

A Roof for Everyone Workshop (Feb. 26, 2022)

Highlights from Discussion Groups

Group 1

Question:

- Could you afford the home you currently live in if you moved here today?
- What do you think this means for the nature of our community?
 - Most people wouldn't be able to live in their neighbourhood today, if they hadn't settled here earlier. If they are renters and are forced to move, they would have to move to a less expensive neighborhood.
 - Someone would have to die, for the next generation to move in.
 - In Greater Victoria, there are 13 municipalities, and rules are different everywhere. Sometimes, people need to break the rules to have a place to live.
 - More people move to BC every year. We're not keeping up with the pace of housing needs.
 - Now is a great time to ask municipal councils what they're doing to improve the housing situation. Municipal elections are coming up this fall.

Group 2

Question:

What do you think a healthy inclusive neighbourhood would look like?

- What do you see?
- What would it feel like?
 - Characteristics of a healthy, inclusive neighborhood: within walking distance of parks, transit, shopping, and other amenities; diversity (cultures, ages, occupations) among residents); access to green space.
 - We want to see green roofs on top of taller buildings, common areas (eg. squares or plazas with buildings around them).
 - We want a sense of community (people helping each other, joint activities).

This group also discussed question no. 6 (owners vs. renters).

- Renters don't always take good care of the property; on the other hand, some landlords are more interested in profit than in maintaining the property.

Group 3

Question:

- When you think about people who experience homelessness, what thoughts and feelings do you have?
- What shaped these feelings?
- Do you know anyone who has experienced homelessness?

- Feelings towards people experiencing homelessness range from blame (“it’s their fault they’re homeless”) to compassion and even despair.
- The group shared stories of personal contacts with the homeless.
- A simple job loss, or a serious medical condition, can lead to homelessness.
- Influx of refugees these past years: we’re setting them up for failure, if they can’t find a place to live.
- Members of the group shared their experience as landlords. Renters now have to present entire bios of themselves on-line to get an apartment: “Please rent to me!”

Group 4

Question:

– How do you feel about affordable/ social/ supportive housing in your neighbourhood?

–Why do you think these kinds of housing often meet with neighbourhood opposition?

(According to BC Housing definitions, “Affordable housing” means housing costs do not exceed 30% of a median household’s gross income; “Social housing” = a housing development that the government or a non-profit housing partner owns and operates; “Supportive housing” = a type of housing that provides on-site supports and services to residents who cannot live independently.)

- Density needs to be reallocated, spread around a bit to more peripheral areas.
- Sometimes, social housing has an environmental impact (eg. loss of Gary Oak meadows). We need to achieve “social objectives” without negatively impacting the environment.
- What is affordable housing? Sometimes, what is presented as “affordable” is not necessarily affordable by the CMHC formula (30% of a median household’s gross income).
- There needs to be better monitoring of “social housing” after the fact (rents, housing agreements etc.).
- We need to learn how to live together by accepting differences.

Group 5

Question:

– What do you think needs to happen to create more affordable housing for families in your neighborhood?

– How do you see yourself contributing to these changes?

- We would not be able to afford the housing we’re living in today, if we were just arriving in town.
- Multiple forms of housing (up to 4 storeys) are okay in single-family neighborhoods.
- We support the conversion of larger homes into triplexes or four-plexes.
- We support multi-generational housing. This is the norm in many cultures.

- Landlords who own a second house should charge lower than market rent. This is of course a personal decision.
- People who oppose developments speak for themselves, not for the public. Unfortunately, private interests are often more vocal than public interest.

Group 6

Question:

2016 statistics show that 30% of Saanich residents were renters then, and that the majority of those under age 44 were renters. We know that the percentage of renters has increased. (In the City of Victoria, it's 61% renters.)

- Does the percentage of renters or owners surprise you?
 - If you're a renter, have you experienced discrimination simply on the basis that you're a renter?
 - What are your thoughts and perception of people who rent and those who own their homes?
 - What has influenced your image of a renter or a homeowner?
 - Does it make a difference to you whether your neighbours rent or own their homes?
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- Respect between renter and landlord needs to be mutual. The renter is in a position of inferiority in relation to the landlord.
 - Some landlords do have to deal with bad tenants. Some tenants also have to deal with landlords who want to get as much money as possible while doing as little as possible.
 - Co-housing (an alternative to owning or renting) is a viable option.
 - Housing is a human right, not just a commodity or a source of income.
 - Discrimination against renters in strata housing: they have no say on strata matters, while non-resident owners do. Owners often want to restrict the number of units that can be rented out in the building. Renters are perceived as not being there for the long haul, even though some remain in the same unit for decades.
 - Examples (both historical and current) of social housing from other countries
 - Intergenerational housing options: matching senior landlords with younger renters could be beneficial to both parties.