

HOME WASTE PREVENTION STRATEGY: Municipal Action Plan





1390 Madore Ave, Coquitlam: Summer 2020



**RENEWAL
DEVELOPMENT**
SUSTAINABILITY. QUALITY. COMMUNITY.



501 Veterans Rd, Gibsons: Summer 2021



Executive Summary

British Columbia is growing.

From 2016 to 2021 Metro Vancouver, for example, was the fastest growing metro area in Canada.¹ The region welcomed 179,000 new residents -- a 7.3% population increase. This growth, which is projected to continue², is putting incredible pressure on our housing market supply. In response local governments have adopted policies promoting residential densification. The process to achieve this urban density, however, has the unintended consequence of generating huge amounts of material and embodied carbon waste, as well as a missed opportunity to preserve and transform existing homes into affordable housing.

Metro Vancouver, on a per capita basis, is one of the demolition capitals of the world. Currently more than 2,700 single family homes on average are demolished across Metro Vancouver every year. The average 2,000 sq ft wood framed building contains 65,000 KG of embodied carbon³ and 100,000 KG of raw materials.⁴ Thirty-three percent of our local landfills are full of construction and demolition waste.⁵

It will cost Metro Vancouver taxpayers \$112 million in closure and post-closure costs for the Vancouver Landfill alone.⁶

Average Material Composition of a 2,000 sq ft Wood Framed Home.



There are responsible & sustainable alternatives to machine home demolition. According to industry experts, it is estimated that the following higher uses could apply to the 10,000+ homes scheduled for removal in the next five years:

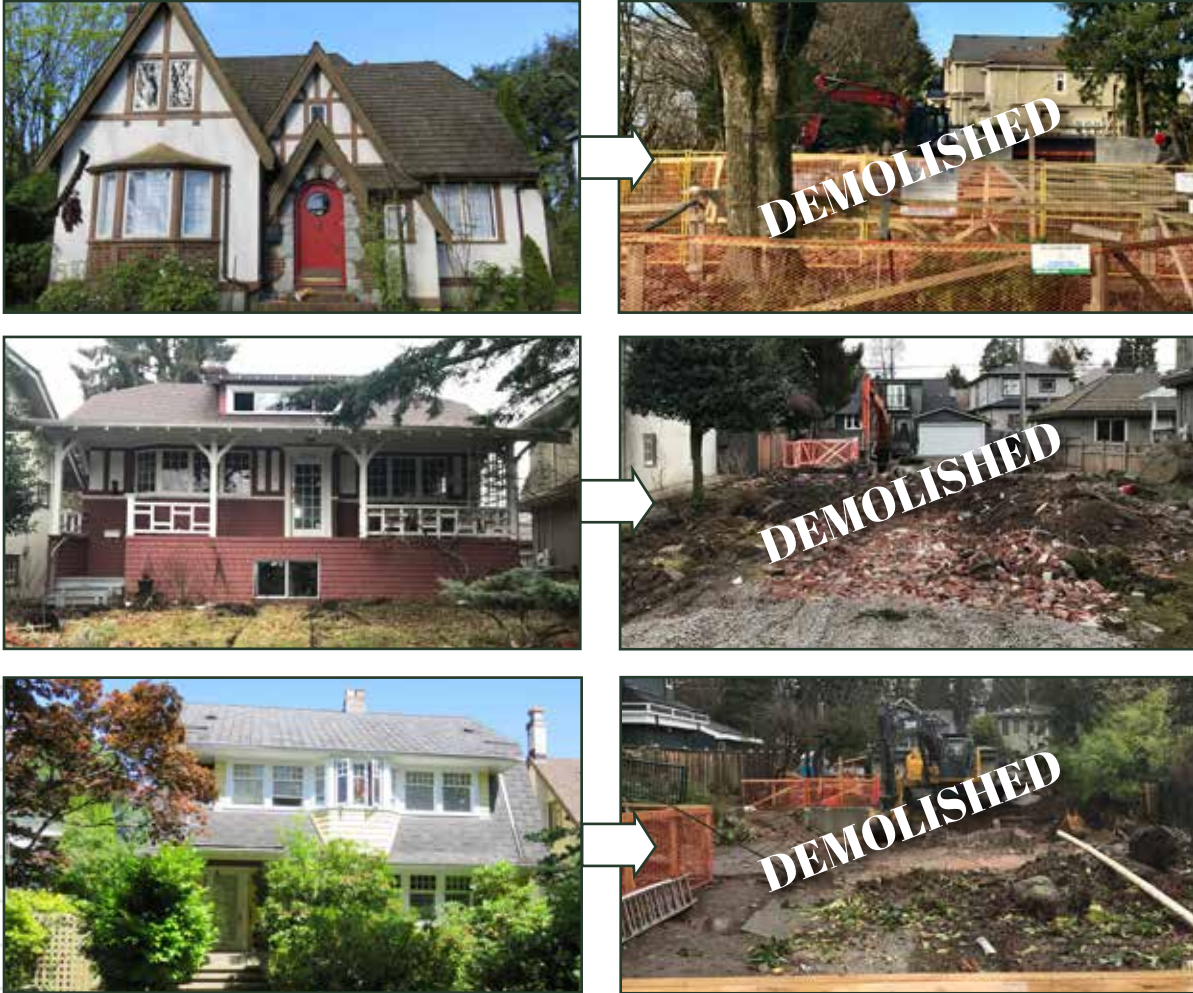
- Retention (viable for ~ >1% of buildings)
- Relocation (viable for ~ 40% of all buildings)
- Deconstruction (viable for all pre 1975 buildings)

Moreover, while many communities are facing critical housing shortages, Metro Vancouver developers are paying to demolish roughly 1,200 good, high-value homes each year when many of them could (and should) be relocated and repurposed as low cost, low carbon affordable housing. Many of these homes could be utilized by exurban Indigenous communities or non-profit housing groups. TLA Development demonstrated this home donation model with the Songhees Nation in Winter 2023⁷.

On the whole, the *Home Waste Prevention Strategy* is designed as a “win-win-win” to assist developers and homeowners save time and optimize density, enable responsible building removal, divert landfill waste and provide affordable housing to exurban communities in need.

This document puts forward a 7-point policy framework to support this strategy.

- I. Responsible Building Removal Assessment**
- II. Early Green Removal Permits**
- III. Refundable Demolition Deposit**
- IV. Density Bonus for Relocated or Fully Deconstructed Homes**
- V. Municipal Building Removal Procurement Standards**
- VI. Policies to Support Receiving of Relocated Homes**
- VII. Create Streamlined Building Move-On Permit Process**



I. Responsible Building Removal Assessment

Policy: Municipalities should create a pre-demolition assessment form (as early in the process as possible) to require applicants to assess a home slated for removal for relocation and deconstruction.

Rationale: This puts the responsibility on the applicant to contact a responsible building removal company, not the other way around. The assessment does not bind the applicant to either removal solution – simply that the applicant has undertaken an assessment as part of its due diligence. The mandatory assessment is a critical first step in setting an objective framework for making decisions and aligning other supporting policies and incentives.



II. Early Green Removal Permits

Policy: Subject to completion of the house assessment, municipalities should allow all homes to be relocated or deconstructed *anytime* before the building permit is issued through an Early Green Removal Permit.

The Early Green Removal Permit is best structured as a separate and stand-alone removal permit application and process that is granted once a home assessment is completed and relocation and/or deconstruction are identified as viable options.

Rationale: Early Green Removal Permits save the developer or property owner time and money. Most municipalities do not allow the removal of a structure before a building permit is issued. This creates a time crunch situation where as soon as the building permit is issued the applicant seeks the *easiest and fastest* way to get rid of the home(s). It can take up to two months for an applicant to machine demolish a home after the building permit is issued e.g. service disconnection, abatement and demolition, and it often takes longer than this if they were to choose relocation or deconstruction. The Early Green Removal fronts the removal process to anytime before the building permit is issued, provided the applicant is utilizing a sustainable, low-carbon removal option (i.e., relocation or deconstruction). Consequently, the applicant can have a clear, ready-to-build lot the day they receive their building permit - saving them at least two months. The additional benefit to the community is the project is completed faster, providing additional housing supply more rapidly.

Early Green Removal Permits also help reduce risks associated with empty homes. When a developer takes over a land assembly, tenants regularly move out early and on short notice – sometimes months before the building permit is approved. The developer often does not find new tenants as they do not want the risk of having to give multiple months notice. This results in many single family homes being boarded and left vacant for weeks (and often months) which become a magnet for break-ins, squatting, theft, vandalism and fires. The Early Green Removal Permit provides an opportunity and incentive for the developer to relocate or deconstruct the home instead of letting it sit unoccupied while they wait for their final building permit approval.

The word *Early* is key from a policy communication perspective: to create a real and perceived time saving benefit. If a municipality already has decoupled demolition permits from building permits, Early Green Removal Permit applications should always be prioritized to create a timeline incentive over machine demolition applications.



Existing Example:

The City of Port Moody and District of West Vancouver, for example, have entirely decoupled demolition and building permits. That said, the better approach is to only allow early building removal for responsible strategies, e.g. relocation or deconstruction. If machine demolition is treated equally with relocation and deconstruction we have lost the power of the time saving benefit.

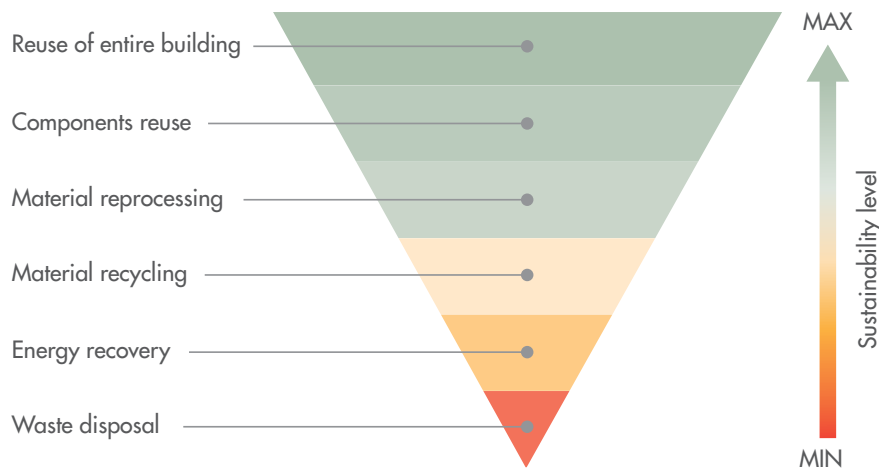
The District of North Vancouver is currently piloting an Early Green Removal permit process (contact: Bo Ocampo ocampob@dnv.org).

III. Refundable Demolition Deposit

Policy: Municipalities should require a \$15,000 - \$20,000 demolition deposit for all single family homes. This deposit is returned if the applicant proves the home was relocated or 3.5KG per sq ft of finished floor space is deconstructed and salvaged. The deposit is also returned if the applicant demonstrates the home was not suitable for either relocation or deconstruction (see [Section I: Responsible Building Removal Assessment](#)). The deposit should only be kept if the applicant confirms the home was suitable for relocation or deconstruction and they chose to proceed with machine demolition regardless.

Rationale: In partnership with the mandatory assessment, the demolition deposit provides a financial incentive for the applicant to strongly consider implementing the most responsible removal solution. In the instance where a home is assessed to not be able to be relocated or deconstructed, the deposit is returned. Viability can be confirmed in the form of a supporting letter from a qualified relocation and deconstruction company.

Many municipalities are implementing some combination of these deposits. Home relocation should be clearly identified as a viable option for an applicant to receive their deposit. Many bylaws and policies have too narrowly focused on wood or material recycling/salvage. Communicating home relocation as a viable option is key.



Existing Examples: The City of Victoria has a \$19,500 demolition deposit ([source](#)). The District of North Vancouver has a 3.5KG per sq ft salvage requirement for the deposit return ([source](#)).



IV. Density Bonus for Relocated or Fully Deconstructed Homes

Policy: For every home an applicant commits to relocate or fully deconstruct in their development plan, municipalities should allow additional density to be built above what the current zoning allows. This density bonus policy should be extended to all homes relocated or fully deconstructed.

Rationale: Developers and homeowners need strong incentives (e.g. Early Green Removal and Density Bonuses) to support responsible building removal solutions. When looking at this on the whole, applicants should recognize the package of solutions as being overall beneficial to their development plans and business operations.

Existing Examples: The City of New Westminster has a Heritage Protection Policy whereby an applicant's development plans can supersede local zoning regulations (including density). The objective is to provide a strong incentive for the applicant to preserve the building in-situ or relocate in return for a development benefit ([source](#)).

The City of Vancouver has provided density bonuses ([source](#)) to developers who have relocated heritage or character significant homes (e.g. [The Twin Dorothis](#)).



V. Municipal Building Removal Procurement Standards

Policy: Municipalities should update their own demolition procurement criteria for public projects. Whenever a building (residential, commercial, institutional) owned by the City is slated for demolition the building removal tender criteria should prioritize relocation and then deconstruction.

Example Policy:

“Whenever a building owned by the municipality is slated for removal, the procurement criteria will favor relocation, then deconstruction, then machine demolition; in order of best highest re-use.”

The tender should be made available to qualified relocation and deconstruction companies, not the general public.

Rationale: Municipalities should be leading the development industry by example. This policy lens would ensure more buildings owned by the City will be treated in the same manner as private buildings.

Existing Example: Parks Canada have “alternative use” assessment criteria for heritage and character buildings slated for removal. The Federal Treasury Board Policy on Management of Real Property ([source](#))



Streamlined Building *Receiving* Policy Recommendations

VI. Policies to Support Receiving of Relocated Homes

Policy: Municipal policy should reinforce policy in the National Building Code and the BC Building Code with respect to existing buildings. Specifically, policy should treat relocated homes as existing homes, include provisions for a “move on” permit and supporting requirements.

Rationale: By implementing supportive policies in origin and destination municipalities, we can divert waste from regional landfills, secure affordable housing for British Columbians, and cooperatively contribute to zero emissions goals. Harmonization between Federal, Provincial and Regional policies provides clear directives to local developers and building officials, ensuring regulations are easy to communicate and understand, and that they support end goals with similar language. Applying language and policy consistent with the NBC also allows building officials to directly reference NRC User Guides should they require further guidance.

VII. Create Streamlined Building Move-On Permit Process

Policy: Municipalities should allow relocated homes to be delivered to their destination site prior to the building permit being issued via an Expedited Move-On Permit.

The Expedited Move-On Permit is best structured as a separate and stand-alone permit application and process.

Expedited Move-on permits are best supported by the following minimum requirements:

- a. Site and elevation plan
- b. Confirmation the building fits within setbacks, and current zoning requirements
- c. Confirmation the building fits within the value requirement for moved-on buildings.
(See Section 1.6.e.)
- d. Engineer's report for the relocated building certifying that it is safe for continued occupancy.

Rationale: Expedited Move-On Permits relieve recipients utilizing this affordable housing option of having to pay storage fees, by facilitating delivery at the destination site at the same time as removal from the origin site. These additional costs can have a large impact on affordability.

Move-On Permit applications must be prioritized to create a timing incentive for the home to be relocated, not machine demolished.

Existing Example: The Comox Valley Regional District utilizes a separate [move-on permit](#) to encourage the reuse of buildings.

