

# Community Acceptance of Non-Market Housing

## Purpose

*The purpose of this guide is to provide practical materials for non-profit housing providers to use through the pre-planning and development phases of a proposed non-market housing project.*

*Guide 4 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](http://www.bchousing.org).*

## Guide 4 Sample Materials for Non-Market Housing Providers

This guide provides useful materials for housing providers to assist them through all stages of the pre-development, approvals, and community engagement processes.

### Sample materials provided in this Guide:

- › Pre-planning phase
  - Checklist: Estimating community acceptance if rezoning is required
- › Development phase
  - Samples: Letters of support
  - Templates: Frequently asked questions and response considerations related to various types of non-market housing
  - Templates: Media communications
  - Checklists: Online communication
  - Checklists: Planning community events



*Kitsilano House, Vancouver*

# Pre-Planning Phase

## Checklist: Estimating Likelihood of Community Acceptance if Rezoning is Required

If a site being considered for proposed non-market housing requires rezoning, gaging community acceptance for the project can help assess whether the potential costs associated with a rezoning application are worth the risk. While it is never possible to know the outcome in advance, these questions may be helpful to assess if the proposed housing project might be accepted by the community.

- › What is the estimated approval timeline?
- › What additional costs are anticipated to complete the rezoning?
  - This includes technical studies (such as environmental, geotechnical, traffic, and servicing assessments), staff or consultant time for additional project coordination and community consultation, carrying costs associated with any financing, and the financial risk of losing grants due to delay.
  - Be as detailed as possible, speak with the local government planning department and consider engaging an experienced non-market housing development consultant if you are unsure.
- › How consistent is the type of housing and density proposed to adjacent properties?
- › Is it similar in massing and density?
- › What is the character of housing within the neighbourhood? If it is all single detached, rancher style homes, can you design something that will look similar?
- › How much development is the neighbourhood experiencing?
  - Neighbourhoods in transition may be more accepting of a non-market housing project.
  - Established neighbourhoods that are not experiencing new development may be more resistant.
- › How receptive will the community be to the development?
  - Look at other residential development, particularly non-market housing in the community to help answer this. Review past applications for redevelopment, read local newspapers and speak to other housing providers, and particularly look at any other non-market housing projects that were proposed in the area.
- › How receptive has the mayor and councils and boards been to similar rezoning applications?
  - Speak with local community groups, non-market housing providers, councils and boards, and/or the local planning department for insight.
  - Work with an elected official to gain information, educate other councils and boards and leverage those connections for introductions to community groups.





Tanner Terrace, Vernon

## Development Phase

### Sample Letters: Introducing the Development to Key Stakeholders

#### Sample Letter: Introducing Your Development to Potential Supporters

Below is a sample letter that can be tailored to meet your organization's needs. It is suggested that your group prepare and send a letter to potential project supporters. These proponents, as discussed in Guide 3, may include, but are not limited to:

- › Well-respected local leaders who are vocally supportive of non-market housing in their community such as police chiefs, business leaders, religious leaders, councils and boards, Chiefs, or mayors;
- › Representatives of local public agencies and non-profit organizations such as health authorities, charities, and homelessness coalitions;
- › Immediate and adjacent land owners and neighbours; and
- › Other non-market housing providers with a strong reputation in the community.

For the letters to the immediate and adjacent residents, it is ideal to deliver this letter personally. It is recommended that the letters be delivered at an appropriate time when the residents are expected to be home (evenings or weekends) by a suitable representative of your organization who, if given the opportunity, would engage in a short conversation with the recipient about the upcoming meeting. If no one is home, a brief note on the envelope – “sorry to miss you” - would be appropriate with an offer to follow up with a visit or phone call. Areas with gated communities or limited access apartment buildings are more challenging. Contact with the resident manager or condo board may be needed to determine the best way to advise neighbours. Alternatively, this letter could be sent from the director of your housing organization and delivered by mail.



## Sample Letter to Potential Supporters

**Date**

**Personalized Address**

Re: **(Name of Development or Site Address)**

Attn: **(Name of Contact and Their Title)**

Dear **(Mr./Ms. Last Name)**,

On behalf of **(Insert Organization Name)**, I am writing you to personally inform you that our organization has acquired a site at **(Insert Address)** for the development of a non-market housing development. The housing development is proposed to accommodate (Insert Resident Group, ex: families experiencing housing insecurity). A need for this type of housing has been identified by our organization and through **(Insert name of local government and its housing needs assessment/strategy or other study you are referencing)**.

We are proposing this development to be approximately **(Insert number)** of **(Insert type of homes)**. We are very excited about the opportunity to provide much-needed housing for this community and would greatly appreciate your support.

Our intention is to apply for a **(rezoning/development/variance permit)** in accordance with the requirements of (Insert name of local government) within the next **(Insert number)** months.

We hope that we can count on your support for delivering much needed non-market housing in this community. Please let us know if you would like to be involved and we will stay in touch regarding ways you can show your support.

We would be happy to provide you with any additional information on the development should you be interested by arranging an in-person meeting or phone call.

Sincerely,

**Insert Signature**

**Insert Name, Title**

**Insert Phone Number and Email**



### Sample Letter: Introducing Your Development to Future Neighbours

The sample letter can be tailored to meet your organization's needs in sending a letter to potential future neighbours. Typically, this letter will be sent individually to each household within a 400 m radius of the site (to the end of each block).

Alternatively, it can be sent from the director of your housing organization by mail. Consider also attaching a list of anticipated FAQs to the letter, such as who will live there, when residents will move in and who will operate the development.

## Sample Letter to Future Neighbours

**Date**

**Personalized Address**

Re: **(Name of Development if determined or Site Address)**

Dear **(name if known or neighbourhood name)** neighbour,

We are writing to you as your potential new neighbour. **(Insert organization name)** has acquired a site at **(Insert address)** for the development of **(Insert Use, ex: Apartments)** for **(Insert Tenant Group, ex: families)**. We are excited about this opportunity to provide much-needed non-market housing in **(Insert name of local government)** and would like to invite you and your neighbours to work with us in designing our development.

Our intention is to apply for a **(rezoning/development /variance permit)** in accordance with the requirements of **(Insert name of local government)** within the next **(Insert number)** months. Before we take our plans any further, we understand that it is important for our future neighbours to provide initial input and would like to invite you to an informal meeting to talk about the project. Members of our organization, and **(Insert names of other relevant consultants, proponents, etc.)** will be on hand to answer your questions. We hope you will be able to attend the following scheduled meeting:

**Date and Time**

**Location**

To learn more about our organization and our current developments, we invite you to visit our website at **(insert url)**.

We look forward to meeting with you. In the meantime, if you have any questions, or if you are unable to attend, please don't hesitate to call or email **(Insert Name)** at **(Insert email and phone number)**.

Sincerely,

**Insert Signature**

**Insert Name, Title**

## Templates: Frequently Asked Questions

It is important for a non-profit housing provider to anticipate questions that the community will ask. This is also an excellent exercise for the non-profit housing provider to be realistic about what concerns the community may have. This sample list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) is meant to serve as a guiding document as your organization crafts its responses to anticipated questions from the public. A working list of FAQs should be kept on hand by your organization's representative(s) when engaging the public and media to ensure consistent responses. The FAQ document should also be publicly available online on your project webpage. Before you commence any consultation with the community or meet with neighbouring residents, you should have responses prepared to these questions, and any others that your organization anticipates. As new questions and concerns are raised throughout public consultation and project planning, continue to update your working FAQ list.

Although the specific questions will vary depending on the type, location, local circumstances and size of development being planned, most questions will fall into one of six topic areas:

- › Who the future residents will be
- › Operational concerns of neighbours
- › Local government approval process and development timelines
- › Impacts on the neighbourhood
- › Details related to physical design
- › Information about your organization (the housing provider)

Templates showing typical questions and considerations for responses to each of these topic areas are provided.



Apple Valley, Kelowna

## FAQs Related to Future Residents

### Who will live there?

Provide information on the anticipated tenant demographics (families, seniors, singles). Be clear if they are anticipated to already be living in the community and what the general eligibility requirements are. Explain the rent structure for the proposed non-market housing.

### When would residents move in?

Provide an approximate timing for when approvals are anticipated to be achieved, when construction would commence and when residents would be able to move in.

### Who will operate the housing? Will there be part-time or full-time staffing? How many staff? What type of staff?

Provide information on who the operator would be, how many staff would be involved and what their roles would be. Specify whether there will be onsite staff 24/7 or what the staffing hours would be. Specify whether management of the building will be by the same organization providing onsite supports. If this development will create employment, provide information on this.

### How will residents be selected?

Your organization does not have to provide specifics on resident selection, however the target resident group should be identified and information on how to apply for housing should be provided (such as a link to your organization). A statement regarding tenant selection should be provided.

### How do you propose to integrate residents into the community?

Provide information on how complaints can be filed and how any issues will be addressed. This statement could be as follows; "When residents move into a building, they are immediately matched with appropriate supportive services to ensure that they are supported in stabilizing their housing."

### What community services do you anticipate residents utilizing? Are these services available and within walking distance for people who need them - transit, shopping, child care, medical facilities?

Be prepared to defend the location of your development



and why it is appropriate for the resident group. You should not be proposing this development unless you feel strongly that the location is appropriately located near relevant services.

#### **Will there be adequate support for residents with disabilities?**

Provide information on the types of disabilities anticipated and the supports/services that will be available to them. This could include physical design features such as ramps and elevators. This could also include acknowledgement of the availability of transport services.

#### **What is supportive housing (if applicable)?**

If you are proposing supportive housing, provide a basic definition and explanation such as: “Supportive housing provides supports and services to residents who cannot live independently, helping transition individuals into living healthy and productive lives. Research shows that this form of housing is the most effective way to end homelessness through providing people safe, clean and stable homes with resources such as mental and physical health services, addiction treatment, job training and case management. This type of housing has proven to be successful for both residents and surrounding communities. For more information, visit BC Housing’s website.”

#### **What types of supports will be available for residents?**

Provide information on the types of supports that residents will have access to both on-site and in the community such as counsellors, social workers, life skills and job training. Explain that these types of supports are vital to reducing homelessness and social issues. Have references to local statistics on the existing need for these types of supports and housing, which residents may not be aware of. Pay attention to privacy concerns for specific groups such as vulnerable women, youth and kids.

#### **What types of support will be available to people with mental health diagnoses and/or drug/alcohol addictions?**

This does not apply to all housing types, however it will likely be of great concern to neighbours. Provide information on the types of supports that residents will have access to, to cope with their illnesses and/or addictions such as psychiatric care and support staff. If there is going to be live-in staff, identify how many.

### **FAQs Related to Operational Concerns**

#### **How will the development be monitored? What will be done to keep unwanted “visitors” away from the neighbourhood?**

Provide information on site surveillance, security, monitoring, and management. This can also address design issues, site lighting and ‘eyes on the street’. Reiterate that the safety of residents is equally important and that 911 should be called if anyone witnesses illegal activity.

#### **How will neighbours’ concerns be addressed after the development is built/occupied?**

Provide information on how neighbours will be able to communicate concerns/complaints and who will be responsible for following up. This could be with the housing provider (resident manager), bylaw enforcement, or police. Consider providing neighbours with opportunity to join a Community Advisory Committee.

#### **Who will be the contact person for neighbours’ concerns?**

Provide the building manager or contact person’s information if known, or where and when their contact information will be available to residents. People want one point of contact. This contact person must be available 24/7.

### **FAQs Related to the Municipal Approval Process**

#### **What types of local government approvals are required?**

Be prepared to explain each approval required (provide basic definitions in layman’s terms), the process, decision maker(s), and expected timelines. For example, a rezoning application will be required to determine whether the intended use (apartment, townhouse, etc.), density (number of units), height (meters), and setbacks (distances from property - all lines for the construction of structures) is appropriate for the site. In addition, if an Official Community Plan (OCP) or Neighbourhood Plan amendment is required, this application will require input from neighbours and consideration of the relevant policy in the local government’s adopted Official Community and Neighbourhood Plans, available on their website. The housing provider needs to explain when they will be submitting their applications. Being open and transparent about any conversations with local government is helpful. An estimate of timing is critical. As recommended in Guide 3, the housing provider will have engaged the community

at various stages of the application. There will also be opportunity for public input at the public hearing. The local government will announce the date for the public hearing, post it on the web site, mail out notices (if that is their policy), advertise in local newspapers and post it on the city's website. Residents have an opportunity to respond in writing or to attend the public hearing and speak to their concerns. A decision will be made by councils and boards, these meetings are open to the public to attend.

#### **Who from the local government will be reviewing this proposal? How do we contact them?**

If the application is being reviewed by the planning department, provide contact details. If it is being decided on by councils and boards, ensure you let the public know how they can contact them.

#### **Why are you requesting a rezoning and why should it be supported?**

Be prepared to defend why you are rezoning or requesting a variance, if you are. This answer must go beyond the number of homes you are hoping to provide. For instance, an appropriate answer would be: The apartments will be designed to a maximum of 500 square feet to maintain affordability. Under the existing zoning, apartments are not an outright permitted use, and providing townhouses/duplexes/detached houses would not make the homes affordable. However, we have designed the development to be to the same distance from property lines as townhouses/duplexes/detached houses and ensured that neighbouring property views and privacy are respected by the building height and orientation. We feel that the exterior design of the building and the landscaping proposed is to a high standard; however, we are open to your ideas on how to make the appearance of the building as compatible to the neighbourhood as possible.

#### **What opportunities will there be for neighbours to identify any issues and concerns about the project through the approval stage(s)?**

Provide specifics on dates/timelines and where they can access information on upcoming opportunities, such as a link to the project website. If possible, commit to emailing invitations and project updates to those most directly impacted by the development (within 400 m radius) who

have expressed a desire to stay informed about the project. Outline the number of opportunities they will have: the first contact with the housing provider, engagement organized by the housing provider, public hearing for the rezoning or OCP amendment, circulation and comment on Development Permits.

### **FAQs Related to Impacts on the Neighbourhood**

#### **How will the local school(s) be affected in terms of class sizes, enrolment, and safety?**

If the development is geared toward families with school aged children, provide anticipated numbers and outline how many students are expected to be coming from other schools vs. how many are likely already attending that school. Demonstrate that you have consulted with the local school(s) on this matter if it is perceived to be an issue.

If the development does not involve families with school aged children, be clear about this and who your residents will be. If safety is cited as a concern based on the resident group and the site is located within close proximity to a school, demonstrate that you have consulted with the local police department and consider having them attend and speak to the issue to the public.

#### **Will there be any increased police presence in the neighbourhood? Could there be an increase in crime in the neighbourhood? How can you be sure there won't be?**

If possible, provide a statement from the local police on these matters. Also provide information on specific site surveillance, and security measures. Provide evidence from similar developments of the impacts on crime and emergency service rates. Consider including reference to BC Housing's research on calls to police, available in the Community Acceptance Series. Note that police often provide outreach and services to supportive housing that do not relate to crime. These include community relations, wellness checks and mental health assistance, and as first responders.

#### **How will property services such as sewer, water, drainage, sidewalks, roads, and parks be affected?**

Consider having your civil engineering consultant or an engineering department representative from the local government speak to this issue in public consultation.



Have your servicing reports/studies on hand and consider providing a link to them on your project website. Provide confirmation that the development is being assessed by the local government to ensure that services can be appropriately provided to local government standards and that any servicing upgrades would be at the cost of the developer/housing provider, not taxpayers (unless that's not the case).

#### **How much traffic will be generated? What impact will it have on neighbourhood roads?**

Provide a summary of your Traffic Impact Assessment to the community that clearly states the impacts and what upgrades you might be required to complete (such as widening sidewalks in front of the development). It is also good to point out that often affordable housing has lower private vehicle ownership. If anticipated vehicle ownership rates are low, provide evidence of this and be clear how much traffic is anticipated to be generated by the development and why (i.e. “We anticipate that based on similar developments in the area that only X% of the X number of driving aged residents will own personal vehicles due to personal income levels and access to public transportation”). Address how you will provide on-site parking.

#### **How will property values in the general neighbourhood or the time it takes to sell property be affected by the construction of the non-market housing project? How can you be sure there won't be a problem when we decide to sell our home?**

Several studies have been completed, on the effect on property values of non-market housing developments. Provide these resources at consultation events and consider providing links on your project website. Be prepared that property owners, despite the evidence, may be skeptical. You will have to provide sound rationale behind your justification such as details on staffing and management policies, and justification that the appearance of the building will be indistinguishable from other developments in the neighbourhood, etc. Speaking to the social return on investment of non-market housing can show how the proposed non-market housing can help enhance the community. For more information: please see [Tools for Developing Social Housing](#).

#### **Neighbours now use the vacant property as a shortcut, park, parking area, etc. Will this continue? Will there be any compensation for losing it? Will the development make any positive contribution to the neighbourhood?**

Be clear that the site was never intended for public access or recreational use. It is likely that the property was private property and that the land holder has development rights. The exception to this would be if the land were donated by the local government – the land could have originally been acquired for municipal or school reserve and is now not required for those purposes. It would be important to highlight what the community will gain from the development in terms of amenity and a more diverse caring community. For instance, are you upgrading sidewalks, crosswalks, adding landscaping, providing a community garden, etc.

#### **What will the construction impacts be on my residence or business?**

Provide information on the anticipated months of construction, construction hours, impacts to on-street parking, road and sidewalk closures, and expected level of noise. Provide a point of contact during construction for resident complaints so they can be followed up with in a timely manner. Provide an opportunity for neighbours to meet with your organization prior to construction to address any specific concerns.

#### **FAQs Related to Details of Physical Design**

**For new developments: What will the development look like? What colours and materials are being suggested? How will this fit in with nearby properties? What does the entrance look like? Where will the parking be located? Where will the garbage bins be located?**

**For renovations: What exactly will be changed? Is it compatible with the existing look of the building?**

Rather than simply providing descriptions, be as visual as possible. A picture is worth a thousand words. Prior to community consultation, use artistic sketches and renderings exploring concepts/ideas rather than more concrete looking plans. After an appropriate level of public input has been received, particularly from nearby neighbours, provide 2D and 3D renderings showing not only the site but how it fits into the neighbourhood block/surroundings.



**How many homes will there be? What is the density in comparison with the adjacent area? Is this higher/lower than the proposed development? Will there be garages, carports? If not, how will parking be handled? How many resident stalls are being provided? Will there be any visitor parking? Does the parking provided meet the local government's requirements? Is there a guarantee that all required parking will be on the site?**

Be clear about the level of vehicle ownership anticipated and reasons why. Provide a site plan clearly identifying the location of any parking, including accessible and visitor stalls. If you are requesting a parking variance, provide an explanation as to why car ownership is anticipated to be much lower than a typical market development.

**Where are the access/exits from the project? How will they affect the neighbouring properties?**

If the access/exit points are changing for the site, provide a brief rationale. For example: "In speaking with local government planning and transportation engineering staff, and through consultation with our traffic consultant, it was determined that the most appropriate site access be located on Smith Street to avoid traffic deceleration and congestion on the much busier Park Avenue. Based on the projected traffic flow, it was determined that a signaled intersection was not required, so the stop sign will remain."

**What will the exterior lighting be like? Will it shine on neighbouring properties?**

Demonstrate how you have, or will be incorporating exterior lighting into the building design. For example: "All exterior lighting will be focused on the building to reduce glare on neighbouring properties."

**What will the landscaping look like? Will there be enough separation between neighbours? What will the fences look like?**

Provide the landscaping plan on the website and at public consultation engagements and incorporate it into the design renderings if possible. Demonstrate that you have addressed neighbours desire for privacy in the design of landscaped or screened buffers but that you are not going to provide unsafe hiding areas.

**Will there be a children's play area? Where will it be in relation to nearby neighbours? Will the play area be**

**adequate for all children living in the development? What other outdoor or recreation space is planned?**

If the play/recreation area(s) are publicly accessible, make it known. Demonstrate your rationale behind their location(s).

## **FAQs Related to the Developer and Development**

**Who is building the development? What is the relationship of the society to the builder?**

If possible, identify the builder early on. It is preferable to use local contractors and/or subcontractors to demonstrate how the development will be benefitting the local economy. State if the procurement process involves allocation of a particular amount of the project to local businesses or if they will be given any sort of preference. Provide information on how local contractors can be involved in the procurement process and do not be surprised if you receive inquiries. If you or other non-market housing providers have used the selected contractor previously, provide photos and information on these representative developments.

**Who is the architect? Have they worked on these types of projects before? What other professionals will be involved?**

Provide names of consultants that are involved in the development and why they were selected and are well suited to the project (experience, reputation, local knowledge, etc.). If possible, demonstrate how local businesses/professionals are benefitting from the project.

**What other developments has your organization been involved with?**

Provide photos and descriptions of other developments that your organization has been involved in. If none, ask other non-market housing providers for permission to reference their developments within that community as examples of the type of development that your organization is proposing.

**What guarantees are there that your organization will carry through on promises made? Can the development be sold to another group?**

If the ownership or management oversight is being provided by BC Housing, be clear about the process. Be clear whether the development must remain non-market housing, for how long, and how it is enforced. This can be addressed through Housing Agreements, covenants and other forms of commitments.

**Who is funding the development? How much tax payer money will be contributed toward the development?**

Provide percentages on the level of funding, if permitted, and the estimated cost of the development. If this is not possible, provide a more general response on who the funding partners are. This could also provide the rent calculations to demonstrate how the development will be below market.

**Why doesn't the housing provider look for another parcel of land that is already zoned? Did the developer consider other properties? Why was the site selected?**

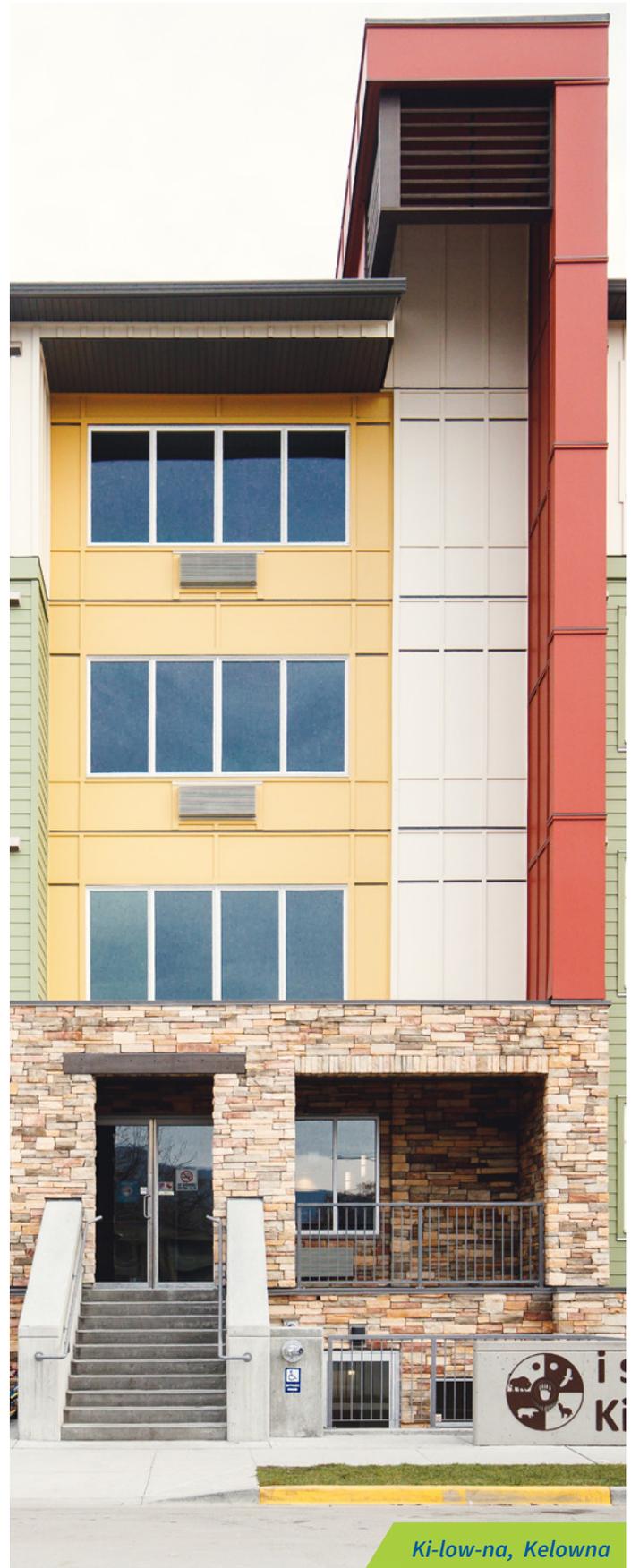
If the land was donated, be clear about it. Be prepared to defend why the site is appropriate for the type and level of development that your organization is proposing.

**Who is the primary contact for this project and how can they be reached? Will the same person be available after the development is occupied?**

Maintain a consistent point of contact with sufficient contact details (name, title, phone number, email address, office address) for the development through the planning process. If a different person is going to be responsible for management during building operation, provide that person's information (if known) or where and when their contact information will be available to residents.

**How will the neighbours' development and design concerns be addressed?**

If consultation event(s) have already been completed, provide information on dates, locations, attendance, and how the event(s) were advertised. Provide information on upcoming opportunities for input. In addition, if community input does result in changes, make it known that the community was listened to. If there are comments from the community that cannot be addressed, make those known also. Sometimes the community does not understand some of the regulatory requirements.





## Sample Messaging: To Address Common Neighbour Concerns Regarding Proposed Supportive Housing

COMMON NEIGHBOUR CONCERN	SAMPLE MESSAGING
<p><b>Concerns based on stigmas and stereotypes regarding supportive housing residents</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The residents moving into supportive are diverse and of different ages, backgrounds, cultures, education levels and experiences.</li> <li>• There is no single path to homelessness, and each resident has faced their own particular struggles that led to the devastating experience of having no home.</li> <li>• Some residents may be survivors of domestic violence, some may have experienced a debilitating injury or illness or a sudden and unexpected loss of income.</li> <li>• Supportive housing helps our neighbours experiencing homelessness through providing a safe and stable home. Residents receive on-site physical and mental health support, addiction treatment, meals, and other services.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Safety issues</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new homes will not be disruptive to your quality of life as the continued safety of you and your neighbours is extremely important.</li> <li>• The building will have on-site security features and benefit from 24-hour presence of support staff.</li> <li>• On-site staff are available to respond to community concerns and to prevent any problems from occurring.</li> <li>• A thorough assessment of every resident is completed to make sure they access the right services.</li> <li>• Residents moving in have a strong desire to better their lives through housing and services.</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from County of Los Angeles and United Way Greater Los Angeles. 2017. "Supportive Housing Community Outreach Toolkit." <https://nonprohousing.org/wp-content/uploads/Supportive-Housing-Community-Outreach-Toolkit-LA-United-Way-2017-12.pdf>



## Sample Infographs: Services Provided by Proposed Supportive Housing and Community Need

Sample infograph of services that may be provided to residents in supportive housing:

 <p><b>24/7 professional support staff</b></p>	 <p><b>Safe and secure place to sleep</b></p>	 <p><b>Breakfast and one hot meal a day</b></p>
 <p><b>Private Washrooms</b></p>	 <p><b>Laundry</b></p>	 <p><b>Social Connection</b></p>
 <p><b>Accessible for a diverse group</b></p>	 <p><b>Connection to local community services</b></p>	 <p><b>Peer employment opportunities</b></p>
 <p><b>Referral to health care, mental health and addiction services</b></p>	 <p><b>Trauma-informed support and care</b> to assist people in stabilizing and creating plans to move from homelessness to successfully housed.</p>	 <p><b>Outreach worker assists</b> with income issues, apartment viewings, securing housing and liaising with landlords to support stable tenancies.</p>

(Source: BC Housing, Public Engagement Poster Boards, <https://www.bchousing.org/partner-services/public-engagement/projects>)

Sample Community Need Infographic:

# Housing Need in Chilliwack

Homelessness is usually the result of many factors including a lack of adequate income, access to affordable housing and medical services, experiences of discrimination, traumatic events and personal crisis, physical health problems or disabilities and mental health concerns.

**According to the 2017 Fraser Valley Regional District Homeless Count, there were**

**221** people experiencing homelessness in Chilliwack,  
which was a **203%** increase from 2014.



People who are homeless in Chilliwack currently have access to the following BC Housing funded services:



Outreach workers



55  
Rent supplements



57  
year-round  
shelter beds



36  
temporary  
shelter mats



# WINNING AND KEEPING COMMUNITY ACCEPTANCE



## COMMON NEIGHBOUR CONCERNS AND HOW TO ADDRESS THEM

### 1 PUBLIC SAFETY AND CRIME



**Obtain**  
local information from law enforcement on operating developments



**Provide**  
information regarding onsite security measures



**Discuss**  
and collaborate on building management practices with neighbours

### 2 TRAFFIC



**Determine**  
expected vehicle ownership rates



**Provide**  
information on upgrades proposed and findings of your traffic impact assessment



**Consider**  
having a traffic consultant or municipal transportation attend public engagement events

### 3 POPULATION INCREASE AND INFRASTRUCTURE STRAIN



**Prepare**  
to defend the number of homes proposed and how the development meets relevant municipal plans.



**Be Clear**  
where residents are coming from and provide evidence of the existing housing need in the community

### 4 STIGMAS



**Invite**  
people with lived experience to share their stories at public engagement events



**Explain why**  
housing insecurity is tied to underlying social issues



**Outline**  
the key social and financial benefits to society of providing non-market housing

### 5 PROPERTY VALUES



**Offer**  
tours of existing developments



**Utilize**  
BC Housing's Research

## OTHER COMMUNITY CONCERNS

### THAT YOU SHOULD BE PREPARED TO RESPOND TO:



Privacy



Noise



Overcrowding



Location



Incompatible Design with the Existing Neighbourhood



# Templates: Media Communications

## Template: Media Release

A media release can be a useful, practical tool for non-market housing providers to communicate with print, online, and broadcast journalists and, in turn, with the wider community. Depending on the circumstances, a media release may be used to convey information about a proposed development, respond to comments made by others during the consultation/approval process, or announce an upcoming event such as a project opening.

This section provides some points to consider as you craft your media release.

**Length:** Media releases are short and crisply written, in the range of 300 - 500 words (one page).

**Formatting:** Releases should be produced on your organization's letterhead. It should state that it is a media release, usually in larger or bolded text. Use standard letter-size paper. Double-spaced typing makes the text easier to read. Start with the date and who, what, when and where – if referring to an event.

Keep it to three to five short paragraphs summarizing the most important information. If you include quotes, keep them short and use ones that express the significance of the news. For example, “Finally, the community will have housing and supports for people struggling with mental illness,” said Sal Smith, Executive Director of the non-profit housing society that will manage the new building. “This is something we can all celebrate.”

If you are sending the release by email, send it in the body of the email, not as an attachment.

Include the contact information of the spokesperson and photo/video opportunities.

### TIP: Be aware of funder communication protocols

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.

**Content:** Introduce the media release with a headline – make this the first and central point of your release. Keep the key points to three or four. Include facts and figures, as appropriate to the story.

Make sure the news release answers the key questions such as Who, What, When, Where, Why and How. Be clear why you are putting out a media release and what you are trying to accomplish. The release should be newsworthy or it is unlikely to be of interest to journalists. Not all news is controversial or front page material, so don't be reluctant about announcing special funding, the first residents' move-in, or an upcoming neighbourhood open house. It's still newsworthy, especially for local newspapers and radio stations that take a special interest in community news and events.

Use quotes which emphasize the point(s) you are making in the text. A board member would be a good person to use for a quote. Spokespersons from advocate or support groups are also suitable candidates for quotes.

Reinforce the message that you are a community-based organization building or acquiring housing to meet specific needs within your community. Briefly mention the community benefits that will be realized.

### TIP: Include a picture of the proposed building

When crafting a media release, consider including a picture of the proposed building. This could include a rendering or proposed design.

For releases where your organization is responding to others' opinions or to misinformation that is circulating in the community, there is no advantage to initiating a 'war of words' through the media. Stick to presenting your position and project in a positive manner. Correct misinformation with facts.

Do not try to include too much background detail – stick to the key points. If there is additional context information that you feel is important, attach this as a separate backgrounder.

The backgrounder is the place to include details about the physical design of the project, funding arrangements and, if possible, an architectural illustration.

Three components that must be in every media release include a release date, place of origin and contact person(s) for further information. Include a phone number and email for the contact person(s). By keeping it short, you invite inquiries.

**Circulation:** Circulate to all suitable print and broadcast media outlets in your community, by email. Find out the names of the journalists who will possibly cover the story. In some media outlets, there may be an individual assigned to the general subject of housing and urban development. Direct the release to the attention of this individual and send to the general news desk as well.

Consider making follow-up phone calls to individuals in the media to reinforce the messages in your news release and confirm receipt of your email by the intended person. Provide them with a single point of contact within your organization should they have any question about the release or have any further questions.

**Release:** Don't expect the print, online, or broadcast media to use the text of your release. Often, the news release will be used as a starting point for journalists, who will cover the story differently or, perhaps, use your material as part of a larger story. Copies of the media release should be circulated within your organization and, if appropriate, to funding agencies, local government staff and councils and boards to keep them informed about the project. Consider also posting on your project website.



## Template: Media Advisory

In situations where your organization is planning an event, information session, or open house, a media advisory (sometimes called a public service announcement) is very useful. The purpose of the advisory is to flag the attention of news outlets so they will do one or both of the following: send a news reporter or crew to cover the event and/or put a notice in their publication or broadcast in advance of the event. This public service advertising can be a useful way of making your event known, and being proactive in getting out first-hand facts and information to media rather than allowing opposition groups to get out in front of the media first.

This section provides some points to consider as you craft your media advisory:

**Length:** Media advisories are very short, usually between 50 and 100 words or 20 seconds on the radio.

**Formatting:** An advisory should be produced on your organization's letterhead and should state boldly that it is a media advisory - use larger text or upper-case letters. Use standard letter-size paper. Double-spaced typing makes the text easier to read.

**Content:** The components that must be in every media advisory include when and where the event is being held, the main reason and basic format (i.e. ceremony to mark the official opening) and who to contact for more information. Do not try to include too much detail - stick to the essentials. Provide a single point of contact for your organization should they have follow-up questions.

**Circulation:** Circulate to all appropriate print, online, and broadcast media outlets in your community, ideally by email.

**Release:** Don't expect the media to use the complete text of the advisory. Check the publication to see whether the information is correct. If not, contact the organization immediately and ask them to publish a correction or change an online story.

Copies of the media release should be circulated within your organization and, if appropriate, to funding agencies, local government staff and councils and boards to keep them informed about the project. Consider also posting on your project and organization website.



# Checklists: Online Communication

## Checklist: Development Website

Information about your proposed development should be easily accessible online, either via a separate external website linked to your organization's website or a webpage included on your website. A person from your organization should be tasked with updating content regularly, responding to any questions and tracking comments received. You may consider offering information on your website in several languages. This project website/page should, at minimum, contain the following elements:

- › A summary of the development, funding partners, and who the development will be serving.
- › The development status, updated regularly.
- › Map with development site location (preferably interactive).
- › Timeline with key milestones and approximate dates.
- › Information on upcoming community engagement events.
- › Concise summaries of completed community engagement events (who, where, what, when, why) along with poster boards, graphics, and other informational materials that were publicly available at the event.
- › A frequently asked questions page.
- › A submission form for submitting questions/comments or requesting additional information.
- › Contact information for a key representative of the development from your organization.

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

## Checklist: Considerations for Addressing Online Opposition

Conversations online can escalate quickly. While some non-profit providers may not engage on social media, some may have social media strategies or policies that allow responding to comments regarding proposed non-market housing. If responding to online comments opposing your proposed project, here are some considerations:

- › Listen to people's concerns
  - Revise your messaging and website content to address concerns and feedback.
  - Invite stakeholders expressing opposition online to an in-person small group meeting or sit down with them one-on-one.
- › Personalize your responses
  - Remind online commenters that there is a person behind the comments by signing each response with the name of your contact person.
  - Consider customizing the message slightly while sticking to high level key messaging for each person's concern.
- › Stop engaging if conversation is not respectful.
  - If someone continues to berate you after a clear answer has been provided, stop engaging with them and they'll eventually stop commenting.
  - Hide comments if necessary on Facebook. If someone uses inappropriate language, "hide" the comment and do not engage with them further. The person who commented and their friends will still see their post, but others will not. This allows you to control the conversation if someone is inappropriate or unreasonable.
  - Note that you cannot hide or delete comments on Twitter. You can report comments as "spam" only if they are posting spam-related content.

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



# Checklists: Planning Community Events

Community events, such as open houses, are a typical method of inviting your future neighbours or the greater community to learn about your organization and a proposed housing development. It's also a good opportunity for your group and project team to hear first-hand about neighbours' concerns or suggestions. As mentioned in Guide 3 consider engaging with your closest neighbours first before taking the proposal to the community at large.

## Checklist: Considerations for Public Engagement Events

- › Town hall style meetings may not always be the best option as they may not allow the opportunity to engage fairly with all attendees, as many people do not feel comfortable asking questions or providing their personal opinions in a large group.
- › Consider holding meetings such as open houses or small workshops. These alternative formats to town halls will permit one-on-one or small group conversations to relay accurate, complete information and permit you to actively listen to and record concerns.
- › Consider having multiple sessions to allow more opportunity for the public to receive more information and provide input, should they be unable to attend a single session.
- › Consider supplementing in-person events with opportunities for meaningful online engagement. This requires less time and is likely to capture a larger audience. Many young people and families will not be willing to dedicate the time required to an open house but will be interested in engaging via your project website FAQs, information materials, comment forms, or a survey.

## Checklist: Planning a Community Engagement Event

### One Month Prior to the Event(s):

#### Confirm the purpose and objectives of the open house(s):

Is the purpose to provide information on the development design (Inform), seek feedback on your preliminary design (Consult), or part of a series of events planned throughout

the approval process (Involve)? It is always preferred to have multiple points of contact with the public and therefore, involve them throughout the planning and approval stages if time and budget permits, rather than at one single time. It will demonstrate transparency if you seek community input before a design is finalized, and then show how their input has been incorporated into the final design. An example would be to have an open house to obtain feedback on preliminary design in the early stages of the planning process (after meeting with adjacent residents and just prior to or after submitting your rezoning/development application(s), followed by an open house(s) to confirm the final design (prior to the public hearing).

#### Determine appropriate dates and times:

Dates should be determined once a tentative project schedule has been created, based on estimated approval timelines. This gives your organization sufficient time to plan and prepare each event. Times must not only suit those within your organization and others that you want to attend, but also the public. Evenings between 6 pm and 9 pm and Saturdays are preferred to ensure inclusive participation. Don't consider dates when the public may not be as likely to attend, such as long weekends, other holidays, or dates of major community events.

#### TIP: Be mindful of timing of public engagement events

It is preferable for an open house format to be drop-in and for at minimum, a three-hour window for people to attend. For a smaller, limited attendance facilitated event, limit to an hour and a half maximum to incentivize people to attend. In either case, start and end on time to be fair to both your staff and attendees. Consider bridging daytime and evening hours to capture a more diverse audience.

#### Anticipate attendance and select an appropriate location:

Anticipate how many people you expect to attend the event. Preferably, limit attendance by sending out RSVP invites and booking additional events should interest exceed available space. If this isn't an option due to time and budget



constraints and an open house format is required, estimate the number of people who are likely to attend to book an appropriately sized location. Consider appropriate, centrally located, easily accessible venues such as schools, libraries, community centres, and halls, preferably located close to the development site. You should only consider sites that are universally accessible (for those with disabilities such as wheelchairs) and easy to get to using public transportation.

#### **Provide suitable, sufficient advertising:**

Advertise well in advance of the event(s), preferably a minimum of two or three weeks prior. Consider how different people obtain information on community events to ensure that all demographics are considered. This includes advertising on community bulletin boards, at community mail boxes, through appropriate local media (print, online, radio, and television through media advisories and/or paid advertising), on your project and organization's website(s), through social media. Target advertising toward those who will be most directly impacted by the development. Send invitations to potential supporters of the proposed non-market housing, asking them to speak at the event in support of the site.

#### **Two Weeks Prior to the Event(s):**

##### **Consider room layout, equipment, food/beverages:**

Consider how the room will be laid out by visiting the venue well in advance and designing an appropriate room layout. If the venue will be arranging tables/seating, work out those details with the venue in advance, otherwise dedicate sufficient time and staff prior to the event for room setup. Have a quiet area in the room with tables/chairs for the people to sit and socialize, especially the elderly. Provide light refreshments and possibly snacks. Keep displays, tables, and/or stations appropriately spaced out to reduce noise and so that the public can disperse evenly throughout the room. If you require any technical equipment, confirm details such as access to wifi and projectors with the venue well in advance.

#### **One Week Prior to the Event(s):**

##### **Prepare your staff/ facilitators:**

It is always preferred to use skilled engagement specialists/ community facilitators to aid in the design and delivery of your community outreach and consultation program. Regardless of whether your organization can engage consultants, ensure that knowledgeable organizational representatives/staff attend to answer questions and be involved in consultation.

Have one assigned lead, whether they are part of the external consultant team such as a community planner, your development coordinator, or another suitable staff representative, to arrange and direct your organization's representatives during the event(s). It will be their responsibility to dedicate appropriate staff/facilitators to each station/area of the room, assign stations beforehand and be clear with each representative what their role will be and what information they should know well in advance so that they can come to the event(s) prepared. Provide instructions on what time they will be needed during setup, the event and teardown. Have name tags for facilitators and provide each with notepads and pens to record comments and the feedback that they receive. Ensure that they have adequate knowledge for the stations/areas they are assigned. Assign at least one or two people as greeters to welcome and direct people and instruct them to complete a sign in/attendance sheet.

Staff assigned to stations should be experienced at facilitating community events and dealing with public opposition, but regardless, it is good for the consultation lead to provide a group briefing with staff/volunteers involved several days prior so that they know what types of questions they are likely to receive and what their standard responses should be. Match experience and knowledge of the individual to the topic area/station they will be located at. Coach them on active listening, avoiding conflict, and what types of questions

#### **TIP: Have subject matter experts available at events to speak to concerns**

Anticipate major community concerns and arrange to have the project team's expert attend and be stationed near the information related to that subject. For example, if traffic is an anticipated major neighbourhood concern, ensure that the traffic consultant or a suitable local government representative of the transportation engineering department can attend to speak to questions as the expert in that field.



to ask and responses to give to anticipated questions (provide a copy of the FAQ sheet with responses to each member).

#### **Consider Translations:**

Consider having non-English language speakers or translators at the event if there is a significant demographic of people in the neighbourhood that do not speak English. Advertise and prepare all information/consultation materials accordingly.

#### **Handling Hostile Questions:**

Over the course of the engagement event, you will likely be faced with some form of public hostility. Accept that you may be unlikely to convert a hostile opponent over the course of a community event, such as a public open house or design charrette. Many project opponents will turn up to say their piece, rather than desiring to engage in meaningful discussion and access accurate information. Set clear ground rules for the event which the public is expected to adhere to.

Your goal is to prevent the opposition from taking your time in engaging meaningfully with the majority of others in the room. Diffuse tension by demonstrating that you are listening to their grievances, provide consistent messaging, and don't be afraid to shut down the conversation if it is not respectful by thanking them for their input and acknowledging that there are others in the room with questions that you also need to address, and inviting them to leave a comment form at the door.

#### **Prepare engagement materials:**

Finalize and print any engagement materials required for the event(s) such as sign in sheets, event feedback forms, maps, poster boards, and informational handouts/brochures. Organize all consultation supplies in a kit, such as pens, notepads, post-it notes, markers, stickers, and easels. Arrange any equipment you want to bring to the event(s) including cameras, computer cords, and laptops.

#### **TIP: Sample posted boards and informational materials are available**

For examples of poster boards and informational materials, see at BC Housing's completed and active public engagement projects here: <https://www.bchousing.org/partner-services/public-engagement/projects>.

#### **Day of the Event(s):**

Plan to arrive at least one hour in advance of the event, in case of any unexpected delays and to ensure adequate time for setup. Ensure that set up can be completed at least half an hour before the event is scheduled. Set up a welcoming area and proper signage to direct people to the event. Ensure sign in sheets and feedback forms are clearly visible. Provide a box for people to drop-off their completed forms. Ensure refreshments and snacks (if being served) are ready and coat racks are available.

#### **TIP: Feedback forms can help inform future events**

Feedback forms are useful for obtaining information to aid in preparing future engagement events. Unlike a survey, which seeks information on views related to the development, these forms should only discuss the event itself. Include questions such as:

- › How did you hear about the event?
- › What did you think of the format?
- › What did you think of the venue selected?
- › Were all your questions answered? If not, what wasn't?
- › How would you like to be informed about upcoming consultation events?
- › How would you like to be informed throughout the development process?

#### **Within One Week Following the Event(s):**

##### **Data Collection and Debrief**

Begin to compile and analyze feedback, creating a detailed in-depth list of all feedback/notes obtained and a summary report with a list of action items (one or two pages). Be prepared to respond to any public or media inquiries and update the FAQ list. Schedule a debrief meeting with the project team to determine follow-up actions/next steps and to obtain event feedback. This summary of the event can also be provided to the local government with your rezoning/development application.



## 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.

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

## Who Helped Develop This Toolkit?

### Non-profit housing providers

- Affordable Housing Advisory Association
- BC Society of Transition Houses
- Coast Mental Health
- Greater Victoria Housing Society
- Island Crisis Care Society
- Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society
- Metro Vancouver Housing
- MPA Society
- New Chelsea Society
- Our Place Society
- PHS Community Services Society
- RainCity Housing
- Salvation Army Maple Ridge
- Sanford Housing Society

### Local Governments

- City of Kamloops
- City of Kelowna
- City of New Westminster
- City of Richmond
- City of Victoria
- District of North Vancouver
- District of West Vancouver
- Fraser Valley Regional District
- City of Vancouver

### Community Organizations

- Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness
- Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness
- Pivot Legal Society
- Surrey Homelessness and Housing Taskforce
- Together Against Poverty Society
- United Way Central and Northern Island
- Vancity Impact Real Estate Division
- Vancouver Coastal Health
- YWCA Metro Vancouver

### BC Housing would especially like to thank Advisory Group members on behalf of:

- BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- BC Non-Profit Housing Association
- Homelessness Services Association of BC
- Metro Vancouver Housing Corporation



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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](http://www.bchousing.org).

Sign up to receive the latest news and updates at [www.bchousing.org/subscribe](http://www.bchousing.org/subscribe).

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To find more about building community acceptance, visit our website: [www.bchousing.org](http://www.bchousing.org)