Tracking the Impacts of Municipal Housing Policy Changes:
An exploratory study of policy monitoring options at the regional level in Metro Vancouver

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TRACKING THE IMPACT OF MUNICIPAL HOUSING POLICY IMPACTS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF POLICY MONITORING OPTIONS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL IN METRO VANCOUVER

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Executive Summary

Understanding the impacts of municipal housing policies, in terms of the number and relative affordability of units created, is critical to refining and adopting policies that are effective in helping to generate diverse and affordable housing options for residents. This research explores how to track these policy impacts at the regional level. Specifically, it explores data sources available for tracking the number and relative affordability of units created as a result of six different policies:

- Allowing secondary suites
- Allowing coach/garden/laneway housing
- Allowing increased density in areas appropriate for affordable housing
- Allowing infill housing
- Zoning for small lots
- Broadening townhouse/rowhouse/duplex zones

Tables exploring sources of data for each of these policies were created. The three most prolific sources of information are the reports generated by the Canadian Mortgage & Housing Corporation (CMHC), the BC Assessment Authority (BCAA) assessment roll, and municipal administrative data (including permit databases, utility bills, and GIS databases). Through a combination of these sources and others, the number and affordability of units can often be obtained. There are, however, important ways in which these sources of information could change to become more useful and fruitful:

- Rent levels can be particularly challenging to monitor, and tracking online classifieds is emerging as a potential new method of accessing information, to supplement CMHC's Rental Market Report. CMHC's data could be augmented through using online survey methods or partnering with apartment organizations to increase the Secondary Rental Market Survey sample size. Also, municipalities could acquire rent level information during the permit or post-occupancy inspection process.

- Another particular challenge identified is around cross-referencing databases, such as permit databases, GIS systems and BCAA information, in order to query for the number of units of a particular type and easily move to understanding the average size or assessed value of these units. Collaboration amongst Metro Vancouver and its member municipalities could perhaps lead to improvements in permit tracking systems that allow for simpler queries and better reporting.

- Most of the ways to track the number and affordability of units rest at the municipal level. Maintaining frequently updated BCAA and GIS databases is important for allowing Metro Vancouver to do regional-level analysis. Metro Vancouver can also play a crucial role in collecting information from municipalities, synthesizing it, drawing the regional picture, and reporting back to municipalities what impacts policies are having in different communities.

Further research could pilot the methods suggested in this report. Next steps could include exploring ways to track online classifieds, piloting collecting rent information through municipal permitting processes, and finding ways to integrate databases and flag the connection between permits and particular recently adopted policies in the permit tracking system.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

BCAA	British Columbia Assessment Authority
BCAOMA	BC Apartment Owners and Managers Association
CHOA	Condominium Homeowners Association of BC
CMHC	Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation
FSR	Floor Space Ratio
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
HPI	Home Price Index
ICIS	Integrated Cadastral Information Society
Metro	Metro Vancouver
MLS	Multiple Listing Service
REBGV	Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver
RBC	Royal Bank of Canada
TRAC	Tenant Resource and Advisory Centre

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Introduction

Context and Project Rationale

In 2007, Metro Vancouver adopted an Affordable Housing Strategy, which includes an outline of actions and policies that municipalities can take to bring diverse and affordable housing to their communities. Municipalities are increasingly taking action to stimulate the provision or to directly provide affordable housing; they are making zoning changes, providing fiscal support, making planning changes, improving approval processes, adopting policies protecting rental housing, and doing education and advocacy work. Still, not all municipalities have created comprehensive strategic plans for affordable housing. Metro Vancouver's newly adopted Regional Growth Strategy (Metro 2040: Shaping our Future) requires municipalities to create Housing Action Plans. The region commits to assisting in this process by "providing analysis on regional demographics, household characteristics and market conditions, and work[ing] with municipalities to review and refine municipal housing priorities, policies and future demand estimates in the context of this analysis" (Metro Vancouver 2011, 46).

It is within this dynamic context of policy exploration and adoption that Metro Vancouver aims to provide assistance to member municipalities, to help ensure that the policies adopted are effective. One such form of assistance could be providing a regional look at how many affordable homes are being created. **This project aims to contribute to Metro's ability to track the number and relative affordability of units created as a result of specific policies.**

Metro Vancouver planners already produce a very comprehensive Housing Data Book, which pools and analyzes the information available through CMHC, Statistics Canada, BCAA and the real estate boards. This important resource provides a regional look at the housing situation, but is not intended to drill into the drivers behind the housing situation. To look beyond average rent levels or prices for general structure types and understand the affordability of units created as a result of particular policy changes necessitates more research. It requires reviewing the available data, identifying any gaps, seeking out additional sources of information, and exploring whether sources can be combined to provide new information.

Research Question and Sub-Questions

This research project - a collaboration between Metro Vancouver's Housing Department and UBC's School of Community and Regional Planning - addresses the following research question:

> **What are appropriate sources of information and methodologies for collecting data that can show the number and relative affordability of housing units built as a result of particular changes in municipal policy or regulation intended to increase the affordability and availability of housing?**

This project is concerned with sources of data on six particular policy and regulatory changes. Metro Vancouver staff and the housing sub-committee of the Technical Advisory Committee identified these policies, listed in the table below, as areas that are not easily monitored or where there are data gaps. The committee did not provide definitions of the policy areas, and one of the first steps in developing a system to monitor the impacts would be to develop clear and widely agreed upon definitions. Currently, municipalities do not all define these policies the same way. The table below provides rough conceptualizations of these policies:

Policy and Regulatory Changes:	Conceptualized as:
a) allowing secondary suites	Self-contained rental dwelling units (with a kitchen and bathroom), usually located within a single-family house but with a separate entrance.
b) allowing coach/garden/laneway housing	Detached dwellings typically located where a garage might be, facing the laneway, on a single-family lot. These houses are generally approximately 550 square feet and are limited to rental or family use (no strata-titling permitted).
c) allowing increased density in areas appropriate for affordable housing	Either rezoning for higher allowed densities in areas appropriate for affordable housing or providing density bonuses on-site for affordable housing units included in projects. Resulting buildings could be completely purpose-built rental apartments, or a mix of condo and rental units.
d) allowing infill housing	Housing whose development does not involve the development of greenfield or prime agricultural land. Infill housing is often considered to be any housing that is inserted within developed areas and constitutes an intensification of the housing or other use that was there previously, sometimes involving the consolidation of multiple lots. Infill housing generally is not defined as including inserting suites into existing residential buildings.
e) zoning for small lots	Lowering the minimum lot size in single-family districts and increasing site coverage allowances or relaxing side yard requirements, to allow for more efficient utilization of land. Small lots range roughly from 2,500 to 6,000 sq. ft. Units built on small lots could be detached single-family homes or rowhouses. This policy generally aims to create ownership units, which might then be rented out on the secondary rental market.
f) broadening rowhouse/townhouse/duplex zones	Zoning permitting attached or semi-detached low-rise housing developments. The line between rowhouses, townhouses, and low-rise apartment buildings is not always clear. These buildings could consist of rental, ownership, or rented out ownership units – stratified or unstratified.

Methodology

This applied project consisted of two parts: firstly, identifying the data available and the data gaps, and secondly, exploring opportunities for capturing missing data or sharing data across jurisdictions. In practice, these issues were often explored simultaneously, in an iterative process of interviews and on-line research. Though the subject matter of this project is the quantitative impacts of policy, the research design involved only qualitative methods – mostly background research in reports by municipalities and housing organizations, and semi-structured interviews.

The first phase of the project involved background research. The student first familiarized herself with a range of databases and publications on the housing market, and became acquainted with the methods used to collect information, and the data they do and do not provide. Particular attention was paid to whether data sources could provide information on the new units created after the adoption of a policy, or only on the entire structure type category. The student also scanned municipal housing strategies for the sources of data included (see Appendix 1). This search was then supplemented by semi-structured interviews with twelve municipal planners and planning technicians from around the region (City of Surrey, White Rock, Port Coquitlam, Port

Moody, Richmond, New Westminster, two interviewees from the City of North Vancouver, two interviewees from Coquitlam, and two interviewees from City of Vancouver), focused on the data they have access to or generate through administrative processes.

Throughout this data cataloguing process, a series of housing data tables were built, exploring sources for data to monitor the outcomes of the six policies. These tables were also informed by semi-structured interviews with key informants in the housing sector, such as staff members from CMHC, the Greater Vancouver Real Estate Board (GVREB), Landcor Data Corporation, BC Assessment Authority (BCAA), the Tenant Resource and Advisory Centre (TRAC), and Metro Vancouver. Email communication with VanCity Credit Union, Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), Royal LePage, Altus Group, and the BC Apartment Owners and Managers Association (BCAOMA) also informed this report.

The intent of the project is to cast a wide net and provide a range of suggestions on possible methods for capturing data. More extensive testing and evaluation of the suggested methods for capturing or sharing data may be needed in the future.

Brief Review of Policy Evaluation, Indicators and Data

Tracking the impacts of policy is a fundamental part of effective strategic planning (Boothroyd 2006, Trousdale 2005, Patton and Sawicki 1993), as seen in the cycle depicted below.

Where Are We Now?
• Getting Started
• Stakeholders & Participation
• Situation Assessment

Have We Met Our Goals?
• Monitor & Evaluate
• Adjust & Modify

Where Do We Want to Go?
• Visioning
• Issues & Objectives

How Do We Get There?
• Strategy Development
• Action Planning & Policy Development
• Organisation & Implementation

Accordingly, in the case of housing policies aimed at generating affordable housing options for residents, monitoring the effectiveness of policies will allow for policy evaluation and reformulation. Tracking housing policy impacts enables reflection on whether policy is working – it is about addressing the question, "Have we met our goals?"

(Adapted from Trousdale 2005)

Part of the evaluation process is selecting appropriate indicators for tracking policy impacts. As Litman (2007) points out, "How things are measured can affect their perceived value" (page 10). What makes an appropriate and effective set of indicators has been extensively explored in the field of sustainability planning. Hart, for example, suggests that indicators should be relevant, easy to understand, reliable, and based on accessible data (2010). These suggestions are echoed by Litman, who suggests indicators be comprehensive, based on high quality data, comparable, easy to understand, accessible and transparent, cost-effective, suitable for developing performance targets, and that they should differentiate between net impacts and shifts of impacts (2007). The Bellagio Principles, which are guidelines on the appropriateness of indicators as well as the process of choosing and communicating indicators, contain similar suggestions (IISD no date).

In practice, because indicators need to be measurable, they are often developed opportunistically, depending on what data is available. In the case of housing policy impacts in

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Metro Vancouver, the evaluation process is notably being developed the other way around: the indicators have been chosen (the number and affordability of units), and the data is being sought out subsequently. Tracking the number and affordability of units catches only part of the range of impacts that housing policies and interventions have on the housing market and residents themselves. Gibson et al., for example, call for more research into the psychosocial impacts of housing design and housing interventions (2011). Hasselaar explores the various indicators of health impacts of housing (2006). Metro may have strategically limited the number and type of indicators to measure at the regional level, leaving broader impact monitoring to the municipal level. When policy impact monitoring begins, consideration could be given to increasing the range of indicators tracked over time.

Project Scope and Limitations

There are a number of limitations to this project, which stem from the limited timeline, the diversity of municipal contexts within the region, and the established parameters, scope and scale of the project:

- This project is limited to exploring two indicators of policy impacts: the number of units generated and the relative affordability of these (including size of units and assessed value, market price, or rent level). Other relevant measurements exist, such as the adequacy of the units created, the locations of these units, and the impact of the new units on the wellbeing of individuals and communities, but these are outside of the project scope.

- This project is limited to exploring ways to capture the relative affordability of units when they are first built. However, the relative affordability of these new units may not be the same as their affordability as they age.

- The housing data tables included in this report were informed mainly by interviews with municipal planners. When a tracking practice is implemented, it may emerge that the methods and sources suggested by municipal planners are not functional for all municipalities, given different database set-ups. Further research could focus more on piloting different tracking methods (see Appendix 3 for a few examples queries of municipal databases).

- This project does not suggest ways to predict likely impacts of policies in different municipalities, as these impacts depend on the context – land scarcity, housing demand, public transit infrastructure and other community characteristics. Although policy choice can be informed by historical trends in other jurisdictions, this project is not meant to be the basis of a predictive model of policy impacts. It is instead focused on improving policy evaluation.

Exploring Housing Data Sources:

Metro Vancouver currently has access to a range of data sources, all pieces of the housing data puzzle, as illustrated below:

In addition, other private consultancies and banks monitor parts of the housing market. For example, both BCAA and REBGV share and acquire data from the Landcor Data Corporation. RBC produces a Housing Price Index, Royal LePage produces a Housing Price Survey, and the Altus Group publishes a Monthly Altus Group Housing Report. A variety of sources are explored in the sections below.

Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)

The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) collects and extensively analyzes information on the housing markets throughout Canada. A range of reports are published periodically, based on surveys such as:

- Rental Market Survey
- Secondary Rental Market Survey
- The Rental Condominium Survey
- The Renovation and Home Purchase Survey

- Monthly Starts and Completions Survey
- Market Absorption Survey
- Statistics Canada's Building Permit Survey

Two reports most relevant to this project are Housing Now and the Rental Market Report. In both of these reports, data is often provided for each municipality within Vancouver CMA (Metro Vancouver), but Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows are combined, as are the Tri-Cities, North Vancouver municipalities, and the Langley municipalities. Data is also suppressed where validity is too low and confidentiality might be compromised. The table below explores some of the data found in these two reports:

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Housing Now (Vancouver & Abbotsford CMAs)	**Rental Market Report – Major Centres** (Vancouver & Abbotsford CMAs)
• Monthly housing statistics and analysis include housing starts, completions, mortgage rates, new home prices, absorption rates and economic indicators. Based on the Starts and Completions Survey. • The structure and tenure type categories include freehold (Single, Semi, Row and Apartment and Other), condo (Single, Semi, Row & Apt & Other), and rental (single, Semi, Row & Apt & Other). Infill, higher density, and units on small lots would not be possible to extract as a separate category. Rowhouses are combined either with apartments or semi-attached units in many tables, making them difficult to extract as well. • Most useful for starts and completions of various types built. Price information is only provided for single-detached homes.	• Annual report on units and rent levels for purpose-built and secondary rental market units. • Structure and tenure type categories: private apartments (average rent by zone and bedrooms, by bedrooms and year of construction – grouped into decades, by bedrooms and structure size), townhouses (average rent by bedrooms and zone), rental condo apartments, secondary rental units (average rent by bedrooms for single detached, semi detached, row and duplex, and other: primarily accessory suites).

CMHC reports are very informative for monitoring the housing market overall, but it is not always possible to deduce and isolate from reports the units that may have been created because of a particular policy change. Having said that, planners can compare number of units in reports over time to get a sense of the extent of change. Metro Vancouver already uses CMHC data extensively, and incorporates it into the Housing Data Book that is published annually.

The biggest limitation of the CMHC information is that for secondary rental market information, data is only provided at the Vancouver CMA level. The sample size for the Secondary Rental Market Survey is simply be too small to allow for publishing of results at the municipal level within Metro Vancouver while maintaining confidentiality.

> **Future Possibilities for CMHC Surveys and Reports:**
>
> CMHC could be a central piece of the data puzzle for monitoring housing policy impacts if the survey sample sizes were increased, such that categories included in reports were more disaggregated:
>
> • What if CMHC supplemented their phone surveys (which are limited by the reality that many renters do not have landlines) with innovative on-line surveys similar to the regional Urban Futures Survey?
>
> • What if CMHC partnered with an organization such as the Condominium Homeowners Association of BC (CHOA) to poll strata councils or condo owners about rent levels charged when units are rented out?
>
> This way, perhaps structure type categories could be more disaggregated (to include categories such as laneways houses), and municipal-level results could be more consistently published.

Statistics Canada

The two main sources of housing information from Statistics Canada are the Census and the National Household Survey:

Census Information	National Household Survey
While CMHC's data is mostly based on the housing unit, Census collects information on individuals and households within those units. Census information includes the names, sex, age, marital status, and languages spoken of all members of the household. Metro Vancouver orders Census data broken down to custom geographies, for areas such as regionally-designated Urban Centres. Housing-related Census data (and previous long-form Census data) is hosted on CMHC's website, in the Housing in Canada Online (HiCO) database.	What used to be the mandatory long-form Census has become the voluntary National Household Survey (NHS). This survey includes information pertinent to understanding the housing market and housing policy impacts in particular, such as household income and dwelling characteristics including structure type, tenure, number of rooms, the period of construction, costs such as utilities, rent levels, mortgage payments, property taxes, condo fees and estimated sales prices. It is not yet clear how reliable the National Household Survey data will be. The sampling rate was increased from one in five to one in three Canadian households. The response rate is anticipated to be approximately 50% whereas the mandatory long-form Census had a response rate was 94% in 2006. There is also a substantial risk of non-response bias (Statistics Canada, 2011).

The Census and the National Household Survey take place only every five years, and there is a delay of approximately two years before results are made public. It is therefore difficult to track present housing units and affordability through Census and the National Household Survey. Still, this data is critical for long-range planning and verifying the assessments made based on other sources of data.

Statistics Canada conducts approximately 350 additional surveys and publishes reports, studies and technical papers on a range of topics, including housing. The most relevant surveys include:

- The **Survey of Household Spending** (SHS): a stratified multi-stage sample-based survey involving collecting information on condo fees, yearly rental rates for tenants in rental housing, the presence of an extra apartment within the dwelling (a secondary suite), and much more. This information is helpful at the national level but sample size is too low to be useful at the municipal level.
- The **Building Permit Survey**: summaries of permits issued are collected from each municipality, and this forms a reference base for CMHC's Starts and Completions Survey. Data collected through this cross-sectional survey includes the permit number, type of project, type of work, value of the work, total building area and the addresses of the builder, the owner and the construction site.

BC Stats

BC Stats publishes reports such as the monthly Economic Statistics Report, which include tables related to housing such as housing starts and building permits. The source, however, is Statistics Canada CANSIM, and there are not additional relevant surveys conducted at the provincial level.

BC Assessment Authority (BCAA)

The assessment roll is a key source of information on the housing stock in the region. Assessment information contains parameters such as the structure type (defined by the manual class, actual use code, and folio number), the size of the structure (in square feet, square meters, or acres for some properties), the number of bedrooms, the assessed value, and the year of construction. Metro Vancouver receives extracts in the form of comma separated values files from BCAA. This database can be queried based on the parameters mentioned. Extensive assessment data (as well as Land Title Survey Plans) is also available online through the BC OnLine site at www.bcassessment.bc.ca.

Although BCAA data is a critical piece for understanding the housing puzzle, a number of limitations exist:

- Metro does not obtain BCAA data extracts on a yearly basis. Metro aims to develop a system for a yearly information dump, but currently acquires information on an ad hoc basis (the assessment information as of January 2012 is from June of 2009).

- Practices surrounding notation also vary across assessment areas. Metro staff often therefore need to do extra manipulation and sorting and sifting before completing a query.

- Not all fields in the BCAA database are consistently populated. In the case of secondary suites, for example, some municipalities are aware of many more legal suites than are visible in the BCAA data. Metro Vancouver has therefore historically triangulated the BCAA numbers with municipal numbers and other sources of information. Fields such as size are reportedly also not consistently populated, making analysis based strictly on the BCAA database challenging.

- It is difficult for Metro Vancouver staff to integrate the BCAA information with the GIS parcel-based information. There are approximately 500,000 parcels in Metro Vancouver, whereas there are approximately 900,000 BCAA records. Matching parcels and assessment information is a labour intensive operation.

- Another challenge is that as housing policy gains complexity and apartment or condo buildings have increasingly complicated tenure structures, there is uncertainty surrounding how assessed values will be calculated and displayed.

Still, taken together with other sources of information, the BCAA information offers the most comprehensive parcel-based look at housing throughout the region. It is an important source of information for monitoring some housing policy impacts.

Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver (REBGV) and Fraser Valley Real Estate Board (FVREB)

The Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver (REBGV) and the Fraser Valley Real Estate Board (FVREB) manage the Multiple Listing Services (MLS) data for the region. The www.realtor.ca website allows the public to search properties and prices by location, and provides qualitative descriptions of the properties. This site can be helpful for looking up or scanning the market prices of properties. For units listed, the information is quite comprehensive: the building type, number of bedrooms, bathrooms, floor space, number of floors, year built, title (condo/strata), and location. It is also possible to scan by units 'for rent', and input a rent level range to search, but the rental listings are very limited, consisting mainly of units in large apartment buildings where property managers are involved.

Internally to the REBGV, the MLS database is more comprehensive than what appears on the web. REBGV regularly retains the Mustel Group to conduct surveys of buyers and sellers. In addition, surveys are conducted with realtors upon completion of a sale. This information is circulated internally only.

The REBGV and FVREB also publish market information on a monthly basis, including median sales prices and the number of sales for different housing structure types (detached, attached and apartments). It is important to note that the REBGV uses division boundaries that do not necessarily match municipal boundaries. In some cases these are smaller than municipal boundaries, but sometimes municipalities are grouped when reported on (North Vancouver is one group, for example). REBGV and FVREB also publish the MLS® Home Price Index for different structure types in different municipalities on a monthly basis. This is a helpful measure of affordability trends.

Sharing Information: How REBGV MLS Data is Acquired and Shared

Because some units are not sold through the MLS system, REBGV's pool of new homes does not represent one hundred percent of the housing universe. Often, developers will provide data after the sales are complete, which will be added to the REBGV database, but there are sometimes gaps which are only filled if the units are later resold. The REBGV occasionally purchases data from Landcor, an organization that has a full set of data based on the Land Titles information. BCAA acquires data from REBGV in order to set assessed values, and reciprocally, the REBGV receives the assessment roll (with Property ID numbers but no ownership information). Municipalities often also provide tax information to the REBGV so that realtors and prospective buyers can know the assessed value and historical taxation of the property.

The REBGV works with municipalities that create affordable housing strategies. Consultants brought on board by municipalities to lead the process of creating these strategies often have agreements with REBGV and can access historical sales data.

Rent Boards

There are various rent boards that post listings for different communities across the region. Craigslist (www.craigslist.org) is a well-known source, as are Kijiji (http://vancouver.kijiji.ca/) and RentBC (http://www.rentbc.com/). Scanning these rent boards and others provides information on the asking rent levels for different structure types (mostly apartments, rooms in houses, or basement suites), and provides qualitative descriptions, sometimes including the size of the units. On Craigslist, it is possible to search by keyword, by rent range, or by the number of bedrooms in the unit.

These rent boards can be important sources of information, especially regarding the secondary rental market. Using them as sources of information requires constant monitoring, as

> **Tracking Rent Levels for Laneway Housing in Vancouver:**
>
> A staff person at the City of Vancouver has been monitoring Craigslist each day for postings on laneway houses in Vancouver for the past year. A spreadsheet is kept up to date, with fields for rent, east or west side of the city, address, number of bedrooms, advertised square footage versus the amount written on the permit, and whether the unit is furnished or unfurnished. Of the estimated 200 laneway homes that might be for rent in the City, approximately 100 rental ads have been tracked over the past year. It is reportedly easy to check for new laneway housing postings as 'laneway' is a clear keyword that pulls all relevant postings.

archives of posts are not readily accessible. The box below describes Landcor Data Corporation's use of online classifieds to provide reports to financial institutes on secondary suite rent levels.

> **Scanning Rent Boards for Secondary Suite Information:**
>
> Landcor Data Corporation works closely with BCAA, and conducts housing market research for many other clients as well. Landcor has a manual collection service involving scanning Craigslist, Kijiji, RentBC, and some Chinese language classifieds sites, for rent levels for secondary suites (bachelor, 1 bedroom, 2 bedroom and 3 bedroom suites). Financial institutions that want to be able to know how much of a mortgage helper a secondary suite is have historically purchased this information. The interviewee at Landcor mentioned that the organization is open to developing a custom or regular report on secondary rental market rent levels if enough clients were interested. Alternatively Metro Vancouver could purchase custom reports on rent levels of secondary suites and other housing forms.

Tenant Resource and Advocacy Centre (TRAC)

Another way to understand the impact of housing policies is to monitor the changes in the lived experiences of those renting in the housing market. TRAC receives approximately 8000 calls per year from tenants, on a range of topics, and staff tracks the topics and housing structure types of callers. Affordability of the units is reportedly not tracked, but the data from the calls could inform a more rounded evaluation of the state of the housing market. TRAC is open to sharing the statistics created through this call-in service with Metro Vancouver.

Municipal Administrative Information

Building permits, in addition to rezoning and subdivision forms and the databases in which they are contained, represent perhaps the most important source of information about what housing projects are happening on the ground.

Most municipalities have permit databases (often Tempest or AMANDA) that include rezoning and subdivision information, and even the municipality's BCAA information (see Appendix 4 for a list of the database systems of some municipalities in the region). These systems are critical for being able to generate reports quickly on the numbers and sizes of various structure types. Permits that are a result of particular policies are sometimes tracked within the system, and fields could potentially be added to identify which policy units are connected to (for example, there could be a field on whether the permit is for greenfield or infill development, or whether the unit will represent an increase in density). See Appendix 3 for a few example queries of municipal administrative databases.

> **Monthly Building Permit Statistics:**
>
> In the case of Richmond, the monthly reports submitted to Statistics Canada are posted on the municipal website (at http://www.richmond.ca/busdev/building/reports/reports.htm). These reports show the number of building and demolition permits for apartments, single-family dwellings, two-family dwellings, townhouses, and other structure types and uses. Metro could track new and demolished townhouse and two-family dwellings from here. There is no year-to-date or cumulative column.
>
> The City of Surrey is shifting the way it reports numbers, to include single-family dwellings as well as single-family dwellings with suites, coach houses, townhouses, two family dwellings, and two structure types for apartments. Their forms include the month as well as the year to date. These are not currently published online but could be shared with Metro Vancouver.

Permit information is also submitted to Statistics Canada on a monthly basis for their building permit survey. Some municipalities post this submission on their websites, and it could be used by Metro to track unit numbers.

Municipalities also interact directly with developers and sometimes understand the price points that developers are building for, as units are being created. In the case of rental units such as laneway or

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secondary suite units, interacting with owners or developers can give municipal planners a clear sense of the expected rent levels or lowest possible rents given the project values. This information is not easily gathered at the regional level, but municipal insights into market prices and rent levels could be investigated further and potentially included in reports to the regional level on housing policy impacts.

Some municipalities report regularly to their Councils or committees on housing affordability issues. These reports are an important resource from which Metro Vancouver can glean a sense of what municipalities are focusing on. However, not all of these reports include numbers and rent levels beyond the number of non-market units built or secondary suite numbers. For example, a 2010 update in the City of North Vancouver focuses mostly on new policies and particular projects underway (included as Appendix 5). Still, such reports could become a more valuable source of information, and if there are common definitions adopted and reporting frameworks outlined, municipalities could begin to create more similar and regular updates.

GIS Cadastral Information

Municipalities have GIS systems with extensive information about lot sizes and buildings. Some municipalities have GIS systems that are integrated with their permit databases, while others can easily cross-reference these sources (see Appendix 3 for an example query of a municipal GIS system).

Metro Vancouver's GIS system is an important data source for understanding the housing market. Parcel layers are updated every one to one and a half years, and a good relationship between the regional and municipal GIS planners means that layers can be traded on an as-needed basis as well.

Municipal parcel layers are increasingly shared through the Spatial BC project of the Integrated Cadastral Information Society (ICIS). As this project progresses and municipalities commit to continuously providing up-to-date spatial layers, Metro Vancouver's system will improve as well.

> **Publicly Accessible Online Mapping:**
>
> Vancouver and New Westminster both have publicly available mapping systems, through which it is possible to access significant amounts on information. On VanMap, one of the visible layers is zoning. On the New Westminster map system, it is possible to see both duplex and townhouse zones, and to select properties for reports which include year built, size, and number of units. As open data initiatives progress, more online mapping with more information may be available. These initiatives are helpful for Metro Vancouver as they decrease the need to frequently request information from municipalities.

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Housing Data Source Tables:

The tables below explore the various sources of information on the number, size, and cost of units developed as a result of particular municipal housing policy changes. The tables were informed by background research (see a scan of municipal housing strategies in Appendix 1), interviews with municipal planners (see summarized results in Appendix 2), and interviews with key housing market informants. A discussion section summarizing the most appropriate sources of information follows each table.

Many of the data sources and limitations are similar across policy areas. In the case of infill housing and allowing increased density in areas appropriate for affordable housing, the data sources were exactly the same and these categories were therefore combined. The discussion under the table differentiates between the two policies.

Secondary Suites:

Some municipalities allow secondary suites in all single-family residential zones, while others have more restrictions. 13 of 15 municipalities in the 2011 survey of municipal housing affordability measures being taken in the region had policies allowing secondary suites in all single family residential areas (Eberle, Woodward, Thomson, Kraus 2011).

Secondary suites are so far held to be suites primarily within detached single-family dwellings, though if Metro Vancouver adopts a definition for the purposes of Housing Action Plans, consideration could be given to suites that are developed within duplexes, townhouses or low-rise condo apartment buildings. Consideration needs to also be given to whether tallies of suites include illegal suites in addition to the legal suites.

Table 1: Data Sources on Secondary Suites

Parameter	Possible Data Source	Method for Accessing	Notes / Limitations
Number	BCAA	Query BCAA database for secondary suites as a structure type (unique folio number)	Metro staff has considered using BCAA numbers on secondary suites in the past and has found them to underrepresent the number of suites as compared to numbers from municipalities themselves. An additional challenge is that Metro Vancouver tends to have BCAA data from two years previous. A BCAA interviewee noted that BCAA is moving towards more desktop reviews for assessment (supplemented by site visits at irregular intervals), and suites added after construction may not be captured. Sometimes BCAA does not know of suites until a house is resold.
	CMHC	Look up "Other: Primarily Accessory Suites" in "Other Secondary Rented Units" in the Rental Market Report	Secondary Suites likely make up the majority of the Other: Primarily Accessory Suites category, but this number was not provided in the 2011 Rental Market Report (suppressed in Table 5.2 for data quality reasons). Even if in the future the Vancouver CMA total secondary suites number is given, it is not disaggregated into municipal totals. CMHC does not release numbers that have been

			suppressed for statistical reasons.
			Also, although new houses with permitted secondary suites are counted (through the Starts and Completions Survey), conversions within existing houses are not captured in CMHC's numbers (meaning if a house is renovated such that a suite is created, this suite is not counted).
	Census proxy-based estimate	Look up number of "Apartment or flat in a duplex" in Census data ordered by Metro Van	The Census is only conducted every five years, and numbers quickly become outdated. The total from the Census would also only include renter-occupied suites.
	Municipal Admin Data	Query permit database systems for the number of secondary suite permits, fees, or post-occupancy inspections. Alternatively, consider utility bills (two bills for one house indicates the presence of a suite)	All municipalities expressed a concern around the unknown number of illegal suites. Some municipalities are actively attempting to identify and legalize these, through investigations by the bylaw department or by scanning local classifieds for suites for rent. Even if the numbers that municipalities have on suites do not capture the informal suites available, the intention of monitoring the impact of a policy is to understand the units that are created as a result of the policy, and not to understand the number of units that were illegally created beforehand.
		Check municipal websites (or contact municipality) for monthly building permit summaries that are sent to Statistics Canada and CMHC, or check municipal reports to Council	Monthly permit reports only show the number of new permits within the month, and year-to-date. Metro could also inquire with each municipality whether suites built into new single detached homes are visible as a category in the building permit summaries. See appendix 4 for example building permit summaries.
Size	Municipal Admin Data	Query the permit database for the average size marked in the field on the secondary suite permit	Some municipal planners reported that the size of the structure is not always inputted into the permit database. Still, in most municipalities there is a size limitation on secondary suites, or a known range of the sizes of suites.
Affordability (Rent Levels)	CMHC	Look up "Other: Primarily Accessory Suites" in "Other Secondary Rented Units" in the Rental Market Report	The rent levels here are not disaggregated beyond Vancouver CMA to the municipal level because of the small sample size. Also, the average rents are found through the Secondary Rental Market Survey, which involves a telephone survey of households, notably missing households that do not have a landline.
	Classifieds and rent boards such as Craigslist and Kijiji	Scan these online rent boards on a regular basis for rent levels of secondary suites Alternatively, contract a consultant to conduct a regular scan	It is labour intensive to scan rent boards, and staff may only find a small number of listings. These scans need to be continuous if they are to be useful, as they only provide a snapshot of what suites are on the market at the moment. The information given in different listings is also not always the same (sometimes addresses are not given and potential renters need to inquire in order to find out). There is also a possible source of skewing when looking at classifieds that reflect only the units that are turning over in the market, and not those that have long-term tenants. Landcor conducts a scan of Craigslist and other classifieds

			including Chinese language classifieds. These scans are not periodic and are generally for financial institution clients who are seeking to understand the extent to which secondary suites are a mortgage helper. Landcor is open to conducting more frequent and more thorough scans for municipal or regional district clients at a fee.
	Municipal Admin Data	Building permit or secondary suite permits could include a field on expected rent levels to be charged. In cases where post-occupancy inspections are conducted, landlords or tenants could be asked about rent levels	If a figure were obtained at the building permit stage, it would only be an estimate of future rent levels, and would not necessarily reflect actual rent levels. No municipal planning staff interviewed felt adding a field to the permit forms or asking during post-occupancy inspection would be a viable option. The tendency is for permits and inspections to be streamlined rather than made more complicated.

Discussion:

There are numerous sources of information on the number of secondary suites, and Metro Vancouver could engage in triangulating from these various sources:

- Municipal administrative data is the most robust source of information. When acquiring these numbers, Metro should inquire about any limitations from the perspective of the municipal administration. The permitting system for suites differs from municipality to municipality, and the extent to which municipalities attempt to bring illegal suites into their system as 'counted' suites differs as well.
- BCAA data could be used as a comparison.
- Census information, available every five years, can serve as a check on the number of suites.

The Housing Data Book already includes a comparison of secondary suite estimates for different municipalities, based on numbers from municipal estimates or counts, BCAA numbers, 2006 Census Proxy-based estimates, and Census ratio-based estimates. These comparisons are used to derive a Metro Vancouver Estimate. This sort of triangulation, based on open communication with municipalities about what their administrative data suggests, appears to be the most reliable method.

Depending on the municipality, the average size of suites may be easily obtainable by querying the permit database system. Several municipal interviewees mentioned that suites are generally built to the maximum allowable size, so the regulations around size could serve as a good indication of the typical size. BCAA is not a source of information for the size of suites. Only the size of the entire structure is reported.

The affordability of secondary suites is much more difficult to ascertain than the number of suites:

- Because secondary suites are not included as a category in CMHC's Rental Market Survey, and only in their more limited Secondary Rental Market Survey, CMHC is not a very useful source. Having said that, knowing the average rent levels for secondary suites at the Metro Vancouver level does enable some discussion about the relative affordability of these unit types, though regional variation is not known.
- Popular online classifieds are a potentially important source of information on affordability, given the limitations around surveys of the secondary rental market.

Commissioning a report from a group such as Landcor that analyzes rental postings on classifieds and rent boards such as Craigslist and Kijiji is potentially a viable option. Metro could meet with Landcor to see whether there is a potential for the latter to produce a regular report on secondary suite (and other types of secondary rental market structures) rent levels. Alternatively, Metro could start monitoring these boards internally.

Table 2: Secondary Suite Summary

	Ideal	Best Currently Available Option	Back-up Plan
Number	CMHC's Housing Now could show suite starts and completions, BCAA could capture more existing suites	Triangulate based on municipal admin data received through regular reporting, BCAA, Census	Municipal Admin Data through specific info requests
Size	BCAA could include size of suite as a field (preferably a number field for simpler queries)	Municipal Admin Data	Municipal regulation on maximum size
Price or Rent	CMHC's Secondary Rental Market Survey could be expanded such that secondary suite rent levels could be included for each municipality in the Rental Market Report Online rent boards and classifieds – tracked by organization such as Landcor	Online rent boards or classifieds, tracked by municipal employees, or a phone survey	CMHC Rental Market Report - regional-level average rent

Allowing Laneway or Coach Housing:

Several municipalities have moved to allowing laneway or coach housing within particular single-family residential zones. Eight of the 15 municipalities in the 2011 survey of municipal housing affordability measures being taken in the region had policies allowing laneway or coach housing in some zones (Eberle, Woodward, Thomson, Kraus 2011).

Table 3: Data Sources on Laneway or Coach Housing

Paramete	Possible Data Source	Method for Accessing	Notes / Limitations
Number	BCAA	Query database for laneway houses as a structure type (unique folio number)	Again, Metro Vancouver's assessment info tends to be a couple of years behind. Allowing laneway or coach housing is a relatively new policy across the region, and new units would only be seen in the most recent assessment roll.
	Municipal Admin Data	Query the permit database system or manually count the number of permits for laneway or coach houses	Because laneway houses are a relatively new policy in most municipalities where they are allowed, municipal administrative data is a good source for understanding the number of units created. Either the permit database can be queried to find the number of laneway housing units, or the number of permits for these can be found by manually looking through the permits (in cases where there is no permit database).

		Check municipal websites (or contact municipality) for monthly building permit summaries that are sent to Statistics Canada and CMHC, or check municipal reports to Council	Monthly permit reports only show the number of new permits within the month, and year-to-date. Laneway houses are included in 'New Apartments Permits' with one dwelling unit.
Size	Municipal Admin Data	Query the permit database system for laneway houses, calculate the average size	Some municipal planners reported that the size of the structure is not always inputted into the permit database. Still, in most municipalities there is a size limitation on laneway houses, or a known range of the sizes of suites.
	BCAA	Query database for laneway houses (unique folio number), calculate the average size of laneway house structure type	The field where size is reported is not always populated, and different assessment areas report in different units (square feet, square meters), making this query very labour intensive.
Affordability (Rent Levels)	Municipal Admin Data	Building permits could include a field on expected rent levels to be charged. In cases where post-occupancy inspections are conducted, landlords or tenants could be asked about rent levels	If a figure were obtained at the building permit stage, it would only be an estimate of future rent levels, and would not necessarily reflect actual rent levels. No municipal planning staff interviewed felt adding a field to the permit forms or asking during post-occupancy inspection would be a viable option. The tendency is for permits and inspections to be streamlined rather than made more complicated.
		Calculate minimum rent levels based on the cost of construction	By understanding what the cost of construction is (through speaking with the homeowner or developer, or if the project value is included on the permit) municipalities may be able to work out the lowest possible rent level. Still, laneway housing is not always put in the marketplace, and units may be rented at subsidized rates for family members (a sample pro forma can be found at http://lanewayhouse.com/lci-laneway-house-cost-return/).
	Classifieds and rent boards such as Craigslist and Kijiji	Scan these online rent boards on a regular basis for rent levels of laneway houses Alternatively, contract a consultant to conduct a regular scan	It is labour intensive to scan rent boards, and staff may only find a small number of listings. These scans need to be continuous if they are to be useful, as they only provide a snapshot of what suites are on the market at the moment. The information given in different listings is also not always the same (sometimes addresses are not given and potential renters need to inquire in order to find out). There is also a possible source of skewing when looking at classifieds that reflect only the units that are turning over in the market, and not those that have long-term tenants. Landcor conducts a scan of Craigslist and other classifieds including Chinese language classifieds. These scans are not periodic and are generally for financial institution clients who are seeking to

			understand the extent to which secondary suites are a mortgage helper. Landcor is open to conducting more frequent and more thorough scans for municipal or regional district clients at a fee.

Discussion:

The number of laneway housing units created can best be ascertained through municipal administrative data. Though currently in the monthly building permit reports to CMHC and Statistics Canada there is no category for laneway housing units, this category could be added, or Metro Vancouver could simply request the additional number from municipalities.

The size of laneway houses could similarly best be ascertained from municipal administrative data. If the size of the units is not recorded, the permit data could be cross-referenced with BCAA data, and the property information could be pulled for individual developments. Having said that, the sizes of laneway houses tend to be tightly restricted; the regulation itself may provide enough of a sense of the typical sizes (unless the floor area of the laneway house is included in the calculation of the overall floor-area-ratio for the lot, in which case houses may be smaller than the maximum allowable size).

Rent levels of laneway housing are more challenging to ascertain – potentially even more challenging than secondary suite rents, because anecdotally it seems many laneway houses do not go onto the market to be rented by the general public. Not only might the rent then not be advertised on rent boards such as Craigslist, but also the rent levels might not reflect the long-term affordability of the structure type (because units might be rented at subsidized rates).

Still, because CMHC reports do not contain average rents for laneway houses (they are lost in the Other: Primarily Accessory Suites category and not disaggregated), the best source of info is either to scan rent boards and classifieds or contract someone else to do this, or derive affordability from the cost of construction if this can be ascertained. If municipalities included a question about rent levels during post-occupancy inspections, an additional source of information would be available.

Table 4: Laneway and Coach House Summary

	Ideal	Best Currently Available Option	Back-up Plan
Number	CMHC's Housing Now could show laneway house starts and completions	Municipal Admin Data through specific info requests or regular reports	BCAA (must be recent BCAA information)
Size	Size field in BCAA data could be a number field, for easy querying	Municipal Admin Data through specific info requests or regular reports, BCAA (unique folio number, size included)	Municipal regulation on maximum size (check whether laneway floor space deducted from total FSR calculations)

Price or Rent	Online rent boards and classifieds – tracked by organization such as Landcor, or obtain rent levels during municipal post-occupancy inspections CMHC Rental Market Report could include a category for rent levels for laneway houses	Online rent boards or classifieds, tracked by municipal employees	Calculate lowest possible rent from project value

Allowing Higher Density in Areas Appropriate for Affordable Housing, and Allowing Infill Housing:

Allowing higher density in areas appropriate for affordable housing as well as allowing infill housing are policy areas that firstly need agreed upon definitions, to ensure that municipalities are tracking the same thing. The question of what is defined as affordable housing (for both ownership and rental, without referring to a ratio of income), as well as the issue of the range of policies that result in higher density in areas appropriate for affordable housing (density bonusing, pre-emptively rezoning for higher densities, describing higher density potential in Official Community Plans, etc.) need to be clarified. Some municipalities consider infill housing to be anything that is not greenfield development, while other use the term only when describing heritage preservation projects that involved infill on the same lot.

The 2011 study of municipal housing measures found that 15 of 15 municipalities surveyed allowed higher densities in areas appropriate for affordable housing, and 11 of 15 allowed infill housing (Eberle, Woodward, Thomson, Kraus 2011).

Table 5: Data Sources on Allowing Higher Density in Areas Appropriate for Affordable Housing, Infill Housing

Parameter	Possible Data Source	Method for Accessing	Notes / Limitations
Number	Municipal Admin Data	Check rezonings or density bonusing cases on file, verify units constructed through building permit data, BCAA	Rezoning information would show the added capacity for housing units, and BCAA, building permit or occupancy permit information would show actual units created. Not all municipalities flag whether units were created as a result of a particular policy on the permit information or rezoning information. Still, if rezonings and bonusing occur infrequently enough, municipalities could deduce the number of units created.
Size	Municipal Admin Data	Once the addresses or identifiers of the particular units are known, permit data could be pulled	Some municipal planners reported that the size of the structure is not always inputted into the permit database.

		BCAA	Once the addresses or identifiers of the particular units are known, the assessment database could be queried	The field where size is reported is not always populated. This look-up process would also be labour intensive because there is no unique folio number identifying the units created as a result of this policy.
Affordability (Rent or Market Sales Price)	**Ownership Units**	MLS listings	Once the address of the units are known, the sales prices can be seen on the public MLS site	This source is only useful if the units have recently been on the market. It is labour intensive to look up individual addresses and compile a list of prices.
		MLS® Home Price Index (MLS® HPI) – replacing the MLSLink Housing Price Index, Monthly Statistical Reports / Statistics Package	MLS® HPI shows fluctuations in prices for a variety of structure types – using a benchmark property approach. Monthly Statistical Reports from REBGV and Monthly Statistics Package from FVREB can inform Metro on average and median prices for particular structure types (useful only if this category is defined as particular structure types).	
		BCAA	Once the address of the units are known, look up some or all of the units in the assessment database for assessed value and last sale price	Sale prices go on to inform assessed values, which Metro Vancouver has access to. The limitation remains that the assessment roll that Metro Van has tends to be a couple of years old. This look-up process would also be labour intensive because there is no unique folio number identifying the units created as a result of this policy.
		Municipal Admin Data	Estimate the likely price point through the development negotiation process, or calculate the minimum price from the project value	Calculating the minimum cost or relying on the cost forecasted by the developer is an indirect and possibly imprecise way of ascertaining the price of units.
	Rental Units (Purpose-Built)	CMHC	Look up average rents by structure type in Rental Market Report (for apartments: average rent by zone and bedrooms, bedrooms and year of construction, structure size and bedroom type, for townhouses: average rent by zone and bedrooms)	This would necessitate knowing the structure type of units built. These average rents are not for new units exclusively, but for all existing units.
		Municipal Admin Data	Building permits could include a field on expected rent levels to be charged. In cases where post-occupancy inspections are conducted, landlords or tenants could be asked about rent levels	If a figure were obtained at the building permit stage, it would only be an estimate of future rent levels, and would not necessarily reflect actual rent levels. No municipal planning staff interviewed felt adding a field to the permit forms or asking during post-occupancy inspection would be a viable option. The tendency is for permits and inspections to be streamlined rather than made more complicated.
			Calculate minimum rent levels based on the cost of	By understanding what the cost of construction is (through speaking with the homeowner or

		construction		developer, or if the project value is included on the permit) municipalities may be able to work out the lowest possible rent level. This could be an imprecise way of ascertaining rent levels.
		Phone survey and classifieds scan	Property managers could be looked up and called, and the particular sites could be researched on the internet for rental listings	This method would ensure that rent levels for the particular units in concern would be ascertained. It would however be labour intensive and it might not be possible to successfully contact property managers for the entire group of units.

Discussion:

Traditional sources of information on the number of units created, such as CMHC's Housing Now or Rental Market Report, are more difficult to use for these policy areas because units created may not be confined to a unique structure type, and the structure type they do fall into may also be made up of units created as a result of different policies. The only real source of information on the number of units created as a result of allowing increased density in particular areas is municipal administrative information. Such information can also yield the sizes of the units created.

The best way to track the affordability of the units depends whether the units are rental or ownership. Median or average prices by structure type can be looked up in MLS-based reports by real estate boards. This results in an 'expected value', whereas looking up units in BCAA or on MLS yields more specific information.

If the units created are rental units without Housing Agreements on Title that restrict rent, rent levels can be difficult to ascertain. If the structure types of units are known (apartments or townhouses, number of bedrooms, structure size), average rents can be looked up in CMHC's Rental Market Report. For more precise information, the units can be researched – classifieds can be searched and property managers can be contacted to understand the rental rates. This process may best be conducted at the municipal level, with reports going up to Metro for synthesis.

Table 6: Infill and Higher Allowable Density Summary

	Ideal	Best Currently Available Option	Back-up Plan
Number	CMHC could increase disaggregation of housing categories, breaking new housing units into infill, greenfield, or other	Municipal Admin Data through regular reports	Municipal Amin Data through specific info requests (may involve manually sifting recent development into infill and non-infill development, or sifting through rezonings)
Size	Municipal permits made possible through a particular policy change (such as allowing infill) could be flagged in the permit tracking system, and this system could be queried and then easily cross-referenced with the BCAA database or GIS parcel layer	Municipal Admin Data through specific info requests (may involve manually sifting recent development into infill and non-infill development, or sifting through rezonings, looking up addresses in BCAA database - either municipality or Metro)	If these developments have particular zoning, size regulations can be looked up in the zoning

Price or Rent	If this policy category is more narrowly defined as a particular structure type (of above a certain number of units, for example), average rent for this structure type could be looked up in Rental Market Report or average prices could be found in real estate board reports	Look up specific units in classifieds for rent levels or MLS or BCAA for price	Rely on municipal planners sense of target price point, or calculate minimum rent levels from project value

Zoning for Small Lots:

Zoning for small lots can be a way to increase density and provide a wider variety of housing types (it therefore overlaps with the policy of allowing for increased density in areas appropriate for affordable housing), sometimes assumed to be more affordable due to the smaller size of units as compared to larger single-family lots. Municipalities do not share a definition of what is considered a small lot, and sometimes this depends on the historical context around the traditional block sizes. The 2011 study found that 11 of 15 municipalities surveyed in the region have created zoning for small lots (Eberle, Woodward, Thomson, Kraus 2011).

Table 7: Data Sources on Zoning for Small Lots

Parameter	Possible Data Source	Method for Accessing	Notes / Limitations
Number	Municipal Admin Data	Check zoning bylaw, rezonings or subdivision cases on file, verify units constructed through building permit data, BCAA	Permit databases cannot be queried for small lots in particular, but the zoning bylaw, rezoning and subdivision information would show the added capacity for housing units, and BCAA, building permit or occupancy permit information would show actual units created.
	GIS	Query parcel layer for small lots, or for small lot zones	City of Surrey interviewee explained being able to query for the small lot zones. Permit information could then be pulled for all units within those zones. At the Metro Vancouver level, the parcel layer could be queried for small lots (defined as under a certain square feet, square meters or acres). Parcel layers would need to have been recently updated for this query to yield reliable results. The number of units built could then be ascertained from checking the BCAA database.
Size	Municipal Admin Data	Once the addresses or identifiers of the particular units are known, permit data could be pulled	Some municipal planners reported that the size of the structure is not always inputted into the permit database. Zoning may limit the FSR or building size for units on small lots, and the small spaces may mean that the majority of units are built to the maximum allowed size. The maximum allowed size might then be an adequate measure of size.
	BCAA	Once the addresses or identifiers of the	The field where size is reported is not always populated. This query would also be labour intensive because there

		particular units are known, the assessment database could be queried	is no unique folio number identifying the units created as a result of this policy.
Affordability (Market Sales Price)	MLS	Check listings for units currently for sale	The public MLS site is useful for units currently on the market. Monthly MLS statistical reports would be less useful for units built on small lots, as small lots are not a category separated out in these reports.
	BCAA	Once the addresses or identifiers of the particular units are known, the assessment database could be queried	Sale prices go on to inform assessed values, which Metro Vancouver has access to.
	Municipal Admin Data	Rely on the likely price point understood through the development negotiation process, or calculate the minimum price from the project value on the building permit	Calculating the minimum cost or relying on the cost forecasted by the developer is an indirect and possibly imprecise way of ascertaining the price of units.

Discussion:

Units on small lots were assumed to be ownership units, though this policy category also requires an agreed upon definition, perhaps even including specifications about what size is considered small (or at least clear specifications from each municipal context).

Because Metro Vancouver has municipal parcel layers in its GIS system, small lots can be quantified by querying the GIS system and subsequently looking up particular units by verifying in BCAA that units have been built. This process depends on up-to-date parcel layers as well as an up-to-date assessment roll. At the municipal level, small lots can be quantified by querying the GIS system (for small lots or for small lot zones) and matching with BCAA or permit data.

The size of units built on small lots can be estimated by looking at the maximum unit size and inquiring with the permit department about whether developers and owners tend to build to the maximum allowable size on these small lots. Otherwise, size can be ascertained at the municipal level through permit information, or BCAA data can be queried at the Metro level (with the caveat that Metro would need recent BCAA data for this method to work).

The affordability of units could be ascertained at the Metro level through BCAA assessed values (if the assessment roll is recent), or at the municipal level through the same method. Alternatively, MLS listings can be searched. Calculating price through project value or estimating based on discussions with developers may be a less reliable and more time-consuming way to understand prices of units on small lots.

Table 8: Small Lots Summary

	Ideal	Best Currently Available Option	Back-up Plan
Number	Query Metro GIS system (ideally with recent property layers) and cross-reference with BCAA database (ideally BCAA database would be built into the GIS database for easy queries)	Municipal Admin Data (query the GIS system for small lot zone or small sized parcels, cross-reference with BCAA database)	Query parcel layers in Metro Vancouver's existing GIS system and manually cross-reference with BCAA database
Size	The size of units could be a number field in the BCAA database, making queries for average sizes simpler	Look up some or all units in BCAA database (municipality or Metro)	Check maximum size in zoning and inquire with municipality about reasonableness of assuming most units will be near maximum size
Price or Rent	BCAA database could be built into the GIS database, making it simple to conduct a GIS query and calculate average assessed value from the result	Look up some or all units in BCAA database for assessed value, or MLS site for recent sale price	Calculate minimum price through project value on building permit, or rely on municipal planner's sense of target price point

Broadening Rowhouse/Townhouse/Duplex Zones

Broadening the zones for these attached and semi-detached unit types can be a way to increase density (broadening these zones can therefore be seen as a way to allow for increased density in areas appropriate for affordable housing, overlapping with that policy area). There are not commonly held definitions of rowhouses as compared to townhouses. A municipal consensus on these structure types would help monitoring efforts. The 2011 study found that 8 of 15 municipalities surveyed in the region have broadened rowhouse, townhouse or duplex zones (Eberle, Woodward, Thomson, Kraus 2011).

Table 9: Data Sources on Broadening Rowhouse/Townhouse/Duplex Zones

Parameter	Possible Data Source	Method for Accessing	Notes / Limitations
Number	CMHC Housing Now, Rental Market Report	Look up the number of Private Row (Townhouse) in Rental Market Report, or the number of Row or Semi in Housing Now report	Rental Market Report tables show only the number of this structure type in general, not the number of newly created units in particular. Housing Now report shows number of starts and completions, but it is unclear whether all townhouses would be counted in the Row and Semi category or whether some would be counted in the apartment category. For Freehold units, Row, Apartment and Other are combined into one category. Some municipalities are combined into zones with other municipalities.
	Municipal Admin Data	Query permit database system	Keywords for rowhouses, townhouses or duplexes could be used to query the permit database system for the number of building permits for such units. Alternatively, the OCP, zoning bylaw, and rezonings could show the capacity for these units, and

				addresses could be checked in BCAA.
			Check municipal websites (or contact municipality) for monthly building permit summaries that are sent to Statistics Canada and CMHC, or check municipal reports to Council	Monthly permit reports that are sent to Statistics Canada only show the number of new permits within the month, and year-to-date.
		GIS	Query parcel layer for rowhouse/townhouse/ duplex zones, cross-reference with BCAA	Parcel layers would need to have been recently updated for this query to yield reliable results. The number of units built could then be ascertained from checking the BCAA database.
		BCAA data	Query BCAA database for units with particular use codes	There are a number of actual use codes that apply to townhouses (rental and fee simple), rowhouses, and duplexes (up down, side by side). Some older townhouses may be coded as garden apartments. The database could be queried for these use codes. The units built before a certain date could then be discarded. Municipal BCAA databases may contain more current information than Metro's BCAA database.
Size		Municipal Admin Data	Query permit database system for rowhouses/townhouses/du plexes, and calculate the average size	Some municipal planners reported that the size of the structure is not always inputted into the permit database. Zoning may limit the FSR or building size for units on small lots, and the small spaces may mean that the majority of units are built to the maximum allowed size. The maximum allowed size may then be an adequate measure of size.
		BCAA	Look up some or all of the addresses in the BCAA database, note sizes	Individual unit records may need to be looked up, because in Metro Vancouver's BCAA database the size field is a text field and summary statistics can therefore not be produced. Also, the field where size is reported is not always populated and Metro's assessment role may be outdated (municipal BCAA data may be more current).
Affordability	Ownership Units	MLS listings	Once the address of the units are known, the sales prices can be seen on the public MLS site	This source is only useful if the units have recently been on the market. It is labour intensive to look up individual addresses and compile a list of prices.
		MLS® Home Price Index (MLS® HPI) – replacing the MLSLink Housing Price Index, Monthly Statistical Reports / Statistics Package	MLS® HPI shows fluctuations in prices for a variety of structure types – using a benchmark property approach. Monthly Statistical Reports from REBGV and Monthly Statistics Package from FVREB can inform Metro on average and median prices for townhouses.
		BCAA	Query BCAA database for average assessed values of all townhouses, rowhouses and duplexes	Metro's assessment roll tends to be a couple of years old. Municipal BCAA databases would provide better information.

		Municipal Admin Data	Rely on the likely price point understood through the development negotiation process, or calculate the minimum price from the project value on the building permit	Calculating the minimum cost or relying on the cost forecasted by the developer is an indirect and possibly imprecise way of ascertaining the price of units.
	Rental Units (Purpose-Built)	CMHC Rental Market Report	Look up private (row) townhouse rents in Table 2.1.2 (by number of bedrooms and zone). Table 5.1 also shows average rents for other secondary rental units, with a category for semi detached, row and duplex units	Some municipalities are combined into one zone. Table 5.1 does not break up average rents into zones, and provides only a Vancouver CMA number. These average rents are not for new units exclusively, but for all existing units.
		Phone survey and classifieds scan	Property managers could be looked up and called, and the particular sites could be researched on the internet for rental listings	This method would ensure that rent levels for the particular units in concern would be ascertained. It would however be labour intensive and it might not be possible to successfully contact property managers for the entire group of units.
		Municipal Admin Data	Building permits could include a field on expected rent levels to be charged. In cases where post-occupancy inspections are conducted, landlords or tenants could be asked about rent levels	If a figure were obtained at the building permit stage, it would only be an estimate of future rent levels, and would not necessarily reflect actual rent levels. No municipal planning staff interviewed felt adding a field to the permit forms or asking during post-occupancy inspection would be a viable option. The tendency is for permits and inspections to be streamlined rather than made more complicated.
			Calculate minimum rent levels based on the cost of construction	By understanding what the cost of construction is (through speaking with the homeowner or developer, or if the project value is included on the permit) municipalities may be able to work out the lowest possible rent level. This could be an imprecise way of ascertaining rent levels.

Discussion:

The number of townhouses, rowhouses and duplexes can be best understood by looking directly at municipal administrative information. CMHC reports can supplement this information, but because categories do not include all three housing types, municipal information is perhaps more exact. The BCAA database could also effectively be queried for the number of units, but if this were to occur at the regional level, then more current assessment information would be needed.

Either BCAA data or municipal permit information could inform the sizes of townhouses, rowhouses and duplexes.

The price of ownership units could be ascertained either through MLS or BCAA information. The affordability of rental units could be understood through the CMHC Rental Market Report (for purpose-built rental private (row) townhouses, secondary rental semi detached row and duplex units).

Table 10: Rowhouse/Townhouse/Duplex Zone Summary

	Ideal	Best Currently Available Option	Back-up Plan
Number	Rowhouse, townhouse, duplexes could be more commonly defined and be own category in CMHC reports	Triangulate by querying the BCAA database for use codes, the municipal permit tracking system for particular structure types, and the GIS system for zones	CMHC Housing Now Report or Rental Market Report
Size	BCAA size could be a number field and an average could be calculated through a query at the municipal level	Look up some or all units in BCAA database, or query the permit database and calculate average size of entries returned	Look at maximum sizes in the various zones and inquire with municipality about reasonableness of assuming most units will be near maximum size
Price or Rent	Rent levels for rowhouses, townhouses and duplexes could be disaggregated by municipality in CMHC Rental Market Report, Housing Now Report	Look up some or all units in MLS or BCAA for price or assessed value. For rent levels of particular units, consider conducting a phone survey of developers and building managers, or a classifieds scan	Look up average rent levels for rental units in CMHC Rental Market Report

Conclusion:

This project represents a first step towards developing a system to track municipal housing policy impacts at the regional level. Interviews with municipal planners and planning technicians, and correspondence with key housing industry informants, informed the housing impacts data tables for tracking the number and relative affordability of units created as a result of the six housing policies. Developing a practice of tracking units at the regional level would be an iterative process, based on taking advantage of data opportunities and communicating frequently with member municipalities.

Many of the potential sources of information on the number and relative affordability of units created after certain policies rest at the municipal level rather than with Metro Vancouver. As such, a system for municipal reporting to Metro Vancouver could be developed. Such a system could involve developing a standard form that municipalities could complete, or common data could be requested from each municipality and submitted in whatever format is convenient (e.g. Excel files, GIS layers, output reports from permit databases, or other). The value added that Metro could provide to member municipalities is from compiling the municipally-collected information, supplementing this with a few key additional sources such as a scan of rent boards that would not be feasible at the municipal level, and looking across the region to analyze policy impacts.

If more municipalities move towards making a greater amount of administrative and mapping data public – as part of open data initiatives – the amount of data that Metro Vancouver will have access to without needing to make repeated requests from municipal planners may dramatically increase.

Considerations for Monitoring Housing Policy Impacts

Below are some preliminary principles and considerations for tracking municipal housing policy impacts:

- A practice of monitoring and tracking housing policy impacts at the regional level needs to begin by establishing **common definitions** for policy areas, including establishing common definitions of structure types and common understandings of the tenure of units created.

- When monitoring policy impacts, particular attention needs to be paid to whether the housing statistics (numbers and affordability) are about the **entire structure type category** or zone, or about the **new units** that would have been created after the adoption of a particular policy. Both snapshots can be informative.

- To understand the total number of existing units, both the **stock and the flow** need to be considered: a base number of units, new units, conversions, and demolitions.

- The **timeline of different data sources** needs to be kept in mind. Census data, for example, can serve as a check on municipal and regional numbers, but it is only updated every five years, and by the time different components are made public, the data is at least a year old. Similarly, CMHC reports come out at particular points in the year and include new units up to a certain point before the report is published. Municipal data on the other hand can be much more current.

- **Causation** can be difficult to establish: the number of units created after a particular policy was put in place may not all be attributable to the policy. When reporting on impacts, it is

important to consider distinguishing between units that might have been built regardless, and units whose building was enabled by the policy.

Planning Implications:

This study has a number of implications for municipal and regional planning. Metro Vancouver could consider taking the following actions:

- Metro Vancouver could host a workshop or webinar with planners and planning technicians from Member Municipalities, to share ideas on the effectiveness of existing permit tracking systems for monitoring the impact of policy, and developing the possibilities for restructuring systems such that reports are more easily generated and policy impacts more easily tracked.

- Metro Vancouver could periodically commission studies from another organization such as Landcor to analyze rent boards and classifieds in order to generate average rent levels (especially for units such as secondary suites and laneway homes). If partner organizations such as financial institutions or real estate organizations are involved, it may also be possible for Landcor to produce a regular report on the topic. This added information on the secondary rental market would represent new information that municipalities are otherwise not able to access.

- Metro Vancouver could request regular reports from municipalities on the numbers and relative affordability of units being created, using a consistent format across the region and based on agreed upon definitions. Alternatively, Metro Vancouver could consider recommending that regular reports be made to municipal Councils, tracking particular indicators. Such reports could then be a source of metrics for Metro Vancouver to compile and analyze at the regional level.

- Metro Vancouver could obtain the BCAA assessment roll on a more regular basis. Because the assessment roll is the most comprehensive source of housing market information in addition to the more limited reports produced by CMHC and the Census information which is only collected every five years, having access to the most recent assessment roll would help Metro monitor the housing market more closely. Having this updated database also allows querying and analysis to be done at the regional level, limiting the number of requests for information from municipalities.

- Although some sources of information, such as statistics from TRAC on calls from tenants, may not provide statistically reliable numbers for units or affordability, such data sources can be helpful for understanding the state of the housing market in particular municipalities and in the region. Similarly, the RentersSpeakUp website may not provide numbers, but the stories posted by renters are important descriptions of what renting is like across the region. These sorts of information sources – based on sharing of stories – could be an important new source of information to building into policy monitoring and evaluation processes, to compliment more quantitative assessments.

Metro Vancouver member municipalities are central to furthering the ability to track and analyze the impact of municipal housing policies across the region. The following actions could be considered:

- Municipalities could consider adjusting their practices and fields in their permit databases, to ensure that they are effective for monitoring housing policy impacts. For example, the sizes of units could be consistently entered into the system. The connection to particular policies

could also be flagged in permit information – in existing or new fields, depending on the exact policies Metro and member municipalities are interested in tracking.

- Municipalities could consider inquiring about rent levels during post-occupancy inspections, or recording expected rent levels during the building permit stage.

Metro Vancouver could consider making the following recommendations to the BC Assessment Authority:

- The lot size and unit size fields could be more consistently complete. These fields could be number fields rather than text fields, so that they can be queried. Different assessment areas could agree on the units to be measured in (square feet, square meters or acres).

- BCAA could investigate the gap between the number of secondary suites that municipalities are aware of and the number that appear in BCAA databases. BCAA could request base information on the whereabouts of suites from municipalities, and track new suites through the monthly building permit surveys that are sent to Statistics Canada.

Metro Vancouver could consider making the following recommendations to CMHC:

- CMHC does not release numbers that have been suppressed for statistical or privacy reasons, meaning Metro would not be able to access disaggregated or georeferenced data if it is not published. Metro Vancouver could rely more on CMHC reported average rents if the telephone survey that forms the backbone of the Secondary Rental Market Survey were more extensive and could cover households without landlines. Alternatively, new ways of understanding rent levels could be explored. For example, CMHC could use online survey tools or partner with housing organizations to disseminate surveys or access respondents.

Areas for Further Research:

Further research could focus on putting tracking methods into practice, and testing them out. Some directions to consider include the following:

- Further research could pilot integrating databases such as GIS, BCAA, and permit tracking systems. Also, adding fields for flagging the connection between permits and particular recently adopted policies could be tested out.

- Using Craigslist and other popular classified sites to understand the housing market could be explored further. As part of this project, an email was sent to Craigslist inquiring about the possibility of a public institution accessing archived rental housing postings, but no response was received. The company's privacy policy is clear that archives are not shared for commercial purposes, but Metro Vancouver could explore accessing the archives as a public institution, for the purposes of understanding affordability better.

- The idea of inquiring about rent levels during post-occupancy inspections could be explored further. A pilot project could be conducted if some municipalities are amenable to testing out this technique.

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Appendices:

1. Scan of Municipal Housing Action Plans

The points below explore the sources, indicators and monitoring strategies in selected municipal housing action plans or affordable housing strategies:

- The City of Coquitlam's Housing Affordability Strategy (2007) includes a section on measuring accomplishments, including a suggestion for an annual audit. The most common source of information is the City's own administrative permit information (for the number of units by housing type and location and the number of secondary suites – broken into those legalized, those decommissioned, and new suite-ready houses). Median Price by Housing Type is tracked through the Real Estate Board (MLS data), while rental rates are obtained from CMHC data. The number of small lots created is tracked through BCAA as well as municipal information. The 2008 progress report provides updates on the indicators, using the above-mentioned sources. Coquitlam's 2011 progress report describes accomplishments and challenges, but does not cite particular information sources.

- New Westminster's Affordable Housing Strategy (2010) makes reference to the REBGV MLS listings, studies done by Coriolis Consulting, and numbers from the City's master suite database, in addition to CMHC and Census numbers.

- Port Moody's Affordable Housing Strategy (2009) includes metrics from Census and CMHC, as well as Neighbourhood Profiles. Rent levels for different neighbourhoods were ascertained through a phone survey of apartment managers and a classifieds search. The strategy also suggests tracking progress using a City of Port Moody data, CMHC data, and REBGV data on housing prices. It is suggested that reports to Council occur every two years.

- Richmond's Affordable Housing Strategy (2007) includes targets for units within particular cost ranges. To create the description of the housing situation in Richmond, numbers were obtained from the Census, MLS data, BC Housing's non-market housing inventory, the GVRD's homeless count, and CMHC Core Housing Need data, Rental Market Report and Housing Now report. No particular indicators and sources of information were identified for reporting on the success of the plan. However, Community Updates on the Affordable Housing Unit and Initiative are created every three to four months. An October 2011 memo included the number of new low-end market rental units, secondary suite and coach houses, and affordable home ownership units.

- The City of Vancouver's new Housing and Homelessness Strategy (2011) suggests an annual report card to Council, using baseline indicators. Market rental indicators include numbers, demolitions, conversions and rent levels (no sources noted), and ownership unit indicators include numbers, types and sales prices (no sources noted).

2. Key Findings from Interviews with Municipal Planners

Below are some of the key findings from interviews with municipal planners across the region:

- Municipal planners interviewed feel there should be common definitions agreed upon for the various housing policy options – for clarity and for monitoring purposes.

- Most municipalities use either AMANDA or Tempest software to track their permits, rezonings and subdivisions. These systems can easily be queried, and reports on numbers and sizes of units can be created. White Rock was the only municipality involved in this project that does not have a permit database system.

- Not all municipalities have GIS systems that are integrated with their permit systems. Surrey and the City of Vancouver do (in Surrey, the Tempest permit tracking system also contains BCAA info), but smaller municipalities do not. Still, in places such as Port Moody, GIS systems and permit databases can easily be cross-referenced.

Table 11: Permit Tracking Database Types

Municipality	Permit Database System
Coquitlam	AMANDA
New Westminster	Tempest
North Vancouver (City)	Permit Plan
Port Moody	Tempest
Richmond	AMANDA
Surrey	AMANDA
White Rock	No database system

- Monitoring rent levels is much more challenging than monitoring the number of units created. Some municipalities scan rent boards to get a sense of rent levels to inform long-range planning, and in some cases municipal planners can speak directly with developers to understand the price point that the developer is aiming for with the units.

- Not all housing policies are adopted with the intention of generating affordability, which might explain why affordability is not more closely tracked. Policies such as allowing laneway houses are sometimes intended solely to increase housing diversity. It is widely held that secondary suites represent affordable options, even though most municipalities only track rent levels by the CMHC average rent measure for suites in the Vancouver CMA.

- Density bonusing for affordable housing often does not result in affordable housing units being built on site. Many interviewees noted that developers opt to contribute to an affordable housing fund. Monitoring policy impacts should include monitoring the impacts of such funds.

- Some municipalities report regularly to their Councils on housing affordability issues. These reports can be an important resource from which Metro Vancouver can glean a sense of what municipalities are focusing on. However, not all of these include numbers and rent levels beyond non-market units built or secondary suite numbers. Still, such reports could be a more valuable source of information, and if there were common definitions adopted and reporting frameworks outlined, municipalities could begin to create more similar and regular updates.

- It is easier to understand the affordability of new units that are secured with Housing Agreements, as these often have specific rent level ceilings (e.g. if a density bonus is awarded because of the provision of affordable housing, the affordable units are often secured with Housing Agreements).

- Municipal planners expressed support for Metro Vancouver compiling housing policy impacts at the regional level, conducting some analysis, and disseminating this information. Such a process could help inform municipal policy choices and evaluation, and allow help to celebrate the achievements of policies.

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An exploratory study of policy monitoring options at the regional level in Metro Vancouver

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3. Examples of Queries of Municipal Databases

New Westminster – Units Built on Small Lots

(Photo adapted from www.newwestcity.ca)

In New Westminster, the RT-2D zone allows for single detached units on small lots. A planner in New Westminster was able to find the number of **units built on these small lots** by querying the City's MapGuide GIS system for RT-2D (compact lot) zoned sites. A screenshot extract from the output Excel file is pasted below:
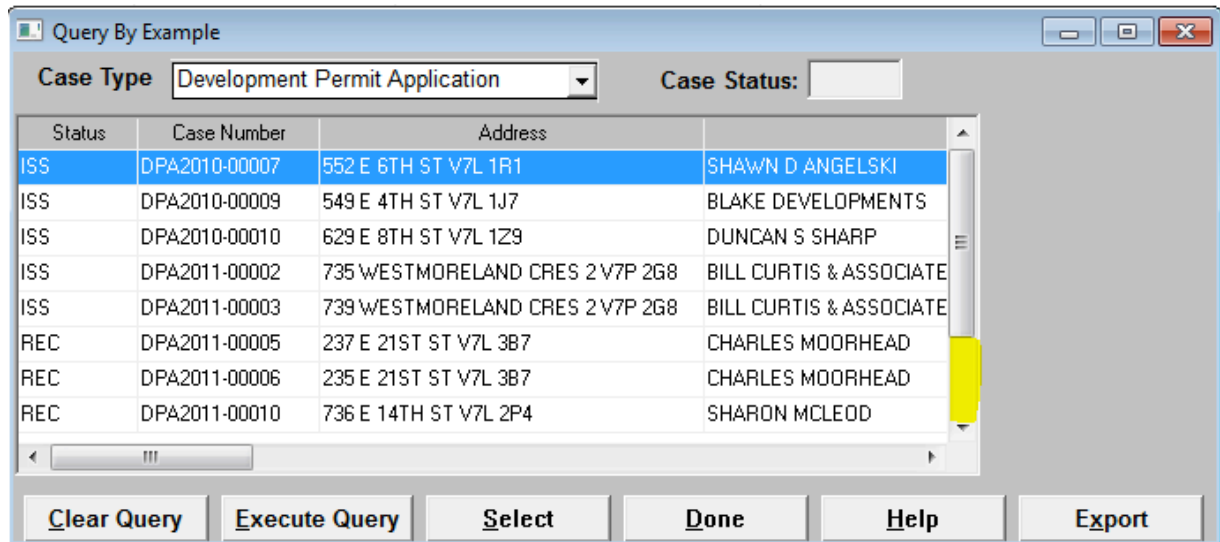
Gra	Block	Census	Floor Space Area	Frontage	Floor Spac	Full Addre	Full Addre	Land Use	Land Use
ft	U-101	208	1,892.00 sq ft	40.32 ft	0.63	707 COLB(	COLBORN	R-HOUSE	HOUSE
ft	U-101	208	1,892.00 sq ft	36.67 ft	0.69	709 COLB(	COLBORN	R-HOUSE	HOUSE
ft	U-101	208	1,892.00 sq ft	36.67 ft	0.69	711 COLB(	COLBORN	R-HOUSE	HOUSE
ft	U-101	208	1,892.00 sq ft	36.67 ft	0.69	713 COLB(	COLBORN	R-HOUSE	HOUSE
ft	U-101	208	1,892.00 sq ft	36.67 ft	0.69	715 COLB(	COLBORN	R-HOUSE	HOUSE
ft	U-101	208	2,533.00 sq ft	28.38 ft	0.53	717 COLB(	COLBORN	R-HOUSE	HOUSE
ft	U-101	208	2,548.00 sq ft	28.38 ft	0.62	719 COLB(	COLBORN	R-HOUSE	HOUSE
ft	U-101	208	2,506.00 sq ft	28.38 ft	0.69	721 COLB(	COLBORN	R-HOUSE	HOUSE
ft	U-101	208	2,396.00 sq ft	28.38 ft	0.73	723 COLB(	COLBORN	R-HOUSE	HOUSE
ft	U-101	208	2,397.00 sq ft	30.00 ft	0.78	725 COLB(	COLBORN	R-HOUSE	HOUSE
ft	U-101	208	2,384.00 sq ft	30.00 ft	0.8	727 COLB(	COLBORN	R-HOUSE	HOUSE
ft	U-101	208	1,666.00 sq ft	30.00 ft	0.56	729 COLB(	COLBORN	R-HOUSE	HOUSE
ft	U-101	208	1,616.00 sq ft	30.00 ft	0.55	731 COLB(	COLBORN	R-HOUSE	HOUSE

Columns include address, unit size (floor space area in square feet), site area, whether the unit is strata (all of these are not strata titled), and many other parameters. Summing the total units and calculating the average unit size is a simple procedure in Excel.

The planner who ran the above query in the GIS system noted that the GIS system and the Tempest permit-tracking system, which also contains BCAA information, are only tenuously linked. Writing queries to pull average assessed values based on a selection of properties from the GIS system would be quite complicated. It would be simpler to query the Tempest system directly for properties with the RT-2D zoning. However, New Westminster's Tempest system has not been set up to produce summary reports on such queries. Instead, individual records would need to be searched through.

City of North Vancouver – Coach Houses

The City of North Vancouver allows two types of coach houses: Level A with one storey, and level B with 1.6 storeys. Querying the City's Permit Plan tracking system, a planning technician at the City was able to easily identify the development permit applications that had been received, issued, or withdrawn. The screenshot below shows the results of the query:

Scrolling down, the planner would easily be able to understand the number of units in the pipeline. Scrolling across, the sizes of the units are also available. The planner cautioned that it would be inappropriate to assume that all the units are built to the maximum allowable size because in the North Vancouver context, the floor area of the coach house is not exempt from the calculation of the overall floor area ratio of the site (including the main dwelling). This sort of query is easily exportable to Excel.

Surrey – Townhouse and Two Family Homes

A planner in Surrey uses a reporting application called Impromptu to generate building permit summaries. Impromptu queries the AMANDA permit database based on a date range that the planner provides. The reports generated are summaries of permits (all permit types), including construction value. An example of a report is pasted below:

The City of Surrey   Today's Date: 16-Feb-2012
Permits Issued Detail
Between: 05/01/2012 and 06/01/2012

Permittype	Permit number	Dwelling units	Value of construction	Issuedate	Statcan Bldgcod	Statcan Workcode
New Single Family Permits	11 034455 000 00	1	$429,000.00	05-Jan-2012	110	01
New Single Family Permits	**1**	**1**	**$429,000.00**			
New Two Family Permits	11 032656 000 00	2	$310,100.00	06-Jan-2012	210	01
New Two Family Permits	**1**	**2**	**$310,100.00**			
New Apartment Permits	10 027138 002 00	362	$38,500,000.00	06-Jan-2012	310	01
New Apartment Permits	10 027138 005 00	362	$38,500,000.00	06-Jan-2012	310	01
New Apartment Permits	**2**	**724**	**$77,000,000.00**			
New Townhouse Permits	10 027138 003 00	7	$873,000.00	06-Jan-2012	335	01
New Townhouse Permits	10 027138 004 00	4	$728,000.00	06-Jan-2012	335	01
New Townhouse Permits	**2**	**11**	**$1,601,000.00**			
Misc. Residential Permits	11 038691 000 00	0		06-Jan-2012	110	03
Misc. Residential Permits	11 038850 000 00	0	$24,160.00	05-Jan-2012	110	03
Misc. Residential Permits	11 038851 000 00	0	$24,160.00	05-Jan-2012	110	03
Misc. Residential Permits	11 038858 000 00	0	$17,040.00	05-Jan-2012	110	03
Misc. Residential Permits	12 003562 000 00	0	$35,000.00	05-Jan-2012	110	03
Misc. Residential Permits	**5**	**0**	**$100,360.00**			

Note that coach houses appear in these reports as New Apartment Permits with one dwelling unit, because that is the way Statistics Canada categorizes coach houses.

These reports can be manually processed and summarized for the monthly reports to Statistics Canada. The summarized information is also added to a spreadsheet with data going back several years. In order to find the total number of dwelling units of a particular type (such as townhouses and two family homes) created since a given date, one would sum up the values for all the months in that interval.

City of Coquitlam – Townhouses, Duplexes or Units on Small Lots

A planner in Coquitlam shared a query of residential permits issued in November of 2011. The report generated is more comprehensive than what is submitted to Statistics Canada. Below is a snapshot of part of the report:

		Total SF Demolitions December 2011	0	0	0	0	-11						11	0	$18
MF	NEW	Townhouse	0	0	0	0	5	2	1395	Marguerite	St	0	5	$1,08
		MF Townhouse Units Planning Area 2	0	0	0	0	5					0	5	$1,08
MF	NEW	Apartment - Low-rise	0	0	0	0	72	4	1150	Kensal	Pl	0	72	$8,50
		MF Apartment Units Planning Area 4	0	0	0	0	72					0	72	$8,50
		Total MF Units December 2011	0	0	0	0	77					0	77	$9,58
SF	NEW	Single Family Dwelling	1	0	0	0	1	2	1203	Burkemont	Pl	0	1	$33
SF	NEW	Single Family Dwelling	1	0	0	0	1	2	1205	Burkemont	Pl	0	1	$33
SF	NEW	Single Family Dwelling	1	0	0	0	1	2	1207	Burkemont	Pl	0	1	$33
SF	NEW	Single Family Dwelling	1	0	0	0	1	2	1208	Burkemont	Pl	0	1	$33
SF	NEW	Single Family Dwelling	1	0	0	0	1	2	1210	Burkemont	Pl	0	1	$32

Similar to the City of Surrey's report, this was generated by using Cognos 8 to query the AMANDA permit tracking system. The report includes the number of permits issued (new and demolition) for various structure types. The construction value is included, and the reports can be customized to include lot or unit size as well as zoning. These reports are therefore useful for understanding the number and size of units of particular structure types built after a certain point in time.

Beyond units of particular structure types, units built as a result of particular policies are not flagged in Coquitlam's AMANDA system. To understand the number of these, further analysis, using GIS or considering the zoning or neighbourhood planning area would be necessary.

4. Sample Monthly Permit Summary

Below is an example of what the City of Surrey submits to Statistics Canada on a monthly basis:

SURREY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT BUILDING PERMITS

	December 2010			2010 Y.T.D.			December 2011			2011 Y.T.D.		
	No. of Permits	Dwg Units	Building Value	No. of Permits	Dwg Units	Building Value	No. of Permits	Dwg Units	Building Value	No. of Permits	Dwg Units	Building Value
New Single Family Dwelling Permits	25	25	8,447,024	1,715	1,715	490,634,521	61	61	17,131,959	1,007	1,007	294,817,165
New Coach House Permits	0	0	0	96	96	4,955,024	3	3	169,350	87	87	4,533,614
New Two Family Dwelling Permits	0	0	0	5	10	1,117,480	18	36	5,232,853	250	500	81,840,354
New Multi-Dwg Permits Apartments	2	103	8,100,000	17	722	89,556,208	0	0	0	8	579	63,257,624
Townhouses	16	71	11,670,921	236	1,064	167,167,404	13	80	11,353,223	226	1,076	165,797,292
Miscellaneous Residential Permits	41	1	1,349,320	935	5	53,941,617	39	2	769,628	870	80	49,502,867
Cancellations	1	0	30,000	-21	-7	-2,392,874	-2	-2	-257,431	-20	-19	-1,942,417
TOTAL	83	200	29,537,265	2,983	3,605	804,979,380	132	180	34,389,582	2,428	3,310	657,806,499
New Commercial Permits	3	0	3,918,135	43	1	148,337,780	6	0	44,454,085	31	0	211,889,995
Miscellaneous Commercial Permits	39	0	4,780,501	483	0	100,097,178	37	0	4,156,100	438	1	54,687,379
Cancellations	0	0	0	-1	0	-142,030	0	0	0	-1	0	-1
TOTAL	42	0	8,698,636	525	1	248,292,938	43	0	48,650,185	468	1	266,577,373
New Industrial Permits	0	0	0	11	0	49,190,069	2	0	8,500,000	17	0	63,666,729
Miscellaneous Industrial Permits	8	0	1,241,051	155	1	15,842,474	19	0	958,161	198	0	11,727,375
Cancellations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	8	0	1,241,051	166	1	65,032,543	21	0	9,458,161	215	0	75,394,103
New Institutional Permits	0	0	0	4	0	52,614,102	1	0	659,500	26	52	29,051,800
Miscellaneous Institutional Permits	9	0	7,456,000	60	2	35,582,303	3	0	13,125,000	49	0	173,803,065
Cancellations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	9	0	7,456,000	64	2	88,196,405	4	0	13,984,500	75	52	202,854,864
Farm Permits	0	0	0	10	0	3,785,812	0	0	0	18	0	1,265,482
Sign Permits	17	0	143,500	249	0	1,553,253	19	0	38,732	247	0	1,411,280
Demolition Permits	33	-28	0	457	-418	0	32	-29	0	495	-483	0
Parking Lot Permits	0	0	0	7	0	2,096,250	0	0	0	11	0	10,959,309
Cancellations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-3	2	0
TOTAL BUILDING PERMITS	192	172	47,076,452	4,461	3,191	1,213,936,581	251	151	106,519,160	3,954	2,882	1,216,268,919

Prepared by A. Dong

Permit categories are based on Statistics Canada "Type of Work" codes, and may not correspond to city zoning or community plan designations.

Planners in Surrey are developing a different reporting system, with categories that are more relevant to the City. A template is pasted below:

Exhibit 1

CITY OF SURREY BUILDING DIVISION PERMITS ISSUED - JANUARY 2012

	January 2011			2011 Year-to-Date			January 2012			2012 Year-to-Date		
	Permits	Dwellings	Value	Permits	Dwellings	Value	Permits	Dwellings	Value	Permits	Dwellings	Value
RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS												
New Single Family Dwelling												
New Single Family with Secondary Suite												
Secondary Suite Addition												
New Coach House												
New Two Family Dwelling												
Townhouse												
Low Rise Apartment (up to six storeys)*												
High Rise Apartment (over six storeys)*												
Miscellaneous Residential Permits												
Cancellations												
SUBTOTAL												
COMMERCIAL BUILDING PERMITS												
New Commercial Buildings												
Miscellaneous Commercial Permits												
Cancellations												
SUBTOTAL												
INDUSTRIAL BUILDING PERMITS												
New Industrial Buildings												
Miscellaneous Industrial Permits												
Cancellations												
SUBTOTAL												
INSTITUTIONAL BUILDING PERMITS												
New Institutional Buildings												
Miscellaneous Institutional Permits												
Cancellations												
SUBTOTAL												
OTHER PERMITS												
Fence												
Sign												
Demolition												
Parking Lot												
Cancellations												
SUBTOTAL												
TOTAL												

* includes mixed use commercial residential.

5. Sample Municipal Housing Report to Council

The document pasted below is a 2010 affordable housing progress report to the City of North Vancouver Council. It references attachments which list the progress achieved but do not include a list of market units created as a result of policies.

The Corporation of **THE CITY OF NORTH VANCOUVER**
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

REPORT

To: Mayor Darrell R. Mussatto and Members of Council

From: Cheryl Kathler, Community Planner, Community Development

SUBJECT: **AFFORDABLE HOUSING & RENTAL HOUSING – PROJECT &
STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION UPDATES**

Date: January 19, 2010   File No: 3365-05-04

> The following is a suggested recommendation only. Please refer to Council Minutes for adopted resolution.

RECOMMENDATION:

PURSUANT to the report of the Community Planner, dated January 19, 2010, entitled, "Affordable Housing & Rental Housing – Project and Strategy Implementation Updates":

THAT the 2010 Planning Division Work Program include 1) as a high priority, an assessment of inclusion of non-market and below-market housing with other funding partners on all or a portion of City owned Sites 10, 11 and 12, and Alder Street properties, and 2) other strategies noted as priorities in the report;

AND THAT Community Development staff continue to explore potential rental and affordable housing opportunities as they arise;

AND THAT staff report back with a draft policy and bylaw to provide Council with the option to waive City Development Cost Charges for non-market housing, and to provide for conditional waiving or partial waiving of City DCCs for market rental housing.

ATTACHMENTS:
1. 'City of North Vancouver Non-Market Housing', updated December 2007.
2. 'Housing Affordability Strategies – Update', dated December 2009.
3. 'Rental Housing Strategies – Update', dated December 2009.
4. 'Regional Development Cost Charge Waiver to Support Affordable Housing Development', dated December 2009.
5. List of City Properties with Residential Potential, dated August 2008.
6. Map of City Properties with Residential Potential, dated August 2008.

PURPOSE:

This report provides a summary of the City's affordable housing achievements over 2009, and an update on the progress made in implementing the City's 'Housing Affordability Strategies' (2006), and 'Rental Housing Strategies' (2007). Among the recommendations, staff recommends continuing implementation of the Strategies, and placing a high priority on initiation of an affordable housing initiative during 2010. Staff also recommends that the City, in conjunction with the recent Metro Vancouver decision to waive regional Development Cost Charges, formalize its recent practice of waiving City Development Cost Charges for non-market while determining conditions for waiving these fees for market rental housing.

DISCUSSION:

A. Affordable Housing Achievements in 2009

1. Chesterfield House – 1415 Chesterfield Avenue

Perhaps the highlight of the City's most recent achievements in affordable and rental housing is 'Chesterfield House'. The current construction of a 9 unit additional building on the property enhances the innovation of this jointly-owned project. In December 2009 staff updated Council on the project which addresses a variety of the City's sustainability-related goals, including, for example, housing goals (retention of existing rental housing, densification of existing non-market housing sites, City partnership in innovative housing projects), social goals (integration of persons with specialized needs, increase their housing options), and environmental goals (link with LEC system to decrease GHG emissions, energy and water upgrades in conjunction with provincial programs). Chesterfield House also provides a model for densification of other non-market and market rental buildings.

2. Market Strata Building - 210 West 13th Street

The existing market rental apartment building located at 210 West 13th will be redeveloped to a 52 unit strata project, of which 6 units will be provided at no cost to the City for affordable rental housing. Initially, as the outcome of a November 2008 rezoning, the City was to receive 5 units from the developer with the option to purchase up to 3 additional units. The developer subsequently offered the City the 6 unit group and the zoning was amended July 27, 2009. When the project has submitted a Building Permit, completion of legal agreements and the process to secure a non-profit operator will proceed.

Attachment 1 provides a current list of non-market housing found in the City, and when the above noted 31 units are completed and occupied, the list will be updated. Overviews of City non-market housing projects developed since 1990 can be found on the City's webpage: http://www.cnv.org//server.aspx?c=3&i=584 .

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Date: January 19, 2010   Page 2

B. Progress in Implementing Affordable & Rental Housing Strategies

The summary tables in Attachments 2 and 3 contain two sets of current City strategies related to affordable and rental housing: 'Housing Affordability Strategies' (2006) and 'Rental Housing Strategies' (2007). The tables have been updated as to steps taken toward implementation over 2009, and the section below provides an implementation overview, with recommendations for high and priority strategies for the 2010 Work Program.

1. Implementation Updates

Progress in implementing the 'Housing Affordability Strategies' includes the following:

a) The Affordable Housing Policies will be updated through the Official Community Plan review and update process;
b) Lock-off units are now offered as an option for garden apartments (townhouses);
c) The number of required parking spaces has been reduced in higher density zones;
d) The City's 'Multiple Unit Building' policy has added numerous new rental units in existing apartment buildings (18 new units and 14 legalized units to date);
e) The Coach House Working Group and the more recent Fire & Life Safety initiative have provided opportunities for the City to consult with and draw on the expertise and knowledge of residents and building owners to strengthen City policy and processes;
f) Overviews of the City's most recent non-market housing projects are now available on the City's website;
g) Metro Vancouver actions related to the regional 'Affordable Housing Strategy' have supported City Strategies (e.g.: determining threshold costs of entry homeownership; advocacy to senior governments on various types of policy, capital programs and tools which would increase the ability of municipalities to partner in providing non-market and rental housing, and to retain the existing rental housing stock).

Progress related to implementation of the 'Rental Housing Strategies' includes the following:

a) LEC service to existing non-market housing projects in Lower Lonsdale is being explored by BC Housing;
b) City website provides links to 'Eco-Strata Guides' (energy and water efficiency etc.) for homeowners and renters;
c) Fire safety alternatives have been reviewed under the Fire & Life Safety Initiative and an upgrade approach has been determined for implementation over 2010;
d) Replacement of rental housing units is sought when existing rental properties are proposed for redevelopment.

2. Ongoing Items

Ongoing items in the 'Housing Affordability Strategies' include the following:

a) Encourage larger size of units which would accommodate families;
b) Inclusion of rental housing (market, non-market) units within developments;
c) Publicize City's interest in innovative housing forms and projects;
d) Information bulletins regarding City policies/progress on webpage and hand-outs;

e) Preparation of easily understood information regarding densification;
f) Advocacy with senior governments regarding adequate policy, programs and resources for unmet affordable housing and supports needs, and retention and expansion of rental housing;
g) Liaison with Metro Vancouver in effective regional and municipal strategies;
h) Collaboration with other local municipalities regarding housing awareness, and hosting affordable housing events.

For the 'Rental Housing Strategies', one Strategy has become an ongoing item:
a) Publicity regarding additional units in multiple unit buildings.

3. 2010 Planning Division Work Program Recommendations

This report proposes one high priority item for inclusion in the 2010 Planning Division Work Program: assessment of the potential for inclusion of affordable housing on City owned properties. Other recommended priority strategies include piloting revitalization agreements to support retention and upgrade of existing rental and market housing, and revisions to policies related to lock-off units, minimum unit sizes, and minimum lot sizes. A separate report summarizing the progress of Community Development Department projects and recommendations on the Planning Division Work Program will be brought before Council in the first quarter of 2010.

Inclusion of Affordable Housing on City Lands

One outcome of the May 2009 "Housing the North Shore" Forum is a heightened interest in creating affordable housing on the part of local community housing advocates. A Forum sub-committee is focused on seeing City action on affordable housing on City lands, more specifically the East 1st Street lands, Sites 10, 11 and 12. Planning and Community Planning staff have met with HNS sub-committee regarding the East 1st Street properties and are aware that a delegation will be before Council in early 2010 to request inclusion of affordable housing on these lands when they are developed.

The East 1st Street properties were the focus of a 2004-05 planning study, and are currently designated for future sale for full market value. In response to an in-camera September 2008 report Council stated its interest in potentially incorporating non-market housing on City lands. While moving forward toward development of the East 1st Street properties was on the 2009 Planning Division Work Program, other work priorities and limited staff resources have meant this task has been delayed, as was the assessment of remaining City lands for incorporation of non-market housing.

Attachment 5 lists the City properties with residential potential, and Attachment 6 illustrates the location of these sites. Of the 4 properties, the two with greatest development potential due to their size, density potential and development readiness are the group of 3 lots on 100 block East 1st Street and the 10 City lots on 400 block Alder Street. These two properties could potentially accommodate a mix of multiple types of housing, and possibly include demonstration or pilot housing projects which illustrate the types of sustainable innovative housing the City is seeking.

Staff recommends that the 2008 directive to assess the potential for available City sites to incorporate non-market housing be a high priority for the 2010 Planning Division Work Program, with the focus on the East 1st Street and the Alder Street properties. More specifically, staff recommends that both groups of properties be assessed for the potential of all or a portion of the sites to accommodate non-market and below-market housing within a viable market development or developments. The assessment would be undertaken in conjunction with other departments.

Staff acknowledges that the range and degree of affordability will be determined by the ability of the overall development to subsidize and offset the costs of providing non-market housing. For a viable mixed housing project, and to accomplish affordability to any degree, the City must work in partnership with other funders and supporters. Staff also recommends that one of the initial tasks be the sourcing of other potential funding partners such as BC Housing and non-profit housing societies. The two Housing Affordability Strategies which would be addressed are 'determining which City lands will be set aside for affordable housing projects', and 'explore a viable demonstration project on a City-owned site which provides innovative affordable housing'.

Other Priority 2010 Work Program Items:
Other strategies that are timely given current opportunities or projects related to affordable and or rental housing include the following:

a) Revitalization Agreements
Finance staff has undertaken preliminary research into revitalization agreements as a means by which the City can offer a degree of tax relief to offset the operating costs of property owners. This tool can be applied to specified buildings or types of buildings, or a class of properties, for a specified period of time. In the case of retention and upgrading of existing market rental housing, time-limited lower tax rates coupled with housing agreements and / or covenants could serve to support the City's objectives for this housing stock. There is also some merit in exploring the application of this tool to rental strata units. Conceptually, revitalization agreements have the potential to support fire alarm system upgrades, and energy and water efficiency upgrades in existing residential housing.

Staff recommends that creation of a pilot revitalization agreement be developed as part of the 2010 Work Program, in conjunction with the Finance Department. Continuing to advocate for revisions to the Assessment Act to permit permanent or long-term differential tax rates (as per the related Housing Affordability Strategy and Rental Housing Strategy) would also be undertaken.

b) Policy Revisions and New Policy
Existing policy related to affordability that could be enhanced or expanded as part of the 2010 Work Program includes the following:
 1) Add lock off units as a permitted accessory use in all medium and high density apartment zones. This new form of small rental units could add less costly rental

units to the rental housing pool while supporting the mortgages of strata unit owners;

2) Review minimum unit sizes. Smaller sized units (rental or for-sale) cost less to construct and are priced lower;

3) Review minimum lot sizes. The current lot size for single family dwellings results in high-priced, large homes. A decrease in the minimum lot size would decrease the size and price of new houses.

4. Future Work Items

As noted in Attachments 2 and 3, future work items yet to be undertaken primarily concern existing rental housing, and strategies to retain and extend the useful life of this market housing. Under the Rental Housing Strategies four actions relate to expanding secondary suites, and another three concern rental strata condominiums. Staff plan to address groupings of related work items in the same work program.

5. Potential Opportunities

Several of the Strategies outlined in Attachments 2 and 3 relate to innovative approaches and collaborative issue resolution, and as such, require openness on the part of the City, property owners and the development sector. As evident in the recent 1629 St. Georges rental housing rezoning, the City can view first-time proposals as case studies or pilots to explore new approaches that support City rental housing goals. Potential proposals might relate to these Strategies, or involve other concepts brought forward by property owners or developers:

a) Retention of existing apartment buildings as part of redevelopment proposals;

b) Rezoning of an existing apartment property and the transfer and sale of additional density to finance reinvestment and building upgrades;

c) Stratification of a rental apartment building and retention of rental suites using housing agreements and covenants;

d) Pilot project where excess density from an existing rental building is transferred to a strata development site and a density bonus is provided in exchange for minimum 20 year rental units.

From time to time single family home and apartment building owners approach the City with ideas for small-scale group living care. It is increasingly acknowledged that new forms of in-community supportive housing will be required as our population ages and requires care. Viable opportunities may arise for the City to facilitate new forms of supportive housing in conjunction with private or non-profit proponents. Two related Strategies include:

a) Exploring increased number of boarders in single family and other housing types as a supportive housing alternative;

b) Explore conversion of existing apartment building into shared living arrangements with support or care as a supportive housing alternative.

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C. Waiving of Regional Development Cost Charges

In late November 2009 Metro Vancouver adopted a bylaw which will permit waiving of regional Development Cost Charges for various types of non-profit rental housing as well as market rental units which have secured below market rents for a minimum of 20 years. Attachment 4 provides details related to the eligibility criteria and definitions of 'affordable rents'. Municipalities will be able to waive collection of the regional DCCs when Building Permits are issued, although Metro Vancouver staff may wish to review the documentation.

Prior to the specific provincial authority to reduce or waive DCCs for affordable market rental housing enacted in May 2008 through Bill 27, in recent years City DCCs have been waived for some of the non-profit housing developments. Examples include the Kiwanis St. Andrew's Place (2007), North Shore Adult Emergency Shelter & Transition Housing projects (2004; 2005), and Quay View Community Housing (partial waiving; 2001).

As was concluded by Metro Vancouver, the waiving of DCCs is one small but meaningful way to decrease the capital costs of affordable housing. Similarly, Council may wish to consider waiving City DCCs on a consistent basis, and also may wish to create policy guidelines similar to those of Metro Vancouver. Staff notes that while the Metro Vancouver guidelines provide full waiving of regional DCCs for rental housing secured for a minimum of 20 years, staff believes that a higher minimum time period, or alternatively, a sliding scale of City DCCs (partial waiving) related to the length of time of the rental covenants, may be more supportable. Should Council agree with development of policy to a) waive City DCCs for non-market housing, and b) provide conditions for fully or partially waiving City DCCs for market rental housing, staff would report back with a draft policy and bylaw. The report will also outline the City procedures for waiving of Metro Vancouver DCCs.

D. Summary of Report Recommendations & Options

This report proposes several recommendations that will continue to implement the City's 'Housing Affordability Strategies' and the 'Rental Housing Strategies':

- the 2010 Planning Division Work Program will include a) as a high priority an assessment of the potential inclusion of non-market and below-market housing on City owned Sites 10, 11 and 12, and Alder Street properties with other funding partners, and b) other priority strategies as discussed in the report;
- continue to explore potential rental and affordable housing opportunities as they arise.

In relation to a recent step taken by Metro Vancouver, staff would be directed to report back with a bylaw to waive City Development Cost Charges for non-profit rental housing, and market rental housing.

Options to the Recommendations

There are several options related to the staff recommendations which Council may wish to consider as alternatives:

Option 1:

Receive and file this report. Staff would continue to implement the 'Housing Affordability Strategies' and the 'Rental Housing Strategies' as time and resources permit, and as opportunities arise.

Option 2:

In relation to the recommendation for staff to assess two remaining groups of City owned properties for potential inclusion of non-market and rental housing, Council may wish to delay taking any action related to its remaining lands. Given the potential value of the land to offset the cost of other City initiatives, Council may wish to focus these potential revenues on priorities other than affordable housing.

Alternatively, Council may see one group of City lands as having more potential for inclusion of non-market and below-market housing, and specifically direct staff to pursue a narrower assessment focus.

Option 3:

In regards to waiving City DCCs, Council may wish to continue to waive or offset fees on a case by case basis for non-market housing only, and / or on a specific-case basis for market rental housing. Alternatively, Council may wish the City to waive DCCs for rental housing on the same basis as laid out by the Metro Vancouver policy, rather than following the staff recommendation.

SUSTAINABILITY COMMENTS:

Two basic key components of a complete community are availability of a range of affordable and rental housing. Retaining and extending the life of City rental housing is important socially, as well as economically and environmentally. Adding new affordable and rental units on a continual basis is critical to the City's social sustainability, while providing environmental and economic benefits.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Several of the proposed 2010 Work Program items involve financial costs to the City, both in terms of staff time and other resources, as well as capital and operational costs (subsidizing land values, contributions from the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund, for example, waiving of City Development Cost Charges). Subsequent reports submitted to Council on each topic would discuss the financial implications in greater detail. The City 2010 Financial Plan includes $1.53million for potential affordable housing projects.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL IMPLICATIONS:

City action related to affordable and rental housing often involves staff from departments other than Community Development. For example, in the case of assessing potential use of City properties, Lands, Engineering, and Finance staff would be involved. Finance would be a main stakeholder with other departmental staff in developing revitalization agreements.

This report has been reviewed by the Civic Projects Team whose comments have been incorporated.

CORPORATE PLAN AND/OR POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

The 'Housing Affordability Strategies' and 'Rental Housing Strategies' relate to the Official Community Plan housing diversity and sustainability objectives. More specifically the recommendations in this report support *Residential Land Use Objective 5.7.7* related to supporting provision of affordable housing, increasing and retaining existing affordable housing, and leasing of City owned property to enable non-profit rental housing.

In terms of the 1998 Social Plan housing goals, implementation of these strategies meets the following objectives:
- *Objective 2*: Ensure that the Zoning bylaw and development procedures and approaches reflect City housing goals and policies.
- *Objective 3*: Define specific City roles and actions which will result in provision of rental and affordable housing which meet a variety of housing needs.
- *Objective 4*: Define effective policies and strategies which result in the retention and maintenance of the existing rental housing stock.
- *Objective 7*: Support and promote innovative housing.
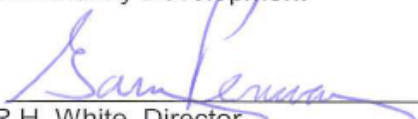
STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS:

Staff recommendations are in keeping with the City's Strategic Plan, specifically   the Strategy Plan vision to be a "diverse and highly liveable community", and its aspiration "to be more sustainable".

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Cheryl Kathler, Community Planner
Community Development

APPROVED BY:

E.K. Adin, City Planner
Community Development

R.H. White, Director
Community Development

REVIEWED BY:

A.K. Tollstam,
City Manager

Attachments

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6. Interview Guide

Background

This research is being conducted for Metro Vancouver by Meredith Seeton - a graduate student in UBC's School of Community and Regional Planning. The research is for course credit, and will form the student's capstone professional project (for more background, see http://www.scarp.ubc.ca/plan547c). The research is being guided by Dr. Penny Gurstein as the faculty supervisor, and Janet Kreda as the agency supervisor.

Goals and Objectives

The intent of this research is to uncover methods for tracking the impact of housing policies that municipalities may adopt. Municipalities across the region have adopted a range of policies to stimulate the creation of diverse and affordable housing options. Metro Vancouver would like to be able to support municipalities in understanding what these policies are achieving, and to develop practices that can facilitate monitoring and evaluation of policies, so that informed changes can be made over time.

In particular, this research will focus on measuring the number and relative affordability of units created as a result of the following six housing policies:[1]

Policy or Regulatory Change:	Understood as…
a) allowing secondary suites	Self-contained rental dwelling units (with a kitchen and bathroom), usually located within a single-family house but with a separate entrance. For the purposes of this project, laneway/coach houses are not considered secondary suites.
b) allowing coach/garden/laneway housing	Detached dwellings typically located where a garage might be, facing the laneway, on a single-family lot. These houses are generally approximately 550 square feet and are limited to rental or family use (generally no strata-titling permitted).
c) allowing increased density in areas appropriate for affordable housing	Either rezoning for higher allowed densities in areas appropriate for affordable housing or providing density bonuses on-site for affordable housing units included in projects.
d) zoning for small lots	Lowering the minimum lot size in single-family districts, and often relaxing side yard requirements, to allow for more efficient utilization of land. For the purpose of this project, a small lot is understood as approximately 2,500 to 6,000 sq. ft.
e) allowing infill housing	Housing whose development does not involve the development of greenfield or prime agricultural land. For the purposes of this project, infill housing is considered to be housing that is inserted within developed areas and constitutes an intensification of the housing or other use that was there previously, sometimes involving the consolidation of multiple lots. Infill housing is not

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[1] It is recognized that some of these policies overlap, depending on how different municipalities define the boundaries between the policies.

	defined as including inserting suites into existing residential buildings.
f) broadening rowhouse/townhouse/duplex zones	Attached or semi-detached low-rise single-family homes. These represent an intensification of land use as compared to single-family homes. Rowhouses, townhouses and duplexes can be ownership or rental units.

The goal of the research is to provide Metro Vancouver with a list of methods to consider putting into practice for tracking the number and relative affordability of units created as a result of policy changes. New methods may consist of completely new practices, simply increasing communication between bodies that are already monitoring and tracking the impacts of housing policy changes, or cross-referencing data sources that already exist.

Methodology

The researcher will be interviewing a range of municipal planners from across the region. Interviews will also be conducted with informants from key institutions that monitor the housing market, such as the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the Greater Vancouver and Fraser Valley Real Estate Boards, and others. For a comparative angle, interviews will be sought with planners from other Canadian cities and regions. The current practices of these interviewees, and their and visions for possible future practices, will inform the study.

Interviews

Reporting and Consent

After the interview, the interviewer will send the interviewee a copy of her notes to ensure accuracy. These notes may be included as an appendix to the final report for Metro Vancouver. Key insights will be incorporated into the body of the report, and inform the recommendations for Metro Vancouver.

Interviewee names and contact information will be provided to Metro Vancouver in case there is a need for further information, but names and contacts will not be included in the notes in the report. However, privacy cannot be completely protected as readers may assume certain planners were interviewed.

At the start of the interview, the interviewer will seek the verbal consent of the interviewee to include the notes in the final report.

Interviews with Municipal Planners: Interview Process

It is anticipated that interviews will not exceed one hour. In advance of the interview, the interviewer will review available materials about the affordable housing policies in place in the municipality.

Interviews will be semi-structured. The interviewer and interviewee will go through the Housing Policy Data Matrix together, considering the six different policy possibilities and the existing and potential data sources available for tracking the number, rent levels or market prices and sizes of units.

Interview Questions

- Is your municipality engaged in monitoring and evaluating the impact of housing policy changes? How?
- For each of the six policy areas:

- o Is your municipality able to (and does it) track the ***number*** of units generated as a result of this policy change?
  - If yes, how? Could this information be shared with Metro Vancouver, or is there some way Metro Vancouver could be tracking this information in the same way?
  - How else do you think Metro Vancouver could be tracking the number of units generated as a result of this policy change?
- o Is your municipality able to (and does it) track the ***size*** of units generated as a result of this policy change?
  - If yes, how? Could this information be shared with Metro Vancouver, or is there some way Metro Vancouver could be tracking this information in the same way?
  - How else do you think Metro Vancouver could be tracking the sizes of units generated as a result of this policy change?
- o Is your municipality able to (and does it) track the ***affordability*** **(rent levels or market prices)** of units generated as a result of this policy change?
  - If yes, how? Could this information be shared with Metro Vancouver, or is there some way Metro Vancouver could be tracking this information in the same way?
  - How else do you think Metro Vancouver could be tracking the affordability of units generated as a result of this policy change?

- Could you share an example building permit form, subdivision application, rezoning or other relevant administrative form that contain information?
- Could you share an excerpt (screenshot, list of fields or other) of the spreadsheet or database that is used for tracking housing or development activity in your municipality?
- Other comments?

Thank you very much for your participation in this study. For further information, contact Meredith Seeton at _____ or (604) ___-____.