



UBC Faculty and Staff Housing Needs Assessment and Programs Review

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urban
matters

Prepared by Urban Matters CCC Ltd.
550 – 1090 Homer Street
Vancouver, BC V6B 2W9



Executive Summary

Overview

Purpose

The Faculty and Staff Housing Needs Assessment and Programs Evaluation (“the Study”) was completed to assist the University of British Columbia, Vancouver (“UBC” or “the University”) in better understanding the housing needs and aspirations of faculty and staff and how they may be impacted by the current housing market. This Study also examines how well UBC’s housing programs are supporting these needs and aspirations in service of the University’s recruitment and retention goals. The purpose of this Study is as follows:



Document available data on faculty and staff demographics to identify how demographics may influence housing needs



Assess on-campus and local housing supply trends to identify barriers to accessing and affording housing that is appropriate for different households



Conduct a high-level qualitative review of UBC’s faculty and staff housing programs to identify potential areas of improvement



Define unmet housing needs among faculty and staff, including the income levels of households facing gaps in the housing market, to identify opportunities to address these needs

The information in this document is intended to be used by UBC to inform the Campus Vision 2050 and the 2023 Ten-Year review of the Housing Action Plan. UBC undertook a separate process to assess student housing need and demand to support Campus Vision 2050 and the Housing Action Plan update.

Context

- » The most ideal workforce housing is envisioned as a “complete community”. More than just a roof over one’s head, this means walkability, access to amenities and transportation options, a well-designed buildings and neighbourhoods.
- » Overarching regional trends indicate that UBC’s nearby communities are tackling similar housing pressures: the high cost of housing and limited supply of desirable units, including larger units for families.
- » Housing research shows that some demographics may experience additional barriers to equity in housing, including discrimination in the rental housing market because of race, size of households, and/or 2SLGBTQIA+ identity and a lack of access to intergenerational wealth that may impact entry into homeownership.
- » In expensive markets like Metro Vancouver, research into workforce housing shows that multiple tools and policies are needed to address employee housing needs; the most commonly used tools are rental assistance programs, financial education and counselling, and the creation of rental or shared equity homeownership programs.

UBC Housing Programs

UBC offers **four Faculty Staff Housing Programs** that work to support the University’s recruitment and retention efforts and increase affordability for eligible households:

- 1. The Down Payment Assistance (DPA) Program**
Offers full-time tenure-stream faculty an interest-free loan of up to \$50,000 that is forgivable after five years.
- 2. The Prescribed Interest Rate Loan (PIRL) Program**
Assists eligible approved tenured or tenure-track faculty, as well as senior and executive-level administrative hires, with the purchase of a home through a one-time loan at a reduced interest rate. Loan amounts range from \$50,000 to \$500,000.
- 3. The Faculty Staff Restricted Rental Program**
Offers apartment units or townhomes to full-time faculty and staff at discounted rental rates, with a current stock of 951 units. UBC aims for its portfolio of rental housing for faculty and staff to be priced at approximately 25 percent below average market rental rates charged for purpose-built market rental housing on Vancouver’s West Side.
- 4. The Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) Pilot Program**
Offers full-time faculty and staff earning moderate incomes to access up to 110 rental units at a more affordable rate (charged at 30 percent of household income).

Employee Demographics

Highlighted below are key demographic indicators of UBC faculty and staff, in comparison with the region overall. UBC represents a unique community with a high concentration of higher-income positions and is not expected to match the region overall, especially on indicators such as income. However, this data reflects overall representation among faculty and staff when it comes to key demographic indicators and can be used to identify potential gaps to support recruitment and retention goals.

Indicator	Faculty	Staff	Metro Vancouver (unless otherwise noted)
Full-time Part-time	80% 20%	90% 10%	
Men	54%	36%	49%
Women	44%	57%	51%
Identifying as trans	0.7%	0.8%	0.2% (Canada)
Median age	50	40	41
Indigenous identity	1.5%	1.8%	2.5%
Visible minority	19%	34%	49%
Persons with disabilities	7%	7%	21%
Identifying as lesbian, gay, or Two Spirit	6%	7%	4% (Canada)
Median Salary	\$135,000	\$63,000	\$40,800

Highlights from the Report

Success Stories

UBC Faculty Staff Housing Programs are highly regarded by faculty and staff who access them, as well as by those involved in recruitment and retention processes. They are innovative in their reach and increase housing options in both the homeownership and rental markets.

The DPA program is popular and makes homeownership more attainable for all eligible faculty.



Number of Recipients Since Program Launched in 2009

565



2021/2022 Total Issued

\$4,025,000

The PIRL program is UBC's most direct and strategic tool for the recruitment and retention of tenure-track faculty and senior administrators. It provides a significant benefit to program beneficiaries while offering the University a flexible and adaptive way to respond to recruitment and retention priorities.



Number of Approved PIRLs since program launch in 2017

248 (127 activated)



2021/2022 Total Issued

\$10,000,000

The Faculty Staff Restricted Rental Housing program offers high quality on-campus purpose-built rental housing to eligible faculty and staff at rents lower than newer rental housing offered in the private market. The program provides housing stability, predictable rent increases, and convenient access to work in proximity to services, green spaces, and high-quality schools. Residents feel safe and value the high quality of the housing and its amenities.

The Rent-Geared-to-Income Pilot Program is UBC's most direct effort to address housing unaffordability for low to moderate income staff. Program participants shared that the program increased their overall quality of life due to improved housing conditions and affordability, neighbourhood safety, reduced commuting times, increased personal time, and reduced stress. Improvements in location, size and property management were also identified as key benefits of participating in the program.



Number of Units (2022)

951

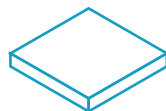


Average Rent (2022)

\$2,183

Proportion of 3+ bedroom units compared to Vancouver

32% vs. 1%



\$2.76 vs. \$3.47

Average rent per square foot compared to new rental in Vancouver



Current Program Participation

61/100 Households

Maximum target of 100 households



Maximum Household Income

\$57,500 – \$80,000

1 bedroom - 3 bedroom units



Average Rent (2022)

\$1,250

Level of Affordability*

44%

Lower than average for new rental in Vancouver

25%

Lower than average for all rental in Vancouver

*Not counting taxable benefit (see sections 5 and 6 for more information)



Housing Gaps for Faculty and Staff

Employees in low to moderate income households face unaffordability and hardship in the regional housing market today and have few housing options at UBC and on Vancouver’s West Side. UBC’s Faculty Staff Restricted Rental and RGI programs work to respond to these challenges, but high demand and restrictive high demand and restrictive eligibility means not all households who wish to access the programs are able to. These programs are also considered taxable benefits which erodes their impact on household affordability.



Vacancy Rate (2021)

UBC and UEL:

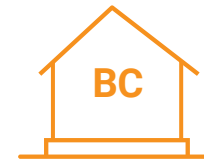
0%

Vancouver:

1.1%

Metro Vancouver:

1.4%



BC Housing’s Housing Registry (2021)

14,552

+50% since 2015

The region continues to face significant housing affordability and supply challenges. Vacancy rates in the rental market remain extremely low and there is an extremely limited supply of larger rental units for families. While rising interest rates may temporarily dampen demand in the homeownership market, renters hoping to buy face greater challenges than ever as the monthly carrying costs of a mortgage have increased substantially.

Long commutes cost employees money, time, and impacts their health and wellbeing, and high costs and limited options may prevent the University from recruiting and/or retaining staff needed to deliver services.

Estimated Monthly Commuting Costs



Average Rent in Vancouver (all units) (2021)

\$1,612

+55% since 2011



Average Rent in Vancouver (built 2000 or later) (2021)

\$2,164

+55% since 2011



Public Transportation

\$103 to \$185



Private Vehicle

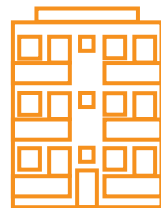
\$393 to \$563



Price of Typical Detached Dwelling (June 2022)

\$2,592,800

+67% since 2012



Price of Typical Apartment Condominium (June 2022)

\$813,000

+92% since 2012

Recommendations

This report makes a number of recommendations to improve UBC housing programs for faculty and staff to augment the role these programs play in recruitment and retention, and to support positive housing outcomes for UBC employees.

1.

General

- Increase housing programs for low to moderate income staff, increase their participation in existing programs, and explore additional programs to support staff into the future.
- Explore the use of housing programs to attract faculty and staff from historically marginalized groups (e.g., those who are Indigenous, visible minorities, women, and/or persons with disabilities).
- Implement a communications program to increase awareness among faculty and staff about UBC housing programs and eligibility.
- Monitor key performance indicators that demonstrate the impact of UBC faculty staff housing programs in relation to recruitment and retention as part of annual reporting to the UBC board.

2.

Down Payment Assistance (DPA) Program

- Explore increasing the loan amount, including for target groups, to ensure the DPA continues to be a benefit in recruitment and retention.
- Improve support for recipients during the purchase period.
- Expand program eligibility to support unique housing situations.
- Automate the taxable benefit process.

3.

Prescribed Interest Rate Loan (PIRL) Program

- Explore the development of prioritization criteria to support the Office of the Provost in evaluating applications.
- Explore the size of PIRL required for effective recruitment and retention through market research.
- Monitor how funding is allocated by faculty and explore program adjustments as needed.
- Set intake dates for retention PIRLs.
- Improve communications regarding PIRL as a merit-based, limited program.
- Require retention PIRL applications to be made by faculties.

4.

Faculty Staff Restricted Rental Housing




- Continue to build rental housing for Faculty and Staff
- Review waitlist prioritization with a focus on equitable access for staff
- Explore ways to support postdoctoral fellows and research associates
- Improve program administration through small process changes

5.

Rent-Geared-to-Income Pilot Program (RGI)

- Make the Pilot Program permanent.
- Improve program information.
- Introduce a communications plan to better reach intended beneficiaries, including during the hiring process.
- Improve management of unit mix.
- Update household income thresholds for staff eligible for the RGI program to better reflect market gaps.
- Explore the feasibility of setting rents below 30 percent of income to account for the cost impacts of taxable benefit.
- Explore the feasibility of new ways of making off-campus rental housing more affordable, such as offering portable rent subsidies, building RGI housing on other UBC sites, and/or implementing a free or more deeply subsidized transit pass for low to moderate income staff.
- Provide flexibility on income earned to accommodate tenants with variable incomes.
- Improve RGI administration process.

Current and Proposed Income Thresholds

Unit Size By number of bedrooms	Household Income Thresholds	
	Current	Proposed
	\$57,500	\$62,100
	\$69,000	\$82,100
	\$80,000	\$110,100

