



POSITION PAPER FROM HOUSING STAKEHOLDERS

There is clearly significant, unmet demand for housing in British Columbia, for both renters and owners. Several demand-side measures have been introduced in recent months, and adding more supply is an important aspect that requires attention.

As construction and housing industry associations, primarily in market housing, we have collaborated to identify several recommendations to improve housing supply. Some of the recommendations can be achieved by municipal governments, but the provincial government can also encourage or assist these processes.

Address the “missing middle”

- Ensure there is sufficient focus on the “missing middle,” meaning ground-oriented housing that provides an option for families and/or downsizers between a traditional single-family home and a high-rise condominium. Examples include stacked townhouses, rowhouses, duplexes, quad-plexes, mid-rise purpose-built rental, and traditional townhouses. A focus on the “missing middle” and how to build diverse product that is affordable for consumers – and viable for industry – is paramount.
- Be creative with ownership, including stratifying laneway houses or suites.

Increase density, for both owners and renters

- Address barriers to purpose-built rental, including approval processes, operation costs and rate of change policies so that builders can meet demand and build accordingly.
- Counter “not-in-my-backyard” opposition to development through public education. For example, this could be achieved via a “new neighbours” campaign to increase acceptance of new developments geared to first-time home buyers and purpose-built rental developments.
- Increase provincial funding for new infrastructure. Traditionally, each level of government (federal, provincial and municipal) contributes one-third of the funding required for infrastructure projects. The provincial government should increase its share of the funding, to lessen the amount funded by municipal governments through development taxes. As a result of increased funding, the provincial government should further tie the investment to required density and zoning targets that must be achieved, including ownership and purpose-built rental units, so more British Columbians will fully benefit from the investment.
- Ensure growth in suburban areas is supported by infrastructure, including schools, transit, and appropriate zoning to accommodate population growth.

Ensure predictable fees, charges, and timelines

- Ensure local governments levy development cost charges and community amenity contributions appropriate to the impact of development. Services such as transit benefit everyone, and buyers of new homes should not pay disproportionately for these community benefits. Fixed contributions and charges, rather than negotiated or unpredictable fees, should also be considered.
- Ensure real estate transactions already underway are exempt from any new changes to taxes, such as the Property Transfer Tax.
- Consider the impact to affordability of changes to the Building Code and local bylaws. Civic inspection staff and the industry have had difficulty keeping up with all the changes and ensuring compliance in a timely fashion.
- Collaborate with local governments and real estate stakeholders on alternative ways of funding community amenities, without continuing to burden the buyers of new homes with high costs.
- Ensure that federal and provincial capital-raising and underwriting rules for mortgage lenders are not unduly restrictive, so that BC home buyers and borrowers continue to have financing options.
- Collaborate with municipalities to speed up approval processes, so housing can be built faster with lower carrying costs. Resources to help expedite approvals and improve service are welcomed.

Focus on retrofits for existing homes

- Create more incentives for energy retrofits, rather than only focusing on new housing. With proper incentives, existing home owners can contribute to climate change goals.
- Retrofit incentives should also include purpose-built rental units, for the benefit of owners and tenants.
- In cases where demolition is more feasible for seismic or energy-efficiency requirements, permit more multi-family dwellings in replacement of single-family homes.

