Session CS-27 Burnaby 2050: Innovations in Inclusive Official Community Plan Engagement

Presented by:

Erin Rennie RPP, MCIP, Senior Planner and Burnaby 2050 Project Manager, City of Burnaby

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Daylin Mantyka, Community Engagement Consultant/Principal, Urban Systems

Article by Alison McNeil, Retired PIBC member & PIBC Communications Committee Member

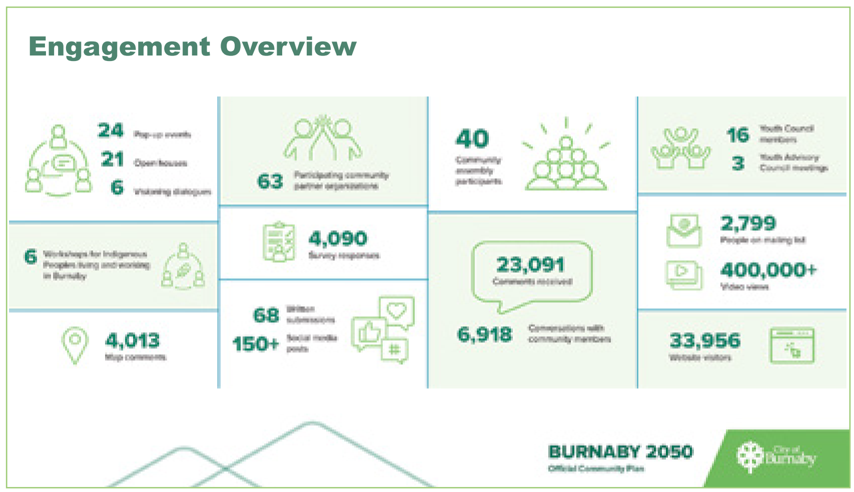
Despite appearing late in the conference program, this session was well worth waiting for. Given the legislative shift in recent years, it's heartening to see we're still talking about public participation in planning, not only giving it due care and attention, but as the speakers demonstrated, making it a force for community building and democracy.

Burnaby's 2050 OCP, this year's Gold winner of PIBC's award for Excellence in Policy Planning (Cities and Urban Areas), was adopted in December 2025 and replaces the 1998 OCP. With Burnaby's population projected to increase by 55 percent over the next 30 years, a robust engagement process was called for to shape the plan's vision, land-use and policy and implementation frameworks. The plan is well organized and readable, covers 142 pages plus maps and appendices, and is available on the City's website.

The OCP engagement process sought to significantly and inclusively reach residents and community partners. It took place over 4 years and was divided into five stages (surfacing-visioning- drafting-mapping-confirming). Overall, the sheer number and kinds of engagement events, tools and approaches are impressive, as shown by this summary graphic in the OCP. *See below.*

Inclusiveness was key and to maximize it, the team designed engagement strategies and approaches around the following four pillars:

1. Removing barriers to participation, including newcomers and those facing language barriers
2. Shifting power to under representative voices, including indigenous and youth participation
3. Designing for belonging, not just input
4. Meet people where they are at



< Welcoming attendees to the popular Trivia Night sponsored by CIMA+ B&A

> Attendees taking in the Penticton sunshine.

> PIBC Let's Chat booth where attendees chatted with Board members, picked up their Bingo Cards and learned about the Intelligent Inventory.

The three speakers outlined a great many activities, successes and key learnings from the process, as well as some significant challenges. Here are some highlights.

Building Interest and momentum at the outset

When asked "how did they get people to care about the planning process and participate?", the speakers noted that phase 1, the "surfacing" phase was largely educational and key to telling people what they were doing and why it matters. The focus was on getting the community excited and building communication networks to keep people informed of engagement opportunities and how their input was being used. All input received (23,000 comments) throughout was categorized into themes (no Ai used!) and included in "what we learned" reports at the end of each phase.

Meet People Where They Are At

To literally meet people where they are at, the team found mobile pop-ups at shopping malls and parks were effective, particularly when given the limited number of accessible venues that were available. Attending community partner meetings and events was also a key strategy since these groups could facilitate engagement of those they serve. They had over 60 community partners involved including non-profits, community groups, faith-based organizations and post-secondary institutions. The engagement team took a tailored approach to each group they were trying to reach.

Providing plain language information and easy but meaningful ways to provide input was also a key to success. "NOW, WOW, HOW" surveys were one example. These surveys asked people to identify how they see their city NOW, then suggest how it could be better (WOW) and finally, describe "HOW do we get there?" To allow people to confront the trade-offs involved when considering planning options, they used the "dot-mocracy" technique to narrow down priorities and solutions.

Design for belonging, not just input

The staff team realized that when people show up, they need to feel safe and valued. And having fun also helps! They put these ideas into action when hosting six major evening "visioning dialogue" events with food, music, as well as facilitated roundtable dialogues. These events proved popular as did other events, and they found themselves responding to last minute requests for additional events, prompting two pieces of advice – budget for overtime, and recruit broadly across the organization to address limits to staff capacity and reduce event fatigue. The City's internal OCP interdepartmental working group was important to keeping staff across the organization up to date in the OCP development, and involving them in the engagement process as subject matter experts, translators, facilitators at events and other roles.

Shifting power to under representative voices

Shifting from simple "input" to real "impact" was a key focus when engaging under-represented groups, and the goal was to involve them in actually shaping direction and having influence on the plan. Effective approaches used in this effort were the Youth Advisory Council, Community Assembly, Talking Circles with Indigenous people living in Burnaby and engaging host First Nations early and often. A notable related challenge was debates with internal departments regarding the need to collect demographic information from participants while balancing privacy protection concerns. Advice on this point was to build in time into the project schedule for dialogue and making your case (writing privacy impact assessments).

Removing barriers to participation

To remove language barriers, the team were able to work with the non-profit society S.U.C.C.E.S.S. as a community partner which was very effective. They also recruiting city staff to help translate at events as well as having OCP materials available in multiple languages.

Practical barriers were addressed by providing things like child minding and transit passes to allow easier access to all events, accessible venues geographically dispersed and multiple participation formats including in-person and online.

In addition to providing plain language guides to explain policy directions, the City found using "Personas" to show how policies could affect different audiences (e.g. indigenous people, families, businesses, youth) to be very effective.

Other Emerging Challenges – Planners take note!

Speakers flagged some emerging challenges to prepare for, including risks from AI, (e.g. survey bots), managing protest-driven participation and angry people due to some confusion with provincial housing policy changes and a decline in local media as places to seek coverage and promotion.

Conclusion: Big Investment – Long Lasting Benefits

It was clear that Burnaby's OCP public engagement process was a significant financial investment and a huge amount of work. It was obviously worth it due to the quality and diversity of input. Just as importantly, the City built social capital for the long term – which makes it all pay off not just for creating the plan, but for everything that comes after. In other words, connections and interest have been built by the City with residents and community partners, who are vital to successful implementation of the plan.

Finally, as one speaker put it, this is participatory democracy in action! Not only did the investment in the process serve Burnaby well into implementation phase but it also serves to strengthen democratic process; informed citizen engagement in local government decision making for the long term.

Session CS-26
12 Inspiring Bold and Transferable Planning, Housing & Transportation Innovations

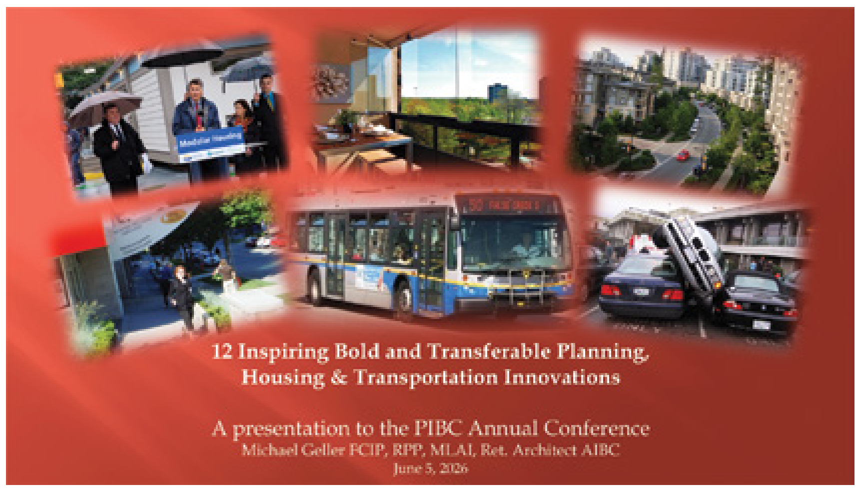
Presented by:
Michael Geller B.Arch, MAIBC, RPP, FCIP

Article by Benafshaw Dashti RPP, MCIP
PIBC Communications Committee Member

The breakout session titled "12 Inspiring Bold and Transferable Planning, Housing & Transportation Innovations" was presented by Michael Geller, a highly experienced planner and housing consultant with over six decades of work spanning the public (CHMC), institutions (SFU University), and private sectors.

His experience as an architect, planner, real estate developer, and adjunct professor includes new forms of housing, new housing tenures, innovative approaches to financing public transit and sustainable buildings, and creative approaches to the use of modular housing.

Dr. Edward de Bono has been Geller's inspiration for lateral thinking and comprehensive thinking. The session provided a



< Attendees taking in the beautiful view during the Awards Gala.

> Councillor Tim Lezard and Anona Fawn Kampe from the syilx Indian Band with the opening conference welcome.

> Exhibitors connecting with attendees during the conference.

compelling overview of practical housing and transportation innovations that are highly transferable to communities across British Columbia. A key theme emphasized by Mr. Geller was that many effective solutions already exist—the challenge is applying them broadly and adapting them to local contexts.

The session examined **12 planning, housing, and transportation innovations** that Geller has helped develop or implement. Topics include:

- New housing forms and building types.
- Alternative housing tenure models
- Innovative transit financing approaches
- Financing strategies for sustainable buildings
- Creative applications of modular and prefabricated housing
- Practical ideas that can be adapted by both large urban centers and smaller communities throughout British Columbia

Expanding Housing Choice

One of the most significant themes is the need to diversify housing options. For decades, many communities have relied heavily on a binary choice between detached single-family homes and large apartment buildings. Today's housing needs call for a broader spectrum.

Innovations such as modular housing, secondary suites, laneway homes, duplexes, fourplexes, and townhouses—often described as "missing-middle housing"—offer ways to increase housing supply while maintaining the character of existing neighborhoods. These forms of housing can be integrated into established communities with modest changes to infrastructure and urban form.

A modular housing option was explored as an effect to reduce homelessness in Vancouver until it became Geller's last project is an affordable manufactured home park in Nanaimo.

Alternative types of housing as mentioned in the presentation:

- Small lot detached housing
- Zero lot line housing
- Fee-simple rowhouses
- Duplex versus semi-detached.
- Basement suites
- Small apartment buildings
- Stacked townhouses
- Lock-off suites.
- Convertible suites
- Floating homes
- Laneway apartments

Exploring New Models of Ownership

Affordability challenges have also encouraged exploration of alternative housing tenure models. Community land trusts, leasehold housing, and cooperative housing arrangements offer ways to separate the cost of land from the cost of housing, reducing barriers to entry for residents.

These approaches shift the focus from housing as a speculative asset toward housing as a long-term community resource. By preserving affordability over time, they can create stable housing opportunities for future generations rather than only providing short-term relief.

Building Faster Through Innovation

The growing interest in modular and prefabricated housing reflects a desire to accelerate housing delivery while maintaining quality.

Unlike conventional construction, modular housing is manufactured in controlled factory settings before being assembled on-site. This approach can shorten construction schedules, reduce waste, and improve cost certainty. It is particularly valuable for smaller communities, remote regions, and projects requiring rapid

Stacked Townhouses
Source: https://newimage.com/seattle/townhomes/

deployment, such as workforce housing or supportive housing developments.

As labor shortages and construction costs continue to affect the housing sector, modular approaches are becoming an increasingly important part of the solution.

Aligning Growth with Transportation

Housing and transportation are deeply interconnected. Communities that concentrate growth around transit investments can create more efficient, sustainable, and livable urban environments. Geller shared his experience in this area when he worked for CMHC at False Creek South Shore where they introduced the development cost levy to improve transit at False Creek prior to the first resident moving into the area. Political involvement was mentioned as a way to support this crucial factor in everyone's livelihood and contributing towards a sustainable community.

Transit-oriented development encourages higher-density housing near transit stations, reducing dependence on private automobiles while supporting public transportation systems. Residents benefit from improved mobility, shorter commutes, and better access to jobs and services.

This approach also makes more efficient use of public infrastructure investments, ensuring that transportation improvements support broader community development goals.

Rethinking How Infrastructure Is Financed

Innovation is not limited to physical development. Financing mechanisms can be equally transformative.

One promising concept is value capture financing, which recognizes that public investments in transit and infrastructure often increase nearby land values. A portion of that increased value can be directed toward funding the infrastructure itself through development contributions, special assessments, or other mechanisms. Geller mentions DCCs as part of False Creek Development to bring transit to the people.

By linking growth-related benefits to infrastructure funding, communities can create more sustainable financial models while reducing pressure on general taxpayers.

Advancing Sustainability

Environmental performance has become a central consideration in modern planning. Incentives for energy-efficient buildings, green construction practices, and sustainable neighborhood design can reduce long-term operating costs while helping communities meet climate objectives.

Rather than treating sustainability as a separate goal, many successful projects integrate environmental performance directly into housing and transportation planning. This creates developments that are not only greener but also more economically resilient over the long term.

Lessons for Communities of Every Size

The most important takeaway is that innovation does not require a community to be large or wealthy. Many of these ideas—secondary suites, modular housing, alternative ownership structures, transit-oriented planning, and sustainable building incentives—can be adapted to local conditions and implemented incrementally.

The challenges facing British Columbia are significant, but the experience of past decades demonstrates that practical, creative solutions already exist. The task now is not simply to invent new ideas, but to apply proven innovations more broadly and more boldly.

As communities continue to search for ways to provide housing, improve mobility, and enhance quality of life, these transferable innovations offer a roadmap for building more inclusive, affordable, and sustainable places to live.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Incremental density is a practical solution
- Alternative ownership improves long-term affordability
- Modular housing supports faster delivery
- Transit integration is critical for sustainable growth
- These ideas are adaptable across communities

Overall, the session highlighted that practical, proven solutions are available today and can guide future housing development across British Columbia. Another great session by Michael Geller that shared numerous ideas that can be discussed among the planning world to bring to reality; the session fit this year's theme well – Bold Actions!

< View from the District Wine Village in nearby Oliver, part of the optional social activity.

< The Canadian Institute of Planners joined us onsite and connected with attendees.

^ PIBC staff and conference volunteer welcomed attendees to the Welcome Reception.

Session CS-12 Industrial Lands – Planning Places and Building Spaces for Economic Growth

Presented by:
Robert Miles RPP, MCIP, Long Range Planning Manager, City of Kelowna

Roy Nuriel, Director of City Planning City of Vernon

Jeff Hudson, Principal / Founder HM Commercial Realty

Rob Veg, Manager of Planning City of Cranbrook

Darren Brewer, Economic Development Officer City of Cranbrook

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By Eric Aderneck RPP, MCIP, Industrial Lands Program Manager, City of Maple Ridge and moderator for this session.

INDUSTRIAL LANDS AND MEGA PROJECTS – THE FOLLOW UP

Industrial lands and mega projects are no longer niche planning topics—they're central to economic resiliency, trade diversification, infrastructure planning, and community well being. Whether it's the Okanagan making room for jobs, the Kootenays attracting investment, or the northwest managing billion dollar projects, the message is the same: proactive planning is essential.

About Industrial Lands and Uses

Industrial lands may not be flashy but they are crucial, while mega projects get more profile. They represent primary and secondary industries, diverse businesses, and connect to supply chains that keep our communities and country running, with direct and indirect economic, employment, and taxation benefits.

Industrial comprises a wide spectrum of uses and intensities, ranging from heavy to light, and traditional to modern. Everything from large-format transportation, distribution, and manu¬facturing facilities to local-serving pro¬ducers, contractors, and suppliers, along with natural resources and advanced technologies.

Renewed efforts to grow the provincial economy, diversify Canada's trade, process natural resources, and raise volumes through gateway ports requires enhanced supply chain logistics, transportation infrastructure, and industrial lands.

Planning Places and Building Spaces for Economic Growth

The Okanagan region's industrial market experienced a surge in building activity over the 2020-2024 period. Key drivers include the UBC Okanagan campus, the Kelowna International Airport, and other major public and private sector employers.

Recent light industrial projects are accommodating traditional users (manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, sub-trade/contractors, storage facilities, and modular home manufacturers), modern users (aerospace at the airport, agri-industrial for local fruit production), and emerging sectors (data and technology centres, food production / cloud kitchens, film production and studio space, last mile distribution / e-commerce).

Kelowna is entering a sustained period of employment growth with industrial land constraints a looming challenge. Complementing initiatives for housing, long-term planning for employment uses is needed to avoid longer commutes, infrastructure strain, employer flight, and weakened economic resiliency.

While fast-growing cities with a constrained land base can densify residential uses, meeting industrial needs is especially challenging. Bringing new industrial land to market can be difficult given topography, the Agricultural Land Reserve, servicing complexity, and public concerns. Case studies illustrate long timelines, negotiated infrastructure agreements, and competing residential and commercial pressures that test industrial land supplies.

Vernon's housing development is often the focus, yet maintaining an adequate supply of industrial and employment lands

< Over 100 speakers shared their knowledge and expertise at this year's conference.

> Thank you to all #PIBC2026 volunteers (some pictured here).

> A special thank you to #PIBC2026 conference partners & supporters.

is equally important for continued prosperity. Ensuring serviced, development-ready sites is essential to attracting businesses, investments, and jobs.

Regional collaboration is even more important as communities share infrastructure, workforce, and investment opportunities, through coordinated planning, strong land use policies, and strategic economic development initiatives.

Cranbrook is the hub of the East Kootenay region. The Kootenay / Columbia Basin generates billions in economic activity through natural resource development, including mining, forestry, and energy production, and continues to provide a strong foundation for ongoing investment.

Over the past decade, the City has made targeted efforts to better understand its opportunity base, including land availability, sector strengths, and emerging opportunities, while aligning policy and regulatory frameworks to support further growth.

Cranbrook's value proposition is rooted in its location along established transportation corridors. Industrial land prices are less than one-tenth of those in the Metro Vancouver region, offering cost certainty and room for expansion. The Canadian Rockies International Airport, combined with available industrial land and strategic location, creates a competitive platform for logistics, defense spending, manufacturing, and supply chain–oriented industries.

Session CS-05 Mega Projects Part 2: Planning for Industrial Lands, Natural Resources, and Energy Projects in Northwest BC

Presented by:
Krysten Hogan RPP, MCIP, **Planning Manager District of Kitimat**

Myfannwy Pope RPP, MCIP, **Director of Planning & Development Services, City of Prince Rupert**

David Block RPP, MCIP, **Director of Development Services, City of Terrace**

By Eric Aderneck RPP, MCIP, **Industrial Lands Program Manager, City of Maple Ridge and moderator for this session.**

Following a decade of port expansion in Prince Rupert, Rio Tinto modernization and LNG projects in Kitimat, and institutional investments in Terrace, the region is now a national focus with four of the Prime Minister's Major Projects Office investments. These provincial and national scale initiatives have land use planning implications for the host communities.

Kitimat was created in the 1950s based on the Garden City concept to support the construction of a new aluminum smelter, with a clear intent: 'The purpose of Kitimat is in the industrial success of the plant.' Between the 1950s and the 1980s the community experienced a 'boom', followed by a 'bust' when two major employers closed, and more recently growth associated with the Liquid Natural Gas export facilities.

Rio Tinto, powered by the Kemano hydroelectric dam, is still the main employer, with roughly 1,100 direct employees and 400 contractors. The new LNG Canada export facility is the largest in Canada, with a total private investment of $24 billion, started production in 2025 and employs 300 through ongoing operations. Proposed LNG Canada Phase 2 would double capacity and make it one of the largest facilities in the world.

Cedar LNG is the first Indigenous majority-owned LNG project globally. Construction is underway, with LNG exports to start in 2028. The $4 billion investment will provide long-term revenue for Haisla Nation.

From these new projects, community benefits include significant municipal tax revenue for Kitimat, and the population is now increasing after almost thirty years of decline. LNG Canada has invested heavily in the community and region: housing, health care, social services, childcare, infrastructure, community events, and indigenous partnerships.

The 'not so good' side of rapid growth includes: 'work camp' and 'boom and bust' community dynamics, rentals shortages, contractors serving the major industry rather than local residents, land speculation, long-term uncertainty, and cumulative

environment and health impacts.

Prince Rupert is experiencing an influx of gateway port investments and, while capitalizing on that growth, sees broad and complex impacts. These projects can and have affected environmental and food systems, and placed pressure on services like healthcare, housing, and infrastructure. While they are often described as job generators, the major employers have pulled from the local workforce rather than adding new workers, leaving businesses in the community short-staffed.

Planning for projects is essential to minimizing impacts and leveraging benefits. Start with a strong understanding of the community's baseline and capacity: housing stock, service levels, and infrastructure conditions, with realistic estimates of how much additional pressure the community can absorb. From there, local governments need to align and update bylaws, policies, and development requirements to deliver what the community needs, i.e. housing, infrastructure, or services.

Alongside these tools, Prince Rupert has demonstrated how communities can advance social licence, partnerships with First Nations, and regional collaboration. The City has worked strategically to support both industrial lands and major projects through their municipally-owned corporation Legacy Inc, an innovative approach to directly benefit from economic activity to underwrite community infrastructure investment.

Terrace is at the crossroads of major resource projects in northwest BC. As a local government and community, Terrace has no direct benefits from taxation or revenues as the projects are outside the city limits. The impacts however are substantial. While the city is poised to attract and support industry and has excellent lands in the Skeena Industrial Development Park, it lacks revenues to fund infrastructure and amenities for its residents. Funding from major projects is therefore essential to support local communities.

The **Resource Benefits Alliance (RBA)** agreement with BC provides $250 million over five years to local governments across the northwest. Historically, resource development revenues left northern and rural communities while financing provincial and federal budgets. The 2024 RBA agreement supports the renewal or replacement of local capital assets and construction of infrastructure.

RBA funding is critical for Terrace in completing capital works projects, like the reconstruction of Lakelse Avenue contributing to downtown revitalization, and supporting a community challenged by increasing social issues by funding Community Safety Officers. In Kitimat, the RBA has funded a water treatment plan, public safety building, and upgrades and repairs to the ice rink and aquatic centre. In Prince Rupert, projects include the design and construction of a new water treatment plant.

Lessons Learned

Several themes emerged across communities:

- **Start early:** Updating policies, regulations, and community vision documents before major projects arrive is critical.
- **Define success:** Communities need clear metrics to understand when growth is beneficial and when it becomes unsustainable.
- **Plan for indirect impacts:** Beyond major projects, pressures extend to light and medium industrial areas and rural residential lands.
- **Recognize land constraints:** Many communities have less usable industrial land than they assume, making long range planning essential.
- **Use innovative tools:** Municipalities can secure community benefits through mechanisms such as density bonusing, temporary work camp contributions to social housing, and converting short term facilities into permanent amenities.

The challenge ahead is ensuring communities have the tools—and the land—to shape what comes next.

Session CS-09 Regional Collaboration for Affordable Housing

Presented by:
Matt Thomson, Senior Planner
Sunshine Coast Regional District

Mariah VanZerr RPP, MCIP,
Regional Planning Manager,
Regional District of Central Okanagan

Diana Jeliazkova, Regional Planner,
Metro Vancouver Regional District

Article by Alison McNeil, Retired PIBC member

Introduction

In this session, speakers demonstrated how regional districts are using established tools and approaches to better support shared housing goals within their regions, while also creating new ones to advance collaborative action.

Small – Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD)

Despite not having a regional housing service, Senior Planner Matt Thomson described SCRD's long history of members working together to focus on affordable housing. In 2015, SCRD's incorporated the Sunshine Coast Affordable Housing Society (SCAHS) and among its successes, last year it completed the first rural non-market housing project in the region, in Pender Harbour.

< The Ministry of Housing & Municipal Affairs connected with attendees on its Building Permit Hub

< Attendees engaging with exhibitors

The creation of a Regional Housing Coordinator (RHC) position has been central to advancing collaboration efforts. First hired in 2022 and on contract with the SCAHS, this position is funded using the tax on short term rentals (MRDT funds).

As described, the Regional Housing Coordinator role is clearly a very busy one. They support the regional Housing Action Table and three working groups, which are focused on homelessness, seniors housing and housing for working-age adults and families. They also share data and land studies with Regional District members, including information on emerging housing needs and gaps to supplement Municipal Housing Needs Reports. Another valuable role is assisting with matching land with non-profit societies and ensuring that when there are funding calls, there's awareness, alignment and capacity locally.

In addition to fostering regional collaboration, SCRD has made housing and climate the key pillars in the update of OCP for rural areas. Currently in the 5 electoral areas there are 7 OCPs (between 8 and 30 years old), 110 land uses, 2 zoning bylaws and a lot of overlap. The challenge is to manage the impacts of a rural development pattern and find opportunities for housing delivery that considers efficient servicing and affordability.

Medium – Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO)

RDCO Regional Planning Manager, Mariah VanZerr described a similar context to that of SCRD – they are also a fast-growing region (one of the fastest in Canada) with low housing affordability. Regionally, they need the right amount of housing, of the right type, in the right place. How then, could the RDCO help member local governments "on-board" more housing? Their answer is to facilitate a coordinated approach to housing and growth in the region, as well as focus on housing in the electoral areas.

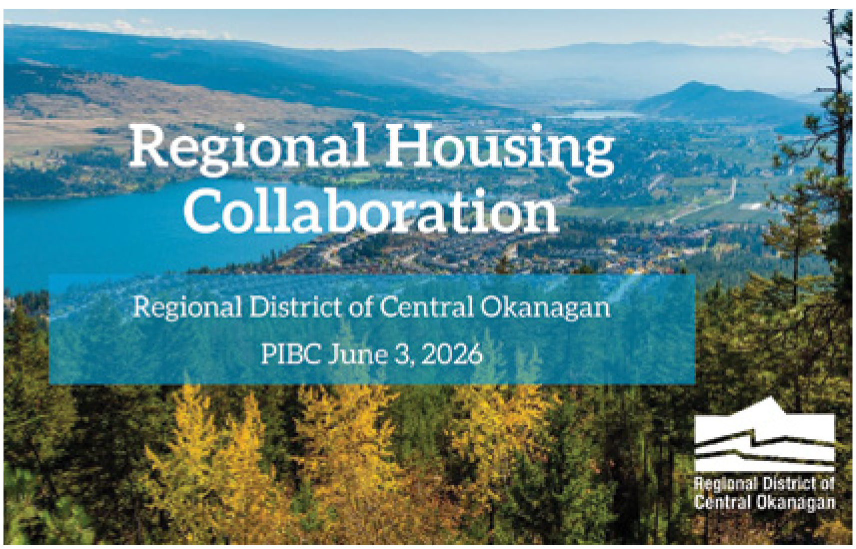
A clearer picture of the situation has been provided by a Regional Housing Needs Summary. Based on a review of all member Housing Needs Reports, it provides snapshots of housing unit numbers and types needed regionally.

Convening planners from around the region at a "Regional Housing Planning Lab", has also been a successful approach. The first event of this kind planners considered the results of the regional Summary and identify opportunities for action. These ideas include sharing best practices and lessons learned across member local governments, and speaking with one voice when advocating for infrastructure funding needed to support new housing. Planners also identified tangible, practical ways the RDCO can usefully "lean into the housing space" to support their members, such as helping to increase consistency and alignment in their housing regulations, costs and fees, to provide more clarity and efficiency in the development process. This effort is currently underway in relation to environmental development permit areas and assessments.

As RDCO launches an update to their Regional Growth Strategy, there is support for a future development of a Regional Housing Strategy following the next regional Housing Needs Reports summary.

Large – Metro Vancouver Regional District (MVRD)

Regional planner Diana Jeliakova outlined how MetroVancouver has played a successful role in regional collaboration for affordable housing in two major ways; direct provision and through regional



< Marla Zucht RPP, MCIP (Awards Committee Member) introducing this year's award winners

< Attendees enjoying great food and company at the #PIBC2026 Welcome Reception.

policy coordination.

The MVRD Housing Corporation was established in 1974, today directly provides affordable rental housing across 50 sites to 10,000 residents, primarily families with low to moderate incomes. It is a non-profit that was described as operating at no cost to the taxpayer and takes a sustainable mixed-income approach to affordable housing provision.

Through regional policy coordination, the 2023 Regional Growth Strategy "Metro 2050" includes a new distinct housing goal to provide "diverse and affordable housing choices" in the region. The RGS provides specific agreed to actions, policies and targets, including a target of 15 percent affordable new rental housing near transit. Housing 2050 is currently under development and will be an actional roadmap for how the region will work together to increase the supply of affordable rental housing. As part of this process, staff have completed a Regional Housing Needs Report using municipal HNRs, as well as an Affordable Housing Gap Analysis with a detailed affordable rental estimate to help focus on the part of the system that the private market cannot deliver. Both these reports are available on MV's website.

MetroVancouver has also been effective at facilitating collaboration by convening advisory and working groups comprised of like staff (including planners) from its members to identify needs, share expertise and best practices. These inform the development of targeted new tools including "What Works" and best practice guides and online housing policy library providing easy access to the latest policies across the region. In 2024, they developed a regional model for inclusionary zoning to help create consistency across the region which included a calculator tool, to help planners consider and compare policy options.

Conclusion

In conclusion, at this session we were reminded that regional districts can be seen as a "coalition of the willing" where actions are voluntary but the advantages of collaboration are clear in addressing challenges that cross municipal and rural boundaries. The obvious challenge is that regions are comprised of a diverse range of communities with distinct priorities and it is not always easy to align or attain political buy-in. As noted during the question-and-answer period, agreeing on definitions of "affordable" is important for consistency and measurement.

From these three excellent presentations, it was clear that Regional Districts of all sizes can take action by building on established collaborative structures, strategies, and tools. To further collaboration, all three regional districts have tapped into their memberships wants and needs for regional data, analysis and planning, to create more affordable housing options.

Session C S-13 CACs and Affordable Housing – a Case Study of Rent to Own and Affordable Home Ownership Programs in the City of North Vancouver

Presented by:
Steven Petersson MA(P), RPP, MCIP, MLA

Article by Benafshaw Dashti RPP, MCIP
PIBC Communications Committee Member

This session explored how municipalities can use Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) and other tools to create pathways into homeownership for middle-income households who are increasingly priced out of the housing market. The case study focused on the City of North Vancouver's and Cascadia Green Development's efforts to move beyond the traditional affordable-rental model and investigate affordable ownership and rent-to-own opportunities. CACs are commonly generated through rezonings and density increases, allowing municipalities to secure public benefits such as affordable housing.

The presentation emphasized a growing policy challenge: many households earn too much to qualify for social housing but too little to purchase market housing. This "missing middle" group has become a significant concern in high-cost regions such as Metro Vancouver. North Vancouver's Housing Action Plan specifically identifies "Attainable

Homeownership" as a strategic objective alongside affordable rental housing.

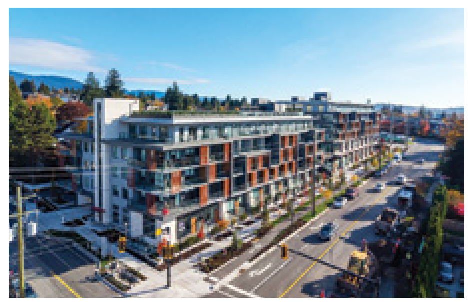
What are CACs?

Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) are in-kind, or cash contributions provided by property developers when municipal council grants development rights through the rezoning process. CACs address the increased demand by adding and expanding municipal facilities created as an impact from higher density rezonings resulting in new residents and employees in the area.

The case study discussed was INNOVA developed by Cascadia Green Development.

The Model – INNOVA is located in the City of North Vancouver and will consist of 168 residential homes and about 30,000 sq ft of commercial space. Nine of the homes will be part of an Affordable Home Ownership Program (AHOP) and eight of the homes will be part of a Rent-To-Own (RTO) program that is designed to benefit the individual, providing an opportunity for new home buyers to allocate their rent towards the down-payment of their future home. The Rent-To-Own program is prioritized for first responders or people who live or work in the City of North Vancouver. The overall price of the home will be set at this time and will not fluctuate with the market value of the property – key factor. Once moved in, they will pay market-rate rent on their assigned home for 24 months. At the end of the term, the full amount of the rent paid, in addition to the initial contribution, will be credited towards their final down payments. Or you an walk away, and the money you've paid monthly becomes, in essence, rent you've paid as if it were any other rental unit. By doing so, you do not need to save for a large down payment before purchasing and you can still change your mind later.[1] An interesting model towards home ownership.

"High down payment costs remain a significant barrier to homeownership, particularly for young people in Metro Vancouver," said Chief Economist for the British Columbia Real



INNOVA, Moodyville, North Vancouver
Source: Cascadia Green Development

< Thank you to City of Penticton for bringing fun treats & giveaways.

< Participants enjoying Trivia Night

> Attendees connecting during the conference

Estate Association, Brendon Ogmundson. "Innovative, private sector-driven solutions like the Homeownership Accelerator Program can play an important role breaking down these barriers and sustaining the housing development cycle amid today's economic uncertainties."[2]

Some Key Messages

1. **Affordable Housing Is More Than Rental Housing**

A central theme of the presentation was that municipal housing strategies have traditionally focused on rental housing, while opportunities for ownership have steadily declined.

The session argued that communities need a full housing continuum that includes:

- Rental housing
- Mid-market rental housing
- Rent-to-own programs.
- Shared-equity ownership models
- Permanently affordable ownership housing

The City of North Vancouver has recognized this broader housing continuum in its housing policies and planning framework.[3]

2. **CACs Can Be Used Creatively**

[4] Rather than directing all CAC value toward traditional amenities or rental housing, municipalities can potentially leverage CACs to:

- Reduce land costs for affordable ownership projects.
- Support down-payment assistance programs.
- Fund shared-equity structures
- Create permanently affordable ownership units through resale restrictions.
- Enable rent-to-own pilot programs.

The presentation highlighted how land value generated through rezoning can be redirected toward long-term housing affordability objectives.

3. **Rent-to-Own as a Bridge to Ownership**

A major focus was the rent-to-own model. Under a typical rent-to-own structure:

- Residents rent a unit for a defined period.
- A portion of monthly payments may be credited toward future ownership.
- Buyers gain time to improve credit, increase savings, and qualify for financing.
- Purchase prices may be fixed or partially protected from market escalation.

The model addresses one of the largest barriers in Metro Vancouver: accumulating a sufficient down payment while paying high rents. Similar private-sector examples have emerged on the North Shore in recent years, demonstrating growing interest in the concept.[5]

Policy and Financial Challenges Discussed

1. **Maintaining Affordability Over Time**

One of the most prominent issues raised was how municipalities can ensure public investment remains affordable for future generations.

Options discussed included:

- Shared-equity agreements
- Resale price controls
- Housing agreements on title
- Community land trust models

Without such mechanisms, publicly subsidized ownership units can quickly revert to market prices, eliminating the long-term public benefit.

2. **Balancing Rental and Ownership Priorities**

The session acknowledged that municipalities face difficult choices when allocating limited housing resources.

Questions included:

- Should CACs prioritize affordable rentals?
- Should some funds be allocated to ownership opportunities?
- How can cities support workforce retention through attainable ownership?
- What mix of rental and ownership best serves community needs?

These trade-offs are becoming increasingly relevant as many households remain permanently locked out of ownership despite stable employment and moderate incomes.

Summary

The session's central conclusion was that affordable homeownership should be viewed as a legitimate component of municipal housing policy rather than an alternative to affordable rental housing. By leveraging CACs and other municipal tools, cities may be able to create ownership opportunities for households who are currently underserved by both the rental and ownership markets.

The City of North Vancouver's experience illustrates how local governments can experiment with new models that bridge the gap between renting and owning while maintaining long-term affordability objectives[6]. We need more practical examples of such successes.

Participants enjoying the Summerland mobile workshop.

[1] REW.CA – Rent-to-own your home at Innova by Cascadia Green Development in North Vancouver, April 21, 2025
[2] Anthemproperties.com
[3] City of North Vancouver Housing Action Plan
[4] City of Vancouver, CACs
[5] REW.CA
[6] Housing Action Plan, City of North Vancouver