

Policy Update Note

Latest Small-Scale, Multi-Unit Housing updates in BC

MARCH, 2024

small
housing

Executive Summary

In communities across the province, the demand for diverse and attainable housing options has never been more pronounced.

Small Housing's Policy Update Note is here to provide you with timely policy insights & analysis, to equip you with the knowledge necessary to support the delivery of gentle density, small scale, multi-unit homes (SSMUH) that resonate with the needs of your constituents.

SSMUH can support aging-in-place for seniors, offers more attainable housing options for young families, and promotes fairer access to housing. Additionally, it benefits essential community workers by diversifying housing options, reducing commutes, and improving affordability, benefiting teachers, healthcare professionals, and public servants.

By staying informed and engaged, together, we can foster inclusive communities that deliver the kinds of homes that people want, need and deserve.

At a Glance

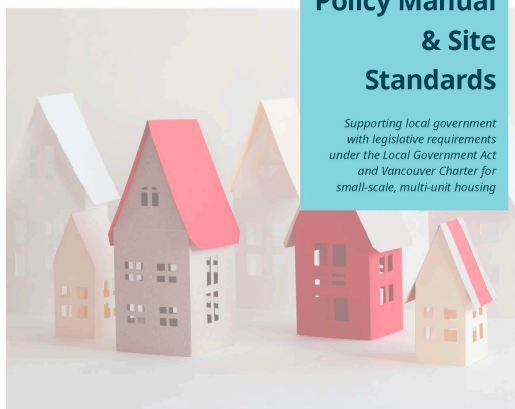
- » BC releases details on Policy Manual & Site Standards to support SSMUH.
- » Provincial progress in standardized housing designs.
- » Province to explore single-egress stairway designs in multiplex buildings.
- » Housing updates from BC Budget 2024 & how BC Builds program can help "*lower construction costs, speed up timelines, & deliver more homes*".
- » Details on Small Housing's **Bylaw Bootcamp Program** and highlights from the Gentle Density Leaders Summit 2024.

Policy Updates

BC releases details on Policy Manual & Site Standards to support SSMUH

In the fall of 2023, BC enacted amendments to the Local Government Act and Vancouver Charter, enabling greater flexibility for small-scale, multi-unit housing in areas previously restricted to single-detached dwellings or duplexes. Applicable province-wide, in communities of over 5,000 residents, these changes signify a significant shift in land use policy and open the door for new housing opportunities.

BC's SSMUH [Policy Manual](#) serves as a crucial tool for municipalities and regional districts, aiding in the implementation of zoning bylaw amendments mandated by the SSMUH legislation. Its guidance facilitates compliance with the new regulatory framework, ensuring smoother transitions and enhanced housing options for residents across BC.



Small-Scale, Multi-Unit Housing

Progress in provincial standardized housing designs

Exciting news for homeowners, builders and local governments looking to boost the supply of smaller homes: the Province is progressing its Standardized Housing Design Project, aimed at creating customizable designs for several home types, including townhomes, triplexes, and laneway homes.

These [standardized designs](#), built on single lots, can lead to quicker and more cost-effective housing solutions. Local governments will have the opportunity to adopt these designs, and offer incentives like expedited permitting.

Through standardizing designs, we can enable more streamlined development processes, support consistency across jurisdictions, and increase the potential for small-scale builders and citizen developers to take part in growing our housing supply. The designs are expected to be released this Fall.



Province to explore single egress stairway designs

In January, the Province demonstrated its commitment to exploring the feasibility of single egress stair designs in buildings up to eight storeys. The Province is inviting consultants proficient in building design, engineering, and fire and life safety to provide insights of means of enabling single-egress stairs in the BC Building Code.

A body of research concludes that modern firefighting practices, advanced fire alarms, automated sprinklers, fire resistant separations (walls, doors, ceilings) and other innovations have rendered the two-egress model obsolete in low-rise settings.

It is now technically possible to create multi-unit wood frame buildings with a single egress that are as - or even more - fire safe than a two egress building of yesteryear.

Small Housing will soon be publishing a series of case studies that showcase leading examples of gentle density housing initiatives in action, including [single-egress stairs](#) and the role that they can play in delivering more homes across the province. We will watch with interest to see how the Province's consultations move forward.

BC Budget 2024 & BC Builds

This month's [BC Budget 2024](#) allocated more funding to bolster existing housing programs and services, with an additional \$116 million over three years. Additionally, \$198 million over the same time window has been earmarked for the new [BC Builds](#) program, aimed at accelerating the development of housing for middle-income households, focusing on the use of public lands, preferential government lending rates, modern methods of construction, and local government incentives to deliver new housing supply.

A newly announced "home-flipping" tax focuses on profits from selling a residential property within two years of acquisition. The revenue generated is to be earmarked directly for the construction of affordable housing projects throughout British Columbia.

Finally, qualifying first-time buyers are set to benefit when acquiring a home up to \$835,000, with the first \$500,000 exempt from property transfer tax. An estimated 14,500 people, twice as many as before, will now be eligible for support to buy their first home, with the aim of supporting them move out of the rental market and freeing up rentals for others.

Final thoughts

Gentle Density Leaders Summit 2024: Scaling Up

In case you missed it: Small Housing's 2024 Gentle Density Leaders Summit brought together over 120 trailblazers and innovators across housing, planning, local government, design, construction, real estate, and finance.

Together, they delved into cutting-edge policies, regulations, and proven strategies fostering innovative development at the gentle density scale. To access a broad suite of presentations and resources from the event, head to our dedicated [event page](#).



Small Housing - Bylaw Bootcamp

Small Housing is excited to be launching a number of new services to support municipalities across the province in their efforts to deliver small-scale, multi unit housing, ranging from guidance papers, training workshops, and more.

We are shortly launching our new **Bylaw Bootcamp Program**, advising municipalities on updating their zoning bylaws to align with SSMUH legislation and meet the June 30th deadline.

SHBC is partnering with municipalities to conduct a series of technical workshops, guiding local government staff through amendment options while offering insights from other participating municipalities and technical advisors, to support informed decision-making.

To find out how your municipality can get involved, contact us at the details provided.

Deadline for applications is Friday, March 22.



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