PIVOT

equality lifts everyone

Yes, In my Backyard:
Welcoming inclusion, upholding human rights

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PIVOT

equality lifts everyone

This kit offers simple tips for building a more inclusive Vancouver.

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This kit is intended for YIMBYs: people who understand the value of addressing homelessness, addictions, and mental illness in a proactive and positive way through safe and supportive housing, and who want to say "Yes in my backyard!" to projects that help people get off the streets. We hope you will find this guide useful in helping you respond to fears and prejudices about the people who live in supportive housing.

THIS KIT

- Explains the "right to housing"
- Provides a framework for going from NIMBY (Not in my backyard) to YIMBY (Yes in my backyard)
- Offers useful myth busting information
- Details B.C.'s Human Rights Code and the legal framework to support the YIMBY position
- Includes case studies of challenges and success stories

Developed through the collaboration of shelter providers and advocacy groups, this kit offers simple tips for building a more inclusive Vancouver.

DEDICATION

This toolkit is dedicated to all the incredible people across Vancouver working and volunteering to fight homelessness. Your commitment to making Vancouver a better community for everyone is a tribute to humanity's compassion for one another.

THE RIGHT TO HOUSING

Think about where you live today – an apartment, a townhouse, a house – how important is this place? What value do you put on having shelter where you sleep, a place to keep you secure and safe? Regardless of whether you rent or own, how hard would life be without a place to call your own? This situation is the reality for growing numbers of Vancouver residents.

Now imagine that you have to move and your new neighbours – neighbours who say they have nothing personal against you – say damaging and untrue things about you through email, flyers, posters, internet blogs, and at public meetings. If you live in British Columbia, you would probably say that your rights had been violated. Yet in this province, many people experience exactly this whenever a much needed service, like shelter or housing, is proposed.

At Pivot Legal Society, we believe that everyone has a basic right to housing. That means community advocates, housing developers, elected officials, and compassionate neighbours must speak out when human rights are violated by NIMBYism. Otherwise, communities are emboldened to believe they can zone out people they see as "undesirable."

The need for supportive housing in Vancouver and throughout the province – by which we mean safe affordable housing with support services for people with mental health and/or addiction issues – is undeniable. A lack of decent housing is one of the most significant barriers to full participation in community life. Without good quality housing, many people cycle between jails, hospitals, shelters and the streets, costing governments far more than the price of actually providing supportive housing![1]

A CASE STUDY – COQUITLAM

In early 2010 Coquitlam city council held public hearings on a proposal to build a homeless shelter on lands identified for this purpose in 2008. Community resistance to this shelter was such that RCMP officers had to be called to monitor these meetings[2]. The concerns raised by community residents included increased crime, noise, and lowered property values.

"Homelessness advocates and service providers spoke in favour of the planned facility, as did former homeless people, high school students and area residents. In the end, Coun. Lou Sekora was the lone councilor to vote against the proposal, which began discussion at 7pm with a public hearing portion and ended just shy of 1am with the final vote. About 300 people were in attendance."

Read more: http://www.thenownews.com/news/Coquitlam+homeless+shelter/3911358/story.html#ixzz1HwaAr3aT

RESERVED
SERVICE
VEHICLES
ONLY

22%

increase in metro vancouvers homeless

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SUPPORTIVE HOUSING?

Supportive housing can mean short term shelter for the homeless due to inclement weather, it can be transitional while someone is working towards a more stable situation, and it can be permanent for those with physical or mental disabilities that require some ongoing assistance.

While a lack of funding is one of the biggest obstacles to safe and affordable housing, another significant barrier, and one we hope to address in this kit, is community opposition or NIMBYism, when people say "Not in my backyard!"

There is significant research and evidence to show that concerns such as crime, noise, and lowered property values are unfounded. The key to countering these obstacles is to provide awareness and understanding to communities early in the process.

TRANSFORMING NIMBYISM TO YIMBYISM

The term NIMBYism has been around a long time and it means to take a defensive position against a planned project in your community.

It can be applied to a broad range of projects from community gardens and needle boxes to group homes for the disabled and shelters for the homeless.

Typically an announcement is made that a project is being proposed in the neighbourhood and the community rallies in protest to prevent its development.

Often the concerns raised by neighbours are based on assumptions the proposed project will increase crime, noise, theft and lower property values. While these are very real concerns, they are not aligned with the evidence.

See our section on myth busting for some suggestions on how to respond to these concerns.

WHY YIMBY?

Living in Vancouver means we share this city with diverse peoples from all over the world. Sharing this space also means ensuring that everyone, regardless of financial situation or physical/mental ability is also welcome in any neighbourhood.

It's been almost two decades since the federal government handed off responsibility for housing to the provinces, making Canada the only G-8 country without a national housing strategy.

The end result is a housing crisis that the UN described as a "national emergency."

Saying "Yes, in my backyard" means saying yes to accepting our community's collective responsibility to make our shared space welcoming to everyone.

QUICK STATS PROVIDED BY THE CITY OF VANCOUVER:

- The March 2008 homeless count found 1,576 homeless people in Vancouver, accounting for 60% of the regional total.

  Of those counted 765 stayed in emergency shelters and 811 were shelterless[3].

- The March 2008 regional homeless count showed a 22% increase in people who are homeless in the Metro Vancouver region – from roughly 2,200 homeless in 2005 to 2,600 in 2008.

  Since 2002, the year of the first regional homeless count, homelessness has increased 140% across the region[4].

- The number of shelter beds in Metro Vancouver in winter months has increased from 550 beds in 2000 to 1,480 beds in 2008. 1,193 of those beds, or three-quarters of the regional total, are located in Vancouver[5].

  Despite an increasing number of shelter beds, homelessness is on the rise. We need to maintain existing shelters and open new sites to develop long term solutions.

REASONS TO BE HOPEFUL

Sixty years ago in Canada, there were subdivisions that prevented Jewish, Asian and African-Canadians from purchasing a home. The people who set up these restrictions believed they were protecting property values, public safety and good neighbourhoods.

Now, such a practice would be unthinkable. Why? Because courts ruled such practices illegal. And because the overwhelming evidence has shown that neighbourhoods had nothing to fear, and everything to gain, from welcoming residents of all ethnicities and religions. There have been rulings recently against similar municipal policies which attempt to "zone people" rather than land use. There have also been studies done that show the positive impact that social housing projects have on neighbourhoods.

Over the past 20 years, supportive housing has proven its contribution to healthy neighbourhoods. In Vancouver, visionary organizations and individuals are helping to change the way we think about the right to housing and providing practical solutions to help end homelessness.

There's more good news. On March 7, 2011, the *Vancouver Sun* shared results from a survey confirming British Columbians are particularly supportive of anti-poverty initiatives. This means that Vancouver, more than many other Canadian cities, is ready to tackle poverty and eliminate homelessness. We look forward to the day, and believe it will come soon, when discrimination against homeless people, people with mental health issues or other disabilities is unthinkable.

Check it out - www.streetohome.org

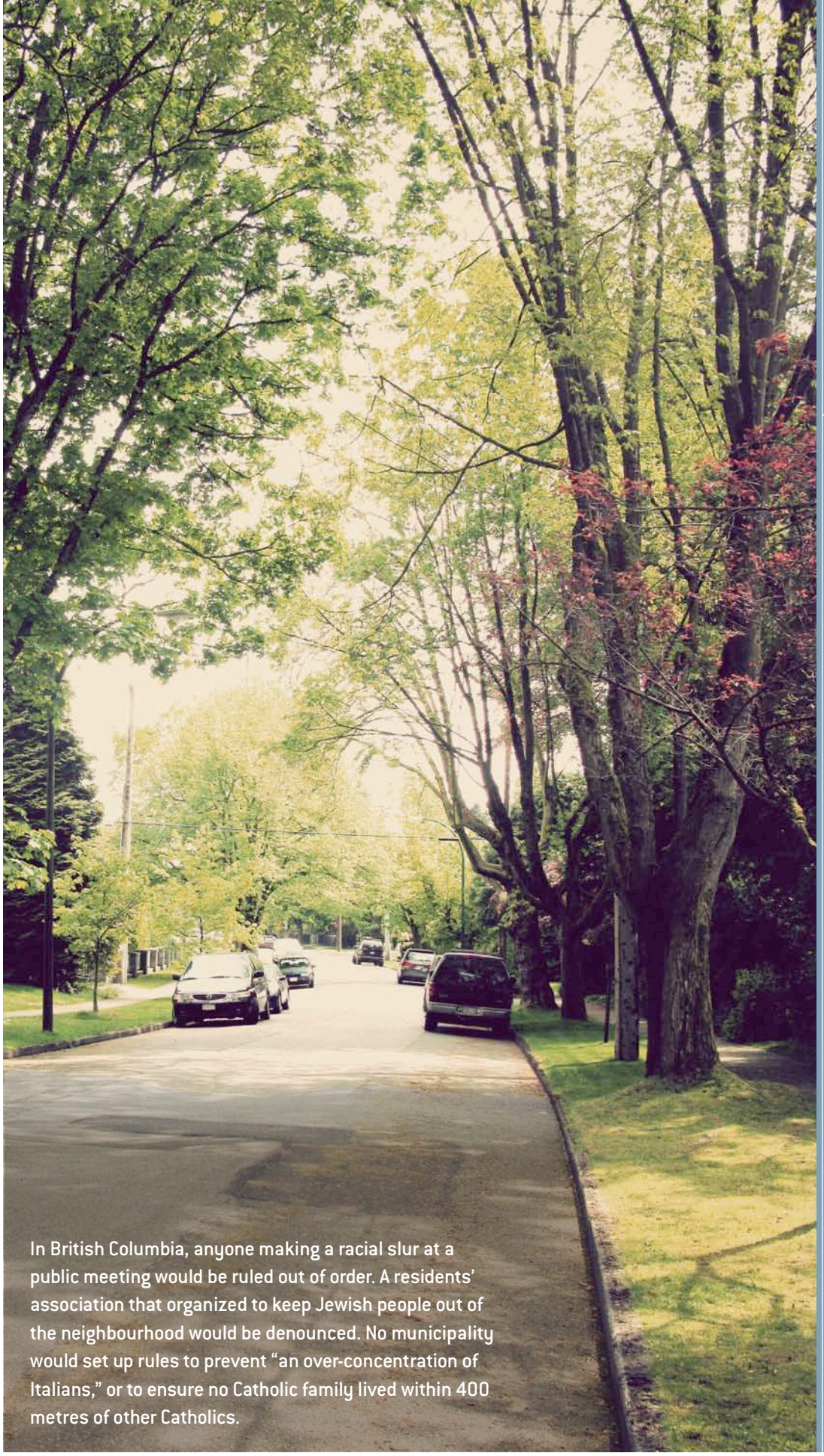
HUMAN RIGHTS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

If neighbours hurl public insults at the people who hope to live on their street, are they simply exercising their right to free speech?

Do local residents' associations have the right to screen who moves into the neighbourhood?

Do municipalities have the right to prevent certain types of people from moving into a neighbourhood, on the grounds that the area already has "more than its fair share" of these types of people?

If you imagine the people in question are racial, ethnic or religious minorities, the answer is obviously no. We recognize that many Canadians have prejudices and fears about people who are different from themselves. But we do not allow these prejudices to compromise basic human rights.



In British Columbia, anyone making a racial slur at a public meeting would be ruled out of order. A residents' association that organized to keep Jewish people out of the neighbourhood would be denounced. No municipality would set up rules to prevent "an over-concentration of Italians," or to ensure no Catholic family lived within 400 metres of other Catholics.

However, many British Columbians believe that it is acceptable to discriminate against people who are mentally ill, disabled, or poor. They are mistaken.

People who have a mental illness, another disability or who are on social assistance have the same rights we all enjoy.

No one should have to ask permission from their neighbours before moving in next door.

Nobody goes knocking on doors before buying or renting a home to ask whether it's okay that they move in. Everyone has a right to live where they want, without apology and without having to justify their choice. The community's permission is not a necessary prerequisite. While there may be planning approvals that must be obtained before a new building can be built, municipal planning by-laws regulate land use and building form, not the people who will live there.

Check it out - **http://www.ag.gov.bc.ca/human-rights-protection/**

A CASE STUDY – UBC HOSPICE

In January 2010 a proposal to build a 15-bed hospice next door to an 18-storey condominium building on UBC grounds raised significant resistance from condo owners. Residents' argued that living next to a hospice went against Chinese beliefs, and decreased property values. While building is currently on hold, many people have contradicted the cultural concerns raised by condo residents as an inaccurate representation of Chinese culture.

Read more: **http://www.globaltvbc.com/money/Angry+condo+owners+protest+hospice/4103582/story.html**

TAKE THE CRINGE TEST

The Cringe Test is a tool you can use to tell the difference between discrimination and a legitimate objection to supportive housing. If it sounds wrong when you say the same thing about a racial, ethnic or religious minority, then you know you've heard a discriminatory statement and this statement goes against the B.C. Human Rights Code.

WOULD YOU SAY...?	...IF IT MAKES YOU CRINGE TO SAY?
This neighbourhood already has its fair share of people on welfare.	This neighbourhood already has its fair share of Italians.
The homeless should be placed only on arterial roads.	Jews should be placed only on arterial roads.
This neighbourhood is just not suitable for vulnerable mentally ill people.	This neighbourhood is just not suitable for vulnerable Asian people.
Welfare recipients lower property values and drain public services.	Senior citizens lower property values and drain public services.
Houses for people with disabilities must be separated by 245 metres.	Houses for Catholics must be separated by 245 metres.
We are placing a moratorium on housing for low-income people while we study the impact on the area.	We are placing a moratorium on housing for Greeks while we study the impact on the area.
We deserve to be warned before people with mental illness move onto our street.	We deserve to be warned before gays and lesbians move onto our street.
We are a tolerant people. We have been happy to welcome people with mental illness into our neighbourhood. But enough is enough.	We are a tolerant people. We have been happy to welcome the Chinese into our neighbourhood. But enough is enough.
We don't want mentally ill people, but we're willing to accept seniors.	We don't want Muslims, but we're willing to accept Protestants.
If mentally ill people are going to live here, then I want the building to have:	If black people are going to live here, then I want the building to have:
▪ A 12-foot high wall around it	▪ A 12-foot wall around it
▪ Bars on the windows	▪ Bars on the windows
▪ Frosted windows so they can't look out	▪ Frosted windows so they can't look out
▪ Windows that can't open	▪ Windows that can't open
▪ A curfew	▪ A curfew.

"HOW TO" GUIDE FOR NEW YIMBYS

You've decided to become a YIMBY and join the fight against homelessness, but you're not sure where to start. It's important you are informed about how you can support proposed developments in your community, and how the law can help.

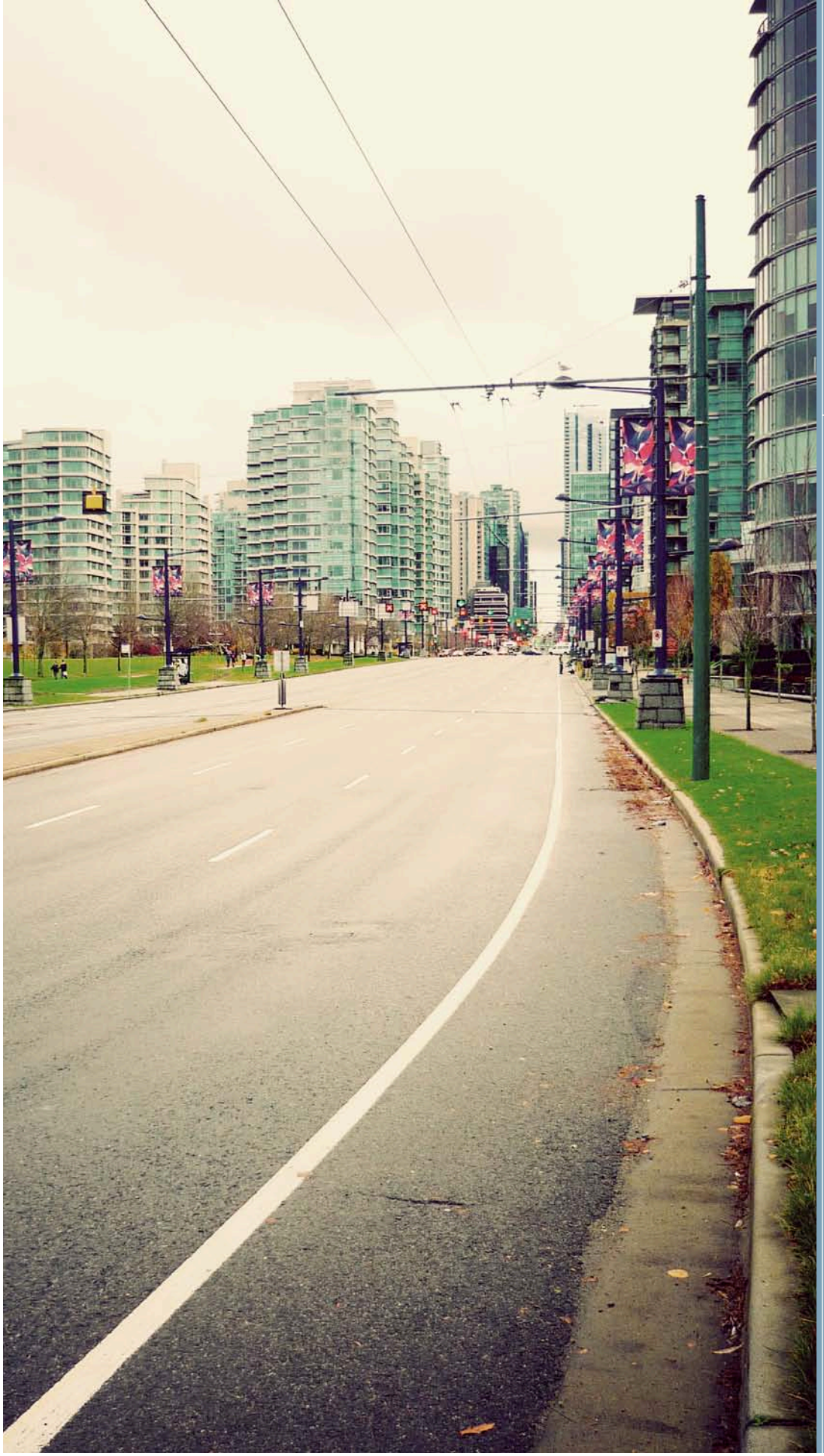
MYTH BUSTING

A Homeless Shelter will decrease the value of my home.

Home ownership is perhaps the most significant investment made by any individual or family. All homeowners want to feel that their investment is secure and that, if and when they decide to sell their home, its value won't be negatively affected by their neighbours' properties. Fortunately, social and supportive housing does not have a negative impact on property values. Consider two important studies, one local and one international:

1. The British Columbia Ministry of Housing, Recreation and Consumer Services conducted a study in 1995 in seven different regions of the province. In each region they compared the market fluctuations in an area with supportive housing to another area with none. In all seven cases, the appraisers found:
    - No evidence that the presence of the supportive housing negatively affected the sale prices of homes in the impact area. House prices in the vicinity of the non-market project increased as much – and in some cases, more – than nearby areas of similar housing types and ages;
    - No evidence of panic selling or extraordinary length of time on the market between the dates of listing and sale[6].

2. New York University's Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy released a report in 2008 evaluating the impacts of 123 supportive housing developments across the city's five boroughs over an 18 year period. Their results showed that:
    - Properties within 500 feet of the supportive housing development experienced steady growth in value
    - Properties between 500 feet and 1000 feet of supportive housing developments also experienced growth in value, but at a slightly slower pace
    - Neither the size of the development nor the density of the neighbourhood had an impact on the results[7].



Supportive housing is a waste of taxpayers' money.

At Pivot Legal Society, we believe that everyone, including the most vulnerable members of the community has a right to safe housing. However, calculations show that a "housing first" model also makes good economic sense.

1. In 2006, BC Housing asked the Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addictions for a report on the economic impact of homelessness in British Columbia.

   The report found that the cost of responding to homelessness with ambulances, hospitals, police, courts and jails far exceeds the cost of providing suitable housing:

   - Non-housing service costs amount to about $644.3 million per year across the province – the average street homeless adult with SAMI (severe addictions and/or mental illness) in BC costs the public system in excess of $55,000 per year;
   - Provision of adequate housing and supports is estimated to reduce this cost to $37,000 per year;
   - This results in an overall "cost avoidance" of about $211 million per year; and
   - The "cost avoidance" in health care and provincial corrections institution costs are more than sufficient to offset the capital costs and the costs of providing housing supports to those who are absolutely homeless[8].

2. There are also significant costs associated with the measures elected officials and housing developers must undergo in order to battle discriminatory community activism. That is why it is so important for all of us to speak up in support of these important projects.

3. Some people argue supportive housing will attract drug dealers and criminals to the neighbourhood and make the community less safe. We all have a right to be safe in our homes and neighbourhoods. Experience shows that building social housing helps improve safety and security in communities and leads to reductions in crime. Consider the following:

   - When two homeless shelters opened last year in the West End of Vancouver, the City of Vancouver reported that the number of people sleeping outside dropped from 267 to 12, and there was a significant decrease in incidences of aggressive panhandling. The Vancouver Police Department reported 16% fewer crimes in the area compared to the year before.
   - The Vancouver Police have publicly called for investments in affordable housing and support services for the homeless and people with mental illness as a means of reducing crime and improving communities. Moreover, supportive housing helps free up police and resources to deal with serious crimes, rather than dealing with by-law infractions related to homelessness.
   - Most residents living near social housing buildings do not even know that the facilities exist. After a facility is running, many of those who were initially opposed to the project come to support it, or simply forget about it.

- Residents of social housing facilities contribute to making their neighbourhoods vibrant, safe, inclusive and welcoming places to live!

For additional myths and facts about homelessness, please visit:
http://communitychallenge.files.wordpress.com/2008/06/info_sheet_myths_about_homelessness_081.pdf

A CASE STUDY – UNION GOSPEL MISSION AND GOOD NEIGHBOUR AGREEMENTS

The Union Gospel Mission (UGM) is one of Vancouver's largest supportive housing providers with multiple sites across Metro Vancouver. In January 2010, UGM created a Good Neighbour Agreement (GNA) to assist with relations between their supportive housing site and Vancouver's Strathcona and Downtown Eastside communities.

Simply put, a GNA outlines an organizations, commitment to being a good neighbour. It's a way to promote dialogue and earn trust in the community. For UGM, the agreement helped dispel contentious disputes, and while not a legally binding document, the GNA addressed local residents' concerns as it was crafted with their participation.

A CASE STUDY – RAINCITY HOUSING'S FRASER STREET DEVELOPMENT

When RainCity Housing and Support Society's supportive housing development at 5616 Fraser Street in Vancouver officially opened in October 2007, there was cause for celebration. Not only does the building provide much-needed housing for 30 clients with concurrent disorders, this NIMBY-plagued project also opened its doors to a welcoming community.

During the development stage, there was fierce opposition from the neighbours: 3,000 residents opposed the site, while only 16 residents endorsed it. Nevertheless, Vancouver City Council decided to proceed. A Community Advisory Committee was established to liaise with surrounding residents and businesses through the entire process.

When residents began moving into the three-story concrete building, apprehension was inevitable. The surrounding community, however, seemed unaware. People passing by actually stopped to ask whether the apartments were rental or condo and whether they could fill out an application. Businesses in the community also made the new residents feel welcome.

Read more: **http://www.bchousing.org/breakingthecycle/stories_of_hope/development_profiles/fraserstreet**

2,600

metro vancouver's homeless in 2008

HOW TO SUPPORT A NEW PROJECT

...WHEN YOU FIRST HEAR ABOUT A PROPOSAL

- Contact the developer or the non-profit organization who will be managing the project. Tell them you are a supporter. Ask how you can help.
- Consider "who you are" in relation to the proposal, and why you support it.
- Contact people who might also support the proposal. Keep them informed, or link them directly to your information source.

The goal: to create a nimble network of supporters and to plan the "message" that will inform your actions

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Email, phone or write a letter to your councillor.

- Write a letter to city council.
- Let them know you support the development.
- Caution them against a "double standard" – requiring public consultations just because the people who will move in are disabled or on social assistance. Urge them to uphold the City's responsibilities under the Charter to treat all its residents equally.
- Send copies of letters or emails to the organization managing the project.

The goal: To show beleaguered councilors there is strong support for the development and to ensure all councilors understand the human rights implications of their actions.

**See the sample letters at the end of the kit for suggestions.

...AT THE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT BOARD MEETING

The Board meets once every two weeks and their meetings are always open to the public.

Find out more details on the City of Vancouver Development Services website: **vancouver.ca/commsvcs/development-services/**

- Go to the meeting and speak out. You do not need to register in advance. Be brief. Plan what you will say with the housing developer and other speakers to avoid duplication
- Be ready to wait – the Committee may be hearing many cases on the same day, and cannot always tell you when your item will come up on its agenda.

The goal: To demonstrate neighbourhood support for the proposal to both the Committee and City Council.

...IF THERE IS AN OPEN HOUSE

- Encourage as many supporters as possible to attend
- Write a letter to the planning department before or after the meeting (contact information is usually on the notice), and send a copy to City Council and housing developers
- Speak up at the open house, as early as possible. Speak sincerely and personally.

The goal: To give the city planner material for a positive report; to give City Council courage to support the proposal; show opponents they do not speak for the entire community; discourage anyone from making discriminatory or offensive remarks.

HELPFUL DOCUMENTS:

The City of Vancouver is well-aware of the need for social and supportive housing. To bolster your submissions, you might want to remind them of previous commitments they have made towards social housing and support services in the community:

The Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside*

Recommends increased investment in social housing in the neighbourhood to ensure it remains a place where low-income tenants can continue to live. It also recommends that the community should be involved in monitoring the rate of change in the neighbourhood to ensure that development of condominiums does not outpace development of affordable housing.

http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/dteshousingplan.pdf

The City's Homeless Action Plan*

Discusses ways the City and the Provincial Government can reduce homelessness by making it easier for people to access welfare, developing supportive housing, and increasing mental health and addiction services.

http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/hap05jun.pdf

The Supportive Housing Strategy*

Focuses on housing for people with mental illnesses or addictions, including low barrier housing for people who may not be actively engaged in treatment, and recommends an increase in the supply of supportive housing units in newly developed buildings.

http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/supportivehousingstrategy/pdf/FinalSupportiveHousingStrategy.pdf

LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

The right to live in a neighbourhood of one's choice:

When someone says, "I don't want black people (or Jewish people, or gay people, or Chinese people, or seniors) to live near me," we know we are hearing a discriminatory statement. We know, because these statements don't feel right to us.

We also know that the B.C. Human Rights Code protects people from discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnic origin and age.

At times it feels like people are more comfortable expressing or hearing harsh attitudes about those who have a physical or mental disabilities or are poor than they would be about other groups. However, people on income assistance who are looking to rent a house or apartment are also protected by law. So are people with other disabilities, youth, and newcomers. This section looks at the laws that protect these rights, the practices that may violate them, and what you can do to fight discrimination and uphold these rights.

THE B.C. HUMAN RIGHTS CODE

The B.C. Human Rights Code applies to every person living in this province. Any person who violates the Code can be challenged before the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal.

1. Grounds

The B.C. Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination in accommodation in two sections.

Section 8 says:

> 8. (1) A person must not, without a bona fide and reasonable justification,
> (a) deny to a person or class of persons any accommodation, service or facility customarily available to the public, or
> (b) discriminate against a person or class of persons regarding any accommodation, service or facility customarily available to the public

because of the race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation or age of that person or class of persons.

Section 10 says:

> 10. (1) A person must not
> (a) deny to a person or class of persons the right to occupy, as a tenant, space that is represented as being available for occupancy by a tenant, or
> (b) discriminate against a person or class of persons regarding a term or condition of the tenancy of the space,

because of the race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, age or lawful source of income of that person or class of person, or of any other person or class of persons.

As you can see, the B.C. Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination in tenancy on the basis of race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, source of income, sex, sexual orientation or age. Refusing to rent a room to for one of these reasons – even if it's not the only reason – is illegal and a violation of human rights.

Many people have successfully challenged discriminatory treatment at the Human Rights Tribunal. The Tribunal has ruled in favour of tenants who were discriminated against on the basis of physical disability

(McDonald v. Schuster Real Estate Co. Ltd., 2005 BCHRT 177), mental disability (Beale v. Gambell and Gambell (1998), 34 BHRR d/113 (BCHRT)), as well as source of income (Tanner v. Blake, 2003 BCHRT 36, Neale v. Princeton Place Apartment LTD., 2001 BCHRT 6).

In addition, B.C. Courts have interpreted the term "disability" to include an addiction to drugs (PHS Community Services Society v. Attorney General of Canada, 2008 BCSC 661). Therefore, discriminating against someone due to the fact they have an addiction is also against the law.

2. Intention to Discriminate

Announcing an intention to discriminate is also prohibited. Literature and websites, in which the purpose is to promote discrimination or plan out future discriminatory practices, are illegal. The Code says:

> 7. (1) A person must not publish, issue or display, or cause to be published, Issued or displayed, any statement, publication, notice, sign, symbol, emblem or other representation that
> (a) indicates discrimination or an intention to discriminate against a person or a group or class of person, or
> (b) is likely to expose a person or a group or class of persons to hatred or contempt

because of the race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation or age of that person or that group or class of persons.

3. Indirect Discrimination

Discrimination is easier to spot when it takes the form of an intentional decision to exclude supportive housing, shelters, addiction treatment or mental health care facilities from a community because of the people who will live or access services there. The Code also prohibits less direct and even unintentional discrimination, including conduct or policies that may appear unobjectionable but which nevertheless have the effect of excluding people with disabilities from neighbourhood. The Code says:

> 2. Discrimination in contravention of this Code does not require an intention to contravene this Code.

This means that even if the person responsible for the action or comment did not "mean it", it may still be discrimination according to the law.

4. Who Can File a Complaint

Not only do tenants and future tenants have the right to challenge discriminatory rules or treatment under the Code, but housing providers can also file human rights complaints on behalf of those who are more directly affected. According to Code (s. 21(5)), the only reason a complaint of this type would be denied is if:

> (a) the person alleged to have been discriminated against does not wish to proceed with the complaint, or
> (b) proceeding with the complaint is not in the interest of the group or class on behalf of which the complaint is made.

THE CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

In addition to the provincial human rights codes, the rights of people living in Canada are protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Charter focuses on discriminatory government rules and actions, and prevents governments from discriminating on the basis of protected grounds:

> **Section 15(1) of the Charter says:**
> Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

The Charter applies to the Parliament and Government of Canada, and to the legislature and government of each province. That means, for example, that the Vancouver Community Charter and Local Government Act are covered by the Charter.

The Charter also applies to the policies and rules established by municipal governments, including Official Development Plans, zoning by-laws, development permit boards and even political decisions, such as a council-approved moratorium on more supportive or emergency housing for a particular neighbourhood.

The Supreme Court of Canada has emphasized the broad application of the Charter on several occasions and stated that it should be used as a guide to decision-making at all levels of government. The purpose of this extensive application is to encourage compliance with human rights legislation and to foster the development of a general culture of respect for human rights.

Each Canadian is also protected by section 7 of the Charter which states:

> Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

In a recent Supreme Court of B.C. decision, the judge reasoned that the dangers associated with being homeless act as a barrier to the full realization of section 7, stating that "sleep and shelter are necessary preconditions to any kind of security, liberty or human flourishing" and that interference with the right to shelter constitutes an "interference with the life, liberty and security of the person of these homeless people." (Victoria (City) v. Adams, 2008 BCSC 1363).

At Pivot Legal Society we hope that this reasoning will serve to guide future cases.

People or organizations who would never think of opposing housing on racial or ethnic grounds will sometimes try to exclude housing for people with mental illness. Simply reminding them that the B.C. Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability can make them stop.

CIVIL AND CRIMINAL LAW

People living in supportive housing or shelters, like everyone else, are protected against slurs and threats.

Civil law covers slander, libel, and defamation. It's not easy to bring a case forward. You must not only prove the statements are untrue (which might be quite straightforward), but that future tenants – the ones slurred – have sustained damage to their reputations.

The Criminal Code makes circulating hate literature a criminal offence. Tenants or future tenants subjected to a hate campaign can ask the police to press charges. They don't need legal representation – they are the victims.

WHAT DOES THE LAW MEAN

Does the B.C. Human Rights Code apply to opponents of housing for people with mental illness or other barriers? Does the Charter prohibit municipalities from stopping people who are covered by one of the prohibited grounds from moving into a neighbourhood, on the grounds there are already "too many people like them in the area"?

If the new housing is being opposed on the grounds that the future residents have disabilities (including addictions), are on social assistance, or on the basis of any other prohibited grounds, we think the answer is yes. If the housing is blocked by restrictive zoning rules or land use policies, again the answer might be yes. If the housing is blocked because of municipal decisions which reflect discriminatory attitudes, this would also fall under the jurisdiction of the Code and the Charter.

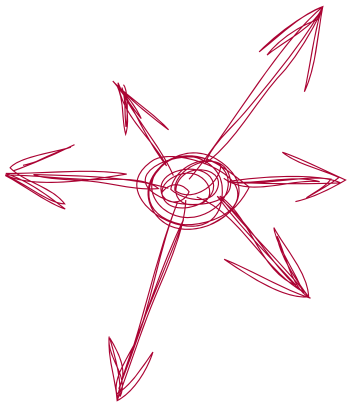
We believe that:

- People have the right to live where they choose.
- Social and Supportive Housing Initiatives should not require the approval of neighbours.
- Individuals, organizations or by-laws that exclude or defame people because of any grounds prohibited under the Code or the Charter can be challenged.
- When a person or group of persons makes affordable life-saving housing unavailable because of discriminatory reasoning, it is a violation of basic human rights.

Without a ruling from a Superior Court, however, this is an untested position legally, but an important decision at the Manitoba Court of Appeal does suggest the type of decision we might expect. A group of organizations, including the Canadian Mental Health Association, John Howard Society, Elizabeth Fry Society, Manitoba League of the Physically Handicapped, and Alcoholism Foundation of Manitoba challenged the City of Winnipeg's group home by-law, saying it was vague, discriminatory, and in effect, zones people, not land use.

The court agreed, and in his decision, the judge said,

"It is simply not acceptable since the advent of the Charter to prohibit a use of land with reference to the attributes of those who may use it, at least where the attributes are those which distinguish members of a disadvantaged group and where there is no evidence to show that such a prohibition is one which can be demonstrably justified as reasonable in a free and democratic society."



WHAT CAN YOU DO – HOW TO APPLY THE LAW

Know the difference between discrimination and legitimate opposition.
There could be many legitimate reasons for opposing a housing proposal: concerns about height, density, design, parking, access, or other characteristics of the proposed building or site plan. You may not agree with these concerns, but they are not discriminatory. It is only discrimination if the opposition is based on the characteristics of the people who will be housed.

Point out discrimination.
People or organizations who would never think of opposing housing on racial or ethnic grounds will sometimes try to exclude housing for people with mental illness. Simply reminding them that the B.C. Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability can make them stop. This is especially true of community leaders who may be ashamed of a charge of discrimination.

Watch out for prejudice "cover up."
Sophisticated people will hide their discrimination by saying the project does not "fit" the neighbourhood, or that it is "not appropriate", or even that the site is "not in the best interests of the future tenants." Section 8 of this guide offers some responses to these statements.

Change your language.
As many human rights activists know, this can be the first step towards changing attitudes. Once you have put this issue into a legal and human rights framework, it may discourage discriminatory statements. And once you are talking about legitimate land use issues, then you can respond with facts and arguments.

Challenge discriminatory planning policies and by-laws.
Policies that impose additional restrictions on supportive housing because of the people they house may be vulnerable to legal challenge, especially if the requirements cannot be justified on land use grounds. Even restrictions that have some basis in planning principles may be found to be discriminatory if, upon a legal analysis of human rights principles, the need for supportive housing outweighs the rationale for the restriction.

If you encounter a by-law, policy, or decision you believe to be discriminatory, seek the advice of a lawyer or call Pivot Legal Society 604-255-9700. You may be able to develop a human rights submission to support an application to the municipality.

What about making a human rights complaint against an individual or a neighbourhood group.
Intentionally hurtful discrimination, malicious statements, and threats to block a housing project deserve a tough response. In these cases, you may want to consider whether to lodge a human rights complaint with the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal.

140%

increase in regional homeless since 2002

The human rights process is rarely used for these kinds of situations, and the Tribunal is unlikely to resolve the issue quickly enough to make a difference for a given project. But simply receiving the Commission's letter can show your opponent that their words and actions have consequences.

Filing a complaint is free. A complaint can be filed by a person who feels that he or she is directly the target of discriminatory conduct, rules or laws that are having a negative effect on their right to secure housing.

The first step is to call the Tribunal's General Enquiry phone number (1-888-440-8844). But because your complaint will likely be an unusual one, you may want some legal advice first. The B.C. Human Rights Coalition (1-877-689-8474) or Pivot Legal Society (604 255-9700) may be a good place to start for advice. You may also write your opponent a warning letter, or ask a lawyer to write one. This letter would describe the offending behaviour, and warn that you will file a human rights complaint if the discriminatory behaviour does not stop.

You will strengthen your case by keeping detailed notes of precisely who said what, and when. Ask witnesses for detailed notes too. All complaints should be made within six months of the date the offending statements or actions were made.

Your opponents will receive a letter from the Tribunal informing them a complaint has been made. They will then need to defend their statements in writing, and commit themselves to a legal position.

TIPS FOR YIMBYS WHO WANT TO SUPPORT A HOUSING PROJECT

It is not uncommon to fear change, especially when changes impact your neighbourhood – many of us can understand this. But these fears do not justify discrimination.

1) Remember that your voice is valuable.

Often those who are not opposed to a project are less motivated to vocalize their support. Although understandable, this has the effect of giving an unbalanced view of the perspectives of the community. Never underestimate how important your voice of support is to the City of Vancouver or the housing provider. It will provide a desperately needed morale boost to those involved, and sometimes even a single positive voice has been a critical part of the decision making process.

2) Be aware of "who you are" when you are advocating.

Your message will come across differently depending on how you are perceived – be aware of how relevant your background is in communicating any message. Some details which have proved very relevant similar situations are: being a business owner, living directly in the neighbouhood affected, being someone who has benefited form social housing, being a member of a faith group, or being a parent. Highlight any experience which makes you an "expert" on some aspect of your community and which shows your genuine interest and commitment to the long-term evolution of the neighbourhood.

3) Write a letter.
This old-fashioned tool is still very effective. Remember that a letter does not have to be long or overly professional to be respected; a personal and honest explanation of why the issue is important to you is best. Remember, a letter to your MP in Ottawa is postage-free!

**See our letter-writing tips and sample YIMBY letter for more ideas.

4) Speak to the media.
If you are comfortable with a higher level of public attention, this is an excellent way for your voice to have maximum impact. Contact housing providers directly and volunteer yourself as a positive voice in the community for potential media stories. Writing a letter to the editor of a local newspaper can also help generate valuable support.

Helpful HINTS

The best way to prepare yourself to speak to the media is to plan for expected questions and know your talking points. Jot down 3-5 reasons why you support this development. What is your message? Be clear in your language and be brief. Don't forget to be aware of "who you are." The media want to hear your opinion as a concerned resident, parent, friend, or business owner.

5) Participate in a business association, residents association, or community advisory committee.
You can ensure that these organizations truly speak for the entire community and remind those in positions of authority that compassion and a sense of justice is a priority in your neighbourhood.

6) Join in public consultation.
Most supportive housing developments will require an open house and a Development Permit Board hearing before they are approved. At an open house you'll have a chance to have your questions answered by those directly involved in planning, designing, and managing the proposed housing project. You will also have the opportunity to interact with other neighbours who may not be as enthusiastic about the project as you. You do not have to live in the neighbourhood affected by the project to attend – local residents could benefit from your positive input.

At a Development Board Hearing you can speak out more formally about the reasons why you think supportive housing is beneficial to the community. It is at this meeting that final decisions will be made. Your voice could be pivotal to the officials involved. Bear in mind that these officials are required by law to act in accordance with Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the B.C. Human Rights Code, which is why putting the issue in a human rights context will be very useful.

7) Connect with other YIMBYs.
There can be a lot of pressure from neighbours to join in opposition to social housing projects. A network of like-minded supporters can be a crucial factor in keeping your energy up. Not only will you be able to find solidarity, but there may be a lot to learn from each other's strategies.

One way to connect with like-minded people committed to ending homelessness is to become a member of Pivot Legal Society and express interest in our housing campaign. You will receive news on issues and events which affect housing in Vancouver and have a contact point for any questions or concerns.
www.pivotlegal.org

8) Take the Cringe Test.
You are clearly already a compassionate neighbour with a strong sense of justice. Taking the Cringe Test really illustrates how many taboos still exist within society regarding mental illness and poverty. Not only will it strengthen your resolve, but aspects of the test might be relevant to conversations you have heard, or will hear, among neighbours and friends. Having taken the Cringe Test, you will be better equipped to challenge stereotypical attitudes.

9) Educate your community.
Most residents of Vancouver are genuinely concerned about homelessness, and seek compassionate solutions for the disadvantaged. Resistance to supportive housing is usually seeded in misinformation. Surely you have had your own assumptions challenged at some time or another, now you may have the opportunity to gently and humbly remind your neighbours that everyone has the right to live in whichever neighbourhood they choose and that this insistence on equality will ultimately be of major benefit to the entire community.

10) Put up a poster or sticker as a visual aid.
Not only will a "You Are Welcome in my Neighbourhood" poster or sticker rally support amongst your current neighbours, but it will also serve as a welcoming message to clients of supportive housing who may be nervous about transitioning into a community that appears not to want them. Download a poster and be part of a welcoming inclusive community!

Often those who are not opposed to a project are less motivated to vocalize their support. Although understandable, this has the effect of giving an unbalanced view of the perspectives of the community.

"HOW TO" GUIDE FOR YIMBY SERVICE PROVIDERS
VANCOUVER CITY COUNCIL - BASIC PLANNING APPROVAL PROCESS

The process for opening new supportive housing, community care facilities or other projects can be lengthy. There will likely be lots of red tape. This section provides information about the zoning and development process in Vancouver, and opportunities for you to say "Yes in My Backyard" when social housing, shelters or mental health facilities are proposed. These details are not, however, meant to replace your own research before starting out.

The City of Vancouver is zoned into different types of areas such as residential, commercial, industrial, and others. As the names suggest, these areas are maintained because land-use within the zones is designated ("zoned") for a particular use. "Zoning regulates the use and development of property in the city through by-laws approved by City Council, which encourage compatible land uses and buildings. Zoning reflects Council policies based on community goals for the future of the city and its neighbourhoods." For example, if your neighbour wanted to change his house to a store front, he would need to seek approval if the zoning of your area is set for residential use.

Step #1 Locate a site and determine the zoning district.

The zoning districts of the City of Vancouver are shown on a map called the Zoning District Plan.

"In each district, land use is either categorized as being "outright" or "conditional." Outright uses are uses that are permitted provided all the regulations and provisions of the Zoning and Development By-law and Parking By-law are met. Conditional uses are those uses that may have some impact in the community, but may be permitted under a development application." In addition, zones list various other considerations, such as allowable building height and space.

Step #2 Find out if your site is zoned with outright or conditional approval for your planned supportive housing.

Details on each zone can be found in the City of Vancouver's Zoning and Development By-law (3575). If you are changing the use of your site (e.g. from a retail store to a youth drop-in centre), but the zoning is correct, you will need to apply for a minor or major application – Development Permit. In other words, you are requesting to change the use of the building. For example, you have a daycare facility and you want to change the facility into an adult drop-in centre. The "minor" or "major" component will vary depending on the extent of the change (typically, though not always, this is determined as a result of whether there are structural modifications that are being made or are deemed necessary). An initial consultation with City staff via the City's Inquiry Centre will assist you in determining what sort of Development Permit is appropriate. Details on how to apply for a Development Permit can be found at;

http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/planning/landuse2.htm.

Step #3 If your site needs to be rezoned.

"Rezoning is the term used for any change to zoning by-laws and zoning district plans. All such changes are subject to approval by the City Council at a Public Hearing. There are different ways that re-zonings take place - depending on the scale and scope of what's being contemplated.

All rezoning applications are reviewed by the Planning Department and are reported to City Council with a recommendation of support or refusal.

City Council makes the decision either to approve the application or refuse it[13]."

It is important to note that the rezoning process is necessarily a long one, and can take several years from start to finish.

The City of Vancouver's Community Services, Planning Department website lists a neighbourhood by neighbourhood snapshot of current projects and activities of the Planning Department.
You will find information on the status of a project, start and completion dates, last update, links to related information, as well as contact names and phone numbers.

http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/planning

The Planning Department website also offers detailed information for the rezoning process.

http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/planning/rezoning/

Step #4 Plan for public notification.

When a developer wants to change a site's use, it usually triggers a public consultation process.
The bigger the change, the longer it will take, and the more important this consultation process becomes.

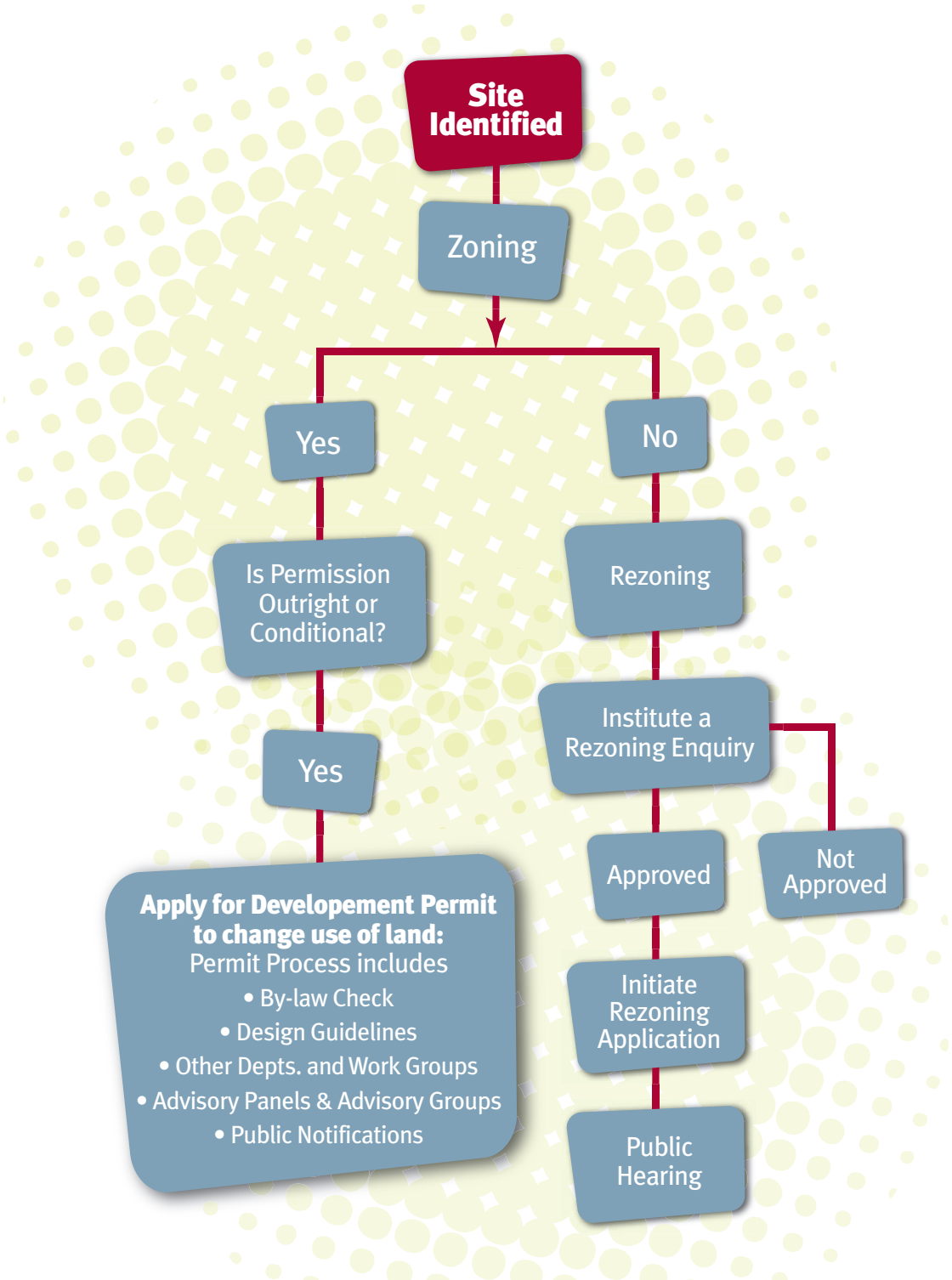
Regardless of whether you are applying to rezone a site or requesting approval to alter the conditional use, it is critical that you engage with the community early and often. The legal requirements for public notification and meetings, as laid out in the Vancouver Charter[14], should be considered the minimum. We believe that changing a NIMBY perception of supportive housing to YIMBY requires community collaboration - this means talking to the community early and often... and not just when required to do so. Expect the arguments opposing supportive housing to be broad. Familiarizing yourself with these arguments will help you plan a positive response.

HOW ARE DECISIONS MADE

When public notifications are posted, the more support the better. Decisions are not set in advance, so your voice is important. Unfortunately, many people may favour supportive housing applications, but they don't attend public hearings or respond to requests for public input.

It is important to note that, outside of the basic process for development permits and rezoning, any projects that you advance will be expected to "fit" with an array of City policies and guidelines — including local area plans (used to guide growth and development at the neighbourhood scale), facility guidelines and other key policy documents.

If the city believes in the project, but there is some resistance, it may still go ahead. If there is 100% opposition, however, the city will likely put the project on hold until public concerns can be addressed.



BASIC FLOW CHART OF APPROVAL PROCESS

TOP TIPS FOR HOUSING PROVIDERS

When addressing neighbourhood residents, there is a lot of value in using simple language to emphasize kindness, compassion, and common sense. We can sympathize with the instinct to protect our families and be consulted on community matters; however, we must remain clear that this instinct does not legitimize discriminatory treatment of some of the most vulnerable members of our society.

A CASE STUDY – RAINCITY HOUSING AND THE FRASER & 41ST STREET SITE

RainCity Housing has provided supportive housing in Vancouver since 1982. With 12 sites operating throughout the Lower Mainland, RainCity has valuable experience with community communication. In particular, the Fraser & 41st Street site brought new challenges that RainCity responded to with flexibility.

Despite starting the process early, not enough information was sent out to local residents, especially in different languages. As a result RainCity decided to slow their efforts to concentrate more on communication and building community trust. They implemented a Community Advisory Committee made up of various neighbourhood stakeholders and they added a position of Community Integration Support Worker. This position's task was to be proactive in the community and build relations between program residents and the neighbourhood.

Both the Advisory Committee and the Integration Support Worker positions continue to function to this day. The Support Worker position was so successful that RainCity implemented the same role in each of its sites.

5 take-aways from the RainCity Fraser & 41st Street experience include:

- Know your community and send out communication in multiple languages, if needed;
- Dedicate a community liaison;
- In all communications, emphasize the value this site will have on the community;
- If your residents will require specific services, ensure these services are accessible in either the building itself, or in your area;
- If possible, have 24 hour staff. This has positive benefits for both the residents and the community, as it provides more support to residents, and ensures there's always someone there for neighbours to speak to - another way to show you want to engage in dialogue.

RainCity's next project will be located on the corner of West 2nd and Cook Street . Stay tuned for more details as RainCity continues their valuable work!

Here are some basic principles of communication which many housing providers have found useful:

1) Be organized and thorough.
Ensure from the start that you have evidence of good project management and a solid business plan. Thoroughly complete the application and review it for any potential errors. This will help to avoid expensive delays, and you will also inspire confidence in your future audience.

2) Start your communication strategy early.
Not only will this give you more time to combat discriminatory attitudes, it will also enable you to meet and encourage your supporters. Some developers have collected hundreds of letters of support before official public notification, sending an unmistakably positive message to city officials. Two aspects of this communication are critical:

a) Prepare your strategy.
Set aside time to research and prepared the answers to the most difficult questions you can imagine. Gather these answers along with key messages and statistics in a single document, so that anyone involved in communication will repeat a consistent message. 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.

b) Dig up support.
Getting as much positive support as possible early can be crucial. Brainstorm all possible contacts in the neighbourhood and speak with them in person about your plans. Many projects have benefited from a single champion, ideally a person from within the neighbourhood who has nothing to gain personally from the development. Businesses and faith groups can also be important allies.

Although the city requires notification to property owners within a specific distance of your project, many housing developers have had success by introducing themselves to residents of all units in the neighbourhood. In this way you can gauge the mood of the community and address any concerns promptly.

3) Be transparent and open.
Public consultation and government accountability are a valuable part of good government, and you do not want to give the impression that you are sneaking a project in and undermining these processes. By keeping your messages and methods transparent you will help to gain the trust of the community. This transparency will also have the effect of drawing out people's concerns early on so they can be addressed before they genuinely threaten the development. Obviously, this also means that it is critical to have a communication strategy already in place and to be ready and committed to taking on a measure of controversy for an extended period.

Another aspect of open communication is the potential to humanize the situation by truly hearing out individual complaints rather than simply going through the motions of consultation. This demonstrates respect for the community and will help new neighbours to understand that there are genuinely concerned and committed individuals behind the project. If you are in a management positions, you may find it beneficial to give out your personal contact details so that individuals can have their questions answered promptly. Once you have established a truly meaningful dialogue you may find this to be an ideal opportunity to clear up glaring myths regarding housing and homelessness.

4) Maintain control of the dialogue.
Activists have long known that changing one's language is often the first step to more tangible change. While respectfully responding to community concerns, it is important not become overly reactive in your communication. Establish your key messages, and stick to them.

Do not wait for negative feedback to initiate your communication; rather, take the offensive and frame your project precisely, positively, and consistently.

5) Be flexible.

No single approach will ensure success. A multi-pronged strategy is crucial, and you will need to take on different roles for different audiences. At times legitimate concerns can be managed by simply referring to well-grounded research; however, when faced with true discrimination and bullying, it is important to be ready to use a more assertive strategy. This would never entail engaging in disrespectful behaviour yourself, but you may have to take on the burden of emotional blows and cruel tactics from a community without losing heart completely. When considering a new tactic, ask yourself: "how does this serve the homeless/ill/addicted/disabled people I am fighting for?" You answer should help you guide your process and find balance between respect for new neighbours and respect for your clients.

Strong leadership is critical, but it is rarely possible for one individual to take on total control of a development. If you are a leader, be realistic about your strengths and train staff carefully in order to fill in any gaps in order to provide consistent messaging throughout the span of your project.

A CASE STUDY — SALSBURY COMMUNITY PROJECT

Over the last 10 years the community work encouraged by the Grandview Calvary Baptist Church has initiated five separate non-profit projects to connect with vulnerable individuals living in the community. Their most recent endeavour is to open a site that will shelter a variety of different people. Still in the beginning stages, the Salsbury Project is a good example of the communication required to encourage community involvement and support.

Before even beginning the rezoning application they reached out and spoke to neighbours one-on-one. They held an open house in October 2010 where concerns raised ranged from property values and building heights to increased density and potential residents. In addition, they sent out a letter to the immediate neighbourhood asking for even more community feedback. In the future, they plan to hold another open house before the public hearing that has yet to be scheduled.

5 take-aways from the Salsbury example include:

- Be prepared for an abundance of communication;
- Make the community feel part of the project;
- Keep neighbours updated on project progress;
- Have a community liaison. Someone local residents can call with their questions and concerns, and;
- Hold multiple open houses and use feedback forms to gather more information.

This project is still in the initial phases and the Salsbury Community Society continues to seek funding.
Stay tuned as this exciting project develops!

Read more: http://www.salsburycommunitysociety.ca

PIER 32

RESOURCES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

http://www.calgaryhomeless.com

NIMBY Guide for Municipal Officers: created by ACT (Affordability and Choice Today) promotes practical solutions at the local level that overcome regulatory barriers to the development of affordable housing. They are funded by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and delivered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, in collaboration with the Canadian Homebuilders' Association and the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association.

http://www.actprogram.com/CMFiles/CRA_ACT_NIMBYGuide_WebEN.pdf

1 **The cost of homelessness:**
http://www.carmha.ca/media/resources/cancom_22Mar08/The%20Cost%20of%20Homelessness%20-%20Vancouver%20Sun%20-%2022Mar08.pdf

2 **The Vancouver Sun. "Police monitor hearing on contentious homeless shelter proposed in Coquitlam." Nov 29, 2010.**
http://www.vancouversun.com/news/Police+monitor+hearing+contentious+homeless+shelter+proposal+Coquitlam/3902714/story.html

3 **Strategies to Address Homelessness (Vancouver.ca/housing)**
http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/housing%20brochure/brochure%205%2011x17.pdf

4 **Strategies to Address Homelessness (Vancouver.ca/housing)**
http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/housing%20brochure/brochure%205%2011x17.pdf

5 **Strategies to Address Homelessness (Vancouver.ca/housing)**
http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/housing%20brochure/brochure%205%2011x17.pdf

6 http://www.housing.gov.bc.ca/housing/publications/neighbour/index.htm

7 http://furmancenter.org/files/FurmanCenterPolicyBriefonSupportiveHousing_LowRes.pdf

8 **Housing and support for adults with severe addictions and/or mental illness in British Columbia (February 2008):**
http://www.carmha.ca/publications/resources/pub_hsami/Housing_SAMI_BC_FINAL(PD).pdf

9 http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/planning/landuse5.htm

10 http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/currentplanning/coloured_zoning_map.htm

11 http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/planning/landuse1.htm

12 http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/BYLAWS/zoning/zon&dev.htm

13 http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/planning/landuse5.htm

14 http://www.bclaws.ca/

SAMPLE Letter to Editor

DATE

Re:

Dear Editor,

I would like to respond to the article you recently published about (project) at (location). Like many of your readers, I am a concerned resident of (neighbourhood) and I want to feel safe and secure where I live. I do not, however, share (journalist or person quoted in article's) concerns about this project.

Consider the following brief points about supportive housing in Vancouver:

- Two separate studies, conducted in BC (1995) and in New York City (2008) found no evidence of lowered property values around the areas where supportive housing was built.
- It costs less tax-payer dollars to provide adequate housing and support than not to.
- The Vancouver Police have publicly called for investments in affordable housing and support services for the homeless and people with mental illness as a means of reducing crime and improving communities.
- Most residents living near social housing buildings do not even know that the facilities exist.

On top of these facts, remember that the *B.C. Human Rights Code* makes it illegal to discriminate against people who are mentally ill, disabled, or poor. Everyone has the same rights we all enjoy and no one should have to ask permission from their neighbours before moving in next door.

I encourage you (or Journalist, or interviewee) to look deeper into the benefits this project will have in our community and reconsider the reasoning behind opposition to this project.

Sincerely Yours,

Name
Address
Phone #
Email

SAMPLE Letter to Opposition to the project

DATE

Re:

Dear (Neighbourhood Association, BIA etc.),

I would like to respond to your recent opposition to the proposed (project) at (location). Like you, I am a concerned resident of this neighbourhood and I want to feel safe and secure where I live. I do not, however, share your concerns about this project.

Consider the following brief points about supportive housing in Vancouver:

- Two separate studies, conducted in BC (1995) and in New York City (2008) found no evidence of lowered property values around the areas where supportive housing was built.
- It costs less tax-payer dollars to provide adequate housing and support than not to.
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- Most residents living near social housing buildings do not even know that the facilities exist.

On top of these facts, remember that the *B.C. Human Rights Code* makes it illegal to discriminate against people who are mentally ill, disabled, or poor. Everyone, even those on social assistance, have the same rights we all enjoy and no one should have to ask permission from their neighbours before moving in next door.

I encourage you to look deeper into the benefits this project will have in our community and to reconsider your opposition.

Sincerely Yours,

Name
Address
Phone #
Email

SAMPLE Letter – City Council

DATE

Re:

Dear City Council

I would like to add my support to the proposed project to open a (project) at (location)

As a resident of this neighbourhood, I recognize the need for this service in our community. I am concerned that a vocal minority of residents is presenting an unbalanced picture the range of views about this project among people in my neighbourhood.

I urge you to uphold the City's responsibilities under the *B.C. Human Rights Code* and to treat all prospective residents equally. Everyone has the same rights we all enjoy and no one should have to ask permission from their neighbours before moving in next door.

Thank you for your dedication to building neighbourhoods that are vibrant, safe, inclusive, and welcoming place for everyone. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information about my support for this project.

Sincerely Yours,

Name
Address
Phone #
Email

PIVOT LEGAL SOCIETY

Founded in 2000, Pivot Legal Society is a non-profit legal advocacy group whose mandate is to use the law to address the root causes of poverty and social exclusion. By drawing attention to the root causes of poverty, criminalization and social isolation, we are creating the conditions for each of us to become full and equal participants in our communities.

Our name is metaphor for our approach to social change - by making the most tangible violations of human rights the focal point of our efforts, we exert maximum pressure in order to shift society toward greater equality and inclusivity.

PIVOT
equality lifts everyone

121 Heatley Avenue
Vancouver, B.C. V6A 3E9
Telephone: 604-255-9700
E-mail: getinvolved@pivotlegal.com

THANKS

We would like to sincerely thank the HomeComing Community Choice Coalition for allowing us to model this YIMBY kit after a similar document they produced in Ontario. Our ability to enact change is dependant on groups of concerned individuals working in collaboration and we appreciate your support to help end homelessness in Canada.

We would also like to thank Jessica Arczynski and Tina Trebilco whose dedication and hard work made this kit possible and Avalon Mott who took the photographs for this kit. Finally we would like to thank everyone who offered their time and expertise to this project.

Design Services provided by Slightly off Center, Advertising & Design

ISBN: 978–0–9811567–6–7