



# Inclusive Housing:

## *Advancing Good Lives in Welcoming Communities*

A Summary of the Findings of the March 2016 Inclusive Housing Forum and a Draft Framework for Inclusive Housing

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## 1. CONTEXT

Community Living British Columbia (CLBC) has a vision for the individuals that we support of *“living good lives in welcoming communities”*. To help make this a reality, CLBC offers services that give people choice, innovation and flexibility. The intent is to maximize self-determination and independence for individuals, and support shared responsibility among families, service providers and community organisations.

CLBC offers different residential supports, based on an individual’s preference and disability-related need. This includes staffed (group) homes; shared living arrangements; and supported living, which provides assistance in activities of daily living for individuals who own, lease, or rent their own homes, and for those living independently in the community.

CLBC does not have a mandate to fund the cost of actual housing. Our mandate is to:

- Provide supports to address disability-related needs, including in an individual’s home
- Assist individuals and their families to find and use generic and community supports such as transit, recreation, social clubs etc.
- Coordinate amongst various agencies where an individual has complex care needs

The availability of appropriate, accessible and affordable housing, however, is critical to the people CLBC supports. In particular, the availability of affordable housing has emerged as a barrier to individuals who would like to access supported living. More and more, individuals and their families, service providers, and other groups are seeking and creating innovative housing options for their communities. CLBC is often asked to support these projects.

While there is general agreement that congregated, segregated and institutional settings are not appropriate, there is not a universally held standard that defines acceptable inclusive housing. As a result, CLBC does not have clear direction as to what types of projects to support. Nor do those developing and operating housing have criteria against which to evaluate their projects. So we are creating a framework to help guide such decisions in a fair and transparent way, ensuring they are always in service of *“good lives in welcoming communities”*.

## 2. INCLUSIVE HOUSING FORUM: PROCESS

CLBC hosted a one-day Forum in March 2016. We brought together stakeholders with a diversity of interests and perspectives to explore inclusive housing and help us develop our framework. Participants included Self-advocates, family members, Community Councils, service providers, BC Housing, and community groups such as BC Non Profit Housing Association, Inclusion BC and Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network, along with CLBC staff.

The Forum involved panel presentations and group discussions. The panel included:

- South Okanagan Association for Integrated Community Living, Oliver (Richard Little, Executive Director)
- Housing for Young Adults with Disabilities, North Vancouver (Clay Knowlton & Vera Frinton Parents)
- Semiahmoo House Society, Surrey (Doug Tennant, Executive Director)
- Catalyst Community Developments Society, Surrey (Robert Brown, President)
- Cool Aid Society, Victoria (Candace MacDonald, Executive Director)

Panelists spoke about their projects; their particular approach to inclusion; and their recommendations to CLBC. In small groups, participants reflected on what they had heard in the context of their community situation; and identified challenges, opportunities, and options. The focus was on understanding what is working well as well as some of the dilemmas and compromises people are facing. Each group presented their top recommendations for CLBC to the whole gathering.

This report summarizes the recommendations from the small group discussions, and then offers a draft Inclusive Housing Framework for further discussion.

### **3. INCLUSIVE HOUSING FORUM: FINDINGS**

Forum participants made recommendations in two areas: *What does inclusive housing mean? What action can CLBC take to advance it?* Below is a summary of these findings:

#### ***WHAT DOES INCLUSIVE HOUSING LOOK LIKE?***

Inclusive housing should be consistent with CLBC's vision of "*good lives in welcoming communities*". People with developmental disabilities have a long history of being isolated and segregated, and housing has played a huge role in this. In order keep moving away from this past, housing models need to facilitate a sense of belonging across all areas of people's lives.

Inclusive housing should promote relationships and the inclusion of individuals as valued citizens in their communities. In short, inclusive housing should promote Quality of Life. There are several factors that can help make this happen:

#### **People's voices must count**

- Having a key to your own house is important but it's not enough. People need choice over where they live and control of what's important to them in their home. An example is being able to have pets.

- Affordability is key to choice. Many individuals have limited financial means which can be severely limiting if affordable housing is not available. CLBC should not make choices for people but rather make sure that people have choices.
- Flexibility and adaptability of housing projects is important to meeting the needs of individuals across their lives.
- Person-centred planning is essential to individuals' having control, choice, and autonomy in determining what their housing will be, and that it supports self-determination on an ongoing basis.

**Families have an important role to play and often important contributions to make**

- Families should have opportunities to contribute to and support people's voices.
- Parents in particular often help individuals find housing and establish a home. They often also possess assets that can be essential in finding housing solutions.. Sometimes families are the prime instigators and have plans to find or develop housing and often only need a bit of support to turn the plans into reality.
- Not every family has the same capacity or level of involvement in an individual's life. Other natural supports that individuals have or could have in their lives can also play a central role in their inclusion. Housing models should foster these networks.

**Safety and security is always a consideration**

- Everybody needs to feel safe and secure and this starts in their home. This is a particularly important consideration for the people CLBC supports.
- Perceived vulnerability and safety concerns must be balanced with dignity of risk and autonomy. An individual's home life and living situation need to incorporate safeguards that do not restrict or limit, but instead support and enable them to live rich, full lives. Housing should create opportunities to foster a range of connections with people from different areas of an individual's life, providing a good foundation for these safeguards.

**Inclusive housing must accommodate people with diverse needs and aspirations**

- Any housing development needs to enable person-centred support of the people who are going to live in it. Any housing model that CLBC supports should enable people with a range of needs and goals to participate, and take this diversity into account so people can pursue their own goals and their own Quality of Life.

**Home and belonging in the community**

- Just like everyone else, people with developmental disabilities need to be in and of their communities. Individuals should be able to engage with communities in a way

that meets their needs, and housing models need to accommodate this. Proximity and accessibility of transportation and other amenities are essential in this.

- Communities need awareness, understanding and opportunities to include and value all of their members. Inclusive housing models can help develop this capacity.
- An individual's home should both reflect and enable that sense of belonging. Housing developments should reflect their communities. This means demographics that reflect the population – people with developmental disabilities are just one part of a rich, diverse community. Housing models should also respond to the needs and capacity of the community – the right fit for the community context. Fostering inclusion might look different in different communities, for example rural vs urban communities or heterogeneous vs homogenous communities. Housing options supported by CLBC should create a range of models to fit within the varying landscapes of B.C. communities.

#### **It is not all about numbers**

- The ratio of people with developmental disabilities to those without developmental disabilities who live within a housing model should be only one factor to be considered in terms of whether a project is inclusive and supported by CLBC. Indeed it should not be the only or major factor. Qualitative factors discussed above are arguably more important to some people.

#### **WHAT SHOULD CLBC'S ROLE BE?**

Forum participants identified a number of areas in which CLBC can or should play a role:

##### **Establishing the need**

Development of housing is a resource-intensive activity and should only proceed after the need for housing in a particular community is clear.

##### **Developing a vision**

Housing development comes in all shapes, sizes and configurations:

- From municipal-sponsored housing to non-profit subsidized housing
- From family-financed to BC Housing-financed housing
- From cooperative housing to co-housing
- From single family homes to multi-unit developments with hundreds of suites

The initiator, whether a group of individuals or families, service provider, non-profit housing provider or developer, needs to be aware of options to develop a vision and a plan for bringing that vision to life. Developing the vision and manifesting it both work best when

the intended tenants and their families are involved in the planning and operation of the housing.

### **Awareness of strategies**

The investments and initiatives of the Government of BC, through BC Housing, and the Government of Canada are important in the development of affordable housing in BC. Development of housing, however, is not solely dependent on Government investment. People have demonstrated many alternative ways to develop inclusive housing. Sharing awareness of these different strategies and experiences will help individuals, families and service providers develop a realistic vision and plan. Some of these strategies include:

- Co-housing models
- Partnerships with local developers/builders
- Partnerships with local government
- Partnerships with the non-profit and co-op housing sector including the exploration of life lease arrangements.<sup>1</sup>

### **Developing partnerships and resources**

No matter the size of the development or who acts as the initiator, developing housing requires collaboration and partnerships. Vision, assets, financing, expertise, planning and supports are necessary ingredients. There are roles for individuals, families, community groups and/or service providers, CLBC staff, developers, municipalities, financial institutions and other businesses, depending on the development. Coordination is often needed amongst these players.

### **Leveraging assets**

Individuals, families, service providers, community organizations and municipalities all have assets that may contribute to the viability of a particular housing development. Opportunities to leverage these assets need to be sought and developed.

### **Planning for and providing necessary supports**

In most situations, individuals will require some supports to live successfully in their homes. CLBC is often called on to fund these services. For best success, these discussions should happen early in the planning. CLBC should make sure people know about its Inclusive

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<sup>1</sup> Best Practices Review – Housing Choices in BC for Persons with Developmental Disabilities, April 2014

Housing Framework, and understand how to work with CLBC early on to ensure they are on the right track with proposals for CLBC support.

#### **Planning for special populations**

Individuals with a diversity of support needs, of all ages, from many cultures and with a wide range of housing aspirations need housing. Some, such as those with complex support needs or who are aging, may need specialized housing and/or supports to adequately meet their housing needs.

#### **Promoting innovation**

Development of housing investments, and exploration of different financial structures and ownership models are examples of creative solutions that support and empower individuals while considering long-term viability.

## **4. WHAT THE RESEARCH TELLS US**

In addition to hearing what the Forum participants had to say, CLBC is relying on what research has to say in developing our Inclusive Housing Framework. A quick review offers the following for consideration (There is a list of references at the end of this document).

### ***WHAT DOES INCLUSION MEAN?***

Inclusion is a complex and often disputed term. We look to our vision of “*good lives in welcoming communities*” to guide our understanding of this concept and the importance of it. For our purposes here, we define Inclusion in two parts:

- It is the interaction between two major life domains of interpersonal relationships and community participation AND
- It exists in the confluence and interaction of individual, interpersonal, organisational, and community spheres<sup>2</sup>

In simpler language, this means that people have relationships with other people and they feel a part of their community. To make this happen, many people, organizations and parts of community need to be connected and involved.

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<sup>2</sup> As defined by Simplican et al

## **WHY IS INCLUSION IMPORTANT?**

### **It is a key aspect of Quality of Life**

The first part of how we define inclusion is directly linked to Dr. Schalock's Quality of Life model, which is at the heart of CLBC's mission and mandate. This model identifies three domains in an individual's life – independence, social participation, and well-being. Successful inclusion results in positive outcomes in social participation – which is about relationships and interactions with other people, accessing supports, participating in community activities and roles, and having human and legal rights recognized. The Quality of Life domains interact and impact each other, so positive outcomes in this domain are likely to improve outcomes in well-being and independence as well.

The second part of the definition of inclusion is about how inclusion relies on the connected actions and efforts of the individual, other people, organizations and the community. Working to enhance Quality of Life outcomes at the individual level both depends on and can support what people and organizations are doing at other levels. CLBC needs to support inclusive practice organisationally, as well as promote and enable this with service providers, individuals and families and community groups. When there is inclusion in the lives of individuals, it enables greater connection and community engagement at all levels.

### **It is a CLBC accountability**

The person-centred, inclusive values underpinning CLBC's practice are formalized in our legislation and policy. The link between inclusion and Quality of Life outcomes means that CLBC's success in achieving "good lives in welcoming communities" is dependent upon inclusion. CLBC's use of the quality of life measurement tool *include Me!* provides a measure of our success and progress.

### **It is in keeping with international commitments**

In 2010 Canada ratified the 2007 *United Nations Convention of Rights of Disabled Persons* (UNCRDP), committing to promote, protect, and ensure the rights of people with disabilities. Inclusion is one of the guiding principles of this convention.

Article 19 of the UNCRPD recognizes the right of people with disabilities to live independently and be included in the community. It highlights their right to choose where they live and with whom. And requires governments to provide access to a range of housing and community support services; and access to generic community services on an equal basis with others.



### ***WHAT ROLE DOES HOUSING PLAY IN INCLUSION?***

Housing can facilitate inclusion in two important ways:

- By actively creating opportunities for individuals to engage with other people, in a range of diverse places, and to be involved in their neighbourhood and community AND
- By not acting a barrier to these things

Housing models that are community-based and inclusion-focused lead to positive Quality of Life outcomes for individuals. Housing should accommodate and facilitate the kind of lives people want to have - it should enhance relationships, accessibility of community, safety, and social opportunities.

## **5. DRAFT FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSIVE HOUSING**

CLBC intends on using this Draft Inclusive Housing Framework to inform practice and future direction.

### ***PURPOSE***

- Guide CLBC decisions about which housing projects or models to support, so that they are consistent with our vision and mandate and with improving Quality of Life outcomes
- Help people proposing new housing initiatives to understand whether or not CLBC is likely to fund support services within them
- Encourage innovative solutions that expand the possibilities of community living, and advance inclusive options for individuals eligible for CLBC services

### ***ELEMENTS***

There are five elements, based on what we learned from the Forum and from the research. All are rooted in Quality of Life. Each has several criteria attached to it:

Element	Criteria
<p><b>1. Choice and Control</b></p> <p>Choice and control over our living space is fundamental to the concept of home and to quality of life.</p> <p>At the same time most housing has rules. An appropriate understanding and balance of these two is expected.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Do individuals have the basic elements of choice and control within their home? Examples:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Their own key</li> <li>○ Choice about who they live with</li> <li>○ Ability to have pets</li> <li>○ Choice about who visits</li> <li>○ Choice of how to decorate the space</li> </ul> </li> <li>❖ Do/did the individuals and/or their families have an opportunity to participate in decisions about design and operation that may affect such things?</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Basic Inclusion Requirements</b></p> <p>Housing in which CLBC provides funded supports must meet several basic requirements that are key to inclusion as an integral aspect of quality of life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Does the location promote community participation i.e. access to amenities and reasonable public transit?</li> <li>❖ Is it affordable?</li> <li>❖ Is it amenable to the delivery of supports to meet individuals’ disability-related needs and to mitigate risks associated with living independently or semi-independently? Does it balance reasonable standards for safety and security with dignity of risk?</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Ratio of people with and without developmental disabilities</b></p> <p>Inclusion is not defined by a hard ratio. An acceptable ratio is dependent on the size of the development, the neighbourhood it is located in, and how opportunities for inclusion are built in and created.</p> <p>Higher ratios are less acceptable as the size of a development increases relative to the density of the neighbourhood.</p> <p>A model with 100% individuals with developmental disabilities is only acceptable if it is a single family home, duplex or four-plex and does not stand apart in a single family neighbourhood.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Is there a reasonable conclusion that the ratio negatively impacts an individual’s quality of life?</li> <li>❖ How does the ratio, along with the physical design and support model, promote opportunities for inclusion for the individuals living there? Examples:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A sense of belonging</li> <li>○ Ways to make contributions and be recognized for them</li> <li>○ Making friends with neighbours inside and outside of the housing</li> </ul> </li> <li>❖ What are the optics of the ratio within the neighbourhood – does the housing fit well and seem integrated with other housing nearby? Or does the ratio result in the conclusion that this housing is somehow different from the norm?</li> </ul>

Element	Criteria
<p><b>4. Diversity</b></p> <p>Individuals eligible for CLBC services have a wide range of interests, preferences, disability-related support needs and backgrounds.</p> <p>While no housing should be exclusive of any group, it is recognized that some individuals are better supported in some situations and some individuals pose risks to themselves or others that must be reasonably mitigated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Is the housing accessible to all types of people, including those who have all types of disabilities and support needs?</li> <li>❖ Is the housing specialized to meet the housing and/or support needs of a particular population, and on that basis may not be appropriate for other individuals because they would be at risk?</li> <li>❖ Where the housing is specialized, are there plans that will enable individuals to be included in the surrounding neighbourhood?</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Sustainability</b></p> <p>Housing needs to provide stability and a sense of permanency to individuals and be amenable to supports being provided in a cost-effective manner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Are tenants confident that they can stay in the housing as long as they want to?</li> <li>❖ Is the housing likely to be financially sound over time?</li> <li>❖ Does the set-up enable supports to reasonably be provided in a cost-effective way?</li> </ul>

**CLBC ROLE**

CLBC has several roles in encouraging and facilitating the expansion of inclusive housing for individuals with developmental disabilities in BC:

- Share this framework with all potential partners and players, and explain the criteria we will use to make decisions
- Convene key partners to problem-solve, seek advice and explore innovative and collaborative solutions (Inclusive Housing Think Tank)
- Identify specific roles for CLBC staff during planning and development of housing
- Create policy that clarifies CLBC’s mandate and staff roles, and enables/encourages the leverage of family and service provider assets
- Forecast and share information about housing needs, patterns and trends, including needs of special populations
- Help build community capacity by connecting families, individuals and service providers with each other and resources (e.g. Community Council-sponsored housing forums)
- Plan for and provide funding for supports for eligible individuals, including the option of Individualized Funding or Person Centred Societies to enable flexible person-centred supports.

## 6. REFERENCES

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