



Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation  
Centre pour les droits à l'égalité au logement

July 6, 2022

Councillor Rebecca Bligh  
Chair, Standing Committee on City Finance and Services  
Vancouver City Council  
Council Chamber, Third Floor, City Hall

Dear Members of the Standing Committee on City Finance and Services

**Re: Vancouver Plan: A long range plan to guide growth and change**

On behalf of the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA), I am writing to voice our support for the Vancouver Plan, which is being presented to the Standing Committee on City Finance and Services for approval. We are Canada's leading non-profit organization working to advance the right to adequate housing. We do this by providing free services to renters facing evictions and human rights violations to remain housed, by providing education and training about housing rights across Canada, and by advancing rights-based housing policy through research and policy advocacy.

Vancouver's latest Housing Needs Report underscores the severity of the city's housing affordability crisis with 86,000 households currently in housing need, meaning they live in housing that is unaffordable, unsuitable, or inadequate.<sup>1</sup> This number is set to increase by over 50% in the next 10 years.<sup>2</sup> These households disproportionately come from equity-denied groups and are at increased risk of housing insecurity, displacement, and homelessness. The evidence is clear that maintaining the status quo will not meet the urgent housing needs of Vancouver's diverse residents.

The finalized Vancouver Plan, which represents the culmination of a lengthy consultative process, provides a new and coherent vision for the City's land use strategy and growth, with the potential to meaningfully address the Vancouver's housing affordability crisis. While the Plan provides strong directions for the city's growth, it must be followed up with urgent policy and planning reforms for its effective implementation.

CERA commends the Vancouver Plan's commitment to an equity-based approach to growth, prioritizing investments in diverse and affordable forms of housing in neighbourhoods with a low density of renters and high availability of services, while investing in stronger services and infrastructure in areas with a high concentration of renters. This will be an effective way to balance the objectives of increasing supply of housing, while maintaining and preserving the existing affordable housing stock through reinvestment and renewal, and critically, protecting renters from displacement. In this way, the Vancouver Plan provides a valuable roadmap for supporting Vancouver's diverse residents to access housing that is affordable, habitable, and near the services and resources required for a dignified life, in line with the

---

<sup>1</sup> [City of Vancouver - Housing Needs Report - April 2022](#), p50.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

principles of the right to housing. As the City moves forward with implementation of the Plan, we urge it to draw on and expand the baseline renter protections established under the Broadway Plan to all impacted neighbourhoods. This includes the right of first refusal, temporary financial support while in interim housing and increased transparency and communication with renters before and during redevelopment.

CERA is also encouraged by the Vancouver Plan's commitment to increase supply of affordable purpose-built rentals as well as non-market, deeply affordable housing options across all neighbourhoods. Increasing supply of both market and non-market affordable rental options will be essential to meeting the housing needs of renters living on low incomes. We urge the City to consider how it can most effectively reform its planning and land use policies to facilitate the construction of deeply affordable housing that remains affordable in perpetuity and prevents displacement of exiting renters. Drawing on examples from other municipalities, this could include providing increased density and other incentives for non-profit housing providers guaranteeing affordability in perpetuity.<sup>3</sup>

In its Neighbourhood Directions, the Vancouver Plan sets the critical goal of ending single family zoning by allowing ground-oriented multiplex dwellings in all neighbourhoods. While CERA believes that the Plan falls short in its intensification goals in these 'multiplex neighbourhoods', which continue to restrict low-rise apartment buildings to the areas outlined in the Secured Rental Policy, we recognize that the Plan takes an important step in signalling the City's commitment to end exclusionary zoning. We look to the City and the incoming Council to take decisive steps to reform Vancouver's zoning bylaws in line with the neighbourhood directions outlined in the Plan.

Furthermore, Council has demonstrated its commitment to meaningful engagement with all stakeholders in the drafting and review of the Vancouver Plan. Going forward, continued meaningful engagement with the full range of stakeholders impacted by the Plan will help the City to effectively achieve its objectives and targets, and adapt the Plan based on stakeholder feedback when required. In this vein, CERA encourages the City to establish an independent accountability mechanism to oversee the implementation of the commitments made under this Plan, and to monitor and address residents' grievances around renter protections and other measures. These efforts will be strengthened through the consistent collection of disaggregated data to monitor progress in the creation of new affordable units and the enforcement of property standards, and to capture the impact of the Vancouver Plan on the city's residents.

Finally, CERA urges Council to go further in recognizing housing as a human right. The right to housing is an important precondition for the enjoyment of other rights including the right to life, work, health, and education. As such, progress in implementing the right to housing will also contribute to the advancement of the Plan's other economic, social and cultural goals. Notably, many of the principles of the right to housing are already included in and advanced through the Plan. A recognition of housing as a human right will further signal the City's commitment to the meaningful implementation of all dimensions of the Vancouver Plan.

---

<sup>3</sup> As is being done in the City of Victoria, BC: <https://storeys.com/city-of-victoria-adopts-historic-process-accelerate-creation-affordable-housing/>

We look forward to providing more of our housing expertise and welcome further discussions with the City to ensure its housing initiatives are effective and rights-based.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B. Shadpour". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bahar Shadpour

Director of Policy and Communications  
Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA)

192 Spadina Avenue, Suite 427  
Toronto, ON M5T 2C7  
Tel: 416-944-0087 | 1-800-263-1139  
Email: [cera@equalityrights.org](mailto:cera@equalityrights.org)  
Website: [www.equalityrights.org](http://www.equalityrights.org)