



INNOVATION &
RESEARCH

NHS Solutions Lab

Social wellbeing in modular housing:

Co-creating design and social programming recommendations and actions to nurture health and social support for vulnerable people living in temporary modular supportive housing.

Stakeholder update from the third workshop

June 2021



About this NHS Solutions Lab

This NHS Social Lab is led by Happy City and supported by Reos Partners. The project uses a resident-focused approach to understand how the design and programming of existing temporary modular supportive housing projects across the Lower Mainland impact resident wellbeing. This project will co-create and pilot design and programming activities with Indigenous modular supportive housing staff, management and residents. Municipal stakeholders and technical experts are also engaged through a community of practice to help us understand challenges and barriers in the industry.

This project, entitled “Co-creating design and social programming recommendations and actions to nurture health and social support for vulnerable people living in temporary modular supportive housing” received funding from the National Housing Strategy under the NHS Solutions Labs. However, the views expressed are the personal views of the author and CMHC accepts no responsibility for them.

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Project background

This document provides updates to workshop participants and project stakeholders about learnings from the project's second workshop, which took place on May 26, 2021.

Overall engagement strategy:

This workshop, the third of four, explored how to improve wellbeing in temporary modular housing buildings. The project aims to understand how temporary modular supportive housing (referred to as modular housing throughout the document), can create nurturing environments that enhance people's wellbeing while they transition from homelessness into affordable housing. The project uses a Social Lab approach to co-create solutions with operators and residents who currently live in temporary modular housing. The focus of the session was to assemble stakeholders from different areas of the modular housing system to discuss and develop priority strategies that can enhance residents' wellbeing.

Goals of the engagement session:

- Provide learning opportunities for workshop participants through Q&A sessions with resource people from different parts of the modular housing system.
- Explore eight design and programming recommendations within the three main areas of opportunity (modular housing design and functionality, processes and operations and social connectedness): explore their challenges and special considerations, as well as their importance to promoting wellbeing.
- Explore possible actions that could be pursued under each strategy as well as gaps in technical and policy knowledge that could represent barriers to implementing them.
- Build connections among participants representing different areas of the modular housing system.

Participants:

The third workshop had 17 participants. Participants were convened from the following groups that form the modular housing system:

- Modular supportive housing operators
- Municipalities and policy makers
- Housing and homelessness advocacy organizations
- Builders and architects

Refined wellbeing principles

This work is guided by a Wellbeing framework that we have created bringing together: learnings from research, insights from 21 interviews, values that guide the work of 26 institutions in British Columbia focused on the needs of people experiencing homelessness, people transitioning out of homelessness, and Urban Indigenous people; and feedback from participants of this series of workshops. Appendix 1 shows this refined Wellbeing framework.

Focus learning sessions

During the workshop, we held a focus learning session. Happy City invited two workshop stakeholders to participate in a “Q&A style” learning session to share their knowledge and experience. The first session focused on the municipal process, with a planner answering the questions. The second session focused on support for residents, and had a social worker answering questions.

The following three pages summarize the learnings from focus learning sessions.

Summary of the first focus learning: understanding the development process for modular housing

Interview with Liza Jimenez, City of Vancouver

Q: What is the process for selecting sites for temporary modular housing?

- The City of Vancouver consults with the real estate department, BC Housing, and planning department to look at all the different vacant and underused sites. Specifically, they look for the following characteristics:
 - Is the site city-owned?
 - What are the future proposals on the site?
 - The site needs to be available for between 5 - 10 years
 - Is the zoning already set for multi-unit housing?
 - Under the Vancouver Charter, the director of planning could receive delegated authority to allow for TMH uses; this avoids going through a lengthy rezoning process.
 - Can the site fit a building and outdoor space?
 - Is the site close to services and transit?
 - Is the site flat?
 - Are the soil and environmental conditions adequate for residential construction?
 - Does the site have water, sewer, and power access with limited upgrades needed?
- As soon as the site is made available, the team is ready to go to deliver the project.
 - They try to deliver beds as soon as possible.
 - When the rapid-housing approach started, Vancouver had a very fast response in delivering so many beds in a short amount of time (unprecedented in North America).
- The site selection process is challenging, because there are so many factors to consider. The team starts working on a site and sometimes has to look elsewhere because of an unforeseen circumstance.
 - All the sites are “no dig” with a triadic raised foundation. Making this work with existing topography proved to be a challenge on some sites.
- During the time the first sites were selected, having a diverse team meet weekly allowed these projects to take place on such a fast timeline, these meetings were needed to rapidly assess sites and get all the information in a timely manner.
 - Decisions were made on a bi-weekly basis when decision-makers met.
- Several lessons learned were implemented during the different iterations of the buildings.
 - Some of the operators’ feedback was taken into account.

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- Buildings may look the same, but there have been seven different versions that have been improved with each subsequent building that was built.

Q: Prior to a temporary modular housing building being built, what is the typical engagement process with the community and how long is it?

- The overall process lasts 3 months.
 - The engagement starts before the development application is made, even though this is beyond the requirements.
- The city sends out fact sheets (about supportive housing in general and specifics for the proposed site).
- They notify the community about the application and invite them to an open house (run for three nights of face to face meetings) with staff from engineering and planning, and subject matter experts from all areas.
- The feedback solicited by the City is about specific things like the appearance of the building. The location of the building is not up for public debate.
- The City heard a lot of stigmatizing rhetoric at the sessions.
- The design team and City make small changes based on the public feedback and then also do a post-application engagement.
- At the post-application stage (city holds 2-3 nights of open house), the design and planning teams show the actual design (including the location of the entrance, outdoor spaces, layouts) and also introduce the operator to the community.

Q: Are there any effective ways to reduce stigma and improve public opinion?

- Some people thought the engagement was too quick. Not sure if more time would have decreased stigma.
- These projects are responding to a housing crisis, it is not necessarily equitable to draw out the community engagement process at the expense of residents who need housing.
- Overtime, there hasn't been much change about public opinion- the same stigma and comments are usually present for each project.
- The public is gaining understanding of the program, but this knowledge can also lead to greater hesitation among people. There is still a lot of stigma and rumors being circulated.
- In general, planners working on temporary modular housing think that there is a good understanding about what the program actually is amongst community members.
- The discourse about people who will be living there can be very stigmatizing and brutal.
- Sometimes, there isn't anything the city can say to quell fears and reduce stigma. They just have to let the conversations play out and most of the concerns resolve overtime.
 - Other people in the community step up and challenge their neighbor's ideas and stigmas.
 - For instance, in Marpole, High School students challenged what their parents and neighbors were saying.
 - The message coming from community members to their neighbors can be very powerful.

Summary of the second focus learning: understanding the needs of residents

Interview with Maura Gowans, Aboriginal Mother Centre

Q: What are the major challenges for Indigenous residents trying to transition into the workforce?

- Racism and discrimination are prevalent.
- Residents have different challenges based on which community they are from.
 - Some Urban Indigenous people have never been to their traditional territory.
- Empowering people is challenging. Without having access to good housing it is difficult for them to improve on other aspects of their lives.
- Indigenous people are at high-risk from the opioid crisis.
- People need to receive trauma-based treatment. Once they do this, other parts of their lives can fall into place.

Q: What helps residents who are transitioning out of homelessness build a sense of community and belonging?

- Have community and cultural events: for instance, talking circles with Elders, drum making, making food.
- During Covid, organizations delivered food to residents, since many had difficulty accessing regular programs due to Covid.
- Indigenous residents need access to specific supports that reference Indigenous frameworks and Western frameworks.

Q: What are respectful ways to collect feedback and engage vulnerable residents?

- Highlight the work and skills of people, and respect them as individuals and human beings.
- Ensuring that specific housing is provided, for instance for young Indigenous women who experience homelessness. Creating a safe space that supports the individual needs allows people to grow and protect them from further trauma.
- Giving people a chance to heal means that they can do anything.
- Consider the whole person and approach their needs holistically.
- Having an Elder present- they can be a safe and supportive presence for both residents and support staff.
- Come with a cultural understanding and empathy. Ask people what they need. For instance, ask Indigenous parents what they need in order to support their child.
- Providing space for culture is really important in urban settings.

Exploring wellbeing strategies and actions

In this session, participants explored a total of eight strategies through two breakout sessions. The strategies that were analyzed are linked to the three areas of opportunity that were identified as the most impactful during the first workshop: **modular design & functionality**, **social connectedness**, and **processes & operations**.

During the breakout sessions, participants were divided into groups of 3-4, each one of them focusing on a different strategy. The groups were arranged based on participants' areas of knowledge, to ensure groups had people from different backgrounds exploring each strategy.

During the first breakout, we focused on these four strategies:

1. Unit design and circulation spaces

2. Temporary modular supportive housing site selection
3. Other options in the housing spectrum
4. Reducing stigma in the development process

During the second breakout, we focused on these four strategies:

5. Housing for Indigenous people living in Urban areas
5. Post-occupancy studies
6. Generating income for residents
7. Interactions with the community

The following summaries reflect participants' conversations. Facilitators provided guidance for each breakout group and ensured each group had time to: discuss the strategy and share insights on why it is important for wellbeing as well as discuss and brainstorm actions to implement the strategy. Participants were also asked to identify challenges and possible gaps in terms of knowledge and resources that the system needs to address to come up with thoughtful decisions.

The explored strategies have been organized by area of opportunity:

Social connectedness: Interactions between residents and with the community

Strategy - Interactions between residents and the community: Create opportunities for residents of temporary modular housing to interact with the community and build social ties.

Stakeholder understanding of the strategy:

Safety for women: women fleeing violence who are experiencing addiction and trauma need a private space to hang out. They may not feel safe interacting with the community in casual settings.

Building relationships with the community can help create a greater sense of safety for residents and neighbors alike, because they will recognize each other when they are out and about. However, for women, the opposite can be true. A sense of safety depends on the intersectional identities of the resident, as well as the context for the building.

Sharing food: sharing food can be a good way to bring people of different cultures and experiences together.

Covered areas: covered areas offer opportunities for the community to pause, sit, or have a meal in an outdoor space. These spaces can help connect residents with their neighbours.

Residents face stigma in community spaces: public spaces such as libraries can feel unwelcoming to residents who have experienced homelessness, addictions, and racism.

Informal interactions are important: Creating structured events can help, but spontaneous interactions are really

important to create relationships over time.

Ask residents what they need: Residents of modular housing are experts on their own needs and preferences. Decisions about events should be made by asking them what they need.

Main wellbeing principles being addressed: Supportive networks + trust + meaning + dignity

Sample actions from the workshop (these were provided to workshop participants during the session and extracted from HC's list of promising actions through research and early interviews):

1. *Create cultural and recreational activities such as BBQs, picnics, talking circles or music events that can attract neighbours and help them connect with modular housing residents.*
2. *Ensure that the building fits into the surrounding context so the neighbours consider it a visual amenity.*
3. *Include an inviting threshold between the sidewalk and building entrance with opportunities to sit, garden, have lunch, etc.*

New actions suggested during the break out session:

1. **Semi-private outdoor spaces for residents:** ensure that residents have a safe semi-private outdoor space (such as a rooftop patio) that they can use when they don't want to be exposed to the larger community.
2. **Engage residents in how they want to interact with the community:** start by asking modular housing residents about their preferences and desires to interact with the community, then co-create interaction opportunities that support their needs.
3. **Connect residents with community resources:** help residents access community centres or other community groups that will help them meet friends and give them a safe place to socialize.
4. **Create a social space that can be opened to other community members:** for instance to host events, social clubs, or for casual hangouts.
5. **Help residents navigate public places:** create partnerships with local public institutions - such as public libraries- to introduce residents to the staff, give them a designated time to learn how to navigate the space so that they feel comfortable going there on their own.
6. **Connect residents to technology:** provide residents with access to computers, tablets, and phones so that they can connect with community and friends through social media.

7. **Create a modular housing cafe:** create a modular housing “cafe” where residents can access the internet, socialize, and get refreshments. This could be open to residents of modular housing across the city.
8. **Sharing food:** create opportunities for residents to cook and share food from their culture with others.
9. **Informal income generating opportunities:** create a space for an informal market or bazaar on site at modular housing for residents to display things they make, generate income, and interact with the community.
10. **Build skills to interact with others:** create opportunities for conflict resolution and mediation training that residents and invited guests can participate in.
11. **Social champions:** engage long-time or former modular housing residents to champion social relationships with neighbours and community organizations. They can pave the way for newer residents who don't feel as comfortable.
12. **Community liaison committee:** create a community liaison committee, made up of staff, residents, and community members. They can meet to organize events and talk about challenges or issues that come up.
13. **Special events:** create special events that modular housing residents are key in organizing and are welcomed to participate in such as sidewalk sales, street markets, music, food festivals, and art.

Challenges:

- Residents of temporary modular housing have diverse experiences, they all have a different comfort and desire for interaction with the community.
- Consider safety for residents of temporary modular housing when interacting with the community, especially for women who experience trauma.
- The temporary nature of the sites can make it difficult for residents to create community connections in the long-term, knowing that they will have to move at some point in the near future.
- Residents can face stigma from neighbours and public institutions.

Modular housing design & functionality

Strategy - Unit design & circulation spaces: Explore the need to diversify unit types and configurations. Design circulation spaces that enable a sense of safety and offer opportunities for casual social encounters.

Stakeholder understanding of the strategy:

Accessible units: since these are limited to the ground floor, it can be tricky to make sure the right residents are housed in these units. Units for a wider range of disabilities should be considered.

Living together or alone: when residents first transition from homelessness, it is important that they have their own unit. Living with a partner or family member can be challenging because people are at different places in their recovery journey, and a lot of conflict can arise. Operators then have to resolve these conflicts which can be very challenging.

Double units: double units are being provided in some buildings across BC, none in Vancouver at the moment. They take up the footprint of two individual studio units, with only one bathroom and kitchen.

Use of the kitchens: according to an operator, only about 50% of residents use their kitchen to cook, however

most appreciate having access to a fridge in their unit.

Individual washrooms: having access to individual washrooms is important for dignity, recovery and health.

Circulation spaces: generally, residents don't socialize in the corridors or stairwells. Having a space to hangout could be beneficial, but it poses safety and maintenance challenges for staff.

Main wellbeing principles being addressed: Dignity + equity + stability + safety

Sample actions from the workshop (these were provided to workshop participants during the session and extracted from HC's list of promising actions through research and early interviews):

1. *Include a diversity of units in the building including single, double, and family units based on the demographic of the building.*
2. *Organize rooms into smaller clusters so that residents can gain a sense of community and keep each other safe.*
3. *Design corridors as opportunities for social interactions by including storage space, display space and seating spaces.*
4. *Locate flexible furniture next to the elevator and stair landing that residents can use to have more intimate social interactions.*

New actions suggested during the break out session:

1. **Improve accessible units:** add push-buttons to open the doors to the washroom in the accessible suites.
2. **Diversify accessibility considerations:** consider other disabilities in the design: for instance, flashing lights for emergency systems for deaf residents.
3. **Access to a bathtub:** provide a shared bathroom on the main floor that gives access to a bathtub. This would be beneficial for residents who receive homecare.
4. **Elevator access:** consider including an elevator in temporary modular housing to create a safety net for residents living on the upper floors who may become injured, mobility impaired, or have children.
5. **Provide options for residents to live together:** design some rooms for couples in the building to give flexibility to accommodate different people's needs.
6. **Provide housing options for couples to transition into:** create couples housing that residents can transition into easily after living in temporary modular housing.
7. **Conflict resolution:** provide support for conflict resolution between couples or family members living together.
8. **Interconnected adjacent units:** provide interconnected units that could accommodate a couple or family members living together while still having their own space.
9. **Units for mothers and their kids:** provide units that allow a mother and child to live together, especially in buildings that are for women-only.
10. **Social corridors:** provide a small hang-out space in hallways that is easy to maintain and that residents feel a sense of ownership over.
11. **Enhanced cooking facilities:** include an oven in each unit or shared by a few units so people can cook their preferred meals.

12. **Trauma-informed unit design:** Design appliances, heaters and other elements in such a way that don't seem suspicious and dangerous for people recovering from trauma.

Challenges:

- The projects are fast-tracked and competitively bid, so it can be difficult for operators to provide input for what the demographic needs of their community are- for instance, if there is a need for a couple's units in the building.
- Balance the overall number of units provided with additional space accommodations that residents need.
- Modular construction thrives on repeatability, but different residents have various preferences and needs.

Strategy - Temporary modular housing site selection: Ensure that sites have access to parks, libraries, services and public transit within a 10-minute walking radius.

Stakeholder understanding of the strategy:

Providing more than a home: temporary modular housing needs to provide a community to people as well.

Womens face safety challenges: women especially won't leave their home if they don't feel safe in the neighbourhood and don't know where the resources are.

Stigma in the community: residents experience stigma, so they like to know the community and have places close by.

Access to public spaces: residents need access to resources, for instance parks to gather with family and friends.

Importance of outdoor space: outdoor space is very important for residents. It needs to be a safe space that is maintained, accessible, and private. People also need to not feel confined while using the space.

Temporary sites: moving from one place to another without choice can cause trauma to residents. Once they need to be moved, it can be challenging to find the right neighbourhoods with affordable housing and a safe environment where residents don't face too much stigma. If residents can form a bond with the community, then planning for them to stay in that community can help them grow roots.

Main wellbeing principles being addressed: Equity + dignity + trust + resilience + stability

Sample actions from the workshop (these were provided to workshop participants during the session and extracted from HC's list of promising actions through research and early interviews):

1. *Locate buildings close to transit stops and secure bike storage.*
2. *Locate buildings within easily accessible distance of external supportive services.*
3. *Locate buildings in temporary sites with the possibility of becoming permanent.*

New actions suggested during the break out session:

1. **Rooftop gathering places:** include a protected rooftop in every site that is dedicated to residents.
2. **Semi-private outdoor spaces:** include outdoor space that is semi-private, where residents can enjoy a

- safe outdoor space in contact with nature.
3. **Consider neighbourhood safety:** locate buildings in safe areas that residents, specially women, can safely navigate throughout the day and at night.
 4. **Consider neighbourhood affordability:** locate buildings in places that have access to affordable groceries and other essential services.
 5. **Match resident demographics with the right neighbourhood:** ensure the services in the area complement needs of the supportive housing demographics.
 6. **Locate temporary housing in neighbourhoods where there are affordable housing options** where people can transition to.

Challenges:

- Sites that have access to resources have competition. For temporary modular housing, it is very hard to secure sites. Generally, the City can access sites that aren't as desirable.
- Affordability of the neighborhood- for instance, residents might not be able to afford the shops and groceries located near to their building.
- NIMBY communities are likely to give the most disadvantaged sites and those sites might not be close to services and transport. Not having access to services puts a lot of stress on program managers and operators.
- Temporary modular housing is not built to last.

Strategy - Reducing stigma in the pre-development process: Build ongoing engagement between stakeholders to reduce stigma around temporary modular housing (and supportive housing in general).

Stakeholder understanding of the strategy:

NIMBYism spreads quickly: people bring strongly negative discourse to predevelopment processes across the province for affordable and supportive housing projects.

Clear messaging: Approach engagement with very clear objectives, goals, and what feedback you are open to hearing. Even with a strong framework like this for engagement, there are always people who are not willing to listen and change their stigmatizing ideas.

Connecting with the community: Developing community connections with supportive housing projects that are already in the neighbourhood can help create more acceptance for future proposals.

Education is not enough: even with evidence-based information provided to the public, there is a deeply political and systemic barrier to reducing stigma around supportive housing.

Using residents' personal stories: Sharing stories can have a positive impact, but it also carries risk to the person sharing their story. People can feel powerful by sharing their story. This strategy can also backfire by fueling stigma by allowing people to focus on differences and "othering" vulnerable residents.

Polarized opinions: In general, there is 10% of people who support projects, 10% who strongly oppose, and the remaining 80% are in the middle- these are the people that messaging needs to target.

Main wellbeing principles being addressed: Equity + Dignity + Resilience + Supportive networks

Sample actions from the workshop (these were provided to workshop participants during the session and extracted from HC's list of promising actions through research and early interviews):

1. *Create thoughtful messaging that conveys to neighbourhoods hosting temporary modular housing what supportive housing is, how it operates and its benefits.*
2. *Build awareness across neighbourhoods around systemic issues that cause homelessness.*
3. *Share stories of success in neighbourhoods to outline the benefits and positive outcomes of incorporating modular housing into their community.*
4. *Create rapid early engagement opportunities with neighbours to understand and clarify expectations.*

New actions suggested during the break out session:

1. **Champion housing for all:** convene municipal champions that can push back against unreasonable and stigmatizing discourse. Housing is a human right, and they do not have the right to block people from living in their neighbourhood.
2. **Engage communication experts:** ensure that communication consultants are engaged in municipalities to create clear messaging that strikes the right balance.
3. **Ensure privacy for residents sharing their stories:** educate operators, staff, and residents about their rights to privacy and risks to sharing their information with media or other organizations.
4. **Resident consent:** ensure that any stories shared about temporary modular housing include consent from residents.
5. **Build awareness about homelessness in general:** provide public education about why and how people experience homelessness to build empathy. Help people understand that the causes of homelessness are complex and often rooted in systems of oppression such as colonization.
6. **Highlight positive outcomes:** share the positive outcomes of temporary modular housing with the community to show that the buildings are really helping people improve their wellbeing.
7. **Highlight financial outcomes:** share the financial benefits to the public for providing housing to people experiencing homelessness- from reduction in use of emergency services to costs of incarceration.
8. **Highlight employment outcomes:** share success stories of residents gaining employment skills and transitioning into the workforce.
9. **Share information between municipalities:** share common concerns and questions with other municipalities so that they can better prepare and anticipate them at public engagement sessions.
10. **Leverage statistics:** to create powerful messaging around the benefits of temporary modular supportive housing.
11. **Build evidence around modular housing:** provide concrete studies that prove that modular supportive housing brings benefit to residents and society as a whole.

Challenges:

- Stigmatizing discourse can be powerful and it can escalate quickly.
- There is always 10% of the population that is strongly against a project, and it is incredibly difficult to change their minds no matter the evidence presented.
- Sharing residents' stories has to be done carefully and with their consent to ensure their safety and privacy.
- There is a lack of formal evidence and studies to draw on to show how supportive housing changes people's lives.

Strategy - Housing for Indigenous people living in urban areas: Design supportive housing that enables urban Indigenous populations to address their needs and connect with their cultural background.

Stakeholder understanding of the strategy:

Culture heals: Culture is really important for some Urban Indigenous people to be able to heal. For others, they aren't interested in culture at the moment so it is important to let them take the lead on what they need.

Funding for cultural programming: operators face challenges accessing ongoing funding for culturally-sensitive programming and services. Without these services, even the best designed spaces won't be effective.

Outdoor spaces are important: having a diversity of outdoor spaces is important for Indigenous people.

Importance of Elders: elders provide a sense of safety and ease to both residents and staff alike. Having access to this trusted person is incredibly important.

Main wellbeing principles being addressed: Equity + culture & values + safety + healing

Sample actions from the workshop (these were provided to workshop participants during the session and extracted from HC's list of promising actions through research and early interviews):

1. *Include spaces for large gatherings where talking and drum circles can be carried out.*
2. *Leave unfinished spaces like walls, outdoor or future landscaped areas so residents can have opportunities to co-create.*
3. *Include one or two visitor suites where Elders can spend the night when they carry out multi-day sessions.*

New actions suggested during the break out session:

1. **Allow residents the choice to participate in cultural programming.** Some residents might not be interested or ready to engage with cultural activities.
2. **Ensure that there are safe spaces indoors where residents can smudge.** This means that the building systems need to be adapted to allow for some smoke.
3. **Provide access to an Elder** to support residents, operators and staff. Having access to a full-time Elder on staff would be beneficial.
4. **Ensure that housing comes with the right social support** so that residents build autonomy and resilience to be successful on their own.
5. **Create a sweat lodge onsite.** Consider modifications in urban areas to ensure that it is allowed by city bylaws.
6. **Create a communal outdoor space** where residents can grow traditional plants.
7. **Create consolidated funding sources** and community of practice for cultural programming to ease the burden of operators.
8. **Create an outdoor space that is sheltered** to hold cultural programming. Consider solar orientation and climate when designing this space.
9. **Create rooftop gardens** to add more diversity to shared outdoor spaces.
10. **Conduct a co-creative process** with operators, Elders, and Indigenous designers to define culturally appropriate design for each project.
11. **Provide guidelines to design spaces** that allow for smudging, fire pits, and sweat lodges. Include case studies of successful examples in urban areas and the considerations and steps to receive approval.

Challenges:

- Operators have to apply for multiple grants annually to continue cultural programming, this is very time-consuming and doesn't guarantee continuity of what they can offer to residents.
- Elements that produce smoke (smudging, fire pits, sweat lodges) can be a challenge for building systems, building codes, and bylaws.

Processes & operations

Strategy - Other housing options in the housing spectrum: Provide a wide spectrum of housing solutions that allow people to transition from temporary supportive housing into permanent housing.

Stakeholder understanding of the strategy:

Housing is a key determinant of health: evidence shows that lack of housing or substandard/overcrowded housing has a detrimental effect on human health.

Housing stigma: once a resident has experienced homelessness and addictions, they face discrimination and stigma even after they have recovered and are ready to return to their communities.

Transitioning out of temporary modular housing: Vancouver is currently emptying one of the buildings to relocate a modular housing building (it has only been operating for three years). During this process, the operator is meeting with each tenant individually to see what their needs are and what they need in terms of a community. People are being offered to move back into temporary housing, or being offered more permanent housing solutions as well.

Understanding the housing spectrum: the housing spectrum isn't a linear "ladder" that people move through from homelessness to ownership. Many residents will always need supportive services, so their housing spectrum will look different from someone else's. Supportive housing has been stigmatized as a temporary or a "less-than" housing solution that people should grow out of. However, this does not reflect reality for many residents.

Housing options: provide people what they need at different stages of their lives. People need various kinds of support.

Transitioning to living independently: Not all residents will be able to transition into independent living. However, for those who can, there is a massive shortage of deeply affordable housing. Having more of this housing supply can free up spaces in supportive housing for residents who need the support.

Land supply: providing a wide spectrum of housing options requires developable land. The abundance of single family detached zoning in Vancouver is a huge challenge- this is a big political barrier. Affordable housing needs density in order to be affordable.

Locating affordable housing: In the City of Vancouver, there are still "pockets" where affordable housing is concentrated.

Funding is restrictive: funding for affordable and supportive housing comes with specific clauses, which limits innovative solutions (more so than for market housing).

COVID has shifted the conversation: People are starting to really consider equity. Anti-racism and greater knowledge of Indigenous populations is starting to be important. Public hearings are now through telephone, which has allowed people who wouldn't normally join to be a part of the conversation- people who don't have time or who are marginalized and would feel more intimidated in person.

Main wellbeing principles being addressed: Equity + dignity + stability + resilience + health

Sample actions from the workshop (these were provided to workshop participants during the session and

extracted from HC's list of promising actions through research and early interviews):

1. *Build an understanding among industry stakeholders on the role of modular supportive housing within the housing spectrum in the long-term.*
2. *Increase the number of rental and affordable housing stock across neighbourhoods to ensure residents living in temporary housing can transition into independent living in the same neighbourhood.*
3. *Transform obsolete office, retail and hotel buildings into housing.*

New actions suggested during the break out session:

1. **Provide a variety of unit sizes** that accommodate different preferences for living, for instance for intergenerational families.
2. **Create zoning bylaws** that allow for denser affordable housing throughout the city.
3. **Provide deeply affordable housing** for people experiencing poverty to free-up spaces in supportive housing for those who need support.
4. **Assess each resident's housing spectrum** to determine what housing options they aspire to or what housing options suit them best.
5. **Use experiences of current temporary modular buildings** that are being relocated as a case study for best practices on how to help residents that need to relocate out of temporary modular housing.
6. **Allow for innovative housing** types to be funded.
7. **Explore a cultural shift in the housing system-** that deprioritizes home ownership as the ultimate housing form- and explores what is appropriate for different residents.

Challenges:

- North Americans prize homeownership, which creates systemic impediments to changing policies, culture, and politics to think differently and accommodate a diversity of resident's needs.
- Persistent stigma: for the last 10 years, the conversation around affordable and supportive housing has cited declining property values, crime, and stigmatizing discourse. These conversations are still ongoing, despite the evidence that in reality this doesn't occur.

Strategy - Post-occupancy studies: Carry out post-occupancy evaluation studies to collect disaggregated data on resident wellbeing and help shape future design and funding decisions.

Stakeholder understanding of the strategy:

BC housing conducted a wellbeing evaluation study across the Province. It provided valuable insight- they found positive outcomes for residents. This data can be used to dispel myths about temporary modular housing. The data can also be provided to funders to make a case for more housing. These surveys measured overall wellbeing, access to services, physical health, addictions support, mental health support, cultural support, and recreational activities. The method used was surveys, they are learning to adapt to more culturally-sensitive techniques.

Methods to collect data: while collecting information, studies should also build community. Peer-to-peer analysis can be more effective than a survey. Co-create with residents to see what they want to evaluate. Provide compensation for residents to participate (cash is emerging as a best practice). Provide choice to residents, and group settings where they can feel safer.

<p>Designers and builders lack an understanding of how the spaces are working for diverse residents. These are complex discussions that need to look at social patterns and how the spaces are used. At the same time, they need to weigh what is the balance of efficient use of limited funding vs. what residents need.</p> <p>Maintenance challenges: since temporary modular housing is new, it can be challenging to anticipate maintenance and ensure that repairs are done in a timely manner.</p>
<p>Main wellbeing principles being addressed: Trust + Safety + Equity + Culture & values + Dignity + Healing + Autonomy & self-determination</p>
<p>Sample actions from the workshop (these were provided to workshop participants during the session and extracted from HC's list of promising actions through research and early interviews):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Create ways to collect feedback from residents that make them feel safe. This means that they won't feel that any negative feedback will impact their housing security, support services, or relationships.</i> 2. <i>Consult with operators on specific kitchen, storage, and building flow requirements.</i> 3. <i>Create mechanisms to keep open communications between residents, designers, and operators to continuously improve design.</i>
<p>New actions suggested during the break out session:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Peer-to-peer feedback: design peer-to-peer feedback methods. 2. Co-create studies with residents: develop co-creation models that ask tenants what questions they want to ask. 3. Find the best methods: review evaluation methods from different supportive housing and depending on what resonates, incorporate them into your own practices. 4. Compensate residents for participating: provide awards or small stipends for participating in surveys. Stay away from cards that define how residents should spend the money (like Tim Hortons), instead provide the cash so they can use it in any way. 5. Share findings with residents: share results of surveys or evaluation with residents. 6. Ease of use: ensure that the method(s) that is(are) used for residents to provide frequent feedback on infrastructure, appliances, and the state of their unit is easy to use. 7. Create a sense of community: engage in group scenarios or settings where a sense of belonging and community has been established to collect feedback. 8. Open transparent channels: create a method where residents can reach out when they need something. 9. Engage existing groups: involve people in a community group or resident association.
<p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is little knowledge on how the spaces are working for residents, how they are using them and if resources are being invested in the best possible way. ● Mechanical systems are extremely expensive and are complex. ● There is a lack of knowledge about culturally-appropriate methods to collect feedback from Indigenous residents.

Strategy - Generating income for residents: find income generating opportunities so that they can gain autonomy and a sense of pride over time.

Stakeholder understanding of the strategy:

Residents face barriers to entering the workforce: Some residents may be ready, but others have health and complex challenges that make them not ready to enter formal employment. In order to build readiness, informal employment and opportunities to build community within temporary modular housing can help.

Residents need gradual “baby steps” to transition into the workforce: Operators need to provide small opportunities that meet residents where they are at. They need to understand where residents are at by talking to them so that they can help match them with the right programs.

Developing a routine helps residents gain confidence: Having a daily routine, like keeping their unit clean, putting on clean clothing can help them be motivated to participate in new activities. Operators can introduce the ideas, but residents need to develop self-motivation and want to participate.

Main wellbeing principles being addressed: Trust + Autonomy & self-determination + Dignity

Sample actions from the workshop (these were provided to workshop participants during the session and extracted from HC’s list of promising actions through research and early interviews):

1. *Offer one-on-one guidance to newly arrived residents to help them navigate the transition from being unhoused or from living in a shelter to living in temporary housing.*
2. *Consider opportunities to connect them with peer mentors who have already navigated the process*
3. *Connect residents to specific community organizations that already provide services, so that residents have multiple options to meet their needs.*

New actions suggested during the break out session:

1. **Social enterprises:** connect social enterprises organizations with residents of temporary modular housing to provide employment.
2. **Employment stepping stones:** provide informal employment opportunities that can provide stepping stones for residents to build readiness for more traditional employment.
3. **Build community from within:** ensure that residents entering the workforce have had opportunities to build stability and community connections within the building prior to committing to employment.
4. **Create informal employment contracts with BIAs:** work with BIA to create maintenance contracts that residents can help fulfill- for instance through street cleaning, landscaping, or minor repairs.
5. **Job fairs:** hold a job fair at the building. However, ensure that residents have had enough time to prepare and that the employment is suitable for where they are at currently.
6. **Educational opportunities:** create partnerships with local colleges or vocational institutions to create programs for residents to develop skills. Applying through “regular” channels can be a barrier for residents, so providing specialized programs can help them overcome the entry barrier.
7. **Online vocational training:** create online programs for residents to gain the credits they need to gain entry into a college or vocational training program.
8. **Working with animals:** in areas with access to agricultural land, provide opportunities for residents to learn animal husbandry.
9. **Working with food:** provide training opportunities to learn how to cook and gain a real seal.
10. **Working with trades:** provide training opportunities for people to gain the skills to do mechanics, repairs, or trades.
11. **Developing life skills:** provide opportunities for residents to slowly develop life skills: basic cooking, cleaning, self-care. This can help build motivation and confidence to pursue new opportunities.
12. **Co-locate buildings with employment:** co-locate temporary modular housing next to a social enterprise or other business, for instance an urban agriculture company or cafe that can employ residents.

Challenges:

- Some job training programs are coupled with “AA”, which can create anxiety for residents.
- Opportunities can feel overwhelming to residents, operators need to help them work up to it in baby steps.

Appendix A: wellbeing framework

Refined wellbeing principles table & wheel

Wellbeing principles summary table
<p>Guiding principles: These 'North star' principles summarize the priority aims for wellbeing in modular housing.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Dignity: Protect, honour and respect everyone. Provide the safe space residents need to find their voice, personal pride, and the courage to move forward. + Equity: Recognize systemic disparities. Find ways to include people with diverse stories and abilities.
<p>Core principle: This principle is at the centre of all others, and works as an enabler for all other principles.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Trust: Build trust – between residents, staff, and neighbouring communities – through transparency, integrity, and accountability for individual action.
<p>Foundational principles: These principles are supported by trust, and in turn enable the supporting principles.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Health: Provide holistic options to care for people's whole selves. Support physical health, mental health, and long-term wellbeing. + Culture & values: Connect decisions and all other aspects of people's lives to their own cultural background and spiritual principles. Provide opportunities and spaces for cultural connection, practice and learning. + Autonomy & self-determination: Nurture people's abilities to make decisions and define life on their own terms. + Stability: Provide permanent housing that is safe, affordable, stable, and respects individual tenant rights. + Safety: Make spaces and relationships safe. Eliminate violence, hold people who harm accountable, and ensure everyone can find the security they need to thrive.
<p>Supporting principles: These principles require the presence of the core principle, trust, as well as foundational principles.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Resilience: Create nurturing and stable environments that enable people to recover from crisis and challenging situations. + Supportive networks: Build places that strengthen social connections and feelings of belonging. Support each person's concept of family and community. + Meaning: Create opportunities and places that strengthen and cultivate people's sense of worth and value. + Healing: Provide spaces for people to take steps to move forward, to forgive one another when things happen, and to be flexible when things change. + Harm reduction: Address the broader social and systemic issues that intersect with substance

use, such as trauma and colonization. Embed, within harm reduction, traditional knowledge systems that see the spiritual world, the natural world, and humanity as inter-related.

