

Langley LIP Housing Forum

Forum Summary

On March 10, 2023, the Langley LIP hosted a forum on housing. The event was organized by the LIP Project Team and was moderated by Jody Johnson of PEERs.

44 individuals representing 21 agencies and institutions attended. Amongst attendees were local dignitaries; City of Langley Councillor Delaney Mack, City of Langley Councillor Rosemary Wallace and Langley Township Councillor Tim Baille and MLA Megan Dykeman.

Agencies and institutions represented:

1. City of Langley
2. Inclusion Langley Society
3. ISSofBC
4. Langley Community Services Society
5. Langley School District
6. Langley Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) SD #35
7. Langley Senior Resource Centre
8. United Churches of Langley
9. Ishtar Women's Resource
10. Educacentre College
11. Helpaide
12. New Directions English Language School
13. Trinity Western University
14. RIF
15. BC Kinsman Housing Society
16. Salvation Army
17. Stepping Stone Community Services
18. Township of Langley
19. Kaiser Landen Realty
20. Société de Développement
21. Chamber of Commerce

As in all areas of Metro Vancouver, the City of Langley and Township are facing a housing shortage which has been accelerated by the communities' significant rise in population and exacerbated by the recent, and rapid influx of immigrants into the region. Finding appropriate and affordable housing is the biggest challenge many of these immigrants face and the focus of the event was to get a clearer picture of the realities on the ground.

There were three main objectives for the event:

1. To understand migration and demographics as they relate to housing in Langley
2. Obtain an understanding of what is currently being done to address housing in Langley
3. Get input to guide actions/next steps for Langley LIP

The two-hour event included three main elements:

1. **A presentation of current migration and demographic data as it relates to housing in Langley** – Dr. Dan Heibert, scholar in residence for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, delivered a presentation entitled, "Learning about Metro Vancouver and Langley from the 2021 Census". A PDF of his slides are attached to this summary report.

He used census data to demonstrate the important trends in both permanent and temporary migration patterns into Metro Vancouver / Langley and the implications. With housing as his

lens, he explained the integration challenges arising in Langley due to these massive demographic shifts.

2. **A Panel** consisting of the CEO from the Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce, Social Planners from Langley City and Township of Langley, a Community Health Specialist, ISSofBC Housing Supervisor and the Parliamentary Secretary for Non-Profits all shared how their agencies were responding to the housing crisis in Langley.
3. **A facilitated dialogue: “What activities, actions and advocacy should Langley LIP take on?”** had attendees in small groups discuss a series of questions provided.

Here are some highlights from the panelists’ presentations.

Cory Redekop

CEO, The Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce (GLCC)

1. **What is your organization currently doing to address the housing crisis?**
 - GLCC is an advocacy and lobbying organization
 - Encouraging density and housing development at the local level
 - Pushing investments and fast-tracking at the provincial level
 - Advocating for Ottawa to meaningfully get back into the housing game.
2. **Is anyone offering or contemplating employee housing or housing subsidies?**
 - Every employer offers a “housing subsidy in Langley” – by offering higher wages
 - Increased salaries to both attract new workers and keep those they have
 - More relevant in resort towns such as Revelstoke, not aware of this happening in Langley
3. **Increasingly, immigrants are yours and your members’ customers and employees. To what degree does the housing crisis impact businesses?**
 - Employees are moving further afield-shifts housing
 - Housing shifts =shifts in labour availability
 - Businesses locate where population, employees, customers, and land are: Surrey and Langley and East are at an advantage here.

Patrick Ward

Manager, Strategic and Social Planning Community and Policy Planning Department, Township of Langley

1. **What is your organization currently doing to address the housing crisis?**
 - Local government’s job is to plan / regulate land use to ensure adequate supply for residential land to meet housing needs
 - Between 2011 and 2021, 10, 000 new dwellings were built
 - Broadening role beyond planning and permitting; now incentivizing affordable housing through regulatory and fiscal incentives
 - Actively implementing the 2021 Township’s Housing Action Plan

2. Both the Township and the City have housing action plans in the works. How important a component is rental housing?
 - Rental housing and subsidized housing feature prominently in the Housing Action Plan
 - Increased incentives for rental housing / new developments required to provide below-market units
 - Updated regulations for detached suites (garden suites) on larger detached sites
 - Priority to support vulnerable residents by focusing on subsidized housing
 - Require new apartment buildings to have 10% of units with three or more bedrooms

3. From a social planning perspective, what are some of the side effects of the housing crisis?
 - Homelessness
 - Living in inadequate housing, too small for size of family
 - Quality of life tradeoffs; little disposable income for other activities
 - Labor shortage—housing too expensive labor moves to cheaper location
 - Fewer younger people can afford to get into the housing market
 - “Social connections” more challenging when people rent; especially apartments

4. Do the two municipalities collaborate to try to address issues together? What about other neighbouring municipalities?
 - The greatest point of collaboration is supporting unhoused individuals
 - Future collaboration around the Willowbrook area (working with Surrey as well) to reimagine area with Skytrain slated for 2028
 - BC Housing has convened a table for the Fraser Region

Dena Kae Beno

Social Planner, City of Langley

1. Both the City and Township of Langley have action plans in the works. How important a component is rental housing? Social housing?
 - Langley City is working on below market housing strategy and zoning bylaw updates (implemented late 2023/early 2024) providing more affordable housing solutions
 - In 2019 Council approved at Langley Lions Site - 450 new units plus phased redevelopment
 - ODP (adopted Nov 2021) supports 1-1 rental unit replacement, tenant rental relocation requirements, and rental housing delivery partnerships
 - Langley City has one of the largest rental stocks in Metro Vancouver, 40% (as a percentage of total dwellings)
 - New construction units as well as those in the pipeline are also trending at 40%
 - Langley city has streamlined approval process to reduce time / money “what you see is what you get” pricing- no surprises in the development application process
 - Parking reductions have been approved for rental processes
 - CAC reductions also available

2. Do the two municipalities collaborate to try to address issues together? What about other neighboring municipalities?

- Township and City participate on Metro Vancouver housing committees together
- Collaborate on policy development (i.e., Metro 2050)
- Collaborate on Skytrain development at Willowbrook
- City is open to collaborate with Township as housing projects come forward

Jon Kirby

Fraser Health, Community Health Specialist, Healthy Living/Healthier Communities

1. What role does housing unaffordability play in general public health?
 - Housing is health, can't have a healthy population without proper housing
 - Housing first models can't exist in silos
2. What are the health consequences of people having to spend too much on housing or living in housing that is substandard to their needs?
 - Can't assume existing services will fill the gaps/Important to use data to drive decisions to effectively meet the needs of residents
 - Need accountability to make sure housing targets are met
 - Langley LIP could be a key driver for accountability / advocacy

Tania Berrios

ISSofBC, Permanent Housing Supervisor - Resettlement Assistance Program

1. What is your organization doing to address the housing crisis?
 - Helping refugees navigate the housing market and secure housing
 - Disseminate research around refugee housing needs
 - Support Refugee Claimant Multi-Agency Partnership BC
 - Champion initiatives like Journey Home
 - Advocate / educate landlords on the needs of refugees
 - More community services that are inclusive and welcoming
 - Engage employers in refugee needs
2. How bad is it on the ground? Where does housing rank among the challenges faced by refugees?
 - One of the top challenges
 - Our mandate = find Government Assisted Refugee (GAR) housing within six weeks after arrival
 - Challenge - landlords hesitant to rent to refugees (lack rental / credit history) and limited income
 - Without a permanent address, refugees can't enroll in language classes or school for children
3. Is everyone facing the same inadequate supply, or are there other specific issues?
 - All refugees struggle to find affordable / adequate housing
 - Subset of refugees (LGBTQ+2, Seniors, Individuals with mobility issues) have intersectional needs
 - Difficult to access multiple services outside of Vancouver

- Trying to change the perception that Surrey, Langley, Fraser Valley is not welcoming to LGBTQ+2 community
4. Whether we call it racism or something else, are there some groups that face an even more difficult time than others finding housing?
- Fear or unfamiliarity with certain groups makes it even harder to secure housing
 - We must continue to educate landlords; they fear GAR's will not be able to pay rent after the government assistance ends (12 months)
 - Anecdotally, we've seen landlords provide opportunities despite their hesitations and develop strong bonds / friendships / support that would not have happened otherwise

Megan Dykeman

MLA Langley East, Parliamentary Secretary for Non-Profits

1. We know the government says social and rental housing are a priority. What does that mean in practical terms? Beyond current agreements, what can we look forward to? Is there a light at the end of this tunnel?

Megan's stats / talking points were pulled from the following four news releases.

BC Welcomes more than a 100,000, the most in 60 years

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022PREM0065-001745>

New Premier delivers action to expanded housing in first few days

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022PREM0019-000505>

Creation of new \$500 million rental project fund

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2023PREM0002-000023>

- BC Housing has completed nearly 300 units of housing in Langley and Langley Township since 2017, with 98 of these units being financed through BC's Housing Hub Program; an additional 250 more units are under construction- 62 of those finance through the Housing Hub Program.

The link below provides more information regarding what the NDP has done regarding housing.

<https://bcndpcaucus.ca/workingforpeople/#Housing>