

## **A Snapshot of Seniors' Housing**

### ***What Partner Organizations are Seeing, Hearing and Doing***

A questionnaire was sent to WSH Partners in advance of a February 21, 2024 meeting. Two public agencies, 5 non-profit organizations serving seniors, 1 residents' association and 1 church congregation responded.

#### **1. What is your organization seeing and hearing from members and clients about seniors' housing?**

(9 respondents)

- Seniors who have downsized to rental buildings are feeling the lack of intentional community that was present in their previous neighbourhood. Looking for more supportive community.
- Seniors who are wanting to downsize are not seeing desirable options come on the market.
- Cost of living and fear of raised rents without anywhere seniors-appropriate and more affordable to move to.
- We see many patrons using our computers to find housing. Many of those are seniors. Of those who ask for help the majority are seniors.
- Concerns about denial of social changes: including rent increases and potential relocation due to redevelopment.
- Hesitancy among seniors to apply for social housing programs like BC Housing.
- Anxiety and fear of eviction and difficulty securing affordable alternatives in current housing market conditions.
- Prevalent financial concerns and uncertainty about available housing options.
- Impact of redevelopment on seniors' living arrangements, adding stress and uncertainty.
- Affordable housing waitlist full
- Health of unhoused seniors deteriorating, physically and mentally
- Homeless seniors in the Westside of Vancouver increasing rapidly
- Renting in same location for 10 plus years and then having to move. Rental rates are then completely out of reach for these seniors.
- Major infestations are a barrier to services, building managers are often not understanding how all the steps required by the senior tenant to prepare for pest control are not doable particularly for those over 85 and timeline is unreasonable.
- Our neighbourhood, while quiet and attractive to seniors due to the wonderful community center, is very expensive. Many seniors have large houses and either try to stay in them as long as possible or move to residences within the neighbourhood. Many of them are concerned about their adult children and at times set up a house-sharing situation.
- Low-cost housing in this area is hard to find.
- The church is very aware of the expense of housing in our area and this is a very real factor when staffing or when supporting refugees coming into the country.
- Some members are exploring alternative living arrangements and are eager to share these resources with others, including Abbeyfield. While housing challenges within our membership have not been widely discussed, there is a growing interest in exploring innovative solutions.
- Seniors who require a family member to come and live with them to maintain independence are stretched thin by cost of living and the family caregiver who may have had to stop working is put in a financially precarious position, putting both people at risk.
- What is needed is safe, supported, rapid access to short term housing and more long-term low-cost housing.
- They cannot afford housing in the area. They are also having trouble finding people to speak to.

## 2. Which issue is mentioned most frequently and are the issues changing? (9 respondents)

- Finding housing and information about government programs online is difficult especially if you do not have computer skills. Digital divide issue.
- Lack of seniors-appropriate options at affordable price-point.
- The rate of market increases and those facing eviction. The issues are not changing as market prices continue to increase and Senior's gov suppl. Income alone is insufficient to accommodate market costs when or if they face eviction.
- No affordable housing – this is prevalent and has not changed over the past few years.
- increased living cost overall: food, household amenities
- Mobility challenges and lack of transportation services.
- Seniors that are losing their independence but want to remain in their own home rather than move to a care facility. This is an ongoing concern.
- Long wait list times for BC housing. High cost of senior living.
- The issues are getting worse. They cannot afford to live in Vancouver

## 3. What help with housing are your senior members & clients seeking and what support does your organization provide. (8 respondents in table)

Housing Support	Help Requested	My organization Currently Provides	We Would Like to Provide
Identify affordable housing options	8	3 Phone numbers; Housing search toolkit, drop-in workshops	1 More resources to provide 1-on-1 assistance for most vulnerable
Navigate housing availability	5	2 Same as above	2 Same as above
Retain current housing	6	3 Phone numbers; Workshops on communication, tenant and landlord rights	1
Help the precariously housed	4	4 Phone numbers; Some support through case management and financial aid	1 More of this as demand far outweighs resources
Help with landlords	5	1	1
Financial assistance	4	4 Some of this	3 More of this as demand far outweighs resources
Advice re tenants' rights	6	2 Phone numbers; Workshops & referrals to other organizations	2
Help with advocacy	6	2 Case management but we don't have enough people power to meet the need	2 More of this
Connect to housing navigators Seniors Service Society of BC and advocacy offices	1	1	
Provide I&R (exploring income, benefits and subsidies options), access to low/free food, subsidy to access our programs	1	1	

**Other comments you wish to share:** (5 respondents)

- The help we provide is mostly limited to connecting people with the information and helping them, as best as we can, to develop the computer skills needed to independently navigate the information. We do not provide direct advice or advocacy.
- I would say it's not just about what type of housing...but also, where do seniors desire the housing to be built i.e. Close to grocery store, doctor office, bus stop, etc.
- We need to expand the Housing Navigation services in the Westside similar West End Seniors Network ([Housing Navigation — West End Seniors' Network \(wesn.ca\)](https://www.wesn.ca))
- As a church we are not involved in these conversations except in individual private discussions with Ministerial staff
- Don't really deal with housing matters. If anything, most of our clients go into a Long-Term Care so it is more working with VCH regarding this
- Here are some of the common issues that are coming more often:
  - o "Very elderly couple in their 80s who have been coming to the library often and who have been homeless for several months. They are currently sheltering at the Gathering Place, but they must leave every morning by 7am and at their age this is very difficult. I have not been able to find any 24/7 shelters with space for them."
  - o A lady in her late 60s who came to see us this week is living on the streets and her only income is \$700 per month. She is surviving every day with a leg infection getting worse due to her housing situation.
  - o Homeless seniors accessing our food programs and I&R services to get support on connecting them to housing navigation and advocacy offices. Some of them come asking for a shelter in Kitsilano, but there is none.
  - o Many seniors receiving one-month notices for eviction
  - o Numerous elderly people currently paying under \$1,000 rental are being evicted. After the eviction's notice, they can't find an affordable place to live in a short period of time. Not only the housing crisis but also their health limitations and lack of family support prevent the seniors from navigating through the housing options within one month notice. These people end up living on the streets, or many move to other cities like Langley, away from their community where they spent their entire life.
  - o Some prefer sleeping on the street instead of passing the night in shelter located in Downtown.
  - o Seniors with mobility limitations not finding an accessible place to live.
  - o The older adults who can afford the expensive rent also struggle finding a new place to live. They claim there is discrimination, and the landlords give priority for younger population.
  - o Lack of knowledge on tenants' rights

# Summary of what we heard

## The City of Vancouver's first Seniors Housing Strategy

The City of Vancouver is developing a Seniors Housing Strategy to better understand and meet the housing needs of seniors, Elders, and older adults aged 55+ in Vancouver. To hear input from the community, the City contracted Happy Cities to engage adults 55+ and seniors-serving organizations in Vancouver.

### Who we heard from

We reached about 1,500 people through:

- 200 phone survey responses
- 950+ online survey responses
- 7 pop-up and community outreach events, reaching over 150 people
- 4 focus group discussions, reaching 45 stakeholders
- 9 conversation kits, reaching 65 people
- 1 ideas fair, attended by 60 stakeholders

### Directions for further exploration

1. Increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing for adults 55+
2. Streamline and improve access to housing and support services
3. Improve housing design standards
4. Prioritize impact and accountability in housing policy
5. Invest in advocacy and partnerships
6. Build complete neighbourhoods

### Snapshot of what we heard

- The majority of seniors are satisfied with their current housing situation. However, those who are living in unaffordable or inadequate conditions need immediate action and support. Low-income renters are most vulnerable, and often struggle to navigate the housing system, placing them at risk of homelessness.
- Affordability is the top housing challenge for adults 55+ in Vancouver, with 97% in support of adding more social and supportive housing options for seniors.
- Seniors in Vancouver are a diverse group with different needs, preferences, cultures, life experiences, abilities, and ages. Factors including racism and ageism make it difficult for some seniors to access appropriate housing.
- Most people want to age in place in their current home, but not everyone can access the supports and home upgrades they need to do so. Notably, 16% of people 55+ have not yet considered their future housing options.
- Universal design in new housing is crucial.
- Around two thirds of adults 55+ would consider in-home support services, but existing services lack the resources to meet the growing demand.
- Walkable neighbourhoods are key to supporting wellbeing, social connection, and independence for older adults.

### Key challenges identified:

			
Housing affordability	Support services	Social connection	Meeting diverse senior needs
			
Navigating the system	Upkeep and maintenance	Neighbourhood context	Housing design