TOOLKIT

Community Acceptance of Non-Market Housing

BC HOUSING
RESEARCH CENTRE

Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to provide advice to non-profit housing developers, future operators and community champions on how to mitigate potential concerns and develop non-market housing that integrates successfully into the community.

Guide 3 forms part of the Community Acceptance of Non-Market Housing Toolkit, a series of five guides. For more information on the Toolkit, go to the Research Centre Library at www.bchousing.org.

Guide 3
Gaining and Maintaining Community Acceptance

Community acceptance can influence the success of a proposed non-market housing project. Community engagement and public relations are important components of the development process in gaining and maintaining community acceptance.

Important notes:

- Local governments have different community engagement requirements, but there is also what is required to be a good neighbour.
- Check with your local government regarding their community engagement requirements. The *Local Government Act* or *Vancouver Charter* set out minimum requirements for community engagement when it comes to developing housing; however, each local government will have their own community engagement guidelines, so it's important to check.
- Check with your funder(s) to see if they have communication protocols regarding media releases, project announcements, press conferences, etc. that need to be followed. These protocols may differ by funder.

Sonja's Garden, Cranbrook

Keeping Community Acceptance

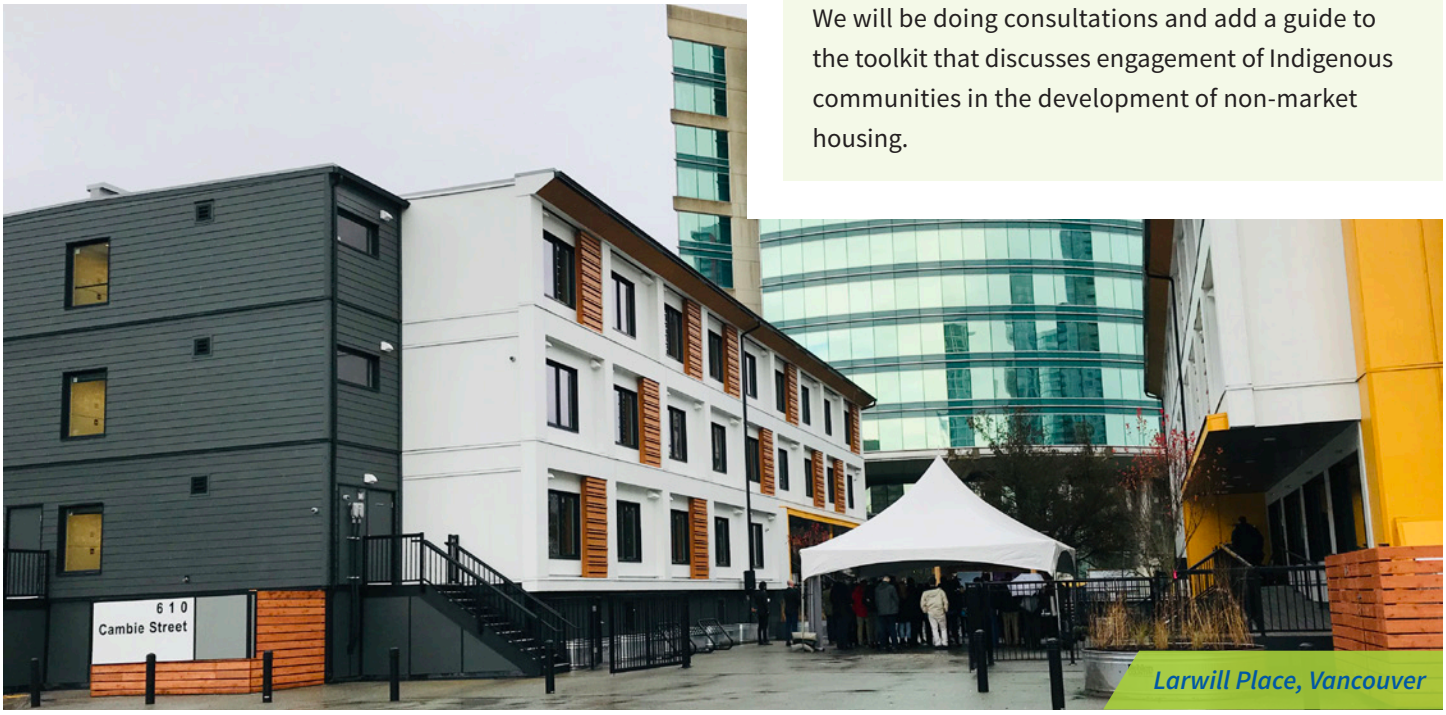
Maintaining community acceptance through the development phase and into the operation phase is vital to ensuring successful integration of non-market housing into a neighbourhood. While there are no guarantees that an open and transparent approach will result in acceptance every time, gaining acceptance for proposed non-market housing will be difficult without this approach.

Those that will be most directly impacted by your development are your adjacent neighbours.[1] Identify a catchment area (such as 400-500 m, rounded to the end of each street) and if possible involve neighbours before your proposal fully goes public. The level of engagement expected and appropriate for your immediate neighbours will be higher than the rest of the general public. By approaching them first, it will demonstrate that you are maintaining a transparent engagement process and prioritizing their opinions, validating that they will be the most impacted by the project.[2]

BC Housing is committed to working in partnership with Indigenous peoples to embrace and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC): Calls to Action. Indeed, one of the key organizational goals is to enhance Indigenous partnerships and relationships. When developing new housing, BC Housing is still learning about the specific ways to respectfully engage with Indigenous communities for input, understanding that different communities have unique protocols and needs.

For example, it is important that the development team know whose traditional territory the proposed project is on. In urban areas where there will be individuals from different First Nations communities, it might be useful to engage with local Indigenous community organizations to learn how best to support the needs of Indigenous peoples in the region.

We will be doing consultations and add a guide to the toolkit that discusses engagement of Indigenous communities in the development of non-market housing.



Larwill Place, Vancouver

1 In the case of a redevelopment or a purchase of a tenanted building, existing residents of the site will be those most directly impacted.

2 PIVOT Legal Society. “Yes in My Backyard! Toolkit.” PIVOT Legal Society Website. 2011. http://www.pivotlegal.org/yes_in_my_backyard_toolkit (accessed August 30, 2018).

Strategies to Gain Support for Non-Market Housing

Principles of Public Participation

How to Engage

This section of the guide discusses important principles of participation that you should be aware of as you develop your community consultation plan. There are five levels of engagement used by community planning and engagement professionals, based on the International Association of Participation (IAP2) principles.[3] This is meant to provide a framework for understanding public engagement. A non-profit housing provider proposing non-market housing may not need to/have the opportunity to do all levels of engagement. Again, check your local government's community engagement requirements.

Before you engage the community, decide what type of feedback you are seeking and what parts of the development cannot be altered. It is better to be transparent about what kind of feedback is being sought rather than seeking all comments, knowing some of which will never be addressed as they are out of scope.

TIP: Setting boundaries on community input

- To prevent delays in project development, ensure timelines regarding opportunities to provide feedback are clear.
- Clearly communicate what is open for community feedback and what is not.
- Use mail outs, public announcements, one-on-one meetings, your website and social media to clearly communicate opportunities to provide feedback.

TIP: Engagement resource

The Capital Regional District, in partnership with the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness and Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy, developed an Engagement Toolkit for working with, and for people with lived experience of homelessness. This Toolkit outlines a wide range of tools for informing, consulting, involving, collaborating, and empowering. To learn more about the tools available for various levels of engagement to assist you with developing your consultation plan, visit: https://victoriahomelessness.ca/our-products/outreach-and-engagement/.

TIP: Factors that may influence level of engagement required

Proposed non-market housing developments will require different levels of engagement depending on various factors, such as:

- Local government community engagement requirements.
- Whether the site needs to be rezoned or requires variances.
- How contentious the proposed housing is.
- Community engagement requirements stipulated by a funder.

3 International Association for Public Participation. "IAP2 Spectrum." IAP2 Canada Website. n.d. https://iap2canada.ca/Resources/Documents/0702-Foundations-Spectrum-MW-rev2%20(1).pdf (accessed September 5, 2018).

Levels of Engagement

1) Inform: Informing is one-way communication, in-person or through posters, presentations, newspapers, newsletters, or social media.[4] The goal is to provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in their understanding and ensure that all interested parties have access to consistent and complete information.[5]

2) Consult: This method is used to seek feedback on a topic of common interest, usually through interviews, focus groups, meetings, surveys or open houses.[6] By consulting, the promise to the public is to "keep them informed, listen to and acknowledge their concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision."[7] The critical element of consulting is that people know they have been heard.

3) Involve: Involving requires continuing contact with participants throughout the process "to ensure that public concerns are consistently understood and considered."[8] Going beyond a single point of consultation, this may require a series of workshops or other forms of interactive engagement (see below for additional ideas).

4) Collaborate: Beyond involving, collaboration is a partnership with the public throughout the decision-making process including development of alternatives and identifying the preferred solutions to a problem. It's a promise to seek their advice in formulating solutions and incorporating their recommendations as much as possible.[9] This may be achieved through a task force, advisory committee, or other participatory decision-making process.[10] It is critical that the public know they have been heard and are shown how their input has been integrated. Just as important is to also demonstrate how some of their input could not be implemented.

5) Empower: For this level of engagement, the outcome is determined by the participants, such as through a vote.[11] It is a promise to implement whatever decision the stakeholders have decided upon[12]. Empowerment can also be achieved by involving the community in the ongoing operation of the development and building relationships with the future residents.

Levels of Engagement

4 Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness. "Engagement Toolkit: People with Lived Experience in BC's Capital Region." June 2017. http://victoriahomelessness.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/170630_crd_toolkit.pdf (accessed September 5, 2018).

5 International Association for Public Participation. "IAP2 Spectrum."

6 Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness. "Engagement Toolkit: People with Lived Experience in BC's Capital Region."

7 International Association for Public Participation. "IAP2 Spectrum."

8 International Association for Public Participation. "IAP2 Spectrum."

9 Ibid

10 Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness. "Engagement Toolkit: People with Lived Experience in BC's Capital Region."

11 Ibid

12 International Association for Public Participation. "IAP2 Spectrum."

Who to Engage

To successfully implement the principles of public participation, identify all relevant stakeholder groups that have an interest in your proposed development. This will likely include, but is not limited to:

- Residents/occupants, if there is a tenanted building the proposed site
- Local governments (various department staff, mayor, and councils and boards)
- Neighbours (within close proximity to the development site, approximately 500 m)
- The broader community (usually within the local government jurisdiction)
- Business owners (within close proximity to the development site, approximately 500 m)
- Schools and community centers
- Local media
- Indigenous groups
- Distinct stakeholders such as organizations that serve youth, vulnerable women, seniors, LGBTQ2
- People with lived experience
- Community advocates and special interest groups (e.g. resident association, business improvement association, Homelessness Task Force).

TIP: Identify your neighbourhood

It is important to do an environmental scan to determine how far your neighbourhood catchment area extends. Factors that will influence this include:

- Local government minimum neighbourhood notification radius
- Natural neighbourhood boundaries (e.g. how does the community see itself?)

Talk to stakeholders in the area to understand the neighbourhood. Are there key stakeholders you need to reach out to, such as the Business Improvement Association or a resident association?

TYPICAL BC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

(COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS)

Community consultation process to establish the vision

Voluntary community consultation process to develop what becomes the Neighbour Area Plan

Formal community consultation process

Formal approval process with public consultation if site requires rezoning

Typical BC Housing Event Planning Process Kicks In

CREATE A VISION	DEVELOP A MASTER PLAN	OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN AMENDMENT	REZONING PROCESS	DEVELOPMENT PERMIT	BUILDING PERMIT	OCCUPANCY PERMIT
	• Driven by the developer • Involve a series of mini plans such as transportation plan, heritage plan, etc.	• Public hearing requirements are mandated by the municipality in accordance to the *Local Government Act*, Part 14, Division 3 – Public hearings on Planning & Land Use) • Typically four readings for the OCP, amendment bylaw/rezoning bylaw	• Typically four readings for the plan		**Under Construction** *(Final Project Commitment)* • Permit would trigger groundbreaking • (Typically 1st go public if no rezoning)	**Completed** *(Occupancy Permit)* • Permit would trigger opening ceremonies

Communication Triggers

- Issues with the project may end up in the media or adversely affect reputation
- Tenants on site that will be impacted by the development
- Neighbourhood consultation is required
- Municipal, provincial or federal requirement for a public hearing or announcement

In Development

(Provisional Project Approval confirms funding)

- If no rezoning, communications triggered if tenants onsite, neighbourhood consultation desired or potential issues

TIP: Level of engagement may vary by stakeholder group

Not all stakeholders need to be engaged in the same way. How you engage various stakeholder groups should be influenced by the level of impact the proposed housing will have on that stakeholder. Those most impacted should also be engaged first. Determining levels of impacts and the levels of engagement required for various stakeholder groups should be part of the stakeholder identification and analysis process. To help inform what level of engagement may be required for various stakeholder groups, a neighbourhood business improvement association or resident association, among others, can identify concerns that might emerge and key stakeholders.

TIP: Engaging with neighbouring businesses

Local businesses are an important group sometimes overlooked when identifying stakeholders. They can be the most vocal opponents or biggest champions for non-market housing. Make sure they are informed of your development and engaged face-to-face prior to going public. Do your best to accommodate their businesses during construction activities by involving them in the development of the construction management plan.

Offer to meet with the local Business Improvement Association(s) to answer questions. Provide opportunities for a local business community representative to be part of your development's community advisory committee to share their important perspective.

Options for Engaging Public During Development

Outside of the local government approvals process, there are several alternatives to traditional town hall style meetings to get input on a proposed non-market housing project and share information about the project to gain community acceptance during the development phase. Determining what format to use depends on:

- development budgets
- development timelines
- phase of development
- level of public interest/concern
- whether rezoning application is required.

While not an exhaustive list, below are some options to consider for engaging stakeholders regarding a non-market housing proposal adapted from "Beyond NIMBY: A Toolkit for Opening Staffed Community Homes in Manitoba."[13] Some of these options are high profile, while others are lower profile options; they each have advantages and disadvantages. A communication strategy may include various combinations of these options, along with other ideas, depending on whether you need to inform, consult, involve, collaborate, or empower community stakeholders.

TIP: Personal stories resonate

Oftentimes, members of the media are hoping to capture and share personal stories that will captivate their audience, rather than simply disseminate information. Consider the personal angle to your development, how it is improving the lives of those that are already part of the community and in need of appropriate housing. Share these stories and show how your organization has impacted the lives of people in the community rather than simply providing the media with facts on your development.

TIP: Facilitated sessions can help keep public meetings focused

Facilitated sessions involve having a third-party moderator (such as a local government planner or professional mediator) present and providing brief presentations by representatives of the development team on various aspects of the project (such as street safety, design, and building management), followed by a moderated roundtable discussion. The moderator should be skilled at moving the conversation and presenters along and facilitating the discussion to ensure that no one person or group takes over the conversation or that only one topic dominates the allotted time.

Facilitated sessions can be used if you anticipate a small group of participants (less than 15) or as a follow-up to a larger open house for those individuals that are interested in being further involved in providing input into the development, with sign up spaces available on a first come first serve basis.

13 "Beyond NIMBY: A Toolkit for Opening Staffed Community Homes in Manitoba", Community Inclusion Awareness Committee, Prepared by New Directions (December 2015) - http://newdirections.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Nimby-Toolkit-web.pdf.

ENGAGEMENT OPTION	ADVANTAGES • CHALLENGES • TIPS

Project website

WHAT IS IT: Provides information and allows for interaction with the public. This can be accomplished with a dedicated project website, a section of the service provider's existing website, using social media such as Facebook, or a blog site.

ADVANTAGES:

- Information is publicly available in one location
- Information can be easily updated
- Consistent and accurate information is available to stakeholders
- Provides a way of reaching stakeholders who may not participate in a consultation process

CHALLENGES:

- Needs to be built, moderated, maintained, and updated
- Incorrect information or public relations mistakes can't be 'taken back'
- Websites are impersonal and don't allow messages to be audience specific
- Not everyone in the community has access to, or is comfortable with the Internet

TIPS:

- *Create an easy-to-remember web address and include it on all communications materials*
- *Use clear and concise language*
- *Designate a person to regularly update the site*
- *Ensure any interactive parts of the site such as comment forums are regularly moderated*
- *Have more than one person proofread material to be posted*
- *Have a social media policy*

Open houses

WHAT IS IT: Involves hosting drop in hours for residents to view information on your development, provide input and ask questions through conversations with development team. Representatives are stationed throughout the room at display boards on areas of their expertise and are available to answer questions.

ADVANTAGES:

- Allows some concerns to be resolved immediately
- Accommodates a large group and a variety of schedules
- Demonstrates transparency
- Multiple open houses can be held when necessary with little additional preparation

CHALLENGES:

- Requires a number of experienced and knowledgeable staff and/or professionals
- Opponents may use the opportunity to be disruptive

TIPS:

- *Develop clear goals and a budget*
- *Advertise widely and in several mediums such as mail-outs, posters, social media and radio ads*
- *Staff the open house with knowledgeable employees/ volunteers/ professionals*
- *Choose a centrally located and accessible venue*
- *Provide comment or survey cards*
- *Provide opportunity for participants to sign-up for a mailing list*

ENGAGEMENT OPTION	ADVANTAGES • CHALLENGES • TIPS

Community dialogue session

WHAT IS IT: Sessions are informal meetings with the public in a townhall style where participants can ask questions and voice their concerns to organizers.

ADVANTAGES:

- Can be used to inform stakeholders and get feedback on a proposed non-market housing development
- Allows some concerns to be resolved immediately
- Demonstrates transparency

CHALLENGES:

- Opponents may use the opportunity to be disruptive
- Requires a number of experienced and knowledgeable staff and/or professionals

TIPS:

- *Develop clear goals and a budget*
- *Advertise widely and in several mediums such as mail-outs, posters, or radio ads*
- *Staff the open house with knowledgeable employees/volunteers/professionals*
- *Choose a centrally located and accessible venue*
- *Provide comment or survey cards*
- *Provide opportunity for participants to sign-up for a mailing list*

Neighbourhood walkabouts

WHAT IS IT: Involves non-profit housing provider representative(s) going door-to-door in the neighbourhood surrounding a proposed non-market housing project to inform neighbours about the project, listen to their concerns, and answer questions.

ADVANTAGES:

- Puts a human face on the service provider and proposed non-market housing development
- Provides opportunities to identify the concerns and feedback of the community
- Introduces accurate information and positive messaging
- Builds respect and trust
- Can be helpful if there is poor attendance or opposition voices dominate public meetings/consultations

CHALLENGES:

- May inconvenience neighbours or make them uncomfortable
- Can overwhelm neighbours with too much information or arouse concerns they did not have before
- Has a limited audience
- Can be time-consuming

TIPS:

- *Develop a detailed plan for canvassing, including how the information will be delivered, a canvassing schedule, and how follow-up will be done*
- *Send an advance note to each household announcing the visit*
- *Listen attentively and don't engage in debate*
- *Schedule canvassing during convenient hours when people will be home*
- *Canvass in pairs*
- *Record the feedback and concerns of neighbours. This information can help you build and tailor the rest of your communications plan*
- *Speak only about what you know for certain and provide follow-up for unresolved questions or issues*
- *Designate personable and experienced canvassers (or provide training)*

ENGAGEMENT OPTION	ADVANTAGES • CHALLENGES • TIPS

One-on-one meetings with key community stakeholders

WHAT IS IT: Involves setting up one-on-one meetings with community stakeholders such as local police and other emergency responders, nearby schools and recreation centres, other local service providers to offer information about the project, listen to concerns, and answer questions.

ADVANTAGES:

- Creates a safe and respectful space to share information, concerns, and ideas
- Allows the facilitator to frame the issues and guide the discussion
- Provides a gauge for community support or opposition
- Develops a network of support and community engagement

CHALLENGES:

- Can take a significant amount of staff time

TIPS:

- *Develop meeting goals, messaging, and follow-up plans for unresolved issues*

Design charette

WHAT IS IT: Involves intensive planning sessions with community members to explore and share ideas. Stakeholders included can be community members, planners, architects and engineers.

ADVANTAGES:

- Allows for smaller group discussions
- Neighbours can contribute their ideas about site design and community amenities (e.g. pedestrian paths, public art, community programming space)
- Provides immediate feedback on design
- Designs can be sketched and results across stakeholder groups can be compared

CHALLENGES:

- Can take a significant amount of staff time
- Can be expensive

TIPS:

- *Can be by invitation*
- *Spaces can be limited*
- *Be clear about event goals*
- *Be clear about how the suggestions gathered during the session will be used to be transparent and set expectations*
- *Charrettes can be more than a one-time event and held at strategic points throughout the development process*

ENGAGEMENT OPTION	ADVANTAGES • CHALLENGES • TIPS

Community advisory committee (CAC)

WHAT IS IT: A group of neighbourhood stakeholders who meet with non-market housing operator on a regular basis to discuss ongoing concerns and solutions.

ADVANTAGES:

- Tool for housing providers to gain and maintain community trust
- Provides a formal way for representatives to voice concerns on behalf of their neighbourhood and collaborate on solutions to addressing these concern

CHALLENGES:

- Needs staff time to coordinate and participate

TIPS:

- *Consider setting up a CAC as part of operational plan*
- *If new to CACs, consulting with other non-profits who have experience operating a CAC for resources*
- *Have a terms-of-reference for the committee to manage expectations*

Newsletters or bulletins (email or hard copy distribution)

WHAT IS IT: Mail-outs to select households or entire neighbourhoods are a good way to give information, provide notification, or to respond to questions from the community. Materials commonly sent in mail-outs include:

- notification letters
- project overviews
- fact sheets
- FAQs
- newsletters

ADVANTAGES:

- Tool for distributing consistent information to a larger group
- Provides the same information to community members to limit the spread of misinformation
- Can communicate a range of information and messages
- Can be simple and relatively inexpensive once the materials are prepared

CHALLENGES:

- Messages are not necessarily tailored to an intended audience
- May feel impersonal
- Information may be understood and interpreted from a variety of perspectives
- Controversial issues or material could raise concerns that were not considered by the community before
- Ignoring controversial issues may raise community suspicion

TIPS:

- *Develop a clear set of goals by asking what you want to achieve: Provide information? Address myths and misconceptions?*
- *Identify a primary audience: will you target immediate neighbours or the entire neighbourhood*
- *Develop materials and keep the following points in mind:*
    - *Be concise and do not overwhelm your audience with information*
    - *Create attractive and engaging materials that communicate information quickly by using images or infographics*
    - *Tailor your messages to your audience where possible by including local issues and concerns*
    - *Include contact information and invite feedback*

ENGAGEMENT OPTION	ADVANTAGES • CHALLENGES • TIPS

Media relations

WHAT IS IT: There are two general approaches to media relations, proactive and reactive.

Contacting media to introduce the housing and make your case for it is a proactive approach. A proactive approach is best if you expect wide-spread opposition or if you are taking a high-profile approach to opening the home.

Contacting media in response to press coverage is a reactive approach. A reactive approach is best when you expect a supportive or neutral response or if you are taking a low-profile approach to opening the home.

ADVANTAGES:

- Gain access to a wider audience
- Shape messages about the housing early on
- Anticipate and address common concerns
- Circulate accurate information
- Raise a positive community profile for the service provider

CHALLENGES:

- Journalists must write balanced articles, meaning opponents may have equal "air time"
- Journalists are likely to seek stories that contain conflict because conflict is news
- Poorly presented interviews or quotes can't be "taken back," though requests can be submitted to correct misinformation or incorrect quotes

TIPS:

- *Media relations requires thorough preparation and you should never take a "wing-it" approach to media relations*
- *Hire a media specialist if you can afford one or if the situation warrants it*

Siem Lelum, Victoria

TIP: Potential media strategy components

Part of project preparation should include preparing a public relations/media strategy. This includes:

- Designating appropriate media spokesperson(s) on behalf of your organization and their roles. Ensure that other team members know these key points of contact.
- Working with these representatives to develop key messages, media statements, and a brief fact sheet to provide media.
- If significant media/public interest is expected, consider providing media training for these spokesperson(s).
- Invite the media to tour existing facilities.
- Follow up on any coverage you receive with thank yous and corrections.
- Develop ongoing relationships with media.

TIP: Online versus face-to-face engagement

When considering how to respond to negative social media comments, consider the appropriate channels for sharing information. Comment pages and direct messages on Facebook or Twitter are often not suitable for having an in-depth discussion. Consider productive opportunities for discourse that require personal accountability for comments, such as sending out an invitation to the organization's representative(s) to meet directly with the group in a neutral location, and if necessary, suggesting that a skilled mediator be present.

TIP: Have a social media policy

Have a social media policy outlining dos and don'ts for your organization. This includes who is responsible for responding to public comments and ensuring that posts reflect the organization's values and voice. Do not get into arguments or debates with people online. It is not advisable to entertain or invite an open Facebook discussion.

Source: Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness. "Engagement Toolkit: People with Lived Experience in BC's Capital Region."

TIP: Potential content for a proposed non-market housing project website

- Consider uploading regular video content, such as a video site tour, Q&A forum, interviews with proponents, future residents or residents of existing non-market housing serving a similar client group, or local champions.
- Consider including visual tools such as 3D flyovers or renderings, story maps of other similar projects, a photo page, and information about similar existing projects.
- Create a useful resources page, including links to the non-profit provider's webpage, funder webpages, relevant studies, housing needs reports, and the local government housing plan.

TIP: Smaller group engagement at large public meetings

Public meetings may draw a large crowd depending on the interest in a proposed project. Breakout sessions can provide an opportunity for smaller group engagement at a public meeting event.

Breakout sessions involve arranging a room with several tables/stations with a suitable representative of the development team at each table. Participants will move between stations after a set amount of time (15 minutes) and each station will be focused on a specific aspect of the development, such as street safety, design, and building management.

You can maintain a ratio of no more than 10 participants per expert (ex: 5 representatives and 50 members of the public). This works best when a relatively moderate number of attendees is expected.

Tips for Encouraging the Public to Gain Community Acceptance

Be Visual

During initial neighbourhood participation, if possible don't use specific design renderings, but rather image boards of similar developments, conceptual artistic sketches, and pictures representative of the types of people who will be living in the building (single mothers, seniors with disabilities, etc.). This will allow residents to provide input and demonstrates good faith in coming to them, not with a finalized design but a conceptual idea.

Once there has been ample opportunity for collaboration on the design with key stakeholders and you are prepared to inform and obtain feedback from the broader community, consider commissioning high quality design renderings and 3D models to communicate the building design and show its relationship and integration within the block and relationship to the street(s) in an engaging and detailed way.

Be Context Specific

- Tie messaging to the particular community you are working in.
- Understand your site's context, learn about the neighbourhood.
- Use architects, planners, and engagement specialists with experience working in the community and sensitivity to the context you are working in.
- Bring in local leaders and cite local experts who can speak to the benefits of your development and provide factual local information.

Kiwanis Towers, Richmond

- Work with local advocacy and community groups to gain insight into community issues.
- If working in a neighbourhood where there are a large number of non-English speaking residents, bring in translators or presenters to assist.
- Provide examples of other similar housing developments locally that will resonate with the group.

Choose Your Words Wisely

- Use consistent language throughout all messaging in referring to the type of housing you are providing.
- Use simple, jargon free language that residents not involved in non-market housing can understand.
- If you have to use a term, provide a clear definition in your messaging materials. For instance, many members of the public may not know what terms like "supportive services" or "non-market housing" mean.

- Focus your messaging on the type of housing you are providing (apartments, townhouses, shared accommodation) and refer to the targeted resident group in broad terms (single adults, seniors).
- Provide information on how the building will be managed (what types of services, education, and support will be available on site).
- Do not get defensive if confronted by someone who is opposed to the proposed housing. Listen, take notes, be polite and respectful and if you cannot immediately respond to their questions and concerns in a calm and rationale manner, obtain their contact information and promise to respond to them in a timely manner.

Have a Negotiation Strategy in Place

Create a list of realistic development must haves (needs) and nice to haves (wants) to identify the negotiable aspects of your proposal.[14] If possible, do not present your proposal to the public as a done deal - show you are willing to work with, and not against the community, listen to, and address their legitimate concerns, but also be clear about what aspects of the project are off the table or what types of requests will not be entertained.

Balance Local Facts with Personal Stories

While there is a great deal of academic research, case studies, and other toolkit resources available to non-market housing providers (including those provided in Guide 5 - Additional Resources), bringing in respected, balanced local voices to speak in support of aspects of your proposal will resonate with and relate to the public more than information told to them by the developer. Hearing personal experiences from those who have benefitted from the type of housing that you are advocating for is a powerful tool and helps to humanize the issue. When using project examples, point to relevant examples in similar and nearby communities and neighbourhoods that will resonate with the public.

NOTE: When asking residents or future residents to share their personal stories, be transparent about where their personal information may go and how it might be used. Make sure they are well informed of potential risks and impacts of sharing their personal stories.

Be Open and Transparent

Earn and maintain the trust of the neighbourhood by remaining open and transparent throughout the engagement process. Some useful tips include:

- Maintain an email and mailing list at public events and provide those interested in staying informed about the project with regular (i.e. monthly) updates on project progress, upcoming opportunities for their input/ participation, and a single, consistent, reliable point of contact they can reach if they have any questions or require additional information.
- Provide information and invitations to upcoming consultation events through a variety of formats. Everyone has different, preferred ways of obtaining information and

TIP: Some opponents may not be swayed by statistical evidence

For more than 30 years, cognitive and behavioral scientists have been studying the "backfire effect"— the phenomenon in which people become more entrenched in false beliefs when confronted with evidence that contradicts their views. Studies show that attempts to refute false information often lead people to hold more firmly to their misperceptions. For example, researchers have found that "when misinformed people were exposed to corrected facts in news stories, they rarely changed their minds. In fact, they often become even more strongly set in their beliefs (Enterprise Community Partners Inc. and FrameWorks Institute, 2016)."

This is why when engaging the public, often exclusively statistical based messaging does not resonate with the public to the same extent as balanced communication strategies that include personal stories and demonstrations of support.

14 Housing Strategies Inc. "NIMBY: When Affordable Housing Development Meets Community Opposition." 2004.

including a diverse range of formats will ensure that you are capturing a robust sample of stakeholders.

- Try to respond to any and all information requests in a timely manner. Set a realistic target for your project team, such as two business days, and respond immediately to any requests stating that you will get back to them within that time. This will earn the trust of the community by showing that you are actively engaging and listening to them.
- Have a clear plan for working with neighbours through the construction process, including a clear point of contact for them to raise concerns. Be clear about what disruptions (noise, impacts to parking, temporary road closures) are expected and when. Do what you can to accommodate local residents and businesses. For those most directly impacted, meet with them in person to answer their questions and formulate a plan for addressing their concerns prior to the construction phase.

Use Skilled Mediators and Consultants

Often in highly contentious environments, the use of skilled mediators can be a beneficial tool in reaching consensus with neighbourhood group opposition. Using mediators that demonstrate a balanced perspective and work to reach consensus can be much more productive than other forms of consultation.

Additionally, many forms of community engagement are best accomplished by experienced consultants that specialize in designing and facilitating engagement activities. These consultants can work with your organization to design a tailored approach for your project.

TIP: Where to find mediators

For a list of potential mediators, contact the BC Non-Profit Housing Association.

Engaging Community to Gain Acceptance

Develop a community engagement plan

- Environment scan
- Stakeholder identification and analysis

Timing is critical

- People who are the most impacted should not find out about proposal in the media (this will erode trust and make more difficult to gain it back)
- Engage key stakeholders early to help provide accurate information (Engaging the BIA or a resident's association can help prevent the spread of misinformation)

Understanding concerns

- Understand what people are likely to be concerned about (physical building, operation model, client type, etc.)
- Concerns are as much about perception as reality (fears around decrease in property value is around the perception that it will affect value; not the reality)
- People may feel angered if they feel stakeholders are disregarding their concerns and calling them NIMBY

Recognizing what gaining community acceptance is

- It is about building trust

Engage Supporters

Obtaining positive support, early in the process, can be crucial. This involves identifying, recruiting, and finally mobilizing your supporters. These people will be called on to support the project in a variety of ways such as letters of support, meeting attendance, and community outreach. This includes other non-profit housing providers.

IDENTIFY SUPPORTERS → **RECRUIT SUPPORTERS** → **SUGGEST ACTIONS FOR SUPPORTERS**

Identify Supporters

Create an internal list with contact details for project supporters that you can refer back to as needed throughout the project. Talk to other non-market housing providers for insight on potential project supporters. Continue to maintain and update your list with each new project in an area so that you are not starting from scratch.

Examples of community organizations that can support a non-market housing development:

- Other housing providers in the area
- Local outreach teams
- Other temporary housing service providers in the area (e.g. emergency shelter and women's transition house providers)
- Local community service organizations that provide supports to proposed housing client group (e.g. addictions and mental health services, health care providers)
- Local police/RCMP
- Nearby hospitals
- Nearby recreation centres or libraries
- Business leaders
- Faith group leaders
- Council/board representatives, chiefs, or mayors

Recruit Supporters

Send personal project information letters to identified potential supporters well in advance of application submission and public notification. Clearly explain how you would like their support and at what stage. Consider offering an information meeting for supporters to become educated on your proposal. Meet personally with local champions and get them on board to come out vocally in support of your project when the time comes.

Suggest Actions for Supporters

Request and collect letters of support from your external team of supporters to submit as part of your application (rezoning, development, etc.) prior to public notification. This will send a positive message of support to local government officials.

- Keep your supporters informed of dates for project information meetings, open houses and public hearings.
- Encourage them to write personal letters and contact them if they have any questions.
- Encourage them to submit comments during the formal public comment period after your application has been submitted.
- Invite your local champions to speak at your project information meetings, open houses and public hearings.
- Provide them with key messages you want them to share with the public and decision makers.
- If possible, engage local experts to speak to anticipated questions in their field of expertise at public engagement sessions and hearings. The public will trust the objective voices of these experts. Examples could include a local police chief to talk about crime related concerns, a mental health expert from the local health authority to speak to the benefits of housing in addressing mental illnesses, or a transportation engineer to answer traffic related concerns.

Timing of Public Engagement

Involve the public in the project participation process at the appropriate time. Involving residents prior to site selection can create false expectations or unreasonable requests. Be clear on what is and isn't on the table for input or collaboration. For instance, if there is a proven, evident need for supplying a particular type of housing in a given neighbourhood, be clear that you intend to develop in that location and give evidence as to why there is a need for the type of housing you're providing. Be prepared to demonstrate how the site was selected and defend why it is appropriate for the type of housing that you are proposing.

On the other hand, bringing the public in too late can be seen as being disrespectful to the community. By finalizing all of the details of the development that could have otherwise been opportunities for collaboration with impacted neighbouring residents who feel impacted (such as façade materials, colours, and other design elements, community amenities, or building height) will send the message that you are unwilling to involve them in the decision-making process and that their opinions don't matter.

Kiwanis Towers, Richmond

TIP: Be proactive in getting information out

Consider offering the media a tour of your site and any others already operating, answering their questions, and providing them with access to your organization. Do this after informing the community of the proposal but prior to community consultation. If neighbours find out about what you are proposing through media sources rather than directly from you, this can break down trust. However, waiting too long to provide information firsthand to members of the media may mean the media will report on information told to them through secondary sources. Ask about deadlines up front and try to meet them. Being proactive is key as any opposition will be quick to get out in front of the media as well. Be easily accessible to the media for interviews and respond to their questions in an urgent manner. Develop a strong working relationship with respected members of the media. Have one point of contact for media inquiries to maintain consistency in responses. Think critically about who your spokesperson will be as the public face of your organization on the project. Make sure that person can answer a range of questions, from operational details about the project to the larger purpose.

TIP: Mobilize early

Begin developing and budgeting for your communication and consultation strategy early in the planning process. Not only will this give you more time to deal with opposition, it will provide you with time to gain your supporters.

Strategies to Address Opposition

Be Prepared to Respond to Concerns

Set aside time to research and prepare responses to the most difficult questions you expect to face from the public. A list of Frequently Asked Questions can be posted on the web site or provided at every engagement event, such as that included in Guide 4 - Sample Materials. If unsure of what types of questions to expect, ask other non-profit housing providers with experience on similar developments in the area. By remaining disciplined in providing consistent answers, it will help you gain trust and demonstrate transparency. Ensure that you have a precise media strategy, with specific guidelines on who will speak with the media and in what circumstances, as well as how to frame the overall tone of your messaging.[15]

Do not underestimate the potential for objections. While you may not have to address every public misperception and fear, you do need to show that you are engaging in good faith, are prepared to negotiate, and come informed to answer their questions.

TIP: Ways opponents may voice concerns

Anticipate the various ways in which residents may voice objections, such as:

- Objection letters addressed to local government council and boards
- Petitions submitted to local government council and boards
- Media interviews
- Public hearings and Council and Boards meetings
- Open houses and consultation events and
- Rallies/protests

15 Pivot Legal Society. “Yes in My Backyard! Toolkit.”

This section discusses concerns commonly raised about proposed non-market housing and how to handle these situations.

COMMON CONCERN	TIPS FOR RESPONDING TO THE CONCERN

Property values will decline	• Evidence from several B.C. studies, as well as research from other jurisdictions, report that property values in the immediate area around the site typically mirror trends at the neighbourhood and municipal level and if there are decreases, they are often small, short-term, and due to other factors (sample links include:
	  • https://www.bchousing.org/research-centre/library/community-acceptance
	  • http://furmancenter.org/files/FurmanCenterPolicyBriefonSupportiveHousing_LowRes.pdf)
	• Organize tours for neighbours, municipal representatives, media and other stakeholders to see existing non-market housing that serves a similar client group or of similar density.

Public safety and increased crime	• Evidence from several B.C. studies, as well as research from other jurisdictions, report that the majority of residents have positive outcomes in terms of housing stability, movement along the housing spectrum, health outcomes, income outcomes, and personal outcomes (sample links include:
	  • https://www.bchousing.org/researchcentre/library/transition-from-homelessness/defining-success-for-supportive-housing-projects-in-bc
	  • https://www.bchousing.org/research-centre/library/community-acceptance/bk-case-study-series-overview&sortType=sortByDate
	  • https://www.homelesshub.ca/resource/housing-my-backyard-municipal-guide-responding-nimby)
	• B.C. research has also provided evidence that calls to police do not increase once the becomes operational (sample links include: https://www.bchousing.org/research-centre/library/community-acceptance)
	• It's important to be clear that there are many varied reasons why someone may be experiencing housing insecurity.
	• Try to break down stigmas by inviting people with lived experience of homelessness, addictions, and or mental health issues to share their stories.
	• Communicate that housing insecurity is less an individual choice and more about underlying social issues impacting vulnerable groups of people.
	• Communicate any supports that will be provided to residents on-site or through off-site partnerships.

COMMON CONCERN	TIPS FOR RESPONDING TO THE CONCERN
Non-market housing is costly for tax-payers	• Evidence from B.C. shows that non-market housing has a positive social return on investment (sample links include: https://www.bchousing.org/research-centre/library/tools-developing-social-housing). • Share stories that show housing delivery has led to positive outcomes in nearby communities and neighbourhoods that the audience can relate to. Outline some of the key benefits of providing homes, such as improving people's mental and physical health, increasing their employment prospects and income levels, and helping them build social networks. Please see *Corporation for Supportive Housing. "Dimensions of Quality Supportive Housing." 2013.* for more information.
Non-market housing will not fit into the neighbourhood	• Demonstrate to property owners that the development will be designed to the same standard as and indistinguishable from market housing developments. • Organize tours for neighbours, municipal representatives, media and other stakeholders of existing non-market housing that serves a similar client group or of similar density. • Use renderings or pictures of similar existing sites to show what the site will look like (samples available at: https://www.bchousing.org/partner-services/public-engagement/projects).
Over-concentration of non-market housing and other support services in the area already	Be prepared to speak to the reasons why this site was selected for the proposed housing. Reasons may include: • Need for housing in the neighbourhood (see sample infographic demonstrating need in Guide 4.) • Proximity to amenities and transit • Connection to community services and employment areas • Alignment with Official Community Plan (OCP)or Neighbourhood Plans • Land was made available for free
Decreased privacy and increased noise	• Ensure design addresses privacy and noise issues for both residents of the proposed non-market housing and next door neighbours (see Guide 2 - Design Details Count for ideas to ensure privacy and noise issues for residents and neighbours in the design). • Consider holding a design charrette or dedicating a small group discussion at a public event to obtain neighbour input on how to ensure privacy and reduce noise transfer between neighbouring sites. • If doing an open house, have a poster board addressing privacy and noise concerns.

COMMON CONCERN	TIPS FOR RESPONDING TO THE CONCERN
Increased traffic and competition for street parking	• Have information readily accessible to the public on what the expected personal vehicle ownership rates would be for the development, based on similar developments and the level of parking that would be supplied. • If it is anticipated to be an increase in traffic generated by the development, provide assurance to the public that the development will be designed to meet the local government's parking and traffic engineering standards and provide information on any upgrades you are proposing and findings of your completed traffic impact assessment in simple terms. • Consider having your traffic engineering consultant attend the public information session to answer anticipated traffic related questions.
Population increase and infrastructure strain	• Remind stakeholders that OCPs and Neighbourhood or Area Plans are tools used by planning professionals to anticipate, well in advance, for projected population growth in terms of infrastructure upgrades and directing growth to appropriate areas and the proposed housing will be assessed by the local government planning staff for its compliance through the rezoning and/or development application stage(s). • If proposing a multi-unit development that will achieve a higher density than adjacent properties, be prepared to justify the density and why, from a land use perspective (beyond just the financial and operational implications), the number of units is aligned with the local government's long-term plans and infrastructure investments. • Highlight additional amenity spaces and programs being provided to residents within the building.

COMMON CONCERN	TIPS FOR RESPONDING TO THE CONCERN
Construction impacts	• Consider meeting in advance of construction activities individually with those residents and business owners likely to be most affected by activities to answer their questions and listen to their concerns. Consider how you can accommodate their concerns, avoid complaints, and demonstrate how you will be a good future neighbour. Starting off on the right foot with neighbours by listening to them and demonstrating how you have considered their concerns will reduce the opposition faced once your development is operational. Consider such compromises as: • Adjusting construction hours (beyond what the local government requires). • Operating especially loud machinery on weekdays rather than weekends and later in the day (afternoons vs mornings) when possible. • Committing to keeping busy sidewalks and roads/lanes open during peak hours (such as morning rush hour). • Finding alternative parking for construction workers (such as renting space from a local business) rather than taking up on-street public parking spaces relied on by residents and businesses. • Considering suitable preferred routes for construction traffic rather than quieter local streets. • Providing visually appealing screening of the construction site to reduce visual impacts. • Maintaining a clean worksite to reduce visual impacts. • Limiting ground disturbance on particularly dry or windy days where dust could be a concern. • Sweeping sidewalks and roads regularly to reduce construction dust and debris. • Providing signage for local businesses when blocking roads or sidewalks to direct customers.

COMMON CONCERNS	TIPS FOR RESPONDING TO THE CONCERNS
Property values will decline	Consult evidence & Research Organize tours for the existing non-market housing community
Public safety and increased crime	Consult evidence & Research Housing insecurity Try to break down stigmas
Non-market housing is costly for tax-payers	Consult evidence & Research Share stories of examples
The non-market housing will not fit into the neighbourhood	Indistinguishable social housing from market housing Organize tours of existing non-market housing Use examples of similar existing sites
Over-concentration non-market housing and other support services in the area already	Be prepared to speak to the reasons why this site was selected for the proposed housing Reasons may include: • Need for housing in the neighbourhood • Proximity to amenities, transit, community services, and employment areas • Alignment with Official Neighbourhood Plans

TIP: Sample messaging about why people experience homelessness

People experience homelessness for a variety of reasons, including:

- A lack of adequate income
- A lack of access to affordable housing
- A lack of access to medical services
- Experiences of discrimination
- Traumatic events and personal crisis
- Physical health problems and disabilities
- Mental health concerns

TIP: "Homes"

Refer to your development publicly as providing 'homes' rather than 'units', which sound impersonal. Say 'developments' rather than 'projects' as they can have negative connotations. The intent is to help the public understand that you are providing more than just a roof over someone's head; you are giving them a place to call home where they can feel safe and secure.

Dos and Don'ts When Facing Anger and Opposition in Public Engagement

Adapted from the "Supportive Housing Community Outreach Toolkit." County of Los Angeles and United Way of Greater Los Angeles, available here: https://nonprofithousing.org/wp-content/uploads/Supportive-Housing-Community-Outreach-Toolkit-LA-United-Way-2017-12.pdf.

DON'Ts	DOs
Speak to an aspect of the development or purport yourself as an expert in something you are unsure about.	Direct the question to an appropriate spokesperson on the subject, or if your organization doesn't have an answer on hand, promise to follow up with that person in a timely manner.
Try to win over an opponent by focusing on the righteousness of the cause.	Provide factual information on what the actual impacts of the specific development will be as it relates to the opponent to dispel false information related to how the development will personally affect them.
Make promises related to how their individual input will be incorporated into the development.	Assure them that their input has been received and that all public input will be taken into consideration as part of the engagement process.
Let one disruptive opponent detract you from discussions with others waiting their turn.	Calmly tell the person that others are waiting for your time. You are unlikely to change a vocal and angry opponent's opinion in one meeting. Focus your efforts on engaging with residents who are undecided and seeking facts.
Entertain vague questions or general comments that don't relate specifically to the development.	Firmly tell them that this is an opportunity to provide feedback as it relates to the development and aspects within your control but that anything outside that should be a conversation to have with their local elected officials.
Try to explain away concerns.	Ask follow up questions to understand their underlying worry, share key messaging, thank them for sharing, and assure them that their concerns will be considered.
Get into an emotional argument.	Stick to key messaging. Don't be afraid to shut down the conversation by thanking them for their time and moving along to another person if the conversation is no longer productive.

Strategies to Maintain Community Support[16]

Being a good neighbour can help maintain positive relationships once the site has opened. In many cases neighbourhood concerns are reduced and complaints become less frequent once the site is operational. Ensuring ongoing maintenance and positive neighbour relations can help maintain community acceptance that has been gained.

Though complaints are less common post-opening, some sites, and in particular supportive housing sites where residents tend to have higher needs (including mental health and addiction issues) do experience some ongoing issues. It is also important to note that sometimes ongoing complaints are not due to the residents, but rather from others in their neighbourhood. Examples of ongoing neighbourhood concerns include:

- building or site maintenance issues
- parking
- resident behaviours in the neighbourhood leading to safety concerns
- loitering
- litter
- residents smoking near other properties

Strategies to maintain positive relationships with neighbours post-opening include:

- Continue community advisory committee meetings to provide a formal opportunity for neighbours to express ongoing or emerging concerns directly with the building's housing providers.
  - Meetings may become less frequent over time as the number of issues for discussion decrease.
- Empower neighbours to keep a watch out and report suspicious activity or incidents right away.
- Have regular check-ins with neighbours so they know who to contact if they have a concern.
- Be available and ensure any neighbour concerns are addressed immediately.
- Ensure neighbour concerns are heard and responded to without being defensive, so neighbours feel comfortable coming forward.
- Install security cameras around the site and monitor them regularly to immediately address any inappropriate behaviour.
- Place office space overlooking the street so staff can see what happens outside the building.
- Invite neighbours to events or building celebrations (e.g. summer BBQ) or ask them to volunteer at the site, to meet residents and get a better understanding of who is being served and to breakdown stereotypes.
- Build strong relationships with neighbourhood service providers to help provide additional supports to residents.
- Consider Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) changes to building and site if necessary to improve safety and reduce crime.
- Ensure resident mix is balanced so supportive levels are appropriate to manage resident needs.
- Hold residents accountable for their behaviour on-site and in the neighbourhood through agreements such as tenancy agreements, program agreements and good neighbour agreements.
- When a new resident moves in, review the agreements and ensure they are clear on their responsibilities.
- Remind residents of their obligations on a regular basis.
- Encourage residents to keep a look out and report suspicious activity or incidents right away.
- Encourage residents to volunteer in the neighbourhood.
- Encourage residents to access nearby services and amenities.

16 Information in this section is based on findings of the Community Acceptance of Supportive Housing Case Study Series conducted by BC Housing and the Impacts of Non-Market Housing on Property Values Case Study Series conducted by Insights Speciality Consulting on behalf of BC Housing. https://www.bchousing.org/research-centre/library/community-acceptance&sortType=sortByDate

Case Study **Supportive Housing**

To improve safety and outcomes for residents with addictions and to address neighbour concerns about open-drug use in the neighbourhood, Johnson Street supportive housing in Victoria added a safe injection site to the building for exclusive use by residents of the building. See https://www.phs.ca/project/johnson-street-community/ for more information.

Garden at Sarah Ross House, Vancouver

How Was This Toolkit Developed?

This Toolkit was developed in collaboration with BC Housing's Research Centre and Dillon Consulting Limited using a variety of methods, including:

- **One-on-one interviews** with representatives from four neighbourhood groups
- **Focus groups** with four stakeholder groups: non-profit housing providers, local government representatives, community organizations, and Advisory Group members
- **Case studies** from throughout the province
- **Literature review** of relevant case studies and toolkits
- **Meetings with BC Housing** staff and **Advisory Group** members

The information in this Toolkit relies on all the sources identified in this section. Where specific sections of other reports were quoted or copied with some slight adaptations, the original reports are cited. However, most components of this guide can be linked back to several pieces of literature, case studies, and primary consultation results, as well the original toolkit. Components of the Toolkit that are not specifically cited are pulled from a combination of these sources. Please see the bibliography on the next page for a listing of reports reviewed as part of the literature review to inform this Toolkit.

For more information about the toolkit and organizations consulted, please see the introductory guide here https://www.bchousing.org/research-centre/library/community-acceptance.

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More Information:

BC Housing's Research Centre works in collaboration with housing sector partners to foster excellence in residential construction and find innovative solutions for affordable housing in British Columbia. Sharing leading-edge research, advances in building science, and new technologies encourages best practice. The Research Centre identifies and bridges research gaps to address homelessness, housing affordability, social housing challenges and the needs of distinct populations. Mobilizing knowledge and research expertise helps improve the quality of housing and leads to innovation and adoption of new construction techniques, Building Code changes, and enhanced education and training programs. Learn more about the Research Centre at www.bchousing.org.
Sign up to receive the latest news and updates at www.bchousing.org/subscribe.

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To find more about building community acceptance, visit our website: **www.bchousing.org**

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