



REFBC Submission: National Housing Strategy

Federal Government's Vision

"All Canadians have access to housing that meets their needs and they can afford. Housing is the cornerstone of building sustainable, inclusive communities and a strong Canadian economy where we can prosper and thrive."

REFBC's Interest in Housing

The Real Estate Foundation of BC (REFBC) is a philanthropic organization that helps advance sustainable land use through research, education, policy and law reform. Over the years, we've given more than \$75 million in funding to help support resilient, healthy, communities and natural environments. Within our Built Environment Sustainability program area, housing is one of our key areas of focus.

Our vision is for a province where built environments support thriving, enduring communities and natural environments through smart community planning, affordable and diverse housing, efficient buildings and infrastructure, and active transportation. This includes housing that meets the full spectrum of needs related to age, access, affordability and liveability.

Through our grant funded projects and other initiatives, REFBC has identified innovative and progressive ideas and solutions for addressing housing needs at the local, provincial, regional and national level. Ideas generated through REFBC research and grant funded initiatives are outlined on the following pages, organized by the Federal Government's four theme areas of the National Housing Strategy.



Housing Needs Assessment. Terrace, BC.



Shipping container housing. Atira Women's Resource Society, Vancouver, BC.

Top: Woodward's Building. Vancouver, BC (Flickr: Hubert Figuière)



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Theme: Sustainability

Environmental Sustainability; Social Housing Renewal; Better Quality of Life; Economic Growth and Stability; Supportive Institutions and Regulations

Recommendations:

- Protect what we have and build more housing to meet the full spectrum of needs related to age, access (e.g. ability, gender identity, aboriginal origin, vulnerability), affordability and liveability.
- Design and implement housing strategies that address long term goals for social, economic and environmental sustainability.
- Expand the use of full-cost, life-cycle accounting, and include ecological and social 'services' (i.e. environmental and social values and considerations), when comparing housing options and allocating funding. Establish clear guidelines (as part of toolkits) for assessing and building these factors into decision making and funding criteria.
- Support green affordable housing, targeting reduced building lifecycle costs and improved occupant health. This could include incentivizing or providing finance for energy and water efficiency retrofits for existing buildings.
- Implement smart growth principles through better integration of land use, housing and transportation strategies that achieve co-benefits for communities.
- Ensure climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies are integrated into land use planning, and housing construction and design guideline across sectors (e.g. preparation for sea level rise, extreme weather, GHG reductions).
- Support the work of housing NGOs and others working in related sectors through funding, coordinated research, capacity building and shared data collection and monitoring of progress.
- Provide federal capacity building support and resources for municipalities to address affordable housing issues.
- Ensure housing initiatives use a collaborative partnership model with all levels of government and sectors.



Under One Roof housing project, Vernon, BC.



Laneway housing, Lanefab. (REFBC LAnd Award winner) Vancouver, BC.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH:

"Alternative Sources of Capital for Social and Affordable Housing"

>> bit.ly/ASC4SH



REFBC Submission: National Housing Strategy

Theme: Affordability

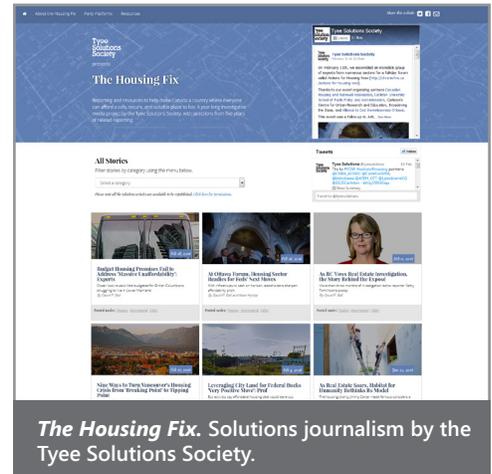
Affordable Lands and Financing; Affordability Pressures in Cities; New and Renewed Rental Housing; First-time Home Buyers

Recommendations:

- Pilot and help create tools to secure and finance land for housing, and build non-market housing, affordable co-op housing, and rental housing. Examples include community land trusts, regional housing trust funds, social impact bonds, alternative sources of capital for social housing and social finance.
- Align financial tools – such as financing, government taxation, development costs charges – to reflect housing affordability goals and new standards for assessing the full costs of housing related to: house location, transportation, construction materials, operations and maintenance, and access to jobs and services (e.g. housing affordability index).
- Consider modernizing and expanding financial tools and levers for Canadians such as the Home Buyers’ Plan (e.g. extending eligibility and updating withdrawal limits to align with the CPI) and the Capital Cost Allowance (to encourage re-investment in rental housing.)
- Link government infrastructure and housing programs to better achieve co-benefits (e.g. integrate transit and housing funding and planning; prioritize senior government infrastructure funding around projects that support housing affordability and other community sustainability goals).
- Better understand the role of land speculation in escalating housing costs, and design and implement a comprehensive approach to addressing market barriers and drivers of housing affordability.
- Support collaboration among all levels of government and the private and non-profit sectors to increase the supply of rental housing, and to share relevant data and analysis.



REFBC workshop. February 2016.



The Housing Fix. Solutions journalism by the Tyee Solutions Society.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH:

“Towards a Sustainable Built Environment for British Columbia”

>> bit.ly/SBE4BC

“The Housing Fix”

>> thehousingfix.ca



REFBC Submission: National Housing Strategy

Theme: Inclusivity

Low-Income and Vulnerable Canadians

Recommendations:

- Support a strong, significant role for senior government in housing low-income and vulnerable Canadians through a national housing strategy.
- Build understanding of indigenous housing interests on and off reserve and ensure these interests and related capacity building are a priority focus in a national housing strategy
- Pilot and assist with the creation of tools, policies and programs that enable seniors who wish to remain in their family homes for as long as possible to do so.
- Provide for long term senior government investment and funding in non-market housing.
- Expand implementation of policy tools that require or incentivize non-market and/or rental housing, affordable infill, and low-to-moderate-income market housing.
- Educate and communicate on housing affordability more effectively and holistically with the public, professionals and the media to adapt public expectations and build support for diverse forms of density, tenure, non-market housing and market housing.



Theme: Flexibility

Use of Data-Based Evidence; Continuum of Housing Options

Recommendations:

- Collect and communicate research on housing affordability performance. Identify key performance indicators and support an on-going measurement program to help all organizations in the field keep abreast of leading practices and on-the-ground performance.
- Set clear goals and targets to help NGOs, business, and government focus, assess, align and adapt efforts.
- Increase market penetration of medium-density, small-scale and affordable housing forms in keeping with comfortable community character.
- Collaborate for change and scale up best practices by building a coalition of non-partisan support for housing initiatives across sectors (with NGOs, professionals, educators, the private sector and all levels of government).