

Backgrounder

Quick Starts

The Mayor's Task Force on Community Housing mandates that a series of "Quick Starts" be presented to City Council early in the task force process. The task force has proposed a list of 10 "Quick Start" actions intended to build momentum and engage residents in a discussion on trade-offs and solutions to improve housing affordability and accessibility. Some Quick Starts are new, while some provide Council with guidance on City policies already under development. The recommended Quick Starts are by no means comprehensive; many other ideas were considered, but required more discussion or did not meet the six-month Quick Start definition. The task force will deliberate on these ideas for its final report, to be presented to City Council in July.

10 Quick Starts

1. Create a Modular Housing Strategy

Pursue further partnerships with BC Housing's Rapid Response to Homelessness Program, including the use of City land for new modular housing, as a way to quickly accommodate, on a longer-term basis, people facing homelessness. The task force recommends that these partnerships, and the City's broader response to homelessness, be given high priority.

2. Regulate Short-term Rental Housing

Explore approaches for regulating and restricting short term rentals (e.g. AirBnb, VRBO and Home Away). Although this is currently a city policy in development the task force recommends it be given high priority. The goal is to ensure private rental housing supply is available to meet local needs.

3. Adopt a Robust Tenant Relocation Policy

Specific measures recommended under this Quick Start are still under discussion. Detailed recommendations will follow in the Final Report.

4. Establish a Rent Bank using Housing Fund Monies

Create and fund (with Community Benefit Bonus Housing Fund monies) a rent bank serving Burnaby renters who find themselves temporarily short of cash to pay rent or utilities. Rent banks provide short-term or no-cost loans and are not used to cover ongoing cash shortfalls due to unaffordable rent.

5. Scale Up/Increase Additional Density for Projects with Below-market Rentals

Approve additional density for projects providing below-market rental housing, both through new development or redevelopment of existing sites, and on both privately owned sites and sites owned or leased by non-profit housing providers, where planning principles permit.

6. Partner with BC Housing, Non-profits and Private Developers for More Non-market Rental Housing

Pursue creative partnerships with other levels of government, non-profit societies, and the private sector in the development/redevelopment of residential properties. The City can offer land, density bonuses, fee waivers, and other contributions to these partnerships.

7. Use a Portfolio Approach for City Lands Program for Non-market Housing

The City should adopt a portfolio approach to its existing City Lands Program for Non-Market Housing. Suitable City-owned lands would be identified and offered for lease on a bulk basis to non-profit societies, such as housing co-operatives and community land trusts. This allows pooling of resources, cross subsidization and possible economies of scale. It also facilitates the development of sites that might not be developed independently.

8. Simplify Zoning and Other Requirements to Increase the Number of Homes in More Neighbourhoods

The City should initiate a review of zoning and other requirements to make it easier to build laneway houses, duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes in a wider variety of neighbourhoods (“missing-middle” housing).

9. Commission Land Value Capture Study

Study land value capture practices, including opportunities for Burnaby to capture the financial benefits from increased density outside of Town Centres. The premise of land value capture is that the uplift in property values that results from a public investment in infrastructure such as transit, or rezoning sites for additional density, should not all accrue to private property owners. Because government action or investment created the benefit, the public should share in the financial returns, which could be spent on achieving public goals like affordable housing. Land value capture programs may also discourage speculation.

10. Gather Data on Empty Homes

The City should obtain data to better understand if Burnaby has a significant number of empty homes. In order to know if action is required, the City first needs to know if it has an empty homes problem. Collecting the necessary data is the first step.