development cost charge reductions or exemptions
- Property tax reductions or exemptions
- Expedited development approval processes
- Density bonus zoning

Housing Legislation

For Local Governments

Local Government Act, Part 13

- **Section 428** provides regional districts the authority to work towards adequate, affordable and appropriate housing through a regional growth strategy.

Local Government Act, Part 14

- **Section 473** requires that an official community plan include policies related to affordable housing, rental housing and special needs housing.
- **Section 481.1** gives local governments the authority to zone for rental housing in areas where multi-family residential use is permitted.
- **Section 482** allows local governments to exchange bonus density for amenities or affordable housing.

- **Section 483** gives local governments the authority to enter into housing agreements for affordable housing and special needs housing.
- **Section 559** provides local governments with the authority to impose development cost charges (DCCs), and offer DCC reductions or waive the fee to encourage the development of affordable housing.

Community Charter

- **Part 7, Section 226** provides local governments with the authority to exempt property from municipal property value taxes to encourage the development of affordable housing.
- **Section 8(3)(h)(i), 16, 17, and Section 53(2)(d), 64, 258, and 260 to 263** provide local governments with the authority to enact Standards of Maintenance bylaws to meet the needs of tenants who may live in unsafe or unhealthy housing due to inadequate building maintenance.

Housing Legislation

Local Government Statutes (Housing Needs Reports), Amendment Act, 2018, S.B.C. 2018, c. 20 makes housing needs reports mandatory for local governments and requires that they be conducted every five years.⁸²

The **Residential Tenancy Act** and the **Manufactured Home Park Tenancy Act** set minimum standards for tenants who may be forced from their homes due to redevelopment; however, local governments are able to enact tenant relocation and assistance policies that go beyond the minimum legislated requirements.



This 12-storey supportive housing complex at 1249 Howe St. provides 110 new units of housing for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Vancouver. Source: Province of BC

Province of B.C.

- **BC Housing** is a crown corporation that supports social and affordable housing, emergency shelters and outreach for homeless populations, and regulates residential construction. BC Housing partners with various private and non-profit organizations, health authorities, ministries, and other levels of government to provide a range of housing options.
- **Residential Tenancy Branch** is in charge of residential tenancy law, including dispute resolution between landlords and tenants. The **Residential Tenancy Act** and the **Manufactured Home Park Tenancy Act** governs landlord-tenant relations.
- **Ministry of Lands, Parks, and Housing Act**
 - **Section 5 (b.1) and (c)** gives the Government of B.C. the authority to develop land or make land improvements for the purpose of providing housing or mixed-purpose developments that include housing.
 - **Section 6** allows the Government of B.C. to enter into agreements with the Government of Canada, the government of another province, or with a municipality, regional district, or any other person, with the intent of developing housing.
 - **Section 8.1 (1) and (2)**, permits the Government of B.C. to enter into an affordable housing agreement with a person to receive assistance from the government to acquire, develop or operate an affordable housing development. S.8(2) enables the Government of B.C. to mandate that all or part of the affordable housing development may only be used for affordable housing purposes.
- **Building Act** gives the Government of B.C. the sole authority to set technical requirements for the construction, alteration, repair and demolition of buildings. The legislation applies across B.C., except in the City of Vancouver and on federal and reserve lands.
- **BC Building Code** establishes minimum requirements for safety, health, accessibility, fire protection and plumbing. It also includes requirements for accessibility and adaptable design to further support healthy housing development.

Glossary of Terms

Active Transportation: Any form of human-powered transportation—walking, cycling, using a wheelchair, in-line skating or skateboarding.⁸³

Adequate Housing: Housing that is reported by its residents as not needing any major repairs.⁸⁴

Affordable Housing: Housing that costs less than 30 percent of a household's before-tax income, including the costs for mortgage or rent, taxes and fees, and utilities. Includes rental, ownership, co-operative ownership and temporary housing.⁸⁵

Co-benefits: Positive outcomes resulting from a strategy or initiative that are not directly related to the original focus of the strategy or initiative (for example, many strategies aimed to improve health outcomes will have economic co-benefits).

Community Well-being: The combination of social, economic, environmental, cultural and political conditions identified by individuals and their communities as essential for them to thrive.⁸⁶

Core Housing Need: When housing fails to meet at least one of the adequacy, affordability or suitability standards, and a household would have to spend 30 percent or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable.⁸⁷

Cultural Safety: An outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in health and justice systems.⁸⁸

Density Bonus Zoning: A provision local governments can include in their zoning bylaw, allowing them to work with developers and exchange bonus density for amenities or affordable housing.⁸⁹

Equity: The fair distribution of opportunities, power and resources to meet the needs of all people, regardless of age, ability, gender or background.

Gentrification: The rebuilding and rehabilitation of neighbourhoods to make them more desirable for higher income earners, resulting in higher housing demand and increased prices. This process often displaces existing occupants, who are unable to afford the rising housing costs.

Health Impact Assessment: A combination of procedures, methods and tools by which a policy, program or project may be judged for its potential impacts on the health of a population, and the distribution of those impacts within the population.⁹⁰

Health Lens: A lens through which the potential positive or negative health consequences of a policy, program, development or initiative should be considered.⁹¹

Healthy Housing: Housing that is accessible, of good quality, appropriately sized and linked to the community assets that support people to thrive.⁹²

Housing Needs Reports: A means to better understand current and future housing needs in a community. Now a legislated requirement for all local governments in B.C., these reports identify existing and projected gaps in housing supply through the collection and analysis of information about local demographics, housing stock and other factors.⁹³

Inclusivity: When all people, regardless of age, ability, gender, income or background, feel welcome and empowered to participate in economic, social, political and cultural opportunities, and enjoy a high quality of life.⁹⁴

Market Housing: Rental or ownership housing where the cost is determined by the market. Costs may vary with location, supply, time of year, or other market conditions.⁹⁵

Missing Middle Housing: Refers to housing types on the spectrum between single-family homes and larger apartment buildings. This may include duplexes, townhouses, and other housing options that are suitable for families.

Shelters: Emergency facilities that offer short-term accommodation and often food and supports.⁹⁶

Subsidized Housing: May include rental or ownership housing where the cost is subsidized through a grant to the property owner or tenant, or through a capital construction grant. This type of housing serves those with limited income, but who have no need for support services.⁹⁷

Suitable Housing: Housing that has an appropriate number of bedrooms for the size and composition of a household.⁹⁸

Supportive Housing: Housing that offers a range of support services based on the needs of the users.⁹⁹

Systemic Racism: When policies, practices, and economic and political structures place minority racial groups at a disadvantage in relation to the racial majority.

Transitional Housing: Accommodation that is provided for anywhere from six months to three years and that offers support services to those who need them.¹⁰⁰

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD): Compact, walkable, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use communities centered around high-quality transit systems.¹⁰¹

Walkability: The quality of pedestrian facilities, roadway conditions, land use patterns, community support, security and comfort for walking.¹⁰²

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A former Remand Centre, 250 Powell Street in Vancouver now provides homes for low-income adults and at-risk Indigenous youth. Source: Province of BC

More Information

Want support or to learn more about improving health and well-being in your community?

Health authorities can support local governments by providing advice and expertise, resources for local government staff and elected officials to develop healthy public policy, community health profiles, and opportunities to work together on joint healthy living actions. You may already have relationships with your health authority. If not, up-to-date contact information for your local health authority lead is available at www.planh.ca.

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PlanH creates healthier communities by supporting partnerships across sectors, providing learning opportunities, resources, and consultation, and facilitating leading-edge practices and collaborative local action.

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