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PLANES, TRAINS AND AUTOMOBILES

BC's housing strategy depends on infrastructure as much as inventory. Bringing all levels of government together to build it may be Minister Rob Fleming's biggest challenge.

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PATRICK CONDON – IT'S ALL ABOUT THE LAND

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The housing strategy is counting on many pieces coming together to succeed, none more important than infrastructure. For BC’s Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, building the transit, schools, hospitals and services needed is the (relatively) easy part; the real challenge may be managing municipal demands while getting the feds to pay their fair share.

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Rob Fleming

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LOCUS

From Latin, “locus” refers to a place, a spot; a specific location – from which we derive the present-day mantra of REALTORS®. LOCUS is the Fraser Valley Real Estate Board’s flagship publication, giving public voice to its perspective on housing and real estate issues.

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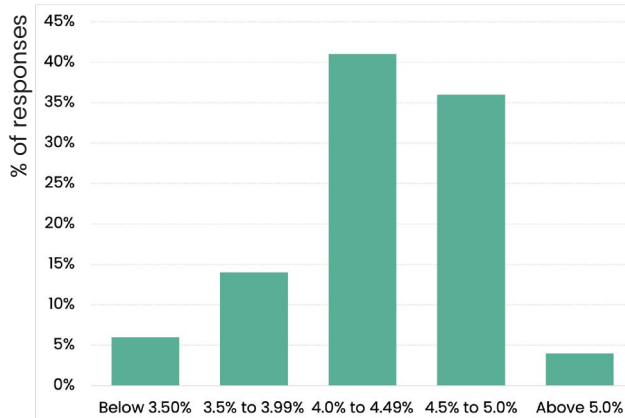
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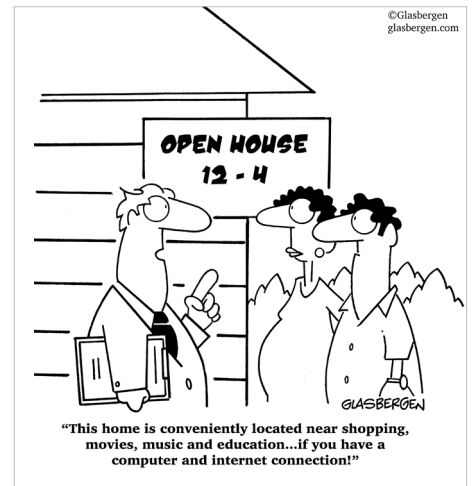
POLL

WHERE ARE INTEREST RATES HEADED?

What do you think the Bank of Canada policy rate will be at December 31, 2024?

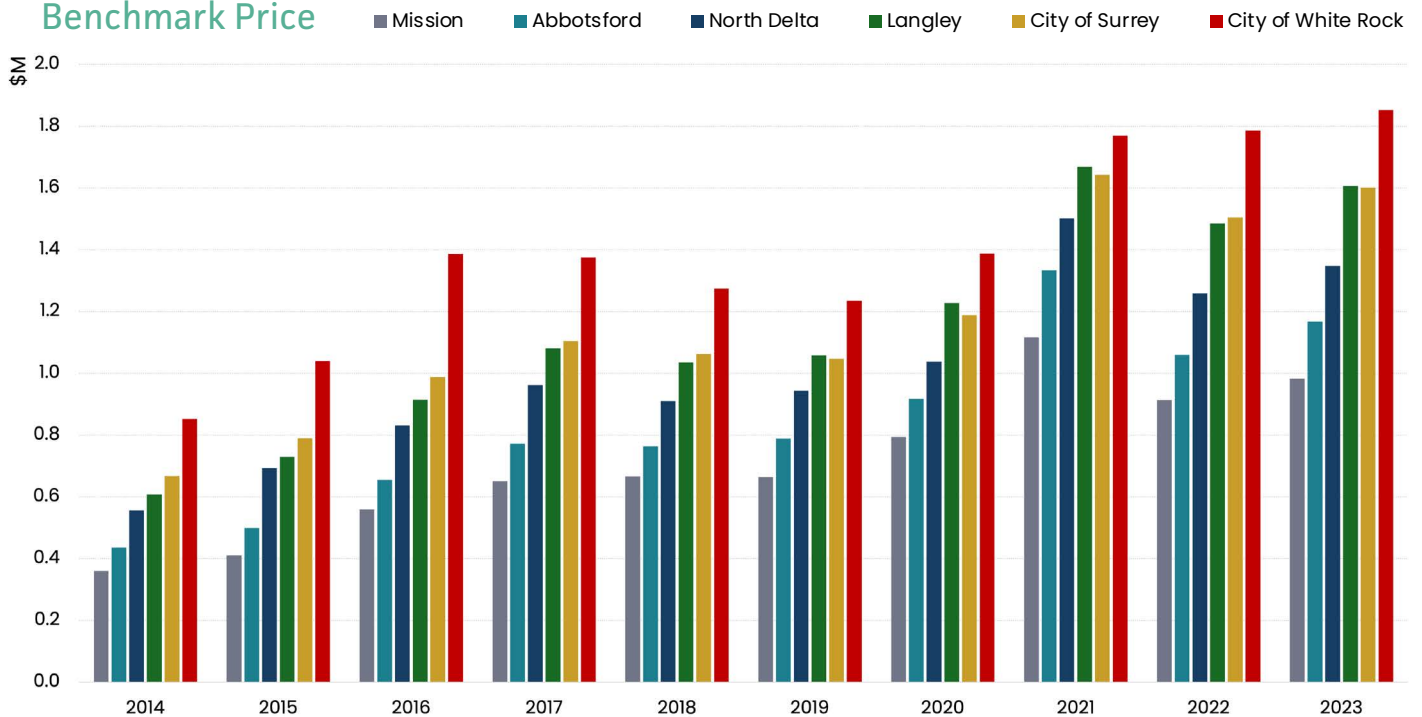


Poll conducted among FVREB REALTORS® between March 10 and March 15, 2024. Results based on 606 responses.

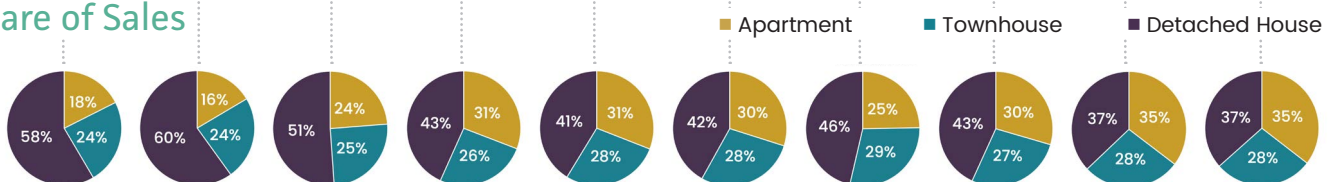


THE RISE (PRICE) AND FALL (SHARE) OF DETACHED HOMES

Benchmark Price



Share of Sales



Building Momentum Together

By Baldev Gill



Cooling Off Revisited

By Jeff Chadha



The wheels of implementation for BC's housing strategy were set in motion last fall with the passage of key legislation prescribing the parameters, mechanisms and deliverables expected of municipalities to increase housing supply throughout the province. Some would argue that the consultation process was not nearly sufficient or that the expectations and time frames are unrealistic, but the reality is that the clock is now ticking.

Collectively, Bills 44, 46 and 47 represent an ambitious, some say historic, undertaking to solve the systemic issue of housing unaffordability in BC. And while many mayors welcome the need for reforms, some are concerned about the strains on local government finances and capacity: "This legislation challenges the principles of 'growth paying for growth,'" said the Union of BC Municipalities, "and raises concerns that local government's ongoing infrastructure challenges will be further impacted."

We hear these concerns echoed in this issue's article on Transit-Oriented Development (p. 14), which explores the inherent challenges in implementing massive housing development changes within an existing transit infrastructure. Yet, we don't have the luxury of waiting for perfect conditions. The Honourable Rob Fleming has sat at both sides of the table – early on as a Victoria city councillor and now as BC Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. "We've had to play catch up from the previous government, which neglected some key areas. We've changed some rules to be more responsive, and quicker, and to prepay for things like land and planning. We've got to keep doing more of that." (full interview on p. 8).

The devil is always in the details. Like any major undertaking, unforeseen challenges will most certainly arise, and to create a path to success we need both levels of government to be true to their commitments of collaboration and compromise. Because the problem will not solve itself, nor by any single player acting alone.

Baldev Gill is CEO of the Fraser Valley Real Estate Board

REALTORS® are starting to see a "spring" in the market, (pardon the pun). Sales are up for the third consecutive month as are listings, and prices have stabilized after several months of decline. Likely coaxed along by the sense that we may have seen the last of rate hikes for a while, this typically seasonal activity is a welcome and far cry from the frenzied market during the pandemic when it was not unusual to see offers made on properties, sight unseen, ten, twenty, thirty per cent or more above asking price. Fear of missing out stoked market demand, triggering an historic rise in prices.

To counter the overheated activity, then-Finance Minister Selina Robinson introduced the Home Buyer Rescission Period (HBRP), which gave buyers a three-day grace period following an accepted offer to perform due diligence, arrange financing and generally allow the emotional quotient to subside. The thinking was that additionally this might also help curb prices by injecting rationality into the equation. It made sense in principle but was less than effective in practice. Few buyers exercised the provision and demand continued unabated keeping prices elevated.

The market has long since settled down but it doesn't mean a resurgence won't happen again and when it does, it is critical that buyers are afforded adequate protections. Instead of the HBRP, perhaps a more effective approach would be BCREA's proposed five-day pre-offer period (see p.22). Starting at the date of listing, sellers would be prohibited from viewing or accepting offers during this time while buyers conducted diligence and arranged financing. It would drastically reduce the potential for buyer regret while avoiding unintended consequences to sellers by unscrupulous buyers who use the HBRP "loophole" to tie up properties.

A fairer playing field helps protect both buyer and seller, while allowing market dynamics to adjust fairly to prevailing conditions.

Jeff Chadha is Chair of the Fraser Valley Real Estate Board

TRENDING

The High Cost of Being World-Class

By Vanessa Cheng

When it comes to *liveability* Vancouver holds its own among global cities, making—sometimes topping—*The Economist's* annual top 10 list. Lately, however, Vancouver has been topping or near-topping another less desirable list: *housing affordability*. According to the 2023 Demographia International Housing Affordability Report published by the Urban Reform Institute, Vancouver is the third-most expensive housing market in the world, as measured by median multiples (median house price divided by the gross median household income). Median multiples of 3.0 or lower are considered “affordable”; 5.1 or more is considered “severely unaffordable”. In the survey of 94 cities, the 10 least affordable included:

City	Rank	Median Multiple
Hong Kong	94	18.8
Sydney	93	13.3
Vancouver	92	12.0
Honolulu	91	11.8
San Jose	90	11.5
Los Angeles	89	11.3
Auckland	88	10.8
San Francisco	87	10.7
Melbourne	86	9.9
Toronto	85	9.5

Other Canadian cities on the list: Edmonton (4.0), Calgary (4.3), Ottawa region (5.2) and Montreal (5.4). The most affordable cities? Pittsburgh (3.1), Rochester, NY (3.2), and Cleveland and St. Louis MO-IL (3.5 each).

Source: Urban Reform Institute

INSIGHT

Generations Apart – Housing Affordability Then and Now

By Brendon Ogmundson



Affordability has long been a challenge in the BC housing market, but the super-charged market that prevailed during the pandemic and the subsequent rise in interest rates to tame inflation have only amplified those challenges. Consequently, affordability for younger first-time homebuyers has never been so difficult.

Now, that claim might prompt some inter-generational debate from Baby Boomers who had to deal with record-high mortgage rates. Indeed, the scar tissue from 20% mortgage rates is very deep – just try lamenting the current level of mortgage rates to anyone in their 60s. Within a microsecond you will be told of an 18% mortgage rate on their first

home. And they are right! If you were between the ages of 25-40 in the 1980s, the average prevailing mortgage rate was a staggering 12.3% and peaked at over 21%!

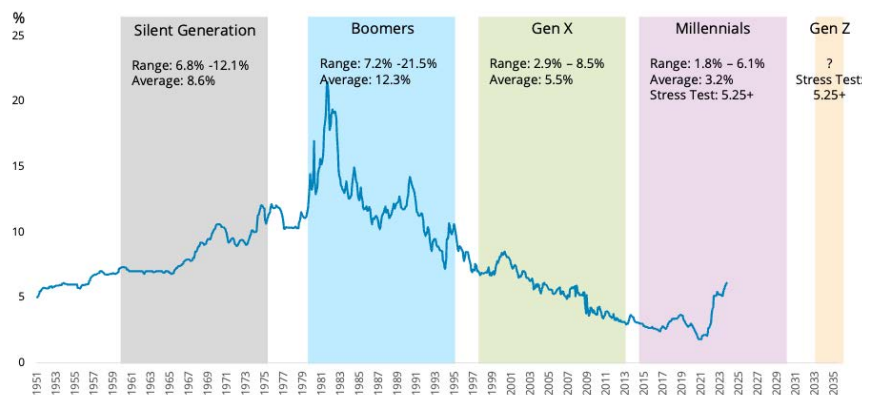
Tighter requirements

However, as bad as affordability was in the early 1980s, entering the market now as a young person is undeniably more difficult. While mortgage rates have not soared back to 20%, Millennials are the first homebuyers in close to 40 years to face a sustained rise in the cost of borrowing and are the first to be subjected to much stricter qualifying criteria in the form of the mortgage stress test. An average mortgage payment (assuming a 20% down payment and a 25-year amortization) in 2019 in the Fraser Valley was

MORTGAGE RATES BY GENERATION

(Shaded area represents the midpoint of when an individual of that generation is aged 25-40)

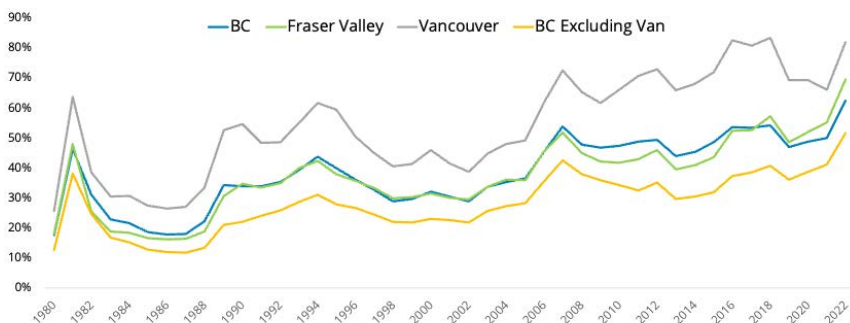
Click to enlarge chart



Source: Statistics Canada; BCREA Economics

WORST AFFORDABILITY IN 40 YEARS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Average mortgage payment, as a proportion of dual income 25-34 year old household, British Columbia
 Click to enlarge chart



Source: BCREA Economics

about \$2,700 per month. Just 4 years later, after a jump in home prices and the highest mortgage rates in over 15 years, that calculation results in an average monthly mortgage payment that is 80% higher at more than \$4,900 per month. For a dual-income household of 25-34 year-olds, that means an average mortgage payment has spiked to nearly 70% of a young couple's income, exceeding the previous nadir for affordability reached in 1981.

“The benchmark five-year fixed mortgage rate is likely to settle in a range of 4.5% to 5% over the next five years.”

Thankfully, mortgage rates have fallen significantly to start the year as markets anticipate forthcoming Bank of Canada rate cuts. However, the benchmark 5-year fixed mortgage rate is likely to settle in a range of 4.5-5% over the next 5 years, much higher than the average 3% rate that has prevailed for the past decade. While government policy is currently very aggressively targeted at bringing new supply to the market, those measures will take some time to bend affordability back to pre-pandemic levels.

For real estate agents engaging with younger clients, affordability over the next 5 years is unlikely to meaningfully improve.

However, given the massive size of the Millennial generation, demand for home ownership is not likely to fade. Consequently, helping the current generation of homebuyers succeed in making their dream of home ownership come true will require a greater weight on ensuring that buyers are pre-qualified and can pass the mortgage stress test, a perhaps narrower scope of homes and areas that young homebuyers can afford and likely far more reliance on intergenerational wealth transfers to meet down payment requirements. L

Brendon Ogmundson is Chief Economist at the British Columbia Real Estate Association.

Fraser Valley Affordability

Using the Dermographia report median multiples methodology (ratio of median house price to median before-tax income) reveals just how tough it is to afford a home in municipalities within the FVREB jurisdiction.

	Median Multiple
White Rock	
Detached Home	17.6
Townhouse	10.2
Apartment	6.3
Langley City	
Detached Home	11.9
Townhouse	7.2
Apartment	4.8
Surrey	
Detached Home	11.6
Townhouse	6.2
Apartment	4.1
Abbotsford	
Detached Home	9.3
Townhouse	5.5
Apartment	3.4
North Delta*	
Detached Home	9.2
Townhouse	6.3
Apartment	4.1
Mission	
Detached Home	7.6
Townhouse	5.2
Apartment	3.3

Sources: Multiple Listing Service, Stats Canada

*Based on Delta Median Incomes.

Planes, Trains and Automobiles

(and hospitals, bridges,
schools, ferries...)

An Interview with the Hon. Rob Fleming

When he's not slapping BC Ferries on the wrist or fining trucking firms for damaging his overpasses, BC's Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure is busy juggling the demands of a portfolio that has only gotten busier with the urgency of the province's housing strategy. Since his days as a Victoria City Councillor, housing issues have always been a focus: he supported the legalization of secondary suites before it was popular and advocated for the establishment of an Affordable Housing Trust Fund. And as if in preparation for his current role, he sat on the Victoria Regional Transit Commission where he championed transit service expansion. FVREB caught up with Minister Fleming in early March to discuss how his portfolio fits into the housing strategy, with a particular focus on transportation and transit.





The Surrey–Langley Skytrain will include eight new stops between Surrey and Langley City. Photo: bcgovphotos.

“If we’re going to remain a prosperous G7 country, we need the Federal Government to step up and invest.”

FVREB: *Transit-oriented development (TOD) is one of government’s key strategies in the plan to tackle the provincial housing crisis and probably the greatest intersection between your Ministry and the Ministry of Housing. How do you see TOD moving the affordability needle in British Columbia?*

RF: It’s really about aligning our transportation infrastructure investments with areas of development needed for higher density that strives for much less reliance on cars to help shape future growth of the region. It allows us to utilize some very powerful land use tools at our disposal that have served BC very

well in the past. The Metro Region has a high degree of sprawl, much of which is governed by very strong land use protections, especially the further away from the center you go. We need to be creative about land acquisition to help get the per square foot cost down, which is critically important for infrastructure and in the service of increasing supply and driving affordability.

FVREB: *What are some of those tools?*

RF: For example, acquiring land around transit and Skytrain hubs is one way to achieve land value capture benefits from upzoning that can accrue to the public

interest via more affordable housing. Depending on how it’s structured, there is even the potential for developing land in this way to actually have it pay for the transportation infrastructure—one of the models we’ve looked at, Singapore, has figured out how to make that happen. The first step is to determine how to ensure the investments that we’re contemplating making provide additional benefits of affordable housing choices along with them. Previous governments missed an opportunity to do that when they built infrastructure like, say, the Canada Line. It was wonderful and necessary, but it didn’t come with any additional housing, or at least affordable housing, nor did



The Patullo Bridge replacement project will accommodate drivers, cyclists and pedestrians, and have the potential to expand up to six lanes. Photo: bcgovphotos.

it contemplate explicitly transit-oriented development. We want to make that critical component intentional so that where stations are located, for example on the new Surrey-Langley Skytrain, they will include a plan for more density and complete communities created in cooperation with all stakeholders: school districts, municipal governments, private property owners. The key is to do it together, in partnership.

FVREB: *Would you consider establishing a land trust?*

RF: Effectively that's what we've done with my ministry's \$400 million fund to acquire land that's strategically located for transit oriented development. The Federal Government has said the same thing about federal lands in Metro Vancouver and out to the Fraser Valley. And not just

residential land but there is a need for industrial space too, for the employment and economic benefits needed to sustain the communities that are developing quite quickly in those areas.

FVREB: *You mentioned Singapore, Are there any other models that stand out to you as examples to emulate or perhaps improve on?*

RF: A number of cities in Western Europe and Scandinavia have done transit-oriented development with great results, including very impressive decreases in the carbon footprint of the average family of four based on having excellent transit services right at your doorstep or within 800 meters of where you live. Stockholm comes to mind—they began doing that in the 1990's, so they have 30 years of experience to draw on. Closer to home, I think Calgary

and Montreal have both done a great job of aligning their rapid transit networks with station infrastructure.

FVREB: *And of course Britain has a fairly well-established and strong rapid transit infrastructure, using regional rail. Is there a place for that in your strategy?*

RF: We have to bear in mind that many of those older systems have the advantage of a much longer run to develop in the post-industrial revolution era, when the rail system was built out. Here in the West, Henry Ford and other automakers came on and changed our pattern of development after the introduction of and mass production of automobiles, which quickly evolved into a lifestyle. Because of this, we have to go back and retrofit our cities in many cases to reactivate corridors



or create new ones, which is not inexpensive. Having said that, I'm very pleased to see the *Access for Everyone* plan that the Mayors Council and TransLink recently brought out because we've got lots of excellent but expensive Skytrain expansions coming out simultaneously—the Surrey-Langley line, the Broadway subway. We also need options that are much cheaper per kilometer, but still able to move people quickly, such as Bus Rapid Transit. The goal is to build up ridership before we start to look at other regional alternatives. Once that's achieved, we'll have an opportunity to move to something higher in the future because I think it will serve us well down the road as density increases.

FVREB: As both you and Minister Kahlon have stressed, success depends on all stakeholders working together and that

includes the Federal Government. Given the huge impact they can have on the overall strategy, how do we ensure their commitment?

RF: It's a work in progress but the feds have been very interested in what we're doing with transit-oriented development. They see that we've gone faster and further in that direction than anywhere else and we're helping them have a national vision for what that looks like. That said, we're not waiting for the feds on everything—we can't. We've gone ahead in some cases to keep the partnership for funding opportunities alive and are hopeful for a positive result on

“My experience has been more mayors supporting our plan and saying that they were already organically updating Official Community Plans to account for needed changes.”

some of our infrastructure funding from the Federal Government. They've done a reasonably good job helping to build a truly world class international airport that serves our region and our economy well, but there are secondary airports, such as Abbotsford, that are in need of federal attention as well, because

the region is growing by leaps and bounds. This goes for national highway investments too, which are part of our provincial transit investments in terms of bus and shoulder and rapid bus technology—investments we have already made. If we're going to remain a prosperous G7 country, we need the Federal Government

to step up and invest in goods movement and supply chain and housing opportunities so that working class people can afford to live in the communities where they work for employers. It's quite possible that BC may have to be go it alone on some initiatives, but we can't afford to do it entirely on our own. If we're complacent or we underbuild, we're going to be in trouble. We've had to play catch up from the previous government, which neglected some key areas, like not building schools fast enough. We've changed some rules to be more responsive and quicker, and to prepay for things like land and planning. We've got to keep doing more of that.

FVREB: *Another key stakeholder, perhaps the most important one, are the municipalities. Their engagement and cooperation is critical to the success of the housing & infrastructure strategy. How do we maintain a collaborative mindset and minimize obstacles to achieving your goals?*

RF: It's true there have been one or two outspoken Mayors who tend to get a little more attention than others, particularly on very specific issues that they may foresee but which, frankly, haven't arisen. By and large, my experience has been more mayors supporting our plan and saying that they were already organically updating Official Community Plans to account for needed changes in their communities, especially with respect to upzoning for higher densities around SkyTrain and TOD hubs. It will allow them to animate neighborhoods and to keep the character of what they've

typically enjoyed, while making things affordable. In places like Kelowna or Victoria, it's going to look a little different, because development will be more around bus exchanges to allow for more density, which is what the mayors near my constituency in this community absolutely want. Together with TransLink, we're currently in discussion with the mayors' council about how to help them get an advanced start on the bus rapid transit routes that they need and to expand service levels to support it.

FVREB: *How do you balance the urgency of infrastructure needs around the housing strategy with the equally urgent needs of existing infrastructure projects like, say, the Patullo Bridge or the Massey Tunnel.*

RF: Well in a way they are all equally urgent because they are all strongly interconnected as part of our infrastructure writ large. Take Patullo. It has been in

dire need of replacing for some time now. We're doing that but at the same time, taking the opportunity to modernize it so that active transportation is going to be a huge feature in an effort to shift the mode away from single occupant vehicles and also to make commercial trucking more efficient. The Massey Tunnel replacement has been a source of frustration for us for some time now. It is just not serving Highway 99 anymore and has never had capacity designated for public transit, nor does it accommodate pedestrians. Premier Eby and Premier Horgan before him have both had the attention of the Prime Minister about this. He knows that the massive tunnel replacement is nationally significant infrastructure, yet it doesn't have a currently defined program to support it. Neither did the Gordie Howe Bridge between Windsor and Detroit or the Champlain Bridge in Montreal. But guess what? They got federal funding to make those projects happen. All we are asking for is the same treatment that the other two largest metropolitan regions got. Every dollar they put into this project will be an investment that provides huge returns for the national economy, especially

considering that the Highway 99 corridor is a gateway to our largest trading partner. The Prime Minister and his Ministers have all said the right things, so I haven't lost hope that a partnership is attainable.

FVREB: *You've been a strong advocate for housing since your councillor days back in Victoria. Much has changed in the landscape since then, including our collective notion of what affordability actually means. How do we adapt to this evolution while maintaining continued regional growth moving forward?*

RF: During my time in opposition, I felt we were not doing enough at a time when it was actually more affordable to build housing. The government more or less abandoned the nonprofit housing sector, resulting in scarcity of non-market housing, and they failed to see the homelessness issue on the horizon during the

nineties—it was a smaller problem back then, but it was one that was coming at us. Even back when I was a city councillor over 20 years ago, you could see the rental market getting tighter—home prices hadn't taken off yet, but rents were rising at a faster rate. So we're playing catch up. It's amazing that we've increased the number of housing starts to record levels, and though we still need much more, we're in a good place. Instead of simply chasing growth, we're looking to shape it, like with the Surrey-Langley Line, where we know there's going to be growth. Without planning and intervention, the growth would end up with very low density, in a sprawling manner. Instead, we can build beautiful, complete communities—False Creek is a

good example, with affordable density, transit and community in harmony. We're going to have a million more people in the Lower Mainland between now and 2051—we have to plan for that today. And instead of being singled out as one of the most unaffordable places to live in Canada, if not the world, we need to build communities where median-level income occupations can grow and thrive. **L**



Tunnel boring at Granville Street for the Broadway line. Photo: bcgovphotos.

Transit-Oriented Development

For the Fraser Valley and other regions, getting there may not necessarily be half the fun



By Richard Littlemore

It's one of those idealistic notions so beloved of city planners, urban design theorists and well-meaning governments, that soon, many more of us will be living in amiable, walkable communities that are so convenient we won't even want to drive our cars.

On the drawing board and in sparkling photos of exemplary neighbourhoods these communities are densely populated and close-knit, dotted with parks and open spaces and connected by narrow, pedestrian-oriented streets that are lined with all the shops, services, and sometimes even the workplaces that people in the neighbourhood want. Critically, they are also 'transit-oriented,' a factor that makes the arrangement more sustainable because people can easily connect to the broader region, again without getting into their cars.

It's a laudable aspiration, these Transit-Oriented Areas (TOAs), and if you talk to planners, politicians, or academics in the Fraser Valley, there seems to be a shared commitment to make the dream a reality in a surprising number of locations. The problem – as with so many things in a growing metropolis that is both congested and sprawling – is that getting there won't be half the fun.

1985
Expo Line



1994
Surrey Extension



The Big Picture

First, a massive change in the general form of development in the Valley is coming, whether we like it or not. The combination of population expansion and tightening physical and economic constraints makes that inevitable – and in many ways, desirable.

Second, the change is already well underway. Developers, planners, and politicians in the Valley and elsewhere in the Metro region have been working together for years to increase housing density and affordability, even as they honour the protected status of natural and agriculture land in their midst.

Third, senior governments have come down hard, with the Federal Government saying it will withhold funding from jurisdictions that don't densify, and the Provincial Government imposing new legislation that massively increases the potential to develop more density, even if it won't necessarily increase the pace.

Finally, there are incredibly sticky points of resistance to this transformation. Most obviously, there is a shortage of funding for the transit that is crucial to transit-oriented development. But there is also the inertia that is built into the layout of our current homes, neighbourhoods, and infrastructure. And there are the enduring cultural habits of the people who live here.

In the words of Dr. Afia Raja, head of the Department of Planning, Geography, and Environmental Studies at the University of the Fraser Valley, “North Americans go to the gym in their cars.” Even aside from the challenges of remaking the landscape, it could take years for citizens to also revise a whole set of personal habits.

Build it or not, they're coming

Beginning on the population question, Andrew Ramlo, who, as Vice President of Intelligence crunches data for the sales and marketing force at the Rennie Group, points out that the Surrey Official Community Plan has, until recently, been working on the assumption that the municipal headcount, which is currently just under 700,000, would rise to one million by 2060. But a recent update from BC Statistics shows the municipality is now expected to

good thing to have a more compact and efficient form.”

Provincial Housing Minister Ravi Kahlon also notes that the population surge – and critical housing demand – isn't a problem that lies somewhere off in the future. He recently told the Surrey Now-Leader, “We have people that are underhoused. We have people that are living 12 people, 13 people to two-bedroom suites, and the need is great.”

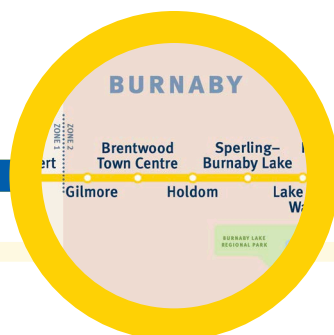
The housing shortage, and especially the dearth of affordable housing, is hardly a surprise in the region. And Valley communities including Surrey and the Langleys are rightfully credited with doing more than their share to fill the need, including working harder to build transit-oriented neighbourhoods, or at least neighbourhoods that would meet the definition if transit was already in place.

“Fraser Valley communities are rightfully credited with doing more than their share to fill the need, including working hard to build transit-oriented neighbourhoods.”

hit that figure by 2046. As Surrey's general manager of Planning and Development, Don Luymes, puts it, there is no room to accommodate that level of growth using the old patterns; no room, for example, for 40% more roads. “It would be a

Langley City Mayor Nathan Pachal, a cyclist who doesn't own a car, says flatly that, even before the anticipated arrival of the SkyTrain extension, his community is already “as transit oriented as can be.” He adds, “it's not Metrotown,

2002 Millennium Line



but Langley City is a compact 10 square kilometres with excellent transit service” arrayed around a walkable commercial district that boasts a 120-year history on the Langley prairie. The City is also working hard to densify the areas around Willowbrook and the Fraser Highway where there will be SkyTrain stations, once the extension finds funding.

Langley Township Mayor Eric Woodward says his municipality is also ahead of the curve. Pointing to the high-density strip along the 200 Street corridor, he says, “We’re doing quite a bit of walkable development in anticipation of transit.” The current lack of transit

in lower-density developments on the urban fringe, where there is little transit now and no serious improvement expected any time soon. We build the housing that makes sense,” he says, implying a denser, more affordable form.

Surrey’s Luymes agrees. “There has been a lot of discussion in planning circles lately about the missing middle, the medium-density housing (townhomes and small multi-family buildings) that fall between sparse, car-oriented, single-family suburban model and mid- or high-rise towers,” he says. “If you’re looking for good examples of the missing middle form, you’ll find the highest

the Provincial Government moved so dramatically last fall to pass in legislation that:

- » requires local governments to allow for increased density on lots currently zoned for single family homes or duplexes;
- » limits the use of public hearings for zoning-compliant residential projects;
- » relaxes municipal parking regulations;
- » requires municipalities to designate land within 800 metres of rapid transit stations and within 400 metres of major bus exchanges as transit-oriented development areas; and
- » sets heights and densities within those areas that, functionally, cannot be denied (see inset).

Taken together, the Provincial Government estimated that the changes in its single-family zoning legislation, Bill 44, could make room for 130,000 new small-scale multi-unit homes in the next 10 years, while the height and density upgrades that Bill 47 permits near transit nodes could allow an additional 100,000 units.

Don Luymes is sympathetic to the thrust of these changes, acknowledging that the system needed a nudge. “I applaud the province’s intent. They were trying to shock the system.”

“Given what we remit in property taxes, it’s galling to see the biggest current transit expenditure – the Broadway Line – is centred in the community that already has the best service in the region.”

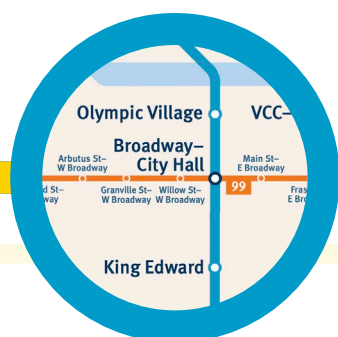
Eric Woodward
Mayor of Langley Township

is a sore point for Woodward, who notes that there are a million people living south of the Fraser River. “Given what we remit in property taxes [towards TransLink], it’s galling to see the biggest current transit expenditure – the Broadway Line – is centred in the community that already has the best service in the region.” Even

concentration in the region among new developments in Surrey and other Valley communities.’

So, if Valley communities have already accepted the advantages of planning more compact, walkable, easily serviced communities – suitable for transit, should it come – you might well ask why

2009 Canada Line



2016 Evergreen Extension



Turning drivers into passengers

North American city planners have spent the better part of a century designing and building cities to make them work for people who drive automobiles, with highways and byways, wide streets with narrow sidewalks and maze-like, car-oriented suburban neighbourhoods that often have no sidewalks at all. It's true that most people would like to be a short walk to a grocery store and a coffee shop, but nobody wants to actually live beside a 7-Eleven, so planners have segregated the city – housing here, services there, workplaces somewhere else. That didn't just make room for cars; in most cases, it forced people to drive – and to park. So, we wound up with ever more roads and bridges and thousands of extra acres of blacktop for parking spots that served to separate everything even further.

“We have required too much parking,” Luymes says (a 2021 University of Calgary study estimated that there are between 3.2 and 4.4 paved spaces for every car in Canada) and that also has made housing even less affordable. He notes that the current cost for an underground parking spot is \$100,000 – a huge premium on the price of an entry-level condo.

But no sweeping government intervention can ever come without unintended consequences. In this instance, for example, Luymes points out that the regulations requiring very high-density buildings within 200 metres of SkyTrain stations and Bus Exchanges, also permit lower density forms between 200 and 400 metres. And because land and project costs are high in the inner ring, lots of developers are instead looking to develop less-expensive, lower-density product (e.g., six-storey woodframe buildings) in the outer ring, where it's cheaper to assemble property. The result, Luymes says, is an invitation to a perverse kind of sprawl; in the short term, we could wind up not with walkable, well-serviced communities clustered close to transit, but rather with donut-shaped density nodes that have nothing in the middle but a bus exchange or a SkyTrain station. It could be a promising start; the centre ring could be expected to fill in over time. But it could also be chaotic, and counterproductive, in the meantime if all the early residents still need cars and there isn't enough parking.

This also comes back to the crunchy question of transit. Sarah Ross, TransLink's Vice President of Planning, is unsurprisingly bullish about transit (*con't on p.19*)

TransLink's Six “D’s” of TOD Communities

» Density

Increase available supply

» Destinations

Coordinate land use and transportation

» Distance

Ensure a well-connected street network

» Design

Include great spaces for people

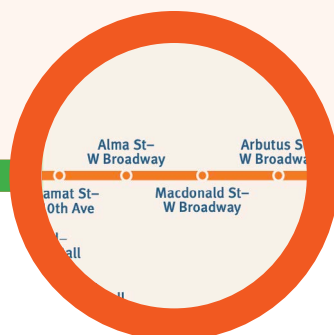
» Diversity

Ensure a mix of uses

» Demand Management

Discourage unnecessary driving

2026 Broadway Line



- » Budget: \$2.83B
- » 700 meters elevated, 5 kms subway
- » 6 underground stations
- » VCC-Clark Station to Arbutus Street
- » Operational: 2026

Surrey-Langley Extension



“There is no room to accommodate anticipated levels of growth using the old patterns.”

Don Luymes
GM of Planning and Development, Surrey

Source: gov.bc.ca

2028 Surrey-Langley Extension

- » First rapid-transit project south of the Fraser River in 30 years
- » Est. travel time between Langley City Center and King George Station: 22 minutes
- » Total cost estimate: \$4.01B
- » Operational: 2028
- » Will include 8 new stations and 3 new bus exchanges



TOA Type	Transit Hub Type	Prescribed Distance	Minimum Allowable Density (FAR)	Minimum Allowable Height (Storeys)	Type of Building
TOA Type 1 (Metro Vancouver)	1A) Rapid Transit	200m or less	Up to 5.0	Up to 20	Condo Tower
		201m-400m	Up to 4.0	Up to 12	High Rise, Mid-rise
		401m-800m	Up to 3.0	Up to 8	Mid-rise
	1B) Bus Exchange	200m or less	Up to 4.0	Up to 12	High Rise, Mid-rise
		201m-400m	Up to 3.0	Up to 8	Low-rise, Townhouse
TOA Type 2 (Victoria / Kelowna / Other Medium-Sized Munis)	Bus Exchange	200m or less	Up to 3.5	Up to 10	Mid-rise
		201m-400m	Up to 2.5	Up to 6	Low-rise, Townhouse
TOA Type 3 (Other Qualifying Areas)	Bus Exchange	200m or less	Up to 2.5	Up to 6	Low-rise
		201m-400m	Up to 1.5	Up to 4	Townhouse

(cont from p.17) south of the Fraser, where ridership – which is still lagging in other parts of the region – is currently up more than 20% from pre-pandemic levels. Ross says, “The increase is outpacing population growth,” partly because TransLink has also rearranged its offering to increase services in the southeast region by 25%.


Ross, who also spoke positively about the high concentration of “missing middle” housing in the Valley, says, cautiously, that “people have oversold density as the definition of transit oriented.” It’s not enough, she says, to have “a big, tall tower next to a SkyTrain station.” You also need the services to allow the residents to walk for a coffee or a jug of milk – and to get their kids to school.

Ross treads lightly on that last point, managing demand, saying, “You can’t blame anyone for driving if a community is designed around driving.” She, for example, describes herself as a Vancouverite

who makes most of her trips around home on an electric bike. “But it’s not because I’m a purist; it’s faster and I don’t have to worry about parking. It’s just that kind of neighbourhood.” It winds up, over the long term, being a build-it-and-they-will-come challenge, she says, adding, “People will make the best choice themselves.” But, “when communities were built as auto-oriented, it takes a long time to transition away. We’ve got a lot of catching up to do.”

As for her transit planning responsibilities, she says, “We see the need for significantly more investment in the Valley and we’re working every day to get ourselves in a financial situation to increase service.”

That, then, throws the spotlight back on senior levels of government. In the words of Andy Yan, Director of the City Program at Simon Fraser University, “It you’re mandating density, you also need to mandate the transit.”

Having recognized the crisis, having been directed – fairly forcefully – toward a solution, we’re now all looking at what will undoubtedly be a bumpy time of transition. Now, we get to wait and see if we’re going to have to make that transition on our own or if there will also be a new round of transit-oriented help. 

Richard Littlemore is a Vancouver journalist and writer whose work has appeared in the Vancouver Sun, BC Business, BIV, amongst other publications.

2030-2035 UBC



The Case for Regional Rail



By Lee Haber



If you live in Metro Vancouver, you know that our region is making progress when it comes to expanding transit and enabling sustainable modes of transportation. Less than 40 years ago, the region didn't have any rail rapid transit. Today it has a network of nearly 80 km that will soon grow with the additions of SkyTrain's Broadway extension on the Millennium Line and the Surrey-Langley extension on the Expo Line.

SkyTrain is not enough

That's commendable growth, however, there is still a long way to go. TransLink has stated that it wants to see parity between

sustainable modes and driving by 2050. The ratio is currently over 3-to-1 in favour of driving—and between driving and transit, it is 5-to-1. The reason for this is simple: transit times for most trips are simply not competitive with driving.

Figure 1 compares travel times between various regional centres. Green cells represent faster travel times using transit, and red cells represent faster travel times by driving.

There are only a few trips where transit is faster than driving (green cells). For the most part, it is a sea of red. And if you look closely, this diagram tells us something further: that rapid transit alone isn't enough

Figure 1 - Current travel times between various regional centres

[Click to enlarge chart](#)

	DT	OK	UBC	AS	LD	LV	MT	BW	LH	EM	NW	RM	LN	PM	CQ	PC	PW	MR	SC	GF	FW	NT	SM	CD	LC	WB	AG	YVR	YXX	HB	TF	BCP
Downtown	X	138%	70%	65%	150%	63%	147%	88%	70%	80%	125%	140%	77%	91%	75%	51%	56%	55%	105%	64%	63%	77%	66%	48%	53%	44%	45%	140%	54%	61%	77%	150%
Oakridge	138%	X	73%	88%	90%	60%	85%	59%	74%	65%	76%	167%	60%	75%	65%	47%	48%	51%	89%	65%	62%	54%	61%	44%	53%	43%	45%	117%	49%	76%	64%	61%
UBC	70%	73%	X	59%	70%	53%	80%	85%	77%	63%	66%	61%	53%	76%	74%	51%	59%	63%	79%	56%	57%	52%	53%	42%	51%	51%	46%	100%	55%	55%	49%	46%
Ambleside	65%	88%	59%	X	54%	28%	62%	45%	46%	44%	63%	100%	72%	56%	50%	34%	40%	41%	63%	38%	44%	51%	58%	36%	39%	34%	37%	80%	44%	61%	68%	76%
Lonsdale	150%	90%	70%	54%	X	43%	56%	38%	41%	38%	56%	90%	64%	51%	45%	31%	36%	42%	65%	33%	37%	56%	53%	38%	36%	32%	33%	87%	37%	41%	61%	85%
Lynn Valley	63%	60%	53%	28%	43%	X	37%	34%	37%	27%	37%	61%	47%	53%	47%	33%	36%	38%	42%	26%	32%	39%	43%	27%	34%	30%	29%	58%	33%	32%	48%	53%
Metrotown	147%	85%	80%	62%	56%	37%	X	61%	90%	88%	180%	65%	40%	82%	70%	44%	55%	56%	158%	67%	80%	76%	47%	54%	60%	40%	44%	62%	53%	57%	45%	187%
Brentwood	88%	59%	85%	45%	38%	34%	61%	X	145%	40%	88%	78%	51%	116%	93%	52%	54%	61%	74%	43%	41%	63%	45%	38%	52%	46%	34%	73%	39%	42%	52%	124%
Lougheed	70%	74%	77%	46%	41%	37%	90%	145%	X	33%	145%	66%	46%	200%	138%	60%	55%	65%	87%	50%	42%	80%	52%	36%	58%	50%	34%	60%	36%	44%	45%	94%
Edmonds	80%	65%	63%	44%	38%	27%	88%	40%	33%	X	63%	44%	33%	62%	51%	33%	41%	43%	71%	43%	79%	56%	38%	42%	46%	36%	36%	55%	36%	44%	33%	88%
New Westminster	125%	76%	66%	63%	56%	37%	180%	88%	145%	63%	X	50%	44%	104%	81%	48%	53%	57%	200%	77%	76%	86%	46%	53%	61%	44%	44%	49%	54%	56%	38%	140%
Richmond	140%	167%	61%	100%	90%	61%	65%	78%	66%	44%	50%	X	53%	69%	62%	51%	50%	44%	55%	51%	51%	64%	68%	39%	44%	37%	40%	84%	48%	79%	53%	103%
Ladner	77%	60%	53%	72%	64%	47%	40%	51%	46%	33%	44%	53%	X	48%	44%	35%	35%	33%	43%	35%	40%	44%	48%	33%	32%	35%	36%	49%	33%	65%	48%	56%
Port Moody	91%	75%	76%	56%	51%	53%	82%	116%	200%	62%	104%	69%	48%	X	200%	58%	70%	74%	76%	44%	44%	63%	53%	36%	53%	47%	34%	77%	41%	52%	49%	100%
Coquitlam	75%	65%	74%	50%	45%	47%	70%	93%	138%	51%	81%	62%	44%	200%	X	43%	67%	70%	57%	26%	35%	49%	48%	26%	49%	29%	31%	63%	31%	42%	41%	70%
Port Coquitlam	51%	47%	51%	34%	31%	33%	44%	52%	60%	33%	48%	51%	35%	58%	43%	X	52%	59%	35%	19%	24%	41%	35%	26%	49%	29%	31%	51%	28%	34%	37%	56%
Pitt Meadows	56%	48%	59%	40%	36%	36%	55%	54%	55%	41%	53%	50%	35%	70%	67%	52%	X	67%	39%	25%	26%	33%	41%	30%	46%	29%	29%	47%	29%	38%	32%	55%
Maple Ridge	55%	51%	63%	41%	42%	38%	56%	61%	65%	43%	57%	44%	33%	74%	70%	59%	67%	X	45%	31%	30%	40%	42%	38%	54%	41%	37%	50%	29%	40%	34%	62%
Surrey	105%	89%	79%	63%	65%	42%	158%	74%	87%	71%	200%	55%	43%	76%	57%	35%	39%	45%	X	56%	84%	86%	70%	53%	69%	42%	45%	57%	59%	56%	36%	129%
Guildford	64%	65%	56%	38%	33%	26%	67%	43%	50%	43%	77%	51%	35%	44%	26%	19%	25%	31%	56%	X	75%	63%	74%	59%	48%	37%	29%	54%	65%	40%	36%	66%
Fleetwood	63%	62%	57%	44%	37%	32%	80%	41%	42%	79%	76%	51%	40%	44%	35%	24%	26%	30%	84%	75%	X	67%	57%	55%	58%	27%	50%	57%	48%	42%	36%	68%
Newton	77%	54%	52%	51%	56%	39%	76%	63%	80%	56%	86%	64%	44%	63%	49%	41%	33%	40%	86%	63%	67%	X	65%	45%	52%	33%	47%	56%	48%	50%	42%	79%
Semiahmoo	66%	61%	53%	58%	53%	43%	47%	45%	52%	38%	46%	68%	48%	53%	48%	35%	41%	42%	70%	74%	57%	65%	X	52%	58%	46%	39%	67%	36%	57%	45%	70%
Cloverdale	48%	44%	42%	36%	38%	27%	54%	38%	36%	42%	53%	39%	33%	36%	26%	26%	30%	38%	53%	59%	55%	45%	52%	X	70%	30%	56%	39%	39%	36%	32%	51%
Langley	53%	53%	51%	39%	36%	34%	60%	52%	58%	46%	61%	44%	32%	53%	49%	49%	46%	54%	69%	48%	58%	52%	58%	70%	X	36%	80%	42%	30%	40%	38%	63%
Willoughby	44%	43%	51%	34%	32%	30%	40%	46%	50%	36%	44%	37%	35%	47%	29%	29%	41%	42%	37%	27%	33%	46%	30%	36%	X	35%	39%	26%	37%	31%	50%	
Aldergrove	45%	45%	46%	37%	33%	29%	44%	34%	34%	36%	44%	40%	36%	34%	31%	31%	29%	37%	45%	29%	50%	47%	39%	56%	80%	35%	X	38%	20%	34%	28%	44%
YVR	140%	117%	100%	80%	87%	58%	62%	73%	60%	55%	49%	84%	49%	77%	63%	51%	47%	50%	57%	54%	57%	56%	67%	39%	42%	39%	38%	X	49%	72%	60%	78%
YXX	54%	49%	55%	44%	37%	33%	53%	39%	36%	36%	54%	48%	33%	41%	31%	28%	29%	29%	59%	65%	48%	48%	36%	39%	30%	26%	20%	49%	X	45%	31%	71%
Horseshoe Bay	61%	76%	55%	61%	41%	32%	57%	42%	44%	44%	56%	79%	65%	52%	42%	34%	38%	40%	56%	40%	42%	50%	57%	36%	40%	37%	34%	72%	45%	X	57%	58%
Tsawwassen Ferry	77%	64%	49%	68%	61%	48%	45%	52%	45%	33%	38%	53%	48%	49%	41%	37%	32%	34%	36%	36%	36%	42%	45%	32%	38%	31%	28%	60%	31%	57%	X	60%
BC Place	150%	61%	46%	76%	85%	53%	187%	124%	94%	88%	140%	103%	56%	100%	70%	56%	55%	62%	129%	66%	68%	79%	70%	51%	63%	50%	44%	78%	71%	58%	60%	X

Source: Mountain Valley Express

Figure 2 – Travel times with regional rail between various regional centres

Click to enlarge chart

	DT	OK	UBC	AS	LD	LV	MT	BW	LH	EM	NW	RM	LN	PM	CQ	PC	PW	MR	SC	GF	FW	NT	SM	CD	LC	WB	AG	YVR	YXX	HB	TF	BCP
Downtown	X	138%	113%	222%	300%	157%	156%	169%	217%	90%	130%	140%	138%	167%	182%	159%	167%	122%	235%	175%	126%	152%	112%	100%	109%	125%	69%	184%	145%	233%	179%	150%
Oakridge	138%	X	147%	130%	175%	113%	169%	118%	159%	93%	100%	167%	83%	98%	110%	98%	98%	92%	148%	133%	107%	83%	63%	78%	93%	107%	65%	117%	125%	150%	125%	82%
UBC	113%	147%	X	108%	141%	135%	143%	150%	139%	100%	118%	94%	83%	115%	130%	120%	127%	115%	138%	128%	109%	98%	76%	80%	100%	107%	72%	153%	121%	107%	107%	67%
Abieside	222%	130%	108%	X	140%	67%	85%	92%	125%	62%	71%	128%	138%	111%	121%	106%	118%	96%	143%	113%	93%	114%	100%	80%	88%	93%	60%	145%	112%	108%	163%	200%
Lonsdale	300%	175%	141%	140%	X	200%	126%	129%	137%	80%	100%	161%	167%	95%	121%	103%	118%	104%	174%	108%	92%	128%	100%	87%	85%	90%	67%	214%	111%	95%	207%	350%
Lynn Valley	157%	113%	135%	67%	200%	X	73%	64%	73%	54%	68%	115%	122%	73%	88%	75%	89%	76%	103%	76%	71%	90%	83%	63%	70%	70%	51%	141%	89%	63%	138%	171%
Metrotown	156%	169%	143%	85%	126%	73%	X	156%	106%	117%	180%	93%	88%	97%	111%	96%	109%	98%	158%	96%	121%	117%	87%	93%	105%	81%	58%	117%	116%	113%	121%	187%
Brentwood	169%	118%	150%	92%	129%	64%	156%	X	145%	54%	92%	118%	105%	116%	124%	105%	120%	101%	187%	111%	77%	125%	94%	80%	89%	90%	51%	167%	125%	104%	132%	130%
Lougheed	217%	159%	139%	125%	137%	73%	106%	145%	X	64%	160%	133%	114%	200%	220%	180%	171%	121%	500%	229%	95%	190%	122%	85%	103%	110%	51%	174%	160%	135%	122%	158%
Edmonds	90%	93%	100%	62%	80%	54%	117%	54%	64%	X	171%	82%	81%	67%	62%	52%	64%	75%	100%	71%	87%	97%	74%	80%	91%	70%	51%	125%	98%	83%	95%	111%
New Westminster	130%	100%	118%	71%	100%	68%	180%	92%	160%	171%	X	63%	64%	89%	87%	73%	80%	98%	200%	125%	144%	158%	100%	109%	125%	87%	61%	80%	132%	100%	80%	140%
Richmond	140%	167%	94%	128%	161%	115%	93%	118%	133%	82%	63%	X	71%	116%	125%	125%	122%	93%	100%	105%	90%	69%	68%	63%	78%	90%	61%	114%	107%	125%	104%	130%
Ladner	138%	83%	83%	138%	167%	122%	88%	105%	114%	81%	64%	71%	X	102%	106%	96%	96%	76%	71%	78%	81%	48%	48%	43%	63%	70%	48%	86%	77%	150%	100%	100%
Port Moody	167%	98%	115%	111%	95%	73%	97%	116%	200%	67%	89%	116%	102%	X	200%	175%	144%	109%	175%	105%	84%	125%	115%	80%	89%	90%	51%	157%	122%	125%	125%	125%
Coquitlam	182%	110%	130%	121%	121%	88%	111%	124%	220%	62%	87%	125%	106%	200%	X	200%	138%	104%	137%	64%	71%	100%	98%	60%	80%	67%	45%	132%	100%	103%	100%	121%
Lougheed	159%	98%	120%	106%	103%	75%	96%	105%	180%	52%	73%	125%	96%	175%	208%	X	280%	126%	116%	64%	59%	100%	88%	80%	97%	91%	50%	132%	100%	118%	100%	121%
Pitt Meadows	167%	98%	127%	118%	118%	89%	109%	120%	171%	64%	80%	122%	96%	144%	138%	280%	X	114%	125%	74%	58%	88%	80%	87%	90%	94%	46%	128%	106%	128%	91%	132%
Maple Ridge	122%	92%	115%	96%	104%	76%	98%	100%	121%	75%	98%	93%	76%	109%	104%	126%	114%	X	125%	104%	60%	118%	85%	117%	113%	141%	62%	105%	105%	113%	80%	117%
Surrey	235%	148%	138%	143%	174%	103%	158%	187%	500%	100%	200%	100%	71%	175%	137%	116%	125%	125%	X	300%	160%	164%	148%	108%	146%	147%	80%	148%	190%	155%	85%	188%
Guildford	175%	133%	128%	113%	108%	76%	96%	111%	229%	71%	125%	105%	78%	105%	64%	64%	74%	104%	300%	X	75%	105%	100%	61%	92%	117%	43%	150%	167%	125%	91%	130%
Fleetwood	125%	107%	109%	93%	92%	71%	121%	77%	95%	87%	144%	90%	61%	84%	71%	59%	58%	60%	160%	75%	X	73%	68%	55%	129%	50%	61%	119%	97%	102%	71%	118%
Newton	152%	83%	98%	114%	128%	90%	117%	125%	190%	97%	158%	69%	48%	125%	100%	100%	88%	118%	164%	105%	73%	X	138%	225%	118%	114%	71%	93%	122%	122%	61%	125%
Seahamoo	112%	63%	76%	100%	100%	83%	87%	94%	122%	74%	100%	68%	48%	115%	98%	88%	80%	85%	148%	100%	68%	138%	X	76%	70%	83%	45%	68%	75%	107%	48%	89%
Cloverdale	100%	78%	80%	80%	87%	63%	93%	80%	85%	80%	109%	63%	43%	80%	60%	80%	87%	117%	108%	81%	55%	225%	76%	X	133%	108%	76%	73%	106%	88%	51%	87%
Langley	109%	93%	100%	88%	85%	70%	105%	89%	103%	91%	125%	78%	63%	89%	80%	97%	90%	113%	146%	92%	129%	118%	70%	133%	X	64%	80%	89%	82%	95%	64%	104%
Willoughby	125%	88%	107%	93%	90%	70%	81%	90%	110%	70%	87%	90%	70%	90%	67%	91%	94%	141%	147%	117%	50%	114%	83%	108%	64%	X	46%	119%	120%	114%	80%	115%
Aldergrove	69%	65%	72%	60%	67%	51%	58%	51%	51%	51%	61%	61%	48%	51%	45%	50%	46%	62%	60%	43%	61%	71%	45%	76%	80%	46%	X	67%	20%	65%	53%	63%
YVR	184%	117%	153%	145%	214%	141%	117%	167%	174%	125%	80%	114%	86%	157%	132%	132%	128%	105%	148%	150%	119%	93%	68%	73%	89%	67%	X	135%	177%	125%	108%	108%
YXX	145%	125%	121%	112%	111%	89%	116%	125%	160%	98%	132%	107%	77%	122%	100%	100%	106%	105%	190%	167%	97%	122%	75%	106%	82%	120%	20%	135%	X	120%	97%	133%
Horseshoe Bay	233%	150%	107%	108%	95%	63%	113%	104%	135%	83%	100%	125%	150%	125%	103%	118%	113%	155%	125%	102%	122%	107%	88%	95%	114%	65%	177%	120%	X	163%	147%	
Tsawwassen Ferry	179%	125%	107%	163%	207%	138%	121%	132%	122%	95%	80%	104%	100%	125%	100%	91%	80%	85%	91%	71%	61%	48%	51%	64%	80%	53%	125%	97%	163%	X	129%	
BC Place	150%	82%	67%	200%	350%	171%	187%	130%	158%	111%	140%	130%	100%	125%	121%	121%	132%	117%	188%	130%	118%	125%	89%	87%	104%	115%	63%	108%	133%	147%	129%	X

Source: Mountain Valley Express

to achieve parity. Consider at any of the trips from downtown Vancouver to destinations on the Millennium Line (Brentwood, Lougheed, Port Moody, and Coquitlam). They are all red. That’s because a transfer is required at Commercial-Broadway Station. Although SkyTrain competes well for trips that run directly on its path through urban areas, it starts to fall behind when a trip requires a transfer or when it runs parallel to a freeway.

Regional Rail Solution

If we want transit to achieve parity with driving, regional rail is the missing piece. Virtually every large city in the world where more people use transit than drive has a regional rail system. What exactly is regional rail? A regional rail system is designed to connect an entire region using faster trains (typically over 100 km/hr) and with stations spaced further apart (typically over 3 kms between stations). In contrast, rail rapid transit systems, such as SkyTrain, meant to connect major local hubs, are typically limited to a top speed of 80 km/hr and have stations every kilometre or so.

Regional rail is not the same as

commuter rail. The key distinction is that regional rail service runs all day in both directions whereas commuter rail systems, such as the West Coast Express, only have trains enter in the morning and leave during the evening. Regional rail systems are therefore a much more reliable form of transit, serve a far greater variety of trips, and typically move much larger volumes of passengers.

With trains that can travel at speeds of up to 160 km/hr (far faster than even freeway speeds), regional rail trips can be far shorter than even the least congested drive. It also means that if a transit trip requires a transfer between rapid transit and regional rail, it is still usually faster than driving. Figure 2 shows a comparison of trip times between different

travel times now competitive, if not superior, to driving (green cells represent faster travel times using transit, red cells represent faster travel times by driving).

Yes, a regional rail network would not come cheap—estimates put the cost at upwards of \$10 billion. But given the explosive population growth expected in our region over the next decade and the growing affordability crisis, can we afford not to do it? Beyond the benefits of strengthening connections and opportunities between regions, it’s a long term investment that seems absolutely crucial if we are to achieve environmental sustainability and economic equity for future generations. L

“Transit times for most trips are simply not competitive with driving.”

regional centres if comprehensive investments in regional rail and rapid transit were to be made. The difference is virtually night and day, with the majority of transit

Lee Haber is an urban and transportation planner and the Director of Strategy and Partnerships at Mountain Valley Express. This piece originally appeared in the Daily Hive.

Political Liaisons

As “boots on the ground”, few stakeholders have the daily proximity that realtors do to those most affected by the housing crisis. Their experience affords real time insight into the concerns of home buyers and sellers as they navigate the challenges of high rates and scarce supply. In the context of the working towards solutions, this sort of intimate intel can contribute to the thinking and dialogue that ultimately informs policy decisions.



by Shafiq Jamal

The BC Real Estate Association’s annual Government Liaison Days (GL-Days) is an opportunity for representatives of the real estate sector to meet with elected officials and share this unique perspective on market dynamics.

From March 10 to 12, dozens of members from real estate boards and associations representing all regions of the province convened in Victoria to meet with their respective MLAs to share perspectives, exchange ideas and provide critical information. In addition to discussions on riding-specific issues, the sector collectively

urged Members to consider two fundamental proposals that could provide stronger engagement—and, hence, better outcomes—with respect to some decisions; and better insight into unintended consequences of others.

Housing Roundtable

The first proposal concerns the process by which policy decisions and legislation are brought forward. In the necessity to take urgent action to address the provincial housing situation, there is a risk of inadvertently excluding the voices of those for whom resulting decisions may have unfavourable

impacts. Being more inclusive in the early stages of deliberations would go far to help mitigate these risks. To this end, the sector proposes a permanent Provincial Housing Roundtable bringing together federal, provincial, municipal and indigenous authorities along with regional and other stakeholders such as market/non-market developers, builders, real estate professionals, community advocacy organizations, etc. to guide policy implementation and monitor the efficacy of new housing policies. The roundtable would emulate successful models already in place such as the Energy Step Code Council and the Development Finance Review Committee.

Pre-offer Period

The second proposal seeks to replace the current rescission period policy, commonly referred to as the “cooling-off” period, with a stronger protection in the form of a pre-offer period. The current policy allows purchasers three days following an accepted



L to R: Tammy Evans, FVREB; Chris Savage, FVREB, BC Premier, David Eby; Ishaq Ismail, FVREB; Jeff Chadha, FVREB



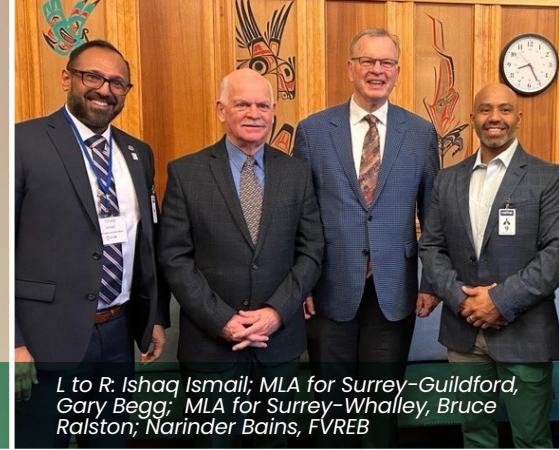
L to R: Sunny Hundal, FVREB; BC United Leader, Kevin Falcon; Narinder Bains, FVREB



L to R: Tammy Evans; BC Green Party Leader, Sonia Furstenu; Jeff Chadha



Conservative Shadow Minister for Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Scott Aitchison



L to R: Ishaq Ismail; MLA for Surrey-Guildford, Gary Begg; MLA for Surrey-Whalley, Bruce Ralston; Narinder Bains, FVREB



Trevor Koot, BCREA CEO



L to R: Chris Savage; MLA for Kelowna-Mission, Renee Merrifield; MLA for Surrey-White Rock, Trevor Halford; Tammy Evans



Trevor Hargreaves, BCREA, Senior VP, Government Relations, Marketing & Communications

offer during which the buyer could rescind the agreement with no questions asked. This largely knee-jerk response to the market frenzy during the pandemic sought to have a cooling effect on overheated pricing while protecting consumers from making decisions based more on emotion than pragmatism. In the first instance it had no discernible effect, and in the second, the mechanism was rarely if ever invoked, according to BCREA research. Further, it resulted in unintended consequences for buyers and sellers alike by tying up properties unnecessarily to put pressure on sellers, while buyers were left with a false sense of security. This is what happens when consultation and dialogue are missing from the process.

The proposed longer pre-offer period of five days would avoid these issues. The period would commence on the date of listing, during which the vendor can neither view nor accept offers on the property.

Sellers would be obliged to allow access to the property for viewings and inspections. This provides a better opportunity for prospective buyers to conduct and complete due diligence before presenting an offer to purchase a property and dramatically reduce the potential for regret. It also reduces unintended negative consequences to the seller, by avoiding a cascading collapse of dependent transactions and reducing the potential for unscrupulous purchasers to tie up multiple properties to pressure sellers into renegotiating.

A well-rounded event

Attendees also heard a series of keynotes from provincial party leaders. Official Opposition and BC United leader Kevin Falcon didn't mince words about the NDP's efforts to date: "Of the 114,000 housing units that the NDP promised to build over an eight-year period, only 16,000 have been built, which reinforces that we need to hold politicians accountable."

Among Premier Eby's messages was the idea that the private market should not be seen as the primary solutions-provider. "One perspective within government is that we should let markets decide [housing supply]. I am not a fan of this because based on the evidence we are seeing, leaving it to the markets to decide did not work with the previous government and is not working now."

Additional sessions included a presentation by BCREA Chief Economist, Brendon Ogmundson whose research indicated that the elevated levels of inflation are almost over, confirming the prevailing sentiment that interest rates will likely start to come down this summer. Rounding out the commentary was a presentation with pollster Mario Conesco whose survey showed that while there is still much work to do, public trust in and experience with the BC real estate community is positive. L

Shafiq Jamal is the Stakeholder & Government Affairs Facilitator, Fraser Valley Real Estate Board



Incoming FVREB Board of Directors 2024-25, L to R: Darcy Reddicopp; Past-Chair, Narinder Bains; Brian Budd; Gurdip Sahota; Chair-Elect, Tore Jacobsen; Jeff Chadha, Chair; Rob Christensen; Gin Dhillon, Vice-Chair; CEO, Baldev Gill; Jasbir Sandhu; Angela Evennett; Larry Anderson; Manny Chatha.

2024 FVREB Annual General Meeting

The Fraser Valley Real Estate Board welcomed a slate of new officers and directors for 2024/25 at its AGM on February 29. Serving as officers with incoming Chair Jeff Chadha are Chair-Elect Tore Jacobsen, Vice-Chair Gin Dhillon and Past-Chair, Narinder Bains. Returning Directors include Larry Anderson, Rob Christensen, Darcy Reddicopp and Jasbir Sandhu, who will be joined by newly elected Directors Brian Budd, Manny Chatha, Angela Evennett and Gurdip Sahota.

L to R: Tore Jacobsen; Jeff Chadha; Gin Dhillon



Bettina Reid, Recipient of the 2024 John Armeneau Award

FVREB member Bettina Reid was presented with this year’s John Armeneau Award, the Board’s highest honour, recognizing members whose personal and professional conduct “shines with passion, dedication, leadership, and commitment to community.”

PacificWest 2024 – Innovate, Integrate and Inspire

Western Canada’s premier real estate conference, PacificWest, will take place October 1-2, 2024 at the Vancouver Convention Center. A joint effort between the Fraser Valley Real Estate Board and Greater Vancouver REALTORS®, the two-day event features local, national and global experts on trends and issues in the real estate and housing markets including:



- » The impact of AI
- » Market disruptors
- » Wellness best practices
- » The future of regulation

The Conference also includes a trade show, workshops, seminars and a Managing Brokers stream. For more information or to register, visit the PacificWest 2024 [website](#).

Fraser Valley REALTORS® Charitable Foundation



The FVRCF is committed to the cause of supporting our region’s at-risk and vulnerable youth through gifts to charities whose work is aligned with the Foundation’s mission. In 2023, the Foundation granted nearly \$200,000 to charities throughout the Fraser Valley and this year, it will more than double the amount of gifts dispersed to \$400,000. Also this year the Foundation will establish bursary program for students from over fifty high schools and learning centres across our region. At-risk, marginalized or vulnerable graduating students who commit to continuing their education to pursue their full potential will be eligible for the \$1,000 bursary.



L to R: FVRCF Chair, John Barbisan; Greater Vancouver REALTORS® CEO, Jeff King; FVREB CEO, Baldev Gill

To learn more about the Foundation or to donate to its programs, visit the FVRCF [website](#). In early September, the FVRCF will co-host its annual golf tournament fundraiser in collaboration with the Fraser Valley Real Estate Board. To register visit the Tournament [website](#).

Medallion 2024



The Medallion Club is the FVREB’s premier awards program celebrating outstanding achievements among the top 10 per cent of members who qualify. Each spring, top qualifiers are

recognized at the annual Medallion Gala, where over 50 awards are presented in a variety of categories including Top Individual (Brent Roberts, Managing Broker at Royal LePage Brent Roberts Realty), Top Team (Katrina & The Team, at eXp Realty of Canada) and Rookie of the Year (Gurinder Cheema, RE/MAX Performance Realty).

Katrina and The Team



FVREB Past-Chair, Narinder Bains

The housing affordability crisis is really a land affordability problem



By Patrick Condon

In Vancouver, since 1970, the number of housing units within city limits has more than tripled, primarily through infill densification and changes in land use. Despite this surge in supply, housing prices skyrocketed, making Vancouver one of North America's most expensive cities to live in. If adding new housing supply, as now mandated by provincial Bills 44, 46, and 47, led to lower costs Vancouver should have North America's cheapest housing. Instead, when measured as the gap between median household income and median home price, it has the highest. This trend of escalating housing costs outpacing wage growth is not unique to Vancouver; but Vancouver is almost the world's most extreme example. It is a global phenomenon affecting major cities worldwide, including all the municipalities in the Lower Mainland. Why didn't adding so much new housing supply lower prices?

“The root cause of this housing affordability crisis lies in the soaring value of urban land.”

The root cause of this housing affordability crisis lies in the soaring value of urban land, driven by speculative investment and a disproportionate increase in land prices compared to wages. This shift in wealth accumulation from income to land value mirrors historical trends outlined by economists like Thomas Piketty and Henry George. The relentless rise in land prices exacerbates inequality, with urban land becoming increasingly unaffordable for the majority.

Attempts to address this issue through increased density have failed to alleviate housing costs, as landowners capture the value created by density

increases. Smart developers exploit this dynamic, profiting from land speculation during rezoning processes. Consequently, the benefits of density do not translate into more affordable housing for buyers or renters.

To tackle this crisis, cities can learn from successful models like Vienna, where proactive municipal policies prioritize affordable housing through taxation and land acquisition. By investing in non-market housing and working with community groups, Vienna has achieved remarkable results, with over half of its housing stock being permanently affordable.

Closer to home, initiatives in cities like Cambridge, Massachusetts, demonstrate the potential for alternative development approaches. By incentivizing affordable housing through density bonuses, coupled with stringent affordability requirements, cities can exert downward pressure on land prices and ensure inclusive urban development.

However, implementing such policies requires careful consideration of local contexts and meaningful engagement with stakeholders. Cambridge's inclusive approach, involving consultation with neighborhood groups and adherence to established architectural standards, highlights the importance of community involvement and holistic planning.

Addressing the housing affordability crisis demands innovative solutions that prioritize social equity and sustainable urban development. By reimagining the relationship between land, housing, and community, cities can create more inclusive and livable environments for all residents. [L](#)

Patrick Condon, is the James Taylor Chair in Landscape and Livable Environments at UBC's School of Architecture & Landscape Architecture.



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