

Your intro to small housing



#wedosmallhousing
#smallchangeiscoming

SHBC

the voice of
small housing in bc

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What is small housing?

Small Housing BC defines small housing as just enough space to live.

Depending on the size of the household, this can be anything between 200 and 1500 square feet. It's small-scale, ground-oriented housing that is either detached or attached, and well suited to existing single-family neighbourhoods.

There are many individual and societal benefits to living in smaller spaces. People who live in small homes generally own fewer possessions, consume less, and have lower utility bills. Smaller homes require less building materials for construction and use less land. As such, they often cost much less to purchase, maintain, and live in. Construction of smaller homes can utilize more efficient, natural, healthy, high-quality materials that might not be affordable in larger dwellings. Small units can infill existing neighbourhoods around urban/main centres, creating community close to amenities. Subdivision of lots results in reduction of total property value, making each unit more affordable, and small housing allows for intergenerational living and aging in place. All of these benefits result in healthier, more cost-effective living, and a better environment.

“ How do strong communities come about? It's not just about creating shelter and affordability. Strong communities have places for everyone. ”

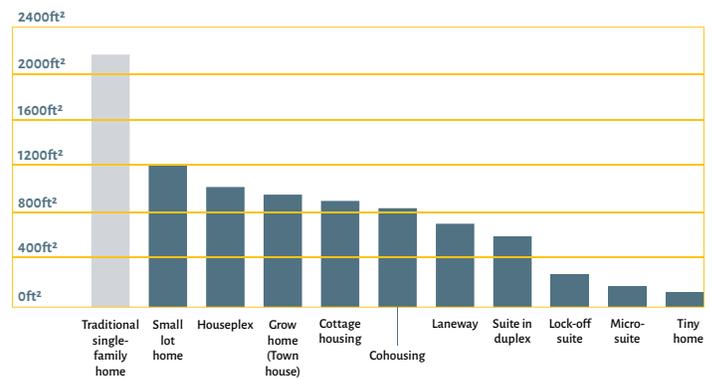
—ROSS CHAPIN, ROSS CHAPIN ARCHITECTS

Small housing types

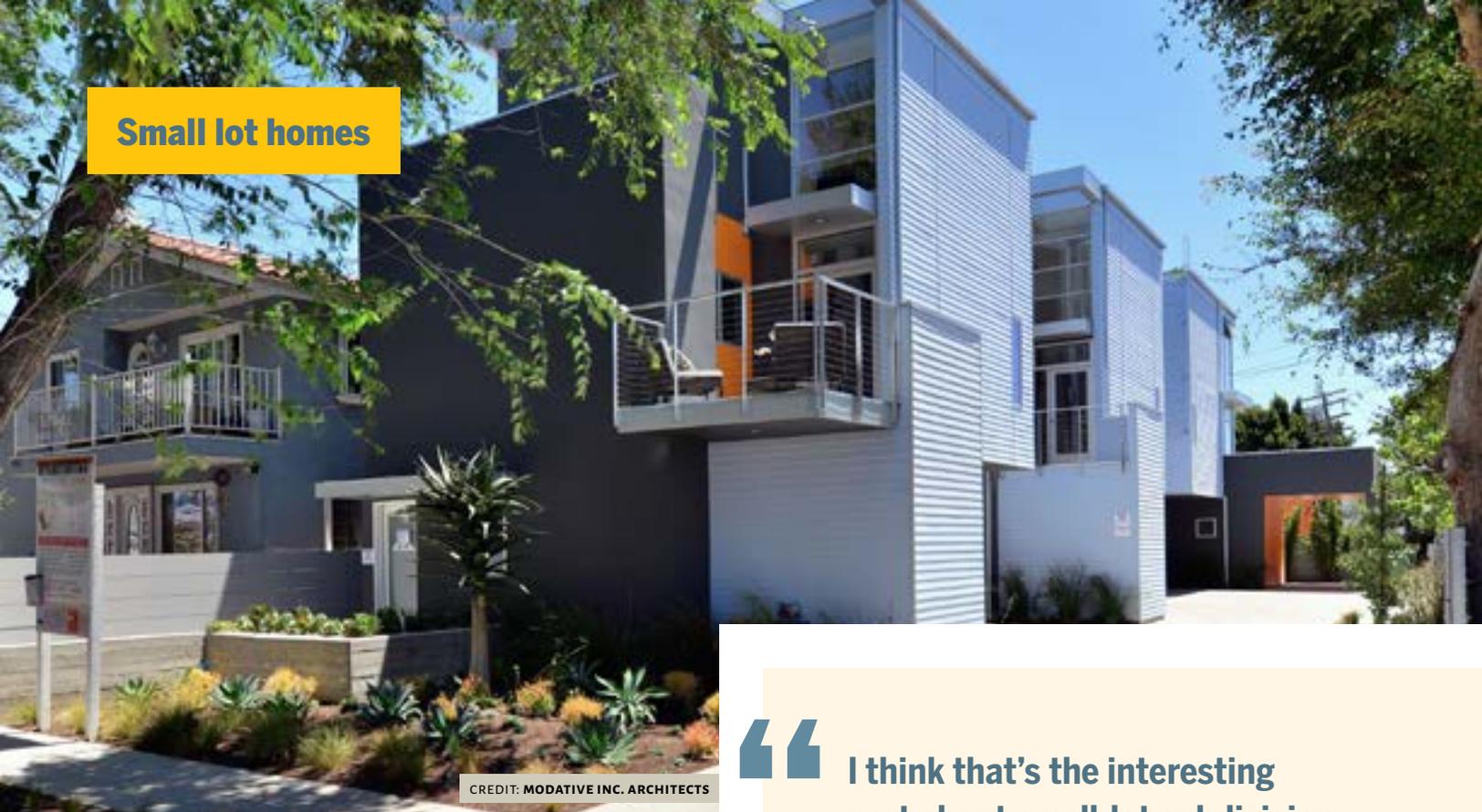
We know that there are alternative liveable forms to the single-family home and the high-rise tower. However, when we think of small housing in BC, we tend to imagine laneways or accessory dwelling units (ADUs) only. There are more forms than that.

Here are some brief summaries of smaller typologies, as taken from SHBC's 2015 report *Small Houses* available at smallhousingbc.org/small-houses-toolkit/. These include an overview on: small lot homes, houseplexes, grow homes, cottage housing, co-housing, laneway homes, suites in duplexes, lock-off suites, micro-suites, tiny homes and collective housing (a recent add-on).

Average sizes of various housing forms



Small lot homes



CREDIT: MODATIVE INC. ARCHITECTS

In a nutshell

- » Detached townhouse, structurally independent with no shared walls
- » 6-inch gap between homes covered with flashing, but appears connected
- » Can be placed on irregular and underutilized lots; reduced setbacks, frontages and open space
- » Average unit size: 1000 to 1500 square feet
- » Example: Los Angeles

Benefits

- » Fee-simple homeownership for condominium-style housing
- » Making use of underutilized lots
- » Increase diversity of housing options for purchase

Challenges

- » Restricted to use in commercial and multi-family zoned areas
- » Inadequate public consultation
- » Takes too long to implement
- » Parking requirements are too high



I think that's the interesting part about small-lot subdivision. Originally it was supposed to be this affordable housing initiative. And I don't think it's ever really been that. We prefer the word 'attainable' over 'affordable.' It does provide people the opportunity to live maybe in a neighborhood where they couldn't live normally, just not in a house with a yard.



—DEREK LEAVITT, CO-FOUNDER AND PRINCIPAL OF MODATIVE, *SMALL-LOT HOMES ADD DENSITY TO LA NEIGHBORHOODS*, KCRW'S DNA: DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE RADIO SHOW, 2018



CREDIT: BESTOR ARCHITECTURE

Houseplex



PHOTOS CREDIT: IAN POELLET (CREATIVE COMMONS)



“ Houseplexes [sic] are small, multi-unit buildings designed to look like a large house, or to be architecturally compatible with the residential neighbourhood. In some cases, one of the units may be designed to appear as a garden suite (a small cottage in the backyard area). ”

—CITY OF VICTORIA, VIC WEST NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

In a nutshell

- » The appearance of single-family housing and the cost savings of attached homes
- » Multiple self-contained units within a large single family house; triplex, fourplex
- » Typically do not share single entrance
- » Preserves and provides affordable options in established residential areas
- » Average unit size: 1000 to 1400 square feet
- » Examples: City of North Vancouver, Portland

Benefits

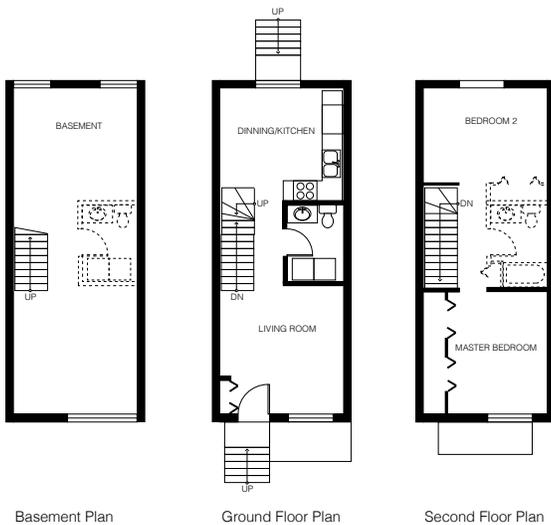
- » New housing option for residential neighbourhoods
- » Pre-approved plan permit option
- » Accommodating density, preserving existing neighbourhood

Challenges

- » Insufficient parking



Grow homes



CREDIT: **SMALL HOUSING BC**

In a nutshell

- » DIY housing model, with main floor typically complete and others barely finished; meant to upgrade over time
- » Starter homes resembling row houses
- » Affordable ownership option through informed design and prefabrication
- » Built on a small lot; energy-efficient compact design
- » Flexible use of space to meet changing household needs
- » Average unit size: 800 to 1000 square feet on two floors
- » Example: Montreal

The first grow homes were built in the suburbs of Montreal, in 1990 as narrow row houses that are largely unfinished and lack partition walls. The lack of finishes reduces the costs and time required for construction, with savings passed on to the homeowner. At their leisure, or when finances permit, residents grow their home—finishing rooms, building partitions and adding fixtures. This is similar to the standard building practices in places such as South America, where limited income requires many to grow into their homes over longer periods of time than is typical in North America.

Benefits

- » Effective affordable housing strategy
- » Flexible use of space to meet changing household needs
- » Energy efficient housing form

Challenges

- » Ghettoization of community
- » Compromised quality finishings



CREDIT: **AVI FRIEDMAN**



The grow home is an exception in an industry that pushes the notion that ‘bigger is better.’ More than just a design, the grow home is a mind-set, one that recognizes that there are people who would rather drive a Honda Civic or an Accord even if they can afford a BMW. Draconian zoning bylaws, conservatism, ignorance, or the simple inability to innovate prevent the industry from providing a broader base of product to potential homeowners. The grow home’s success should make the industry give this strategy a second look—sooner rather than later.



—**AVI FRIEDMAN**, *TEN YEARS OLD AND GROWING*,
CANADIAN ARCHITECT, 2001

Cottage housing



CREDITS: ROSS CHAPIN ARCHITECTS

In a nutshell

- » A community of small detached homes (4-14) oriented inwards around a common open space on a single lot
- » Designed to promote a close-knit sense of community and neighbourliness with an increased level of contact
- » Double density for the underlying zone, efficient use of land
- » Requires larger lot, parking to the side
- » Offers privacy of a conventional single family home
- » Typically less than 1000 square feet each
- » Examples: Langley and Seattle, WA and Pittsboro, NC

Benefits

- » Appealing to a demographic that might otherwise choose a single-family home
- » More efficient use of land
- » Clustered arrangements can contribute to a sense of community

Challenges

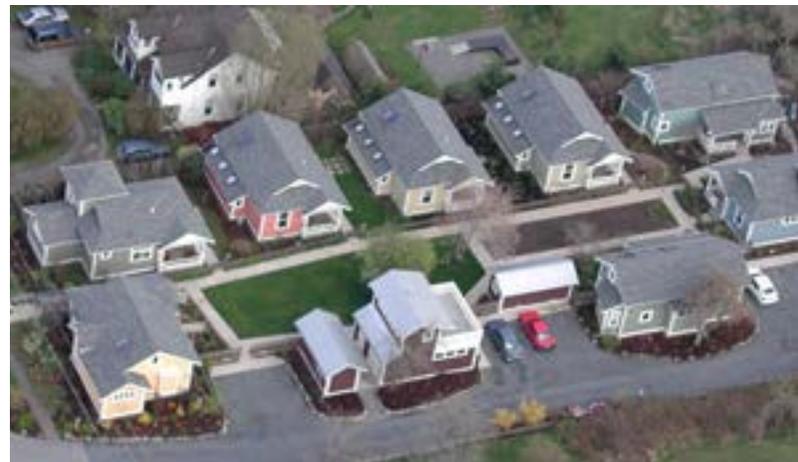
- » Not always affordable
- » Limitations on density
- » Not necessarily transit-oriented



“ Pocket neighbourhoods provide an intermediate zone between the private dwelling and the public street, an open space shared by the houses or apartments surrounding it.

—ROSS CHAPIN, ROSS CHAPIN ARCHITECTS

”



Cohousing



PHOTO CREDIT: DAN TOULGOET



CREDIT: LITTLE MOUNTAIN COHOUSING

In a nutshell

- » Stratified building where owners are the developers and co-designers
- » Private ownership with shared community amenities.
- » Residents live in self-contained units
- » Prioritizes community building and common values, consensus

Case study: In 1964, a group of senior residents and an architect purchased a site outside of Copenhagen, with the intent of co-developing the property for their own use. The group envisioned a development suited to supportive living. The site design included 12 terraced rowhouses, surrounding a common house and a swimming pool. Local officials supported the plan, however, residents living adjacent to the property vocally opposed the project and prevented it from proceeding. This early attempt at community-led development was the first iteration of cohousing. Since then, the idea of private ownership combined with shared amenities has spread worldwide. The Canadian Cohousing Network has counted more than 119 cohousing units in North America completed since 1991 and there are currently 100 more being developed. The cohousing model exists across BC, with examples in Burnaby and Vancouver.

Benefits

- » Private small homes mixed with large shared amenities
- » An intentional community that prioritizes neighbourliness
- » Contributes to affordability and environmental sustainability

Challenges

- » Lengthy and complicated development process
- » Consensus-based decision-making model



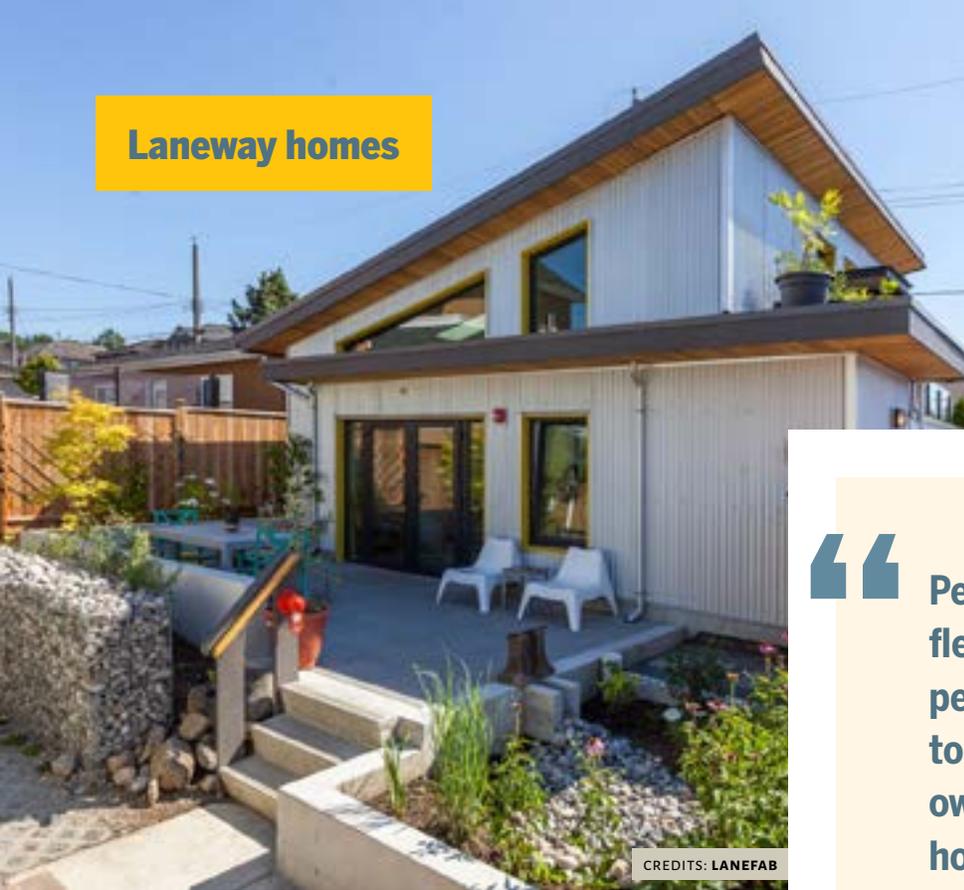
The characteristics of cohousing draw many different people, and the celebration of diversity is one of the ideals. For some, cohousing provides relief from the loneliness and isolation that is often inherent in conventional developments; for others the appeal lies in the sense of belonging to an active community, or the opportunity to create a model for a new way of living together that is more socially and environmentally sustainable.



—BELTERRA COHOUSING, BOWEN ISLAND



Laneway homes



CREDITS: LANEFAB



CREDIT: SMALLWORKS

In a nutshell

- » Detached accessory dwelling unit (ADU) in the backyard of an existing single-family home lot
- » Can be used for family or rental
- » Doesn't always require lane access
- » Also known as ADUs, cottage homes, or granny/garden suites
- » Average unit size: Varies, up to 1500 square feet
- » Examples: All over North America

Benefits

- » Typifies gentle densification
- » Flexible housing arrangements
- » Acts as a mortgage helper

Challenges

- » Neighbourhood resistance
- » Permanence of built form
- » Cost prohibitive, expensive to build



People are looking for far more flexibility. We're getting calls from people young and old who want to build a laneway house of their own so they can rent out the larger house to a family that can actually use the space. In Nelson people are concerned that their children, family, and friends are having to move away for lack of housing. In these situations, a flexible infill housing policy can make the difference between their loved ones being able to stay or having to go.



—ALEX THUMM, PLANNER, CITY OF NELSON



CREDIT: SMALLWORKS

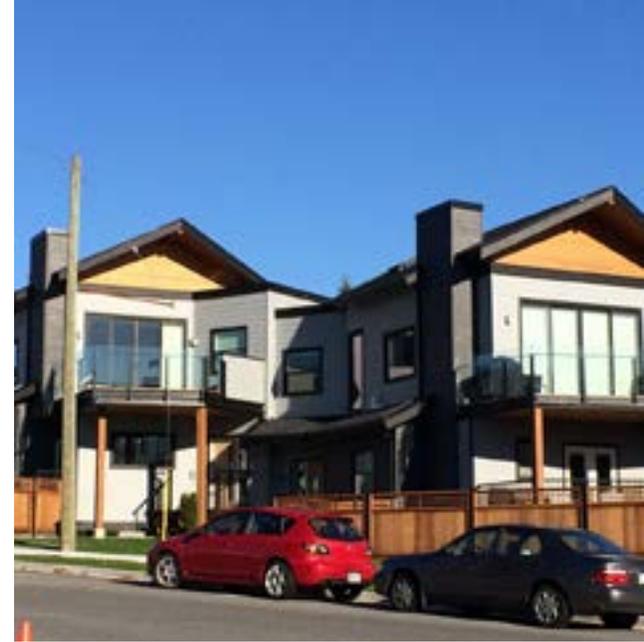


Want to learn more about laneways? Connect with Jake Fry of Smallworks, Bryn Davidson of Lanefab, Scott Fearnley of Click Modular Homes, city planners Lisa Zosiak from Maple Ridge, Graham Anderson from Vancouver and Sebastien Arcand from Nelson; not to mention, Bob de Wit from the Greater Vancouver Home Builders' Association.

Suites in duplexes



PHOTOS CREDIT: CITY OF NORTH VANCOUVER



“ The City of North Vancouver went to the province and advocated for suites in duplexes to increase housing diversity and rental stock, and provide mortgage helpers and increase options for intergenerational living. ”

—ANNIE DEMPSTER, PLANNING TECHNICIAN, PLANNING DEPARTMENT, CITY OF NORTH VANCOUVER

In a nutshell

- » Evolution of secondary suites in single-family home, duplex with basement and accessory dwelling units; four residences within a duplex (CNV duplexes with accessory units are to be owner occupied and then the accessory units can be rental)
- » More efficient use of land in close proximity to a city's service core, with little or no visual change to established neighbourhoods
- » Registered professionals used to meet fire and life safety requirements
- » Average unit size: 400 to 969 square feet (or a maximum of 40% of the total Gross Floor Area, whichever is the lesser)

Case study: A duplex is a semi-detached house where two dwellings are attached, side-by-side (or back-to-front) by a common wall or walls. The City of North Vancouver (CNV) allows duplexes to be stratified. CNV considers an accessory dwelling unit (suite) to be a separated designated area within a duplex that includes cooking facilities, sleeping and living areas and a washroom. The installation of an accessory dwelling unit (suites) in a duplex is permitted in the CNV, subject to both the city's zoning bylaw and BCBC. Building Code challenges have been addressed through the Building Permit process with involvement of Registered Professionals.

Benefits

- » Increases housing options
- » Facilitated hidden density
- » Responsive engagement with community
- » Gradual implementation

Challenges

- » Allocating space for parking
- » Liveability in existing duplexes



Lock-off suites



CREDIT: BCIT



Floor plan of lock-off suite. Credit: Perkins & Co.

In a nutshell

- » Self-contained and legal secondary suites within apartments or townhouses.
- » Likened to a hotel room with a kitchenette
- » Enables condo owners to rent out extra space in their homes
- » Increased affordable rental stock that's close to amenities
- » Average unit size: Less than 300 square feet

Case study: The City of Burnaby was the first municipality in North America to legalize lock-off suites. The city has two large post-secondary schools: Simon Fraser University and British Columbia Institute of Technology. Those institutions have substantial student populations, a large portion of whom need rental housing.

In 2000, prompted by a proposed development adjacent to the Simon Fraser University campus, the City of Burnaby introduced zoning to allow secondary suites in apartment buildings. The proposed development has become UniverCity - an intact high-density, mixed-use, transit accessible, walkable and family-friendly community at the top of a mountain.

Benefits

- » Increased housing options
- » Increase affordable rental stock
- » Mortgage helper
- » Room for extended family

Challenges

- » High construction costs
- » Parking availability
- » Security of tenure
- » Incentivizing lock-off suite construction

Small housing types



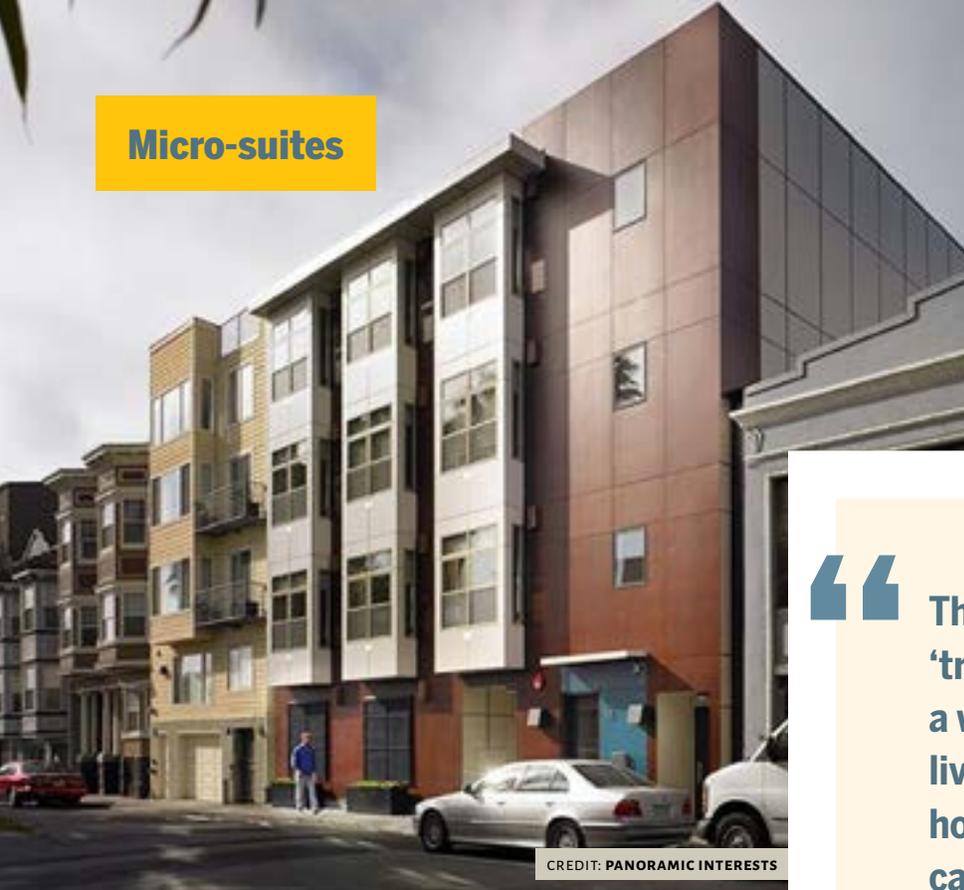
The lock-off suite was conceived to achieve two objectives: to assist a condominium buyer to afford a larger unit (2, 3 or 4-bedroom) by providing rental income until such time as they could afford the larger unit, a mortgage helper in the sky and to provide affordable rental housing within a condominium development.

The City of Burnaby facilitated the first units by modifying the zoning for UniverCity, allowing them in up to 50% of the units. I'm pleased that other municipalities now allow them as well, including Vancouver and West Vancouver. There are, however, technical issues to be addressed, including whether a separate electrical panel is required (it shouldn't be) and how to allocate parking (it's not needed).

—MCIHAEL GELLER, PRESIDENT, GELLER GROUP



Micro-suites



CREDIT: PANORAMIC INTERESTS



“ The principle of a micro-loft is called ‘trading space for place.’ It’s all about a work-life balance and having a very livable but less financially onerous home in a great location where you can tie into the free amenities that are in the city. We have another saying for micro-lofts: ‘a 300-sq.-ft. home with a 3-million-sq.-ft. living room.’ Your living room is the city. It’s like when you’re travelling, and you have a home base. But to mitigate that, we also have these amazing amenities in the building like multiple bookable dining rooms, rooftop decks, study areas, gyms, social rooms, and outdoor spaces.

—JON STOVELL, IS IT TIME FOR VANCOUVER TO ALLOW MORE MICRO-LOFTS?, VANCOUVER MAGAZINE, 2016

In a nutshell

- » Self-contained units
- » Allow for high levels of density without towers
- » Typically limited to 2 people per suite; good for singles
- » Efficient multi-purpose space
- » Can meet social housing goals
- » Average unit size: Less than 300 square feet
- » Examples: Vancouver, San Francisco, Boston +

Case study: The creation of micro-suites—or efficiency suites—was done in response to the challenge of affordable housing in San Francisco. The choice was predicated on the belief that smaller unit sizes would allow increased density of units in a similar sized lot, and the smaller unit size would command a smaller rent. The efficiency units are also an effort to engage the middle class, in a city where policies are meant to help the poorest and the existing housing serves the upper-middle and wealthy classes.

Benefits

- » Increased density
- » Improved affordability
- » Housing for millennials and singles
- » Meeting social housing goals

Challenges

- » Lack of prior examples and successes
- » Liveability
- » “Twitter Apartments”

Want to learn more about micro-suites? Connect with Jon Stovell of Reliance Properties and Aeron Hodges from Stantec Boston.

Tiny homes



CREDIT: BONEYARD STUDIOS



PHOTO CREDIT: SAMANTHA GAMBLING



PHOTO CREDIT: SAMANTHA GAMBLING

In a nutshell

- » Detached houses
- » Mobile, on wheels or a temporary/permanent foundation
- » Simple, multi-functional spaces
- » Affordable and ecologically sensitive homeownership
- » Many designed with a loft space or added storage area
- » Laneway alternative or part of community development with shared amenities
- » Enables temporary use of vacant land
- » Can be exempt from development permits (depending on size)
- » Great for singles, couples and families
- » Average unit size: Depends on width and length of flat deck, but less than 500 square feet
- » Examples: Regional District of Kitimat Stikine, Grand Forks, Seattle, Portland, Los Angeles and growing

Benefits

- » Facilitates simpler, more sustainable lifestyles
- » Affordable housing option
- » Advances the conversation on the role of housing today
- » Exempt from most bylaws and development permits
- » Cost savings in space can be allocated towards better finishings

Challenges

- » Land, securing a location for the tiny home
- » Standards, adherence to building codes
- » Public and cultural acceptance
- » Difficult to access traditional tools for homeownership

“ Sustainability is not a solar panel, it’s a lifestyle. Small living means less stuff and more lifestyle. ”

—BEN GARRATT, DESIGNER/BUILDER, TINY HEALTHY HOMES (NORTH VANCOUVER)

Have tiny questions? Ask Shannon Loeber or Max Hobbs of Hummingbird Micro Homes, Anastasia Koutalianos or Samantha Gambling of the BC Tiny House Collective, as well as, Ben Garratt of Tiny Healthy Homes.

Collective housing



PHOTO CREDIT: HUMANITAS



PHOTO CREDIT: GERRY KAHRMANN

In a nutshell

- » Multiple roommates, often more than five, living collectively in a large home
- » Typically includes shared meals
- » Supports community and intergenerational living
- » Reduces mortgages and rent payments
- » Requires tenant compatibility
- » Option for seniors to age in place, lessens loneliness and provides room and board for shared caretakers
- » Examples: Various, including the Netherlands

According to the Vancouver Collective Housing Network, collective housing is centered around the belief that mutual support of life in the domestic realm results in stronger individuals and stronger communities and that intentional systems and practices increase connections, reduce conflict and lighten the workload. Multiple roommates (related or not), living collectively in a residence (typically in a single-family home) where people share in housework, preparing meals and collective values.

Benefits

- » Cost-saving
- » Shared housework
- » Community building

Challenges

- » Learning to live together
- » Finding the right place



Collective housing is an affordable housing model that utilizes existing dwellings, predominantly single-family homes. This movement is on the spectrum of medium- to long-term shared living, where its residents—ranging from families with children to single adults—choose to intentionally share personal living space and daily lives. This often includes food and meals, common values, decision-making and household responsibilities. Where shared housing is about sharing a house, collective housing focuses on building a home.

—JEN MURANETZ, CO-FOUNDER, COLLECTIVE HOUSING SOCIETY (VANCOUVER)



Province-wide cost comparison of small housing types

Housing costs by region

Region	Greater Vancouver	Vancouver Island	Kootenay	Okanagan	Fraser Valley	BC North / Northwest
Value of detached residential sales	\$1,335,000	\$580,000	\$330,000	\$519,950	\$791,000	\$305,000
Value of condo sales	\$568,000	\$360,000	\$176,500	\$299,450	\$340,000	\$189,000
Value of attached residential sales	\$715,000	\$440,000	\$285,000	\$365,000	\$519,900	\$251,500

Median values (2018). Data from Landcor Residential Sales Quarterly summary report: www.landcor.com/sites/default/files/reports/upload/Q1%202018%20Residential%20Sales%20Summary%20Report2.pdf



This is a snapshot of the small housing market in BC. Mind you, we don't have data for all cities. As a collaborative effort in our small housing research, we are looking to crowdsource your expertise! If you know how much it costs to build small housing in your municipality, please fill in our spreadsheet here: docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/115Zj_tNoeZhr-WCbTFDlu6iR-za4nQaKylbTdwVgwvc/edit?usp=sharing.

Thank you!

Housing costs by city

Municipality/district	Detached single-family (2000sq/ft, 3 bdrm)	Apartment, 3 bdrm	Apartment, 2 bdrm	Apartment, 1 bdrm	Laneway house* (1000sq/ft)	Micro-suite (250-350 sq/ft)	Tiny house (8.5 x 20-foot long)
Kamloops	\$359,000	\$279,900	\$259,900	\$164,900		\$150,000	\$60-\$100,000
Kelowna	\$579,450	\$425,000	\$336,950	\$223,500	\$120,000-\$175,000	\$94,000-\$100,000	\$60-\$100,000
Maple Ridge	\$580,000	\$359,800	\$295,250	\$221,700			\$60-\$100,000
Nanaimo	\$385,000	\$319,900	\$349,900	\$144,400	\$120,000-\$175,000	\$119,000 (2016)	\$60-\$100,000
Nelson	377,000	\$359,500	\$409,000	\$319,900			\$60-\$100,000
Prince Rupert	\$254,900	\$219,000					\$60-\$100,000
Prince George	\$279,900	\$229,700	\$250,200	\$108,500			\$60-\$100,000
Squamish	\$788,950	\$559,000	\$419,900	\$329,900			\$60-\$100,000
Surrey	\$650,000	\$341,400	\$299,900	\$228,400		\$109,000-\$183,000 (2012)	\$60-\$100,000
Tofino	\$469,000		\$665,000				\$60-\$100,000
Vancouver	\$1,238,000	\$1,199,000	\$878,000	\$549,000	\$250,000-\$350,000	\$225,000+	\$60-\$100,000
Vernon	424,900	\$487,450	\$219,900	\$169,000			\$60-\$100,000
Victoria	\$575,000	\$529,000	\$346,700	\$262,450		\$100,000-\$170,000 (2013)	\$60-\$100,000

*Laneway housing is also known as accessory dwelling units (ADUs), garden suites, carriage houses and granny flats across BC.

SHBC the voice of
small housing in bc

smallhousingbc.org