

OCTOBER 2023

SHARING LIVES & SHARING SPACES

A BUSINESS CASE FOR 'CHOSEN FAMILY PODS'



streethome

CHANGING LIVES, BUILDING FUTURES



THIS COULD
HAVE BEEN ME



"I get by with a little help from my friends"

Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band
The Beatles, 1967



BUT NOW
I LIVE HERE

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SHARING LIVES & SHARING SPACES



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Citizens with a low-income, or on a fixed-income, may find that they do not have financial resources to afford rent and other housing costs. This housing instability may place them on the cusp of homelessness. New creative solutions are needed to address the affordable housing crisis and prevent unnecessary displacements. **A ‘Chosen Family’ Pod (CFP) means consciously choosing to live with ‘family members’ that are either: friends, fellow students, co-workers, relatives, or even ex-partners to form a bond that is like blood and share each others’ lives.** It comes with advantages that include comradery, a sense of belonging, safety, and built-in social supports. This starkly contrasts with a landlord, property manager, or another third party renting individual bedrooms to different people who know nothing about each other and are strangers.

In terms of sharing space, an ideal CFP would be a purpose-built rental apartment with a layout that includes individual private personal living spaces (i.e., bedrooms) for three or more ‘family members’ and shared amenity spaces including a kitchen, living room, and laundry. Bathrooms may or may not be shared depending on each building design.

Building sufficient affordable housing stock takes time and considerable capital. Federal and provincial governments have not been able to meet the need. With the right enticements, CFP will be built by the private market rental housing sector. With increased density and affordable rent by design, CFP will house more people, faster, and dramatically impact housing stability.

Streetohome is a charitable organization that is exploring partnerships to promote more affordable private rental market housing developments for low-income and/or fixed-income individuals at risk for homelessness. The focus is purpose-built CFP in the hopes that they will foster improved social and spatial design outcomes for tenants, as well as the engagement of landlords, developers, municipalities, social service providers that serve low-income and/or fixed-income subpopulations, and the Government of BC. The Business Case identifies potential impacts on stakeholders; challenges, facilitators, and best practices; policy snapshots; development examples; financial modelling; promotion options; and recommendations for BC.

This business case preparation involved reviewing over 300 resources including books, published articles, government websites, municipal reports, and media; supporting three Master’s level university capstone projects; conducting 13 interviews with experts and/or thought leaders; and filtering findings and ‘aha moments’ through a Shared Housing Advisory Committee of Streetohome that provided feedback and suggestions along the way over a two-year period.

A note of caution is in order. Some of the examples do not reflect pure CFP in that choice is largely absent. There is often not a choice of neighbourhood location, CFP size, or housemates and hence, the benefits of ‘chosen families’ are not likely to materialize to the same extent. Signing a lease for shared housing or co-living space (see glossary) and living among strangers, may produce diverse tenant bonds, and may not sustain the level of affordability available in CFP developments where choice is front and centre.

CFP will not work for everyone seeking affordable housing but can be a great benefit for many, including youth, seniors, tenants moving on from supportive housing, immigrants and refugees, students, and the low-income workforce.

This business case promotes an opportunity to develop a local expertise on CFP building design and social benefits. The hope is that CFP will be allowed in any zoning districts where residential uses are allowed; that municipalities and provincial governments will embrace this opportunity; that social service providers serving youth, seniors, supportive housing tenants, immigrants and refugees, students, and the low-income workforce, find a way to partner with developers and landlords to create a pipeline of chosen family demand.

CONTRIBUTORS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



This business case would not have come to fruition without the creativity and forward thinking of the following individuals who participated on Streetohome's Shared Housing Advisory Committee:

- **Graham Anderson**, Social Planner, Housing Policy, City of Vancouver
- **Debbie Anderson Eng**, CEO, Pacific Community Resources Society
- **Dominic Flanagan**, former Executive Director, Strategic Initiatives, BC Housing
- **Penny Gurstein**, Professor and immediate past Director of SCARP, UBC
- **Dave Hutniak**, CEO, LandlordBC
- **Hani Lammam**, Executive Vice President, Cressey Development Group
- **Mukhtar Latif**, CEO and Chief Housing Officer, Pomegranate
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- **Vince Tong**, Vice-President, Development Services and Asset Strategies, BC Housing
- **Craig Watters**, Senior Vice President Development, Concert Properties

RESEARCH & CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

The following individuals did the heavy lifting and generously shared their knowledge:



Six Master's students in **Simon Fraser University's School of Public Policy** participated in a BC Priorities Project that culminated in a foundational research report with policy recommendations titled *Addressing Barriers to Shared Housing in the City of Vancouver* (April 2022): Gabrielle Feldmann, Queenie Hewitt, Kimberley John, Andrea Montes-Reyes, Victoria Pullman, and Torry Siggelkow.



Two University of **British Columbia's School of Community and Regional Planning** Master's students completed individual capstone projects that included *Affordable Housing Spotlight: ShareNYC – Shared Housing Pilot* (Lihwen Hsu, April 2021); and *Creating a Home: Shared Housing Models for Women At-Risk of, or Experiencing Homelessness* (Sarah Glazier, July 2021).



KPMG provided pro bono support to develop various elements and versions of the business case. Consultants included Jeremy Pennington, Aanchal Sharma, Salar Shemirani, Ollie James, Jason Morris, and Abdullah Jallow.



The **Streetohome Team**, including Rob Turnbull, Arielle Berze, Lyndon Surjik, and formerly Tracey Harvey – pulled together the various research projects, policy reviews, case studies, interview materials, Committee discussions, and stakeholder feedback to inform the final copy.



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"Peace, like charity, begins at home"

Franklin D. Roosevelt



HOME

STREETOHOME BOARD OF DIRECTORS

From left to right: Rob Turnbull, President & CEO, Streetohome Foundation; Lara Dauphinee, Fiore Group; Bob Chapman, Vancouver Coastal Health; Sherri Magee, Corporate Director; Jennifer Twiner McCarron, Atomic Cartoons/Thunderbird Entertainment; John McLernon, Emeritus Board Member; John Mackay, former Board Member; Kevin Bent, Board Chair; Paul Mochrie, City of Vancouver; Fiona Wilson, Vancouver Police Department; Lloyd Craig, Vice-Chair; Joanne Gassman, Corporate Director; Darwin Schandor, National Bank of Canada; Alan Peretz, KPMG.

*Missing from photo: Geoffrey Cowper, Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP



WHAT ARE 'CHOSEN FAMILY PODS'?

Chosen Family Pods: *Defined*

The CFP social environment typically involves three or more, often unrelated, individuals choosing to live among a 'chosen family' for the purpose of mutual support.

Basically, these are people who understand you, encourage you, celebrate your accomplishments, help you when you need support, and love you unconditionally – even without biological ties. Common examples include friends, co-workers, relatives, or even ex-partners, who are close, reliable, share personal feelings, and recognize each other's worthiness and subsequently form a bond that is like blood.

CFP go beyond space sharing to include the sharing of individual lives in meaningful ways. With that sharing comes informal support. The ethos of CFP promotes four core principles: safe and welcoming space, sense of belonging, individual responsibility, and mutual accountability.

The CFP physical environment is a purpose-built rental apartment with a layout that includes individual private personal living spaces (i.e., bedrooms) and shared amenity spaces including a kitchen, living room, and laundry. Bathrooms may or may not be shared depending on each building design.



“A *home* isn't always the house we live in.
It's also the people we *choose* to surround ourselves with.”
–T.J. Klune



CFP go beyond space sharing to include the sharing of individual lives in meaningful ways.



CFP are designed for individuals who can live independently although it is probably more appropriate to describe it as interdependent housing. The model provides an opportunity to access more affordable rental housing and informal supports when confronted with life's challenges. Support happens naturally through daily interactions with housemates without being forced or planned by anyone. **Some might affectionately refer to CFP as 'supportive housing lite'.**

In contrast, supportive housing may be defined as subsidized housing that is accompanied by on-site tenant supports. These may be complemented with connections to supports in the community. The collective supports are intended to ensure that the housing, income, healthcare, and social needs of tenants can be sufficiently addressed to help them maintain their housing and reduce their risk of becoming homeless. A good proportion of these tenants have moderate to high support needs. Tenants in supportive housing may or may not know their neighbours, understand each other's needs, or develop meaningful relationships.



Who can benefit from CFP?

The far-reaching benefits
of Chosen Family Pods



HOME



Who can benefit from CFP?

PERSONS WITH FIXED-INCOME OR LOW INCOME, AT-RISK FOR HOMELESSNESS

CFP rents tend to be more affordable than a one-bedroom apartment in the same neighbourhood.

CFP apartments may come move-in ready – fully equipped with standard household items; and rent includes utilities, WiFi, common area cleaning, and household supplies.

CFP facilitate increased social support, sense of community, and physical, emotional and economic security, as well as reduced social isolation.

Personal safety & security is a core element of well-being. Knowing that there is someone at home to talk to when you walk in the door is comforting. So is someone noticing if you don't come home.

CFP provide additional choice in housing, neighbourhood, and a chosen family.

Social service agencies (e.g., youth, seniors, women, immigrants) would provide a pipeline of readily assembled and supported 'chosen families'.



Who can benefit from CFP?

THE PROVINCE & MUNICIPALITIES

CFP provide opportunities for individuals, who are being priced out of their neighbourhood due to rent increases, to remain in their ‘home’ community where they have established relationships with local services (e.g., health, grocery, financial).

CFP can play a key role in provincial and municipal affordable housing strategy as it will increase the supply of lower cost rental housing, take advantage of informal supports, and ensure inclusivity in every neighbourhood.

By sharing furnishings, appliances, and kitchenware – people need less stuff – contributing to a lower carbon footprint in support of provincial and municipality green action plans.

CFP substantially increase density within each development, contributing to housing more people within an existing housing mass and a greater impact on preventing homelessness.

Building sufficient affordable housing for fixed-income and low-income individuals takes time and capital and will require all available resources including private market rental housing.

Who can benefit from CFP?

SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

Social service providers (for youth, immigrants, seniors, students, etc.):

- have a vested interest in working with CFP landlords so they can continue to access a more affordable housing pipeline for their 'graduated' clients. The accompanying informal supports provide them with added assurance for housing stability.
- provide a real-life training platform where groups of individuals can practice living together under minimal supervision (i.e., 'training pods') prior to relocating to fully independent housing.
- help already established chosen families find affordable housing; or help individuals find a chosen family; draft 'housemate agreements' that impact things such as the use of shared space, noise, smells, guests and conflict resolution; help chosen families navigate pod bedroom leases; and mediate interpersonal conflicts if/when they arise.

Supportive housing and women's transition housing are constantly looking for homes for clients that have graduated from their services and lament the lack of more affordable independent housing options such as CFP.





Who can benefit from CFP?

**PRIVATE RENTAL
MARKET DEVELOPERS**

REAL ESTATE INVESTORS

**PRIVATE RENTAL
MARKET LANDLORDS**

CFP is a new asset class that includes dedicated purpose-built high-rise apartments or may be combined with traditional one- and two-bedroom apartment layouts in the same building.

CFP tenancies are based on intentional community and connection and should prove longer term than individual tenancies translating into less turnover of units.

Landlords can monitor their asset through regular common area cleaning and household item replenishing. CFP ethos of mutual accountability may result in better maintained housing.

Social service agency nurtured relationships in chosen families and individual responsibility should lead to fewer interpersonal disputes and resulting headaches for the landlord.

Profit level for CFP developments is the same as traditional one-bedroom apartments although the demand curve for this asset class is expected to be higher due to affordability.

Covenants in exchange for density bonusing, reductions in Development Cost Levies, Community Amenity Contributions, and parking requirements will ensure that CFP gets built and tenanted by income-tested individuals that demonstrate the lowest affordability band.

A SAMPLING OF PROSPECTIVE CFP POPULATIONS

From youth aging out of foster care
to seniors renting in Vancouver's West End
and the many in between



HOME



HOME



YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE AND/OR GRADUATING FROM YOUTH SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Chrystal, Ben, James and Sarah have made headway living in a training townhouse with part-time evening staff and are ready to take that next step and live on their own in a Chosen Family Pod.

They feel their needs are low and can be addressed through mutual support and accountability.

They feel a sense of belonging to each other, can communicate authentically, and feel comfortable growing up together.

They take some assurance that their former youth service provider, that helped them ink a Housemate Agreement, will step in to mediate any difficulties they encounter.



SUPPORTIVE HOUSING TENANTS MOVING FORWARD

Anthony, Demetrius, and Carter originally transitioned from living in a carport on the street to supportive housing in three different buildings.

They continue to meet daily, coffee in hand, to socialize in the alley behind the carport they shared for three years. They remember the kind tenant who ran an extension cord out the window so they could listen to the ball game on their radio.

They don't need the intensity of support offered in supportive housing and would like to free up their three units for street and sheltered homeless who require support to remain housed.

Though living separately, their friendship is as strong as ever. They would prefer to meet in a kitchen outside their bedrooms and explained that it would sure beat the long trek they make daily, often in inclement weather. They are eagerly working with their tenant support workers to find their Chosen Family Pod.



SENIORS RENTING IN VANCOUVER'S WEST END

Having lived in this West End for 56 years, Peter knows his grocery clerks, pharmacist, baristas at his local coffee shop and his bank clerks by name. He can't imagine living anywhere else.

The landlord who owns his small West End apartment keeps raising the rent, making retired life on a government pension unaffordable.

Peter just celebrated his 66th birthday and worries that a homeless shelter may become his only option, and he truly believes such a move will kill him.

Peter has connected with a seniors' services provider hoping to find like-minded individuals to join him in a Chosen Family Pod – a true life saver – in the West End.

FINDING COMFORT IN FAMILIAR FACES

Hadiza, Imani, and Taraji prefer to live among other recent arrivals from Botswana. They find it comforting to be able to speak their native language and share similar foods and experiences.

They immigrated to Canada last month for job opportunities, and were able to move in with two other recent immigrants they knew. It was cramped quarters, and they felt that their contribution to the rent was high given limited space.

Their conversational English is basic, and they would like to learn more professional and career-oriented language skills. They enjoy interactions in the community, learning local phrases, and practicing their communication skills together.

Their first priority is to find another place to live where they can continue sharing space and supporting one another. They appreciate the sense of community they share and coming home to a familiar face after a long day at work. An immigration services organization is helping them find a Chosen Family Pod space.



“Home is a shelter
from storms –
all sorts of storms.”

–William J. Bennett

Tom works as a host for minimum wage in the local Earls Restaurant. Tips round out his income to a living wage and it is still difficult to make ends meet.

Tom currently travels into the city daily and spends over two hours to and from his current rental. He's staying in an old two-bedroom apartment separated with curtains with four other people and is getting frustrated at the lack of privacy. Roommates are forever going into his private space and borrowing items without asking.

Tom is seeking quality, affordable housing, with a secure private space (i.e., lockable bedroom door).

He wants to continue to share his life with roommates of his choosing, and under his terms.

Tom would prefer to get back the two hours of daily travel time and find affordable shared accommodations closer to work. In fact, he has developed friendships with other waitstaff with similar interests and values and would like to live with his chosen family.

WORKFORCE HOUSING



"HOME IS WHERE ONE STARTS FROM."

– T.S. ELIOT



CHALLENGES TO CFP



HOME



HOUSEHOLD OCCUPANCY LIMITS IN SELECT COMMUNITIES

- Confirmed by telephone with each municipality's planning and development office
- ∞ = No limit

Community	# Unrelated People Permitted to Share a Household
ABBOTSFORD	2
BURNABY	5
COQUITLAM	5
LANGLEY TWP.	5
NEW WESTMINSTER	∞
NORTH VANCOUVER	∞
RICHMOND	6
SURREY	∞
VANCOUVER	3



REGULATORY BARRIERS TO CFP

Cities may have multiple design restrictions in zoning policies and development bylaws that unnecessarily stop innovative products such as Chosen Family Pods from coming to market.

With the right regulatory framework in place, innovation can thrive and will evolve based on local market dynamics.

Municipal bylaws place limits on the number of unrelated individuals allowed to live together.

COMMON LIMITING FACTORS

Common barriers to the development of CFP and inclusiveness in various communities and neighbourhoods include:

- Zoning restricting apartment scale CFP developments
- Parking requirements
- Height and density restrictions
- Building code updates based on existing household models
- Administrative review processes that add significantly to development timeline and costs
- The lack of provincial and municipal incentives to scale more affordable private market rental housing options such as CFP



UNIT DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

- Existing development and unit design guidelines limit optimal CFP layouts.
- For example, there may be minimum sizes for any locked off portion (e.g., a bedroom) and limits on adding locks to bedroom doors.
- An individual's 'dwelling unit' may be open to interpretation with minimal sizes assigned (e.g., is a bedroom a dwelling unit or is a bedroom and proportionate size of common area a dwelling unit?)
- Development and unit design guidelines do not exist for CFP.
- **Gaps in policy guidance may pose a barrier to approvals (i.e., favouring familiarity and fear of unknowns).**

CFP ACCEPTANCE CHALLENGES

CFP may be considered a risky undertaking for developers because it is a relatively new and **untested concept** in this marketplace. There may be built-in protection for developers if CFP units can be converted to family units where CFP demand fails to materialize.

Renter apprehension may also exist towards the concept. The view that shared space is a “lesser” option than a self-contained one-bedroom apartment will need to be countered through a public education campaign on this innovative way to blend social benefits and housing.

The choice of incoming and exiting tenants will need to be navigated to ensure that the rights of individual tenants, tenant pod, and landlord are optimized in a fair and equitable way.

With the right marketing and communication strategy, acceptance challenges can be addressed effectively while promoting innovation in the housing supply.



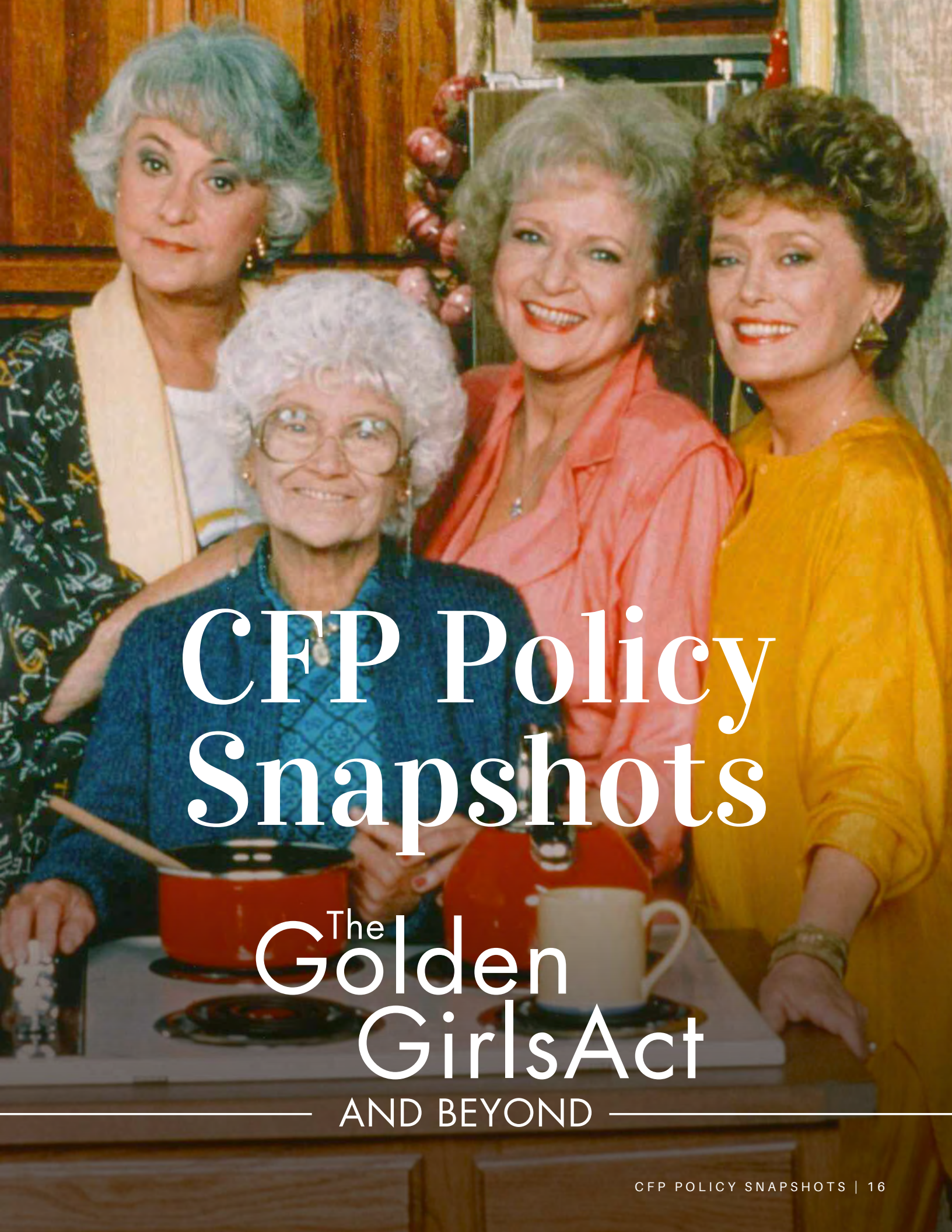
ASSOCIATION WITH SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY (SRO)

SRO is a form of housing that is typically aimed at residents with low-incomes who rent small, furnished single rooms with a bed, chair, and sometimes a small desk. Some units may have a sink, small refrigerator, and microwave. Many residents typically share bathrooms on the same floor and essentially live among strangers.

SRO units are the least expensive form of private market rental housing with \$600/month average rents, with some renting up to \$1300/month (Vancouver).

SRO hotels are old hotels that are generally in a poor state of repair and maintenance. There has been an increasing displacement of SRO units in a process of gentrification through renovation or new developments, as well as fires.

CFP, in contrast, will provide purpose-built pods where five or more roommates share common space and their lives by choice. CFP will offer a standard of safe and clean affordable housing that can be a long-term housing solution and provide a sense of community.



CFP Policy Snapshots

The Golden Girls Act

— AND BEYOND —



ONTARIO BILL 69, GOLDEN GIRLS ACT

2019

This Ontario legislation is named after the 1980's TV show about four women who live together. The premise is that provincial and municipal governments should encourage innovative and affordable housing solutions. Moreover, local municipalities should not use bylaws to deter unrelated individuals from choosing affordable housing options. Bill 69 provides clarity to municipalities in Ontario that the provincial planning act should be interpreted in a way that encourages and permits household sharing by unrelated individuals as a housing solution.

Governments do not appear to recognize that unrelated individuals living together can reap significant health, economic and social benefits. Local politicians and housing planners may not grasp the concept of unrelated individuals wanting to live together. They may be reacting to challenges with SROs, rooming houses, and unregulated recovery homes – and may include new shared living options such as CFP within this umbrella classification. CFP is a housing model with natural supports that officials have not previously encountered.

Governments need to make it easier to think beyond conventional housing scenarios.

• www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-42/session-1/bill-69



Unrelated
individuals living
together can
reap significant
health, economic
and social
benefits.



ALBERTA BILL 48, GOLDEN GIRLS AMENDMENTS 2020

These amendments to the Municipal Government Act ensure that land use bylaws cannot regulate residential users of land or buildings and cannot treat residential users differently based on their relationship to one another.

It also provides the Minister of Municipal Affairs with authority to create a regulation directing a municipality to amend its land use bylaw if it prohibits unrelated individuals' home sharing arrangements.

These amendments ensure flexible and affordable housing options are accessible to everyone, including unrelated individuals living together.

A provincial approach will encourage municipalities to develop building design guidelines that facilitate non-related individuals living together – as a means to increasing housing stock and affordability, building community and belonging, and reducing isolation, loneliness, and displacement.

• www.open.alberta.ca/dataset/9012714b-1d3c-4046-997c-1afbde6975f1/resource/7aeae709-9384-4fff-8721-696079b00e4d/download/ma-municipal-government-act-golden-girls-amendments-2020.pdf

HALIFAX, SHARED HOUSING

2022

Halifax Regional Municipal Planning Strategy was amended to provide housing opportunities for a range of social and economic needs, and to promote inclusive communities and aging in place.

The city began by defining shared housing as a broad term that describes housing shared by a group of individuals living under separate leases where support services may be provided.

The broad definition allowed for a greater variety of housing forms to be implemented across the municipality, particularly in residential areas. Included in this is housing for seniors, those in need of support and/or personal care, affordable housing options, or those seeking a group-style living arrangement.

The Land-use Bylaws amendments allow for “low-impact” (typically 10 or fewer bedrooms) shared housing uses to be permitted as-of-right, providing a quick path to approval for new shared housing developments in all residential zones.

To further remove barriers to providing a wide variety of shared housing forms, the amendments do not require any parking above what is required for a dwelling unit in low-density residential zones, allowing shared housing providers to determine their own parking requirements based on tenants' needs and location.

• www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/shared-housing





DENVER, COLORADO, GROUP LIVING AMENDMENT

2021

Denver modernized zoning code definitions, permitted residential use, and amended the definition of household to allow for more affordable housing configurations for group living. The amendments aim to provide more flexibility for residents to choose who they want to live with while bringing Denver's regulations in line with other cities. These changes will reduce vulnerability to displacement, increase affordability, provide opportunities to age in place, and provide options for non-traditional families such as workforce rental housing, contributing to more inclusive neighbourhoods.

Household is defined as up to five individuals of any relationship, who live together as a family, or as the functional equivalent of a family, and who share household activities and responsibilities, such as meals, chores, rent, and expenses. Members of the household choose who is part of the household, not the landlord, property manager, or another third party.

Household Living is allowed in all zone districts where residential uses are allowed. The amendment will provide options for people to save on housing costs by having multiple roommates, combining households, and/or living in multi-generational households. Renting on a room-by-room basis, such as with student dorms, is considered congregate living, not group living, and separate rules apply.

• www.denvergov.org/Government/Agencies-Departments-Offices/Agencies-Departments-Offices-Directory/Community-Planning-and-Development/Denver-Zoning-Code/Other-Regulations/Group-Living-Rules



SALT LAKE CITY (SLC), UTAH, SHARED HOUSING 2022

SLC is addressing the escalating rents that are forcing many vulnerable residents to move away by using new tools that include fast-tracking shared housing in many residential neighbourhoods, commercial and business districts. This has quadrupled the area where shared housing is allowed thereby providing housing options for residents at various stages of life.

Shared Housing is being promoted as affordable housing to help people from becoming homeless or help people pull themselves out of homelessness while also serving the needs of workforce, artist, essential worker, and student housing.

SLC developed shared housing design standards for households with one or more sleeping rooms (minimum of 100 square feet) that may contain either a private kitchen or private bathroom, but not both. The minimum floor area of communal areas, exclusive of kitchens, bathrooms, hallways, and maintenance/storage areas, is 20 square feet per sleeping room. Communal areas not limited to libraries, lounges, recreation rooms and dining rooms, etc. must be provided and accessible to all tenants. A 24/7 on-site manager and security camera monitoring is required.

Private sector developers and non-profit developers are incentivized by a parking stall reduction ordinance and by reducing, waiving, or eliminating impact fees on shared housing developments. SLC plans to monitor displacement and develop systems that track progress to better know where and how shared housing developments are working to impact *Thriving In Place*.

• <https://shared-housing-1-slcgov.hub.arcgis.com/>
• <https://www.thrivinginplaceslc.org/placeslc.org/>

CITY OF NEW YORK, ShareNYC INITIATIVE

2018

Developers approached New York City's Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) wanting to explore whether the density and affordability of new coliving models can be scaled to meet a variety of income needs. HPD was planning to update zoning regulations and thought piloting innovative developments requesting zoning exclusions may be a good way to test the viability and justification of such changes. HPD responded with 'ShareNYC' – that invited private developers to outline how they planned to design, build, and maintain affordable shared housing with tenant friendly layouts.

Each developer's property management partner provided a formal management plan (that includes cleaning services and tenant conflict resolution), and financial modeling that demonstrates sustainable affordability.

They described how the Housing Maintenance Code would be adhered to, as well as additional tenant protections including rent regulation, individual leases, and locks on bedroom doors. HPD wanted to know who was going into the units, and what oversight looked like. They also wanted to know if a tenant leaves, who comes in after them, and how to prevent a developer from converting those units into market rate housing.

HPD selected a range of proposals to explore how shared housing can work across a variety of building types including large- and small-scale new construction projects. The selected proposals will serve diverse populations including units for "extremely low" and "very low" income tenants, formerly homeless tenants, and the City's workforce population.



• www.nyc.gov/site/hpd/news/092-19/city-reveals-selected-shared-housing-development-proposals#/0

CFP Best Practices

Navigating the landscape between municipalities, landlords, tenants and their chosen families



EDUCATING MUNICIPALITIES, DEVELOPERS, LANDLORDS & TENANTS



HOME

1

CFP can be beneficial to people on fixed or low-incomes at risk for homelessness, the homeless services system (HSS), and the affordable housing inventory in each city. It lowers the cost per tenant, reduces demand for other affordable housing options that can be redeployed, houses and supports more individuals per housing unit stretching limited government funding, and accelerates how quickly the homeless services system can house people. The private rental market sector can magnify this impact complementing and becoming pseudo agents within the HSS.

2

CFP can maximize quality of life. Tenants may be able to rent units in neighbourhoods that had previously been unaffordable to them. It could provide access to communities with better schools, amenities, job opportunities, transportation, and safety.

3

CFP are adaptable and inclusive. CFP can serve multiple demographics and affinity groups (e.g., Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+, immigrants and refugees, seniors, families, youth, multigenerational, workforce, artists, etc.).

4

CFP are not a lesser option. Living with people you choose – either when transitioning out of homelessness, or at-risk of homelessness, due to unaffordable rent increases – is more affordable and comes with social, mental and emotional benefits, something a self-contained unit may be lacking. CFP address loneliness, isolation, and a lack of communal supports.

5

CFP don't have to be forever and can be forever. CFP can serve different purposes for different people. CFP could be a stepping stone to a self-contained unit or someone's preferred way to live. Ultimately, CFP provide an additional choice in terms of a pathway into stable housing with informal supports.

FULLY EQUIPPED, MOVE-IN READY, MAINTAINED HOUSEHOLD

Many tenants may not own, nor be able to afford, furnishings and household equipment. Their furnishings in bedroom and common areas, appliances, household equipment, and kitchenware will be sturdy and well maintained.

Rent will include all utilities (water, gas and/or electric) and high-speed Wi-Fi.

Laundry machines will be located in each unit or available in a shared laundry facility on-site.

Household supplies like toilet paper, paper towels, dish soap, and laundry detergent will be restocked regularly.

While tenants are encouraged to tidy up after themselves, the landlord provides regular cleaning including mopping, sweeping, and vacuuming of shared spaces. This provides an opportunity to monitor the asset and repair items, as necessary.



TENANCY AGREEMENTS

In BC, there are two types of tenancy agreements: individual bedroom leases, and shared head leases.

To ensure the safety and rights of each tenant in the CFP, a bedroom lease should be used. In this way, the individual is responsible for their own monthly rent and the regular upkeep of their part of the apartment that includes their room, the bathroom, and the shared common area.

This type of lease works within the Residential Tenancy Act (RTA) and ensures that each participant on the lease is entitled to full tenancy rights and protection.

RTA amendments may be required to ensure the rights of individual tenants, tenant pod, and landlord are optimized in a fair and equitable way.



Individual Bedroom Lease

- a. The tenancy agreement will be between one tenant and the landlord.
- b. Safest for tenants – each tenant pays a set price for the exclusive use of their own bedroom and joint use of communal areas.
- c. Tenant is responsible for maintaining communal areas.
- d. To minimize vacancy and property damage, a landlord can work closely with social service organizations that coach pre-tenancy, provide tenant referrals, and manage conflicts.



Shared Head Lease

- a. The tenancy agreement will be between the household of tenants and the landlord.
- b. Riskier for tenants:
 - i. If a tenant fails to pay their rent portion, arrears become the responsibility of the other tenants
 - ii. Damages to a personal bedroom space become everyone's responsibility
- c. To contain household risk, tenants can maintain a waitlist of individuals that would be a good fit.



CHOSEN FAMILY POD HOUSEMATE AGREEMENT

Housemate Agreements document the rules and responsibilities of people who live in shared space. The fewer the rules the better. It is more about communication.

They are different from tenancy agreements which cover the rights and obligations of the tenants and the landlord.

There should be a general understanding/agreement on the following:

- Sharing meals or not. Equitable and safe food storage and what is communal versus off-limits.
- Daily routines impacting the use of communal spaces (kitchen, bathroom, living room, laundry)
- General cleaning up after oneself in communal areas
- Managing the privacy of personal space (bedroom) and property
- Quiet time and sleep preferences
- Pets and guests

Agreement on how these areas are managed can go a long way to avoiding conflict.

CHOSEN FAMILY POD: FACILITATION & NAVIGATION

CFP can come about organically as well as intentionally. Either way, tenants share common values and complementary living habits. Examples include:

An elderly women assembled her own chosen family in a rental apartment, and subsequently offers to help other elderly women, struggling to make ends meet on their own, replicate her process.

A youth service provider operates training apartments that bring together 5-8 youth, teaches basic household management and roommate skills, and facilitates transitions to the private rental market.

Social service agencies craft CFP arrangements building on bonds that exist between their clients that may be based on shared experiences, values, interests, and/or goals.

BC Housing could enhance Supporting Tenants and Enabling Pathways (STEP Program) by helping supportive housing tenants, who are ready to live independently, find a suitable private market rental CFP, move in with people they choose, develop a CFP Housemate Agreement, and offer a lifeline for challenges. This will free up units for people who need more supports.



A collection of wooden human figures in various shades of grey and red, arranged on a surface that is split into red and blue sections. The figures are of different heights and are scattered across the surface, with one prominent red figure in the foreground.

MANAGING CONFLICT

Conflict may arise from time to time between chosen family members, or between one or more chosen family members and a landlord. Supporting tenants and landlords is key to CFP. Social service providers will be motivated to mediate conflicts, smooth landlord relations, and ensure a continued, graduating pathway for their clients.

CFP are not for individuals who are looking for a place to live where they can spend all their time in their bedroom, resist developing social bonds, and prefer not to engage with, nor care for each other.

CFP are for individuals who see a benefit of belonging to a group and developing a mutual concern and interest in supporting each other's wellbeing.

We all need emotional support during good and bad times. The frequency of our contact with others and the quality of our personal relationships are crucial determinants of our wellbeing.

Sometimes, conflict can't be fixed and tenants and/or landlords will necessarily go their separate ways.

CFP TRAINING APARTMENTS

Social service provider operated training apartments provide a 'step down' from more intensively supported environments such as supportive housing or shelter with support workers onsite, around the clock.

Training apartments can play an important role by providing individuals with an opportunity to experience living more independently, while still receiving minimal assistance – staff may check in as needed and provide coaching.

They provide the opportunity for clients to test out daily living skills and assess where they may require additional support in managing their accommodation and interpersonal relationships.

Above all, individuals get a sense of which prospective roommates embrace interdependence and may be a fit for their 'chosen family'.

The objective is moving individuals along their preferred life path. For some, this will involve a graduated housing pathway, backfilling vacancies with those whose housing stability requires more intensive supports, and ultimately optimizing assets and outcomes for all.



POTENTIAL CFP HOUSING DESIGNS



HOME

TOWNLINe: DOWNTOWN VICTORIA DEVELOPMENT

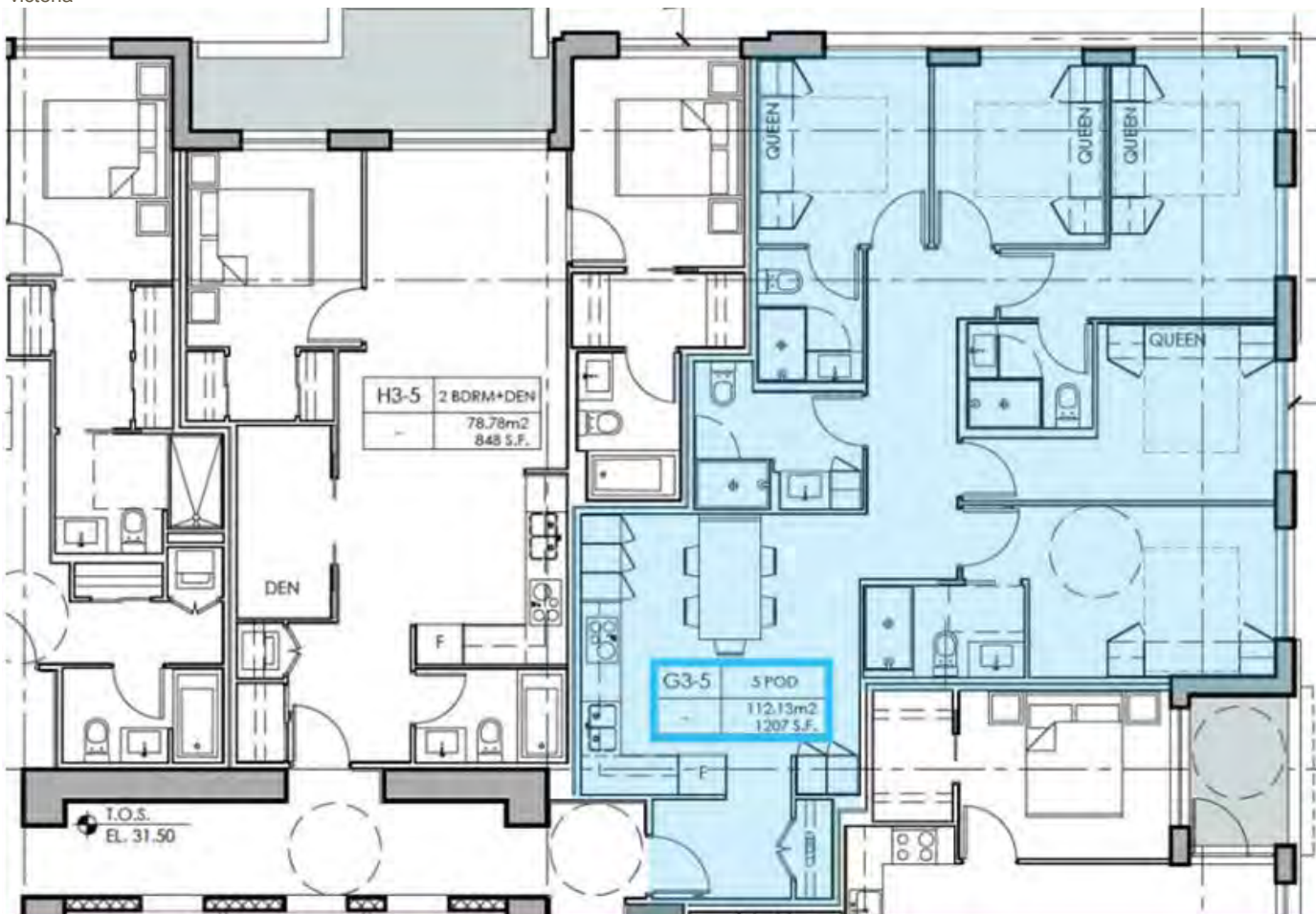
A new 16-storey rental tower in Victoria will provide 289 private market rental units. The 43 one-bedroom and 24 two-bedroom units will create 67 traditional apartments. The **54 purpose-built housing pods, with 3-, 4- and 5-bedrooms and a combination of private and shared bathrooms and shared kitchen and dining space, will create 222 homes.** There may be transitions, either way, between traditional apartments and pods over time.

Housing pods will be furnished, with fully equipped kitchens, and shared common living rooms will be located on alternate floors. Ground floor retail space will have frontage on Pandora Avenue and Vancouver Street.

The shared housing pods will provide a more affordable housing option with a monthly housing cost estimated to be 30% less than market rent of a studio apartment in Victoria. A covenant ensures all homes will remain rentals.



• www.townline.com/2022/01/19/co-living-suites-part-of-new-rental-building-approved-in-victoria



Traditional two-bedroom on the left and adjacent 5-bedroom pod.

COMMON ROOSEVELT

The new development in Harlem consists of two 8-storey buildings with 56 shared housing pods comprising 253 homes. Each building provides different features and options for tenants. The pods in the first one are designed around a large central community room with kitchen, dining and living spaces. The units in the other building offer a more intimate shared housing scale with a mix of private and shared bathrooms.

L + M Development Partners partnered with Common (a co-living property management company operating in ten cities coast-to-coast) to win one of ShareNYC's Selected Shared Housing Development Proposals. More affordable pod housing is distributed throughout the buildings, with a third of the more intimate building including market rate housing.

Features included in the pod rent: a fully furnished apartment including a private bedroom with a nightstand, lamp and bed; a kitchen outfitted with small appliances, pots & pans, utensils, dishware and cutlery; basic household staples such as paper towels, toilet paper, and soap; regular cleaning services for shared spaces; utilities, high-speed WiFi; and property services that respond to maintenance requests within 24 hours.



• www.fastcompany.com/90486963/cities-that-need-more-housing-could-get-it-by-rethinking-the-idea-of-what-an-apartment-can-be



tə šx^whələləməs tə k^wałk^wəʔaʔt

'The Houses of the Ones Belonging to the Saltwater' is the newest residence community at UBC.

The ^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam) Nation generously gifted the həhəməihərh-language residence to UBC in the spring of 2021.

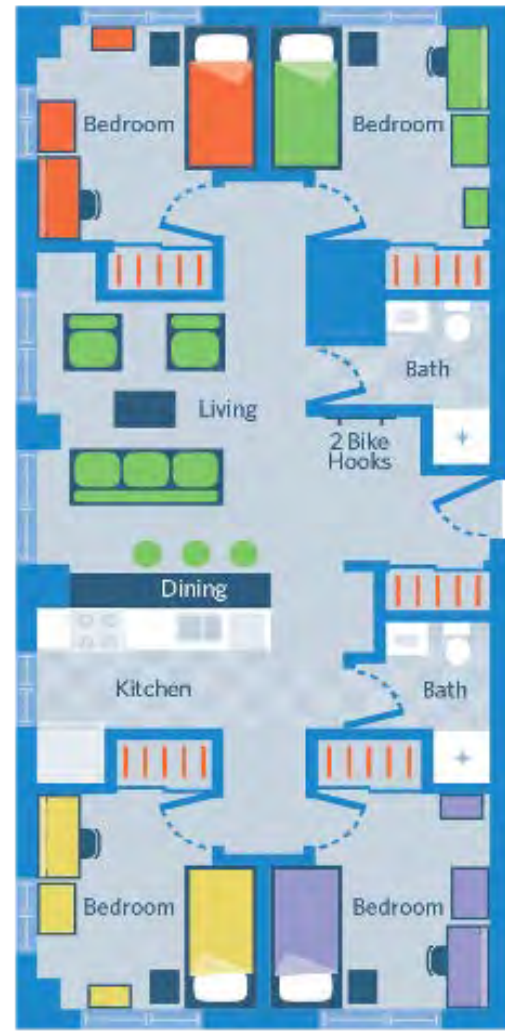
There will be 743 units that include:

- 531 studio apartments, and
- 212 4-bed shared living pods

Studios will have a bathroom, closet, kitchen, desk and bed. Shared Living pods will have two communal bathrooms, and a fully furnished and equipped kitchen, living area and eating area. The bedrooms in pods will contain a bed, wardrobe, dresser, desk, lamp, chairs, bookshelf, and closet. All units will include WiFi, utilities, and access to a laundry facility on the bottom floor.

The monthly rent ranges from \$1,114 for a shared living pod to \$1,459 for the largest studio apartment.

• www.vancouver.housing.ubc.ca/residences/houses-of-ones-belonging-to-saltwater/



Four-bedroom tə šx^whələləməs tə k^wałk^wəʔaʔt

RESPONSIBLE LIVING SQUAMISH

The 2-storey duplex provides 2 semi-furnished pods that will house 6 people each. Private bedrooms consist of a small kitchenette and bathroom with shower. A communal kitchen and living space, alongside a large open balcony provides plenty of room for residents to share space, while community gardens and a gym provide opportunities to participate in activities together.

Responsible Living combines the freedom of privacy with the advantages of shared resources – allowing you to live alone together, forming deep connections with like-minded individuals. Tenants were initially chosen by the property manager to form the foundational pod culture based on common interests. When a tenant leaves, the remaining tenants choose a new tenant whom they feel will be a good fit for the pod.

Tenants can share meals, movie nights, and evenings gathered by the fire whenever they choose. **Average monthly rent will be \$1350-\$1550 depending on the size of the bedroom and will include Wi-Fi and utilities.**

• www.responsibleliving.ca/



Financial Modelling

FINANCIAL MODEL ASSUMPTIONS

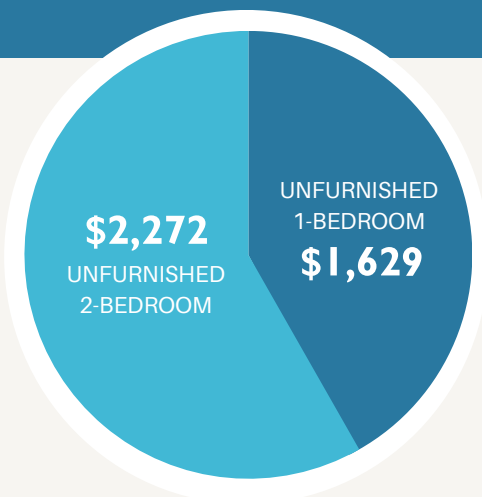
1. The number of households and bedrooms are sourced from the work done on the Townline Pandora project in Victoria on page 27.
2. The financial model calculates and compares the revenues and the rents chargeable for traditional one- and two-bedroom apartments and a bedroom in a shared housing pod.
3. Overhead factors includes the additional operational costs of rent inclusions such as utilities, Wi-Fi, regular professional cleaning, provision of consumable supplies, and repair/replacement of furnishings, household equipment and kitchen utensils.
4. Shared housing revenue is assumed to be 40% more than the revenue generated by traditional apartments to keep the profit levels for the shared housing the same as that of traditional apartments.
5. General vacancy is assumed to be lower in shared housing due to the lower rent per tenant, a sense of belonging, and connection to fellow tenants further releasing a landlord of unnecessary expenses of incurring and filling vacant units.



SHARED LIVING FINANCIAL MODEL (1/3) 1

Townline Pandora in Victoria began construction in June 2022. The 16-storey building will be the first of its kind, high-rise, co-living product in British Columbia.

Using what has been stated publicly about the project, how would the economics fare against a traditional build in the Vancouver market?



CITY OF VANCOUVER PRIVATE APARTMENT AVERAGE RENT 2023***

SHARED HOUSING COMPONENT IN DEVELOPMENT

222	54	40%	↑
NO. OF BEDROOMS	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS	OPERATIONAL EXPENSE INCREASE VS. TRADITIONAL APT. MGMT	RISK LEVEL

TRADITIONAL APARTMENT COMPONENT IN DEVELOPMENT

91	67	—	—
NO. OF BEDROOMS	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS	OPERATIONAL EXPENSE INCREASE VS. TRADITIONAL APT. MGMT	RISK LEVEL

* Operational expenses include furnishings, fully equipped kitchen, household supplies, professional cleaning, utilities and internet
 ** Higher risk associated with more tenants, increased number of bedroom leases, vacancies, wear on units/furnishings, and interpersonal conflict may be offset by a prospect of longer tenancies, serenity in chosen families, increased revenue, and asset management services (regular cleaning of common areas in pods)
 *** Source www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-data/data-tables/rental-market/rental-market-report-data-tables

2 SHARED HOUSING FINANCIAL MODEL (2/3)

TRADITIONAL RENTAL APARTMENT (SAME SIZE, LOCATED IN VANCOUVER)

INPUTS	91 / 67 = 1.36		
	AVG. NO. OF BEDROOMS	NO. OF APARTMENTS	AVG. NO. OF BEDROOMS PER APARTMENT
	1-BEDROOM APT AVG. RENT	1.36-BEDROOM APT AVG. RENT	2-BEDROOM APT AVG. RENT
	\$1,629	\$1,860**	\$2,272
OUTPUTS	\$124,620		\$1,369
	POTENTIAL REVENUE PER MO. (NO. OF APTS. X AVG. RENT)	AVG. RENT PER BEDROOM (POTENTIAL REVENUE/AVG. NO. OF BEDROOMS)	

** \$2272-\$1629=\$643 (difference between 1-Bedroom and 2-Bedroom) \$643*0.36=\$231.
\$1629+\$231=\$1860.

SHARED HOUSING PODS

INPUTS	\$124,620 + 40% = \$174,468		
	POTENTIAL REVENUE PER MONTH	ADDITIONAL OPERATIONAL EXPENSES*	REQUIRED REVENUE
	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <div style="background-color: #00728f; color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 100px; height: 100px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> 222 </div> <p>NUMBER OF BEDROOMS</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <div style="background-color: #00728f; color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 100px; height: 100px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> \$786 </div> <p>AVERAGE RENT PER BEDROOM</p> </div> </div>		

* rent includes utilities, Wi-Fi, regular professional cleaning, provision of consumable supplies, and repair/replacement of furnishings, household equipment and kitchen utensils.



3

SHARED HOUSING FINANCIAL MODEL (3/3)

Using key, publicly available statistics on the new development and matching with core assumptions about a traditional development of a similar size, it is reasonable to assume that **a shared housing bedroom could be offered at 40% less than a typical one-bedroom rental.**

ID	INPUTS	CALCULATIONS	TRADITIONAL APARTMENT COMPONENT	SHARED LIVING POD COMPONENT
a	# of Households	-	67	-
b	# of Households	-	-	54
c	#of Bedrooms	-	91	-
d	# of Bedrooms	-	-	222
e	Avg. # of Bedrooms/Household	c/a	1.36	-
f	Avg. # of Bedrooms/Household	d/b	-	4.11
g	Avg. Rent for 1-BR in Vancouver	-	\$1,629	-
h	Avg. Rent for 2-BR in Vancouver	-	\$2,272	-
i	Avg. Rent for 1.36-BR in Vancouver	-	\$1,860	-
j	Overhead Factor	-	0%	40%
k	Traditional Apt. Revenue/Month	a*i	\$124,620	-
l	Shared Living Pod Revenue/Month	k*1.4	-	\$174,468
m	Rent/Bedroom/Month	k/c	\$1,369	-
n	Rent/Bedroom/Month	l/d	-	\$786

Options Analysis



FOR FACILITATING CFP IN BC





A. MUNICIPALITIES COULD UPDATE THEIR ZONING & BYLAWS TO ALLOW FOR CFP DEVELOPMENTS

CONSIDERATIONS:

Assemble a CFP Zoning & Bylaw Advisory Committee with broad representation from fixed and low-income groups (e.g., seniors, youth, artists, homeless, workers in low-paid sectors).

Research peer municipalities to understand how they are introducing shared housing models.

Consider 'equity' in terms of allowing CFP developments in most, if not all neighbourhoods.

Implement covenants that ensure the longevity of private rental market households and continued 'more affordability' for low-income and fixed-income tenants. **A rule of thumb could become: 40% more affordable than one-bedroom private market rent in the same neighbourhood.**

B. Municipalities could pilot CFP developments and provide zoning and bylaw exclusions while working towards finding what works for developers, tenants, neighbourhoods, communities, activists and advocates prior to making permanent policy changes.

CONSIDERATIONS:

This approach would allow longer term study of CFP developments being implemented and considerable learning over time.

Stakeholders (developers, tenants, neighbourhoods, communities, activists and advocates) can characterize what is working, as well as challenges, with piloted developments and suggest remediation to address challenges.

Local CFP knowledge can influence subsequent developments and make a significant experiential, evidence-based contribution to sound CFP building design guidelines.

Sharing experience and learnings across peer municipalities, including who is accessing units and at what price, will accelerate CFP growth and expansion.



C. MUNICIPALITIES COULD INCENTIVIZE CFP DEVELOPMENTS

DEVELOPER INCENTIVES MAY INCLUDE:

Sanctioning lockable bedroom private spaces

Approving reductions on parking requirements

Enabling Community Amenity Contribution reductions, Development Cost Levy waivers, modest increases in height and density – all tied to sustainable, more affordable, rental housing

Limiting prescription on bedroom and shared amenity space sizes to enhance creativity in building design that may be more realistic and better meet the needs of tenants

Expediting permit processing

Note: In return for incentives, municipalities can (through a legal agreement) secure private market rental unit tenure for the life of the building as well as gain assurances of more affordable CFP rental housing that will continue to be based on similar profit margins for an equivalent traditional apartment building mass (i.e., **rule of thumb: 40% more affordable than one-bedroom private market rent in the same neighbourhood**).





D. PROVINCE OF B.C. COULD ADAPT GOLDEN GIRLS LEGISLATION

Solving British Columbia's affordable housing crisis is going to require new and innovative approaches to bettering the life of others – new ideas, housing models, and processes. CFP can play a role, not for all, but for many individuals seeking the numerous benefits that come with interdependent living.

Preventing a type of living arrangement where any number of unrelated people cohabitate by choice, and may involve seniors, students, coworkers, families, intergenerational, or other demographic or shared interest – could be viewed as being discriminatory and possibly a Human Rights violation.

Artificially constraining CFP by restricting them to 'qualifying' demographics, limiting the number of unrelated individuals, curbing the location (i.e., neighbourhood inclusivity), or prescribing restrictive design guidelines will only serve to dampen the creativity and ingenuity that can build housing that works for all.

Legislation could be enacted in B.C. to prevent municipalities from using local bylaws to prohibit unrelated individuals from living together and thereby blocking affordable housing solutions.

E. PROVINCE OF B.C. COULD INCENTIVIZE PRIVATE MARKET RENTAL CFP

Non-market housing has not solved B.C.'s affordable housing problems, nor has it helped those with the greatest housing needs – people on fixed-incomes or low-incomes faced with rising rents in the existing rental market and an increased risk for homelessness.

Purpose-built, private market rental housing needs to be a much bigger part of the solution. Streamlining and modernizing permitting can reduce costs for private developers and get homes built faster, unlocking more homes with a CFP model.

Incentives could include a comprehensive upzoning framework across BC, low-cost financing, and reduced development cost charges.

Developer incentives may go a long way to ensuring that CFP housing gets built in every neighbourhood, ensuring inclusivity and equity for all British Columbians.

More homes for people, built sooner



StrongerBC
for everyone



F. EDUCATION COULD TAKE PLACE ON CFP AS AN ASSET CLASS, HOUSING OPTION, AND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY

Moving from a place of a 'lesser option' to a 'preferred option' where developers, prospective tenants, social service providers, and landlords are interested in seeing the CFP model unfold and actively participate in its development, will require considerable public education.

Getting to know these stakeholders' concerns and inspiring their participation and interaction with early adopters (developers and tenants) to influence the CFP buildout will require advocacy, and actively brokering and leveraging groundbreaking developments (figuratively and literally).

Profiling CFP in the media, on developer and municipality websites, at Union of BC Municipalities events, industry forums, and with tenant advocacy groups will require continuous efforts until sufficient momentum is underway.

Documenting a post build/occupancy evaluation of each building design, welcoming input from the municipality, developer, landlord, social service providers, and tenants on what was learned and could be improved as the model evolves to meet the greatest need over time.

G. STATUS QUO

In the absence of a CFP model, developer relationships with social service providers may be limited and few. Service providers will not provide a ready pipeline of chosen family households. More affordable housing, informal support benefits, and a broader increased social services system capacity will not materialize.

There will not be an opportunity to provide 'flow-through' for the existing supportive housing inventory. More importantly, 'stuck' individuals who want to move on cannot, and may in fact become compromised with an increased risk of homelessness because their housing is not meeting their needs.

Creative developers may build purpose-built luxury co-living high-rise units, but they will not be available to individuals on fixed or low-incomes at-risk of homelessness because of unaffordability. These may include seniors, immigrants and refugees, youth, low-income workers, supportive housing graduates and students, among others.



POLICY ANALYSIS

ID	MEASURE (5 > 1)	BYLAW UPDATE	MUNICIPAL INCENTIVES	PILOT	PROVINCE LEGISLATE	PROVINCE INCENTIVE	STAKEHOLDER EDUCATION	STATUS QUO
1	Immediacy of affordable housing *Double weighted	2	2	10	10	10	4	2
2	No. of at-risk impacted *Double weighted	10	10	2	10	10	6	2
3	Ease of implementation *Double weighted	2	2	10	10	6	10	10
4	City & Council receptivity	3	3	5	1	1	5	1
5	Developer & landlord receptivity	5	5	3	5	5	5	1
6	Social service provider receptivity	5	5	2	5	5	5	1
7	Prospective housemate receptivity	5	5	5	5	5	5	1
TOTAL RANKING		32	32	37	46	42	40	18

RECOMMENDATIONS



HOME

Chosen Family Pods (CFP) may not be a new idea in Vancouver and other municipalities.

Numerous news stories, housing reports, and private market rental studies have documented low-income individuals opting for affordable shared living arrangements in less than ideal shared spaces in different types of dwellings including single family homes, row houses, apartments and condominiums.

Currently, these households conflict with bylaws intended to limit such cohabitation of unrelated individuals.

These homes are not purposely designed to meet the livability requirements of the housemates and likely contribute to compromised navigation of spaces, a lesser quality of life, and perhaps even fire and life safety risks.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Provincial legislation prohibiting municipalities from using local tools to prevent unrelated individuals from living together (highest scored recommendation) would ensure that this flexible and affordable cohabitation housing option is accessible to everyone across the province of BC.

Purpose-built, more affordable, private rental market housing in neighbourhoods across each municipality could provide fixed- and low-income chosen families with attractive and safe housing options.

The work in Ontario (2019), adapted by Alberta with its own Golden Girls Amendments (2020), could show the way forward in BC.



2

Stakeholder education (highly scored recommendation) needs to play a key role.

Municipalities, developers, investors, landlords, fixed- and low-income individuals, social service providers, housing activists, and the general public, will benefit from learning more about Chosen Family Pods, the role they can play, and how best to work together to ensure mutual wins.



3

Piloting shared housing models (moderately scored recommendation) can start immediately, as can municipal and provincial incentives for these innovative developments.

While municipalities do not currently have approved building design guidelines, collecting and sharing the necessary data can be tied to municipal and provincial incentives. This will be key to this evolving housing industry asset class.

The collective goal is to discover purpose-built designs that best meet housemate needs for both shared space and private space, accessibility and navigation of shared components, adequate storage, and fire and life safety.

These livability factors likely vary for different subpopulations, with no ‘one size fitting all’. Assembling best fit design guidelines for a variety of demographics would simplify approvals and better meet the needs of developers, municipalities, social service providers and housemates. It may be best to approach Chosen Family Pods as an exploratory model that can be adapted and refined over multiple developments so as not to constrain creativity and possibility.

Developer champions will be key to moving this asset class forward in municipalities. While most private rental market building design and financial models will be distinctive and proprietary, rough guidelines can be documented to inform competitive developments. Developers may be interested in learning about mixed income developments that combine CFP with traditional one- and two-bedroom apartments, or alternatively, dedicated CFP buildings. The Housing Research Collaborative within the UBC School of Community and Regional Planning, and the Department of Urban Studies at SFU, may each be interested in contributing to the local knowledge base of CFP development, benefits, and best practice.

NEXT STEPS



HOME

Streetohome will:

1

Share the Chosen Family Pod (CFP) Business Case with Premier Eby; BC Government ministries including Housing, Social Development and Poverty Reduction, and Municipal Affairs; and request follow-up discussion on how to move forward in British Columbia.

2

Distribute the business case to municipal governments, social service providers, and LandlordBC; and lobby related conferences and convenors to host panel discussions with experts and thought leaders leading the way locally and elsewhere, such as those in New York City.

3

Ask the Housing Research Collaborative within the UBC School of Community and Regional Planning, and the Department of Urban Studies at SFU, to review the business case and consider:

- developing and profiling case studies on CFP developments in BC as they unfold,
- inventorying municipal and provincial incentives and developer uptake,
- documenting partnerships between social service providers and private developers along with best practices,
- monitoring the number of fixed and low-income individuals housed in CFP,
- conducting satisfaction, learnings, and suggestion surveys of CFP tenants, developers, social service providers, landlords, municipalities, and the BC Government, and
- tracking the evolution of municipal design guidelines for targeted subpopulations.

4

Pitch CFP in the media and other public forums to promote education and dialogue.



RECOMMENDATION

The Shared Housing Advisory Committee *unanimously* recommends:

The Streetohome Board review the Chosen Family Pods Business Case, and endorse all three recommendations, and all four next steps.



APPENDIX A:
RESOURCES CONSULTED

There were over 300 resources consulted.



Twenty-nine are referenced below.
For a complete list, contact:
info@streethome.org

Affordable Housing Advisory Committee, County of Simcoe (2019), White Paper on Shared Accommodation Housing (SAH)

www.simcoe.civicweb.net

Affordable Living for the Aging (2018), Strategies for Scaling Shared Housing. Best Practices, Challenges & Recommendations

www.homeshareuk.org

Batty, E., Cole, I., Green, S., McCarthy, L., Reeve, K. (2015), Evaluation of the Sharing Solutions Programme (Crisis) Sheffield Hallam University

www.shura.shu.ac.uk

Benton, A. L. (2014), Creating a Shared Home: Promising Approaches for Using Shared Housing to Prevent and End Homelessness in Massachusetts

www.ash.harvard.edu

Carmel, J. (2022), Their solution to the housing crisis? Living with strangers. Thrown together by New York City's brutal housing market, these roommates find a way to get by — even in close quarters

www.nytimes.com

Catalyst Community Developments (2018), Homes that connect us. Building social connections and community engagement among residents of multi-family rental housing

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Citizens Housing Planning Council (2019), Making Shared Housing Work.

www.chpcny.org

Co, D. (2017), Crisis Intimacies: The Dialectics of Shared Housing

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Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (2002), Shared Housing Key Points

www.cceh.org | Trainings, articles, and tools available at: www.cceh.org/resources-library/

Conscious Co-Living (n.d.), The Community Facilitation Handbook

www.consciouscoliving.com

Crisis (2017), Key principles for Help-to-Rent projects

www.crisis.org.uk

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www.sightline.org

Fernandez, C., Taylor J. (2018), Shared Housing – Alternative Housing Review. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

www.ciesandiego.org

Resources

(Continued)

Happy City (2020), Designed to engage. Policy recommendations for promoting sociability in multi-family housing design
www.admin.happycities.com

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www.socialinnovation.usc.edu

Housing Research Collaborative (2020), Scraping By
www.housingresearchcollaborative.scarp.ubc.ca

National Alliance to End Homelessness (2016), Shared Housing: A Solution for Single Adults Experiencing Homelessness
www.endhomelessness.org

Newcastle City Council (2015), Newcastle Shared Housing Accreditation Scheme. Guidance Document for Houses in Multiple Occupation
www.privaterentedservice.co.uk

Oriole Research & Design (2008), Shared Accommodation in Toronto. Successful Practices and Opportunities for Change in the Rooming House Sector
www.homelesshub.ca

Palutsis, E. (2020), Coliving vs traditional multifamily: the impact of bedroom density
www.arcomurray.com

Palutsis, E. (2020), Debunking coliving myths
www.arcomurray.com

San Diego Regional Taskforce on Homelessness (2020), Shared Housing in San Diego. A housing option norm that increases access, affordability, and social supports
www.rtfhsd.org


Sightline Institute (2020), Living Together: Its Time For Zoning Codes to Stop Regulating Family Type
Washington pushes bill forward to remove unrelated occupancy limits.
www.sightline.org

Stern, E., Yager, J. (2018), 21st Century SROs: Can Small Housing Units Help Meet the Need for Affordable Housing in New York City? www.furmancenter.org

Vikander, T. (2021), Data on Vancouver rental market missing shared living arrangements, says researchers who scraped Craigslist ads
www.bc.ctvnews.ca

Virginia Tech (2020), Zoning for co-living in Alexandria: a case study examination of Denver and Salt Lake City
www.media.alexandriava.gov

Winchester City Council (n.d.), Winchester Shared Housing Accreditation Scheme
www.winchesterstudentpad.co.uk



APPENDIX B:
LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Amendment permitting shared housing in all residential zones, Halifax Regional Municipality:

- **July 31, 2023:** Jamy-Ellen Proud, Planner III, Priority Planning, Regional Planning
- **July 27, 2023:** Leah Perrin, Manager, Regional Planning, Planning & Development
- **September 19, 2022:** Jill MacLellan, Principle Planner, Halifax Regional Municipality

The Shared Life Exchange, March 14, 2023

- Tim Dickau, Director, City Gate Vancouver

Co:Here, February 24, 2023

- Jeanette Moss, Director of Strategy & Development, Team Lead, Salisbury Community Society

Responsible Living Squamish, July 12th, 2022

- Dave Ransier, Owner, Target Homes

City of Vancouver, March 24, 2022

- Graham Anderson, Social Planner, Housing Policy, Planning, Urban Design & Sustainability

Sharing Housing Inc., March 3, 2022

- Annamarie Pluhar, President

Co-living development in Victoria, Townline Homes, February 19, 2022

- Chris Colbeck, President

Co-Liv, Global Association of Coliving Professionals, January 25, 2022

- Gui Perdrix, President

Sharing Programmes, Crisis UK, September 9, 2021

- Chris Hancock, Services Development Director
- Sarah Walters, Head of Best Practice

Coliving Development, City of Victoria, July 6, 2021

- Karen Hoese, Director of Sustainable Planning and Community Development
- Ross Soward, Senior Planner
- Hollie Mckeil, Senior Community Planner
- Andrew Cusack, Senior Planner
- Charlotte Wain, Senior Planner

Metro Vancouver HomeShare, June 21, 2021

- Kim Hockey, SFU Associate Director of Community Engagement

ShareNYC – New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, May 12, 2021

- Jaclyn Sachs, Director of Strategic Initiatives
- James Hull, Manhattan Planner
- Joan Huang, Manhattan Planner
- Ahmed Tigani, Deputy Commissioner
- Angus Page, Senior Project Manager
- Kate Cotty, Project Manager
- Brian Baldor, Executive Director of New Construction Design Review

Happy Cities, March 5, 2021

- Paty Rios, Research Lead & Housing Expert

APPENDIX C:

GLOSSARY



At-Risk of Homelessness – people who are not experiencing homelessness, but whose current income and/or housing situation is precarious.

Chosen Family Pods (CFP) – a model of cohabitating that involves choosing to live together, share each other's lives, and look after each other; and maintaining a private bedroom space and sharing common areas among 3 or more housemates.

Cohousing – involves intentionally designed privately owned homes and shared community space on a communally purchased land parcel. The community space may include a large kitchen, dining room, laundry, recreational areas, workshop, and gardens.

Coliving – a form of communal living whereby tenants rent a private bedroom and share common areas. The space is purpose-built, fully furnished, and includes kitchen utensils, household tools and common supplies, utilities, internet and cleaning of common areas in the rent. Social activities are curated by a landlord host and promote the engagement and intermingling of tenants and a convivial atmosphere. (While popular among millennials, Coliving is far beyond the means of fixed or low-income individuals.)

Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) – contributions toward amenities that benefit the public (e.g., schools, libraries, parks, childcare facilities, playgrounds, community centres, and affordable housing) are provided by rezoning applicants as in-kind or cash contributions when a municipality grants additional development rights (e.g., changes in zoned land use, height and density bonuses).

Density Bonusing – sometimes referred to as bonusing or floor area relaxations, is used as a zoning tool that permits developers to build additional floor area, in exchange for amenities and affordable housing needed by the community.

Development Cost Levies (DCLs) – Most new developments pay DCLs based on square footage. DCLs are an important source of revenue used to finance the cost of upgrading or providing infrastructure services (roads, water, sewer and drainage).

Housing Design Guidelines – provide standards and technical guidelines for the design and construction of new buildings to meet the needs of future occupants. (CFP will necessitate a flexible framework for designers to apply the guidelines creatively to optimize space utilization.)

Housing Policy - refers to the actions of government, including legislation and program delivery, which have a direct or indirect impact on housing supply and availability, housing standards and urban planning.

Inclusionary Zoning – requires new residential developments to include affordable housing units, creating mixed-income housing. Ensuring affordable housing is an option in all residential zones contributes to both accessibility and equity.

Independent Housing – means a home that provides a private living arrangement and does not have onsite formal tenant supports. It involves directing your own life and taking responsibility for your actions.

Interdependent Housing – a household where the members are mutually dependent (i.e., reliant on one another) and value each other's perspective, knowledge, and skills; where no one person is expected to have all the answers; and they share a belief that they are stronger collectively in self-actualizing individually.

Market Rate Rent – the usual price charged for rental housing in a free market, rather than one fixed by a state authority or engineered by housing design. If demand for rental housing rises, landlords tend to respond by pushing up its price, thus setting a higher market rate. When demand declines the opposite occurs.

More Affordable – A less than current market rate for a private market one-bedroom rental that is within the financial means of fixed- and/or low-income individuals. (While CFP may help many avoid homelessness, some individual may continue to experience financial hardship and be forced to cut back on other necessities which can lead to food insecurity.)

Self-Contained Unit – one which has a kitchen (or cooking area), bathroom and toilet inside it for the exclusive use of the household living within the unit. If the occupiers need to leave the unit to gain access to any one of these amenities, then that unit is not self-contained.

Shared Housing – a furnished or unfurnished household where each person has a private bedroom and shares the other living spaces such as a kitchen, living room, and bathrooms. Tenants use common areas to meet their individual needs including connecting with other tenants.

Supportive Housing – subsidized housing with on-site supports for single adults, youth, seniors, families and people with disabilities at-risk of or experiencing homelessness. These supports help people maintain stable housing.

Training Apartments – provide a time-limited opportunity for individuals to live in the same household and gain the skills they need to live collectively (budgeting, paying rent, planning meals, shopping, cooking, washing clothes, cleaning, and ensuring positive relationships with neighbours and the landlord) and determine whether housemates would be suitable long term.



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WHO IS YOUR CHOSEN FAMILY?

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