



My Home My Community

*Inclusive Housing Options for
People with Developmental Disabilities:
A National Demonstration Initiative*

Case Study Report 3: UNITI-Chorus, South Surrey, BC

October 2019

This report was produced as part of My Home My Community, a national initiative of the Canadian Association of Community Living and People First of Canada.

The Canadian Association for Community Living is a national federation of 13 provincial-territorial associations and over 300 local associations working to advance the full inclusion and human rights of people with an intellectual disability and their families. CACL is dedicated to attaining full participation in community life, ending exclusion and discrimination on the basis of intellectual disability, promoting respect for diversity, and advancing human rights to ensure equality for all Canadians. CACL leads the way in building a more inclusive Canada for people with an intellectual disability by strengthening families, defending rights, and transforming communities into places where everyone belongs.

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People First of Canada is the national voice for people who have been labeled with an intellectual disability. We believe in the right to freedom, choice, and equality for all. We support each other to reclaim our right to be recognized as full citizens through peer support, sharing our stories, developing leadership skills, advocating for our right to choose where and with whom we live, and by ensuring that our voices are heard and respected. We work together to educate and influence communities and government to ensure that all persons with intellectual disabilities are fully included and supported to live as equal citizens in Canada.

www.peoplefirstofcanada.ca

My Home My Community is a national partnership initiative that is opening doors to inclusive affordable housing for people with developmental disabilities. My Home My Community is driving innovation in housing development and community supports to ensure all persons with developmental disabilities have a home that offers choice and affordability, recognizes rights, addresses support needs, and fosters social inclusion in the community.

www.myhomemycommunity.ca

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CANADIAN ASSOCIATION
FOR COMMUNITY LIVING
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR
L'INTÉGRATION COMMUNAUTAIRE

Diversity includes. On se ressemble.

PEOPLE
FIRST
OF CANADA



PERSONNES
D'ABORD
DU CANADA

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1.0 Introduction

This report provides an in-depth review of UNITI-Chorus' efforts to develop new housing solutions for individuals with a developmental disability. This case study report is part three of three in a series developed for the Canadian Association for Community Living's *My Home My Community* Inclusive Housing Options for People with Developmental Disabilities national demonstration project.

1.1 The Case Studies

The *My Home My Community: Inclusive Housing Options Demonstration Initiative* profiles three innovative approaches to developing inclusive, affordable, and accessible housing. These models not only provide support, but also foster social inclusion for individuals with a developmental disability.

The models profiled as part of this demonstration initiative are just a small sample of the diverse range of ways people with developmental disabilities and their circles of support are making inclusive affordable housing a reality. None are perfect: the models developed in these case studies all have their strengths and weaknesses; each emerged out of a specific context with its own limitations and areas of excellence. Together, they contribute to a growing body of work recognizing the potential of housing to be the cornerstone of inclusive communities.

The three case studies profiled in this series are:

- **Case Study 1: Community Living Toronto, Toronto ON**
This initiative works with housing developers in Toronto to secure dispersed rental apartments to provide security of tenure, housing affordability, and supports for inclusion.
- **Case Study 2: Legacy Homes – Brockville and District Association for Community Involvement, Brockville ON**
This initiative provides individuals and families planning resources, acquires individual homes in the community and provides lifelong lease agreements to individuals with developmental disabilities to ensure security of tenure and supports to enable inclusion.
- **Case Study 3: UNITI-Chorus – Semiahmoo House Society, South Surrey BC**
This initiative leverages undeveloped property and capital assets to develop affordable rental housing, designed to fit the needs of people with intellectual disabilities but including tenants with and without disabilities.

This report provides an overview of the findings from the UNITI-Chorus case study (case study three). This report may be of particular of interest to organizations who have capacity to provide supports in a larger building, as well as the internal capacity and land or other equity available they can leverage to develop such a building.

For detailed descriptions of the case studies Community Living Toronto and Legacy Homes, please see case study reports one and two in this series.

Case Study 1: Partnering with Developers Community Living Toronto	Case Study 2: Family-Led Solutions Legacy Homes	Case Study 3: New Development UNITI-Chorus
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1.2 Why These Case Studies

Throughout Canada, at least 24,000 Canadians with developmental disabilities are in core housing need¹, with tens of thousands more in vulnerable housing situations. The *My Home My Community* initiative is a local-to-national program framework that promotes new development pathways to affordable and inclusive housing for individuals with a developmental disability.

Previous research has identified three development pathways that have demonstrated success in delivering inclusive affordable housing. These pathways were identified through a series of consultations from December 2016 to October 2018 and involved individuals with developmental disabilities and family members, Provincial and Territorial Associations for Community Living (ACLs), members of People First of Canada, housing developers, community partners and local support agencies. The identified development pathways are:

1. Individual and/or family-led housing solutions

Many families have ideas or are successfully developing their own housing solutions. With some support, knowledge sharing, and financial tools, more individuals can take action, with a flatter learning curve.

2. Partnered Solutions

Local or provincial/territorial organizations can partner with families and housing sector professionals to develop new housing.

3. New Development and Regeneration

Providers of housing and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities are seeing a mismatch between their own inclusivity principles and outdated models of residential services. Increasingly, housing providers are looking to leverage their assets and invest in inclusive, affordable housing that prioritizes the needs of people with developmental disabilities but welcomes residents with and without disabilities.

The National Housing Strategy released in 2018 by the Federal Government has allocated funding and initiatives to construct a total of 2,400 units for individuals with developmental disabilities. An asset inventory² conducted as part of *My Home My*

¹ Statistics Canada defines a household in core housing need as one whose dwelling is considered unsuitable, inadequate or unaffordable and whose income levels are such that they could not afford alternative suitable and adequate housing in their community.

² Canadian Association for Community Living (2019). *My Home My Community: Asset Inventory*: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57f27c992994ca20330b28ff/t/5d56a5e63df6e9000117b679/1565959655552/MHM+C+Asset+Inventory+FINAL.pdf>

Community identified that along the three pathways there is an estimated development potential of up to 35,000 units Canada wide.³

The goal of this project is to create a platform that will engage the housing sector, government, and community partners in learning about these three development pathways and help achieve scale along these approaches across Canada through replication.

Report Format

The case study report consists of three main parts. Part one develops an in-depth overview of UNITI-Chorus' approach to creating new housing for individuals with a developmental disability and the impact of this approach on tenants, families and support staff. The remaining section outlines UNITI-Chorus' lessons learned and opportunities for replication of this initiative across Canada. For an overview of the approach taken to develop this case study, see appendix A.

2.0 Introducing the Project

UNITI-Chorus is a partnership between three organizations. These are the Semiahmoo House Society, the Peninsula Estates Housing Society and the Semiahmoo Foundation. Through the UNITI-Chorus partnership, the organizations own, operate and provide supports to the Semiahmoo House apartment building.

The Semiahmoo House apartment building is a mid-rise building with 71 units of purpose-built rental and long-term lease (60 years) housing in White-Rock South Surrey, BC. Of the 71 apartments, a total of 20 apartments are reserved for individuals with a developmental disability, who live independently while receiving supports through the Semiahmoo House society or other support providers. There are 10 studio apartments, 40 one-bedroom, three two-bedroom and two three-bedroom apartments in the building.

The building was constructed on land Semiahmoo House Society had accumulated slowly over a period of 13 years in South Surrey. Construction lasted about 16 months. Tenants first occupied the building in 2016. One aspect that makes the Semiahmoo House apartment building so unique is the extensive pre-construction consultation that was conducted with parents, extended families, individuals with a developmental disability and the wider community. The results of the consultations are reflected throughout the development of this new purpose-built rental building: the first one built in South Surrey in 20 years.

³ Canadian Association for Community Living (2019). My Home My Community: Asset Inventory: 4.



UNITI-Chorus Apartment Building

3.0 The Development Timeline (2003 – 2019)

3.1 From Idea to Action (2003 – 2005)

The idea for an apartment building designed specifically for individuals with a developmental disability was born during a brainstorm session organized by the Semiahmoo House Society in 2003. There were over 40 participants, including individuals with a developmental disability and their families. During the session, many of the individuals expressed a desire to live in a semi-independent apartment, as opposed to a more traditional congregational setting, such as a group home. In subsequent sessions organized throughout 2003 to 2005, this desire was repeated many times over by individuals and their families. However, in those years, a group home or a home-share agreement were the only real alternatives for individuals with a developmental disability to living in the family home.

In response to what Semiahmoo House Society was hearing during these consultations, the organization started to think about several possibilities to develop new housing options for individuals with a developmental disability. This included partnering with developers through a cluster model⁴, similar to the demonstration project described in the Toronto Community Living case study (see report 1 in this series). However, unlike in Toronto, it was found that many of the existing apartment buildings in the area were old and not suitable, while no new purpose-built rental housing was being built. In addition, there

Key Drivers of Change

- Feedback from individuals with a developmental disability and their families that they were looking for alternative housing options to group homes and home-share arrangements.
- A lack of suitable rental apartments in the community of South Surrey BC.
- Confidence within the organization that they had the capacity to develop an apartment building.

⁴ A cluster model in this context is a number of independent apartments in an apartment building that are clustered around one larger unit from where supports are delivered.

was no financial assistance available at the time to make the rents affordable or the project feasible.

Around 2005, the leadership team at Semiahmoo House Society reached the conclusion that it would be better for the organization to develop its own apartment building with a number of apartments dedicated to individuals with a developmental disability. Another factor that influenced this decision was the fact that Semiahmoo House Society already had experience operating a building it had inherited in 1983 through a partner organization called the Peninsula Estates Housing Society. This experience gave the leadership team and the board the feeling that they would be capable of such an undertaking and set the organization on a course to explore development opportunities in the community.

Project Representative

"Apartments in the area were old, expensive and at the end of their life. In addition, there was no financial assistance to make a partnership financially feasible for individuals with a developmental disability"

3.2 Pre-Development (2005 – 2015)

3.2.1 Purchasing Land (2005 – 2009)

An opportunity arose in 2005, when a number of group homes Semiahmoo House Society owned could be closed and sold off. Usually support agencies are required, through operating agreements with the Province, to re-invest the proceeds of a sale into new group homes. However, after a number of conversations with BC Housing, it allowed Semiahmoo House to use the proceeds of the sale for other purposes than creating new group homes. From 2005 to 2009, the group homes were sold, and the proceeds used, in combination with some of the equity in Semiahmoo House's new head office (built in 2002), to purchase four lots adjacent to the head office. The lots were bought by the Semiahmoo House Foundation, an affiliated of Semiahmoo House Society, and were combined into one lot that could fit a mid-sized apartment building. The decision to purchase land close to the head office was a conscious one, as that would allow easy access to the services and day programs future tenants might need.

3.2.2 Developing the First Concept, Design, and Re-Zoning (2009 – 2014)

Once all the land had been acquired in 2009, Semiahmoo House Society proceeded with the development process by conducting additional community consultations with individuals with a developmental disability and their families on what a future building could look like. Through this work, an organic list of 140 interested individuals and families was created, confirming the strong need in the community. Based on the findings of these consultations, the services of an architect were retained to come up with preliminary designs for a future building.

In addition to finding an architect, Semiahmoo House Society applied successfully for \$10,000 in CMHC Seed Fundings⁵ to conduct an initial feasibility analysis and found a

⁵ The CMHC Seed Funding Program still exists but the maximum funding amount has increased in recent years to \$150,000.

partner in a local developer and general contractor, who would develop this initial concept of the building. To minimize the risk to Semiahmoo House Society, this first concept was a 55-unit condominium/strata complex with 80 parking spaces, and of which 15 apartments would be transferred to the Semiahmoo House Foundation upon completion of the project.

In 2010, the re-zoning process was started. The properties needed to be re-zoned from single-residential to multi-residential. This initiated the relationship with the City of White-Rock South Surrey BC. Initially, there was quite some opposition to the proposed development from the community and the rezoning was voted down in City Council in 2011. The main reason the rezoning application was denied was because the City had tied the council decision on re-zoning the property to another change regarding a road that would disrupt an existing cul-de-sac, a change that was very unpopular in the community.

At the same time as the failed re-zoning application in 2011, conversations with the City of White-Rock South Surrey on easing development charges were also not moving forward. This led the Semiahmoo House Society's development team to engage with a development consultant who could help them through this process. With the assistance from the consultant, the development team led a more intentional rezoning strategy from 2012 to 2014. They engaged actively with the wider community and brought individuals with a developmental disability who were supported by Semiahmoo House to Council meetings. Furthermore, the development team ensured that the application for rezoning was not tied to any other decisions Council would vote on.

Project Representative

"When we did it [the second time], we had stations serving tea and coffee [for participants] and created a very different experience. Locals felt valued and consulted with. Taking control of the public consultation made it go much better."

While going through the re-zoning procedure in late 2012, the Semiahmoo House development team started to realize that in a condominium/strata model, the tenants with a disability would be in a minority position compared to the other owners. This could cause issues when decisions were being made by the condominium board. In addition, interest rates were coming down and construction costs were levelling off in the aftermath of the financial crisis. This gave Semiahmoo House the idea they could potentially lead the development themselves and rent out the entire building. This change in approach would also create more equity for the organization and give them more control over the design. Furthermore, owning the building outright would also

increase Semiahmoo House Society's ability to leverage its equity to finance other developments in the future. However, most importantly, it would put the tenants with a disability on the same footing as the other tenants in the building. In consultation with the board and the development consultant, it was decided to pursue this approach.

3.2.3 Re-thinking the Concept, Design Feasibility and Financing (2013 – 2015)

In early 2013, financed by a \$20,000 grant from the Vancity Community Foundation, a housing needs assessment was conducted by City Spaces, and a business plan was developed by the development consultant. The research at the time suggested a strong need for affordable rental housing in the community and pro-forma analysis suggested this could be financially feasible. Based on additional research and feasibility analysis, the development team decided to continue to pursue the development of a purpose-built rental building. However, this did mean a new design and concept was required. With the help from the development consultant, the development team landed on a 71-unit purpose-built rental building with 20 apartments reserved for individuals with a developmental disability. Of the 20 apartments a total of 10 apartments were reserved for units with a 60-year long-term lease⁶ paid upfront by the family or the individuals.

Key Lessons Learned

- Make sure the re-zoning application is not tied to another decision to be made by the Municipal Council.
- Engage a development consultant early in the process to ensure the right steps are taken at the right time.
- Developing a condominium apartment where some apartments are transferred to the agency puts the individuals with a developmental disability in a minority position compared to the other owners on the condo board of their own building.

The feasibility analysis conducted in 2013 showed the total cost of the building would be \$13 million. The fact that the organization already owned the land outright was instrumental in the project's financial feasibility. The land was used as an equity contribution valued at around \$2,350,000. A number of financing strategies were pursued. A \$400,000 grant and a low-interest pre-development loan were obtained through the Vancity Partnership Funding Program. In addition, a \$1,100,000 grant from BC Housing through the Investment in Affordable Housing Program was secured. Lastly, the remaining project cost, approximately \$9,150,000, was financed through low interest loans and loan insurance provided through BC Housing and CMHC. In a key meeting with the three boards of the Semiahmoo House Society, the Semiahmoo Foundation and the Peninsula Estates Housing Society, a total of 20 motions were passed to secure the funding. For more information on how the organizations were able to make these decisions in one evening see section 6.2.

In general, Semiahmoo House had been very careful in its board member selection to ensure the values of each board member were in line with the organization's values. However, prior to this decisive board meeting, the development consultant and the development team had hosted a board retreat with all board members. They developed psychological profiles of each other and engaged in trust building

⁶ Interest in the long-term lease apartments was lower than expected and only three leases were sold. The remaining seven long-term apartments were converted to regular rental apartments.

exercises. In addition, the development consultant had prepared a registry outlining all the risks the organization would face in the coming years. This helped everyone to voice their concerns in a stress-free environment and allowed for efficient decision-making under pressure throughout the development process.

During this pivotal year (2013), the development team continued to work with the City of White-Rock South Surrey in an attempt to get a break on parking requirements, development charges and property taxes. Unfortunately, the team was not able to secure reductions in property tax or development charges, although some of the permits were expedited by the planning department and parking requirements were reduced by 20 spots to take into account the fact that the tenants with a developmental disability don't have driving licenses.

Project Representative

"It was frustrating because other municipalities were stepping up to the plate at that time. Pretty much all other municipalities nowadays offer some kind of waiving of charges or something."

During these years (2013 to 2015), the development team discovered they had been on the right track but had made a number of missteps early on in the development process before the development consultant got involved. First of all, back in 2009, it had been decided that the Semiahmoo Foundation (Charity) would purchase the properties, since charities do not pay property taxes. However, charities are not allowed to operate unrelated businesses or ventures in Canada. A legal opinion obtained in late 2013 by the Semiahmoo House Society indicated that rental housing and collecting rents from tenants without disabilities is considered an unrelated business or venture. As a result, it was decided to transfer the properties from the Semiahmoo Foundation to the Peninsula Estates Housing Society, the non-profit housing society through which the Peninsula Estates had been managed since 1983. This cost the organization an additional \$40,000 in land transfer tax that could have been avoided.

Another misstep in hindsight was engaging an architect too early in the process. The preliminary designs no longer fit the new concept and were not financially feasible for a building with rental and long-term lease apartments. This resulted in the need to re-design the building to fit the new concept and financial realities. Many of the ideas from the original design had to be modified, including an increase in the total number of apartments, reduction in unit sizes and reductions in the available amenity space. During conversations with the project representatives, it was acknowledged that these missteps could have

Key Lessons Learned

- Hire an architect **later in the development process**, after the project concept has been determined.
- Work closely with the board to develop a relationship **based on trust** that can be relied on in stressful moments and during key decisions.
- Make sure the land and building are **not owned by a foundation** if the building contains market rental apartments to prevent engaging in unrelated business ventures, putting the charitable status of the organization at risk.

been avoided by engaging a development consultant with development experience earlier in the process.

**Project
Representative**

"Purchasing the property as a charity and then selling it to a non-profit, cost us \$40,000 in land transfer tax. We should have made sure the land was put into the right holding company from the start."

3.3 Construction (2015 – 2016)

With the land, zoning and financing in place, construction was able to start⁷. In 2014, the houses on the four properties were torn down and in collaboration with the same general contractor who was previously engaged to develop the condominium building, a construction manager was hired to tender the work to the range of trades required throughout the construction process. The winning bids were rolled into a CCDC2 contract⁸ to ensure the building would be delivered at a fixed price to mitigate additional costs that would be Semiahmoo House Society's responsibility. The construction took around 19 months, with occupancy in the fall of 2016. No major delays were incurred during this part of the process.

One comment that came up during engagement sessions with family members was that families and individuals had limited input on the final design of the building. While initially the development team had actively engaged with potential tenants, as well as their families, and used their feedback to develop the initial design, the switch to a purpose-built rental building resulted in limited opportunities for further input as part of the re-design.

During the construction phase, some jobs were created on the development site for an individual whom Semiahmoo House Society supported. This included site cleaning, vacuuming and other hands-on support for the construction workers. An interview with the construction manager identified that while he initially had to adjust his communication methods to provide more explanation of the tasks or show physically how something should be done, he also noted the individual caught on really quickly, and soon was able to execute most of her tasks properly. He expressed that it was a really nice experience, to see his company including opportunities for individuals with a disability in this way.

**Construction
Manager**

"Her job was maintaining the site during construction, including cleaning, vacuuming and protecting the floors from damage. She was able to do the work just fine. The support worker felt she could do the job [and she could]. I was very impressed with her punctuality and ability to memorize all the tasks!"

3.4 Tenant Selection and Preparation (2015 – 2016)

⁷ For the final design and floorplan, please see Appendix D in this report.

⁸ A CCDC 2 -2008 Stipulated Price Contract is a standard prime contract between Owner and Contractor that establishes a single, pre-determined fixed price, or lump sum, regardless of the Contractor's actual costs.

Key Lessons Learned

- Use a person-centred planning approach to identify which individuals might be suited.
- Make sure to spend as much time preparing the families as the tenants for the upcoming move.
- Hire support staff that are aligned with the support vision for the building.

As was mentioned earlier, during the discovery and pre-development stage from 2009 to 2014, the Semiahmoo House Society had consulted frequently with individuals with a developmental disability and their families. Because of these consultations, there was a list of 140 interested individuals and families.

When construction started, the Semiahmoo House Society's team, led by the manager of person-centred practices and family services, used this list as a starting point for the tenant selection process. Her team used a person-centred planning methodology⁹ and started to work intensively with the 140 families to understand which ones would be a good fit. About

half of the interested individuals and families were considered a match. However, not everyone was quite ready to commit at that time, and a new list was created for future projects. On the other hand, during engagements with family members and current tenants, many explained they were quite anxious to get a spot at that time.

With the remaining families, the Semiahmoo House Society team began an intensive personal planning process over the course of 2015 and 2016 to prepare the future tenants for the upcoming move. Support plans were created for each individual to determine what supports they would need. In addition, families spoke frequently with one another and were encouraged to assess their family members with a developmental disability's readiness to live independently, such as leaving them home alone for an evening and giving them chores in the house. All the families spoke very highly of these sessions during their engagement with the research team conducted as part of this report.

Parent

"I have to bring her [manager person centred practices] into this. She introduced all of our children to living independently by designing life plans, talking them through situations, making them more aware of responsibilities and teaching them to recognize where they needed help. She played a huge part in making this successful".

Simultaneously with the personal planning, sessions with parents and family members were held to identify perceived risks and worries and communicate how these would be addressed in the building. One of the main challenges with family members was that many felt their loved one had to master all the skills of independent living before moving out, while in reality, many of these skills can be learned in the process of becoming independent.

⁹ Person-Centered Planning refers to a family of approaches whereby the individual and their chosen network come together to recognize the unique gifts, strengths, talents, and relationships of the individual. Person-centered planning assists in the establishment of meaningful/purposeful goals that support the accomplishment of the individual's identified wants, needs, and dreams.

Project Representative

"What we found is some of the life-skills are not pertinent until after you move out, like when anybody moves out of their family home for the first time."

Lastly, new support staff were intentionally hired to support individuals in independent living. This was done to ensure the implementation of the "just enough support" model¹⁰ envisioned for the building would be implemented appropriately. For more information on this model, see section 6.4.3.

3.5 Move-In (2016 – 2019)

Tenants moved in during the month of October 2016. Tenants with a developmental disability moved in first and were dispersed throughout the building to avoid stigmatization. There was quite an adjustment period for many of the tenants with a developmental disability. Most tenants had only lived with their parents and needed to acclimatize to the newfound freedom. The Semiahmoo House Society Life-Skills team had to step in a number of times to educate tenants with a disability on apartment etiquette.

Project Representative

"The humorous thing was in the first month they started having pyjama parties in the hallway, treating it like hotel life."

In addition, tenants had to learn the difference between an emergency and a non-emergency. One staff person, who is a tenant in the building, is usually on-call overnight. In the first months, this staff person would get calls from tenants in the middle of the night, with the request to hang-out or fix a game console. However, these challenges were mostly overcome with time and only one tenant has moved out as of the writing of this report. During engagement sessions with residents, almost all individuals clearly indicated they never want to move back to their family home and enjoy the life in their new apartment, which is frequently less regulated than it was before while they lived at home.

Resident

"I SLEEP IN!!!! I see my friends, family, girlfriend. I have fun doing what I love to do. Sometimes my dad comes over and fixes things. My mom comes over to see me a lot – I like this."

There were also some issues with staff who would start organizing events, such as communal dinners with tenants. The project leadership team had to step in a number of times to ensure these events would be initiated by tenants and supported by staff, instead of the other way around, to remain in line with the "just enough support" model.

After the residents were settled in, the other tenants without disabilities moved into the building. To help develop an integrated community, the Semiahmoo House Society

¹⁰ The just enough support model is a support approach that encourages the person receiving support to do as much as possible by themselves. The approach aims to only provide support where absolutely necessary and in doing so aims to foster a sense of independence and control over one's life for the person receiving the supports.

organizes monthly events, such as coffee mornings and movie nights, inviting all tenants in the building.

3.6 Moving Forward (2019)

The UNITI-Chorus building is one of the first of its kind in Canada, where a support agency and its partners developed a community for individuals with and without disabilities, as well as a proof of concept for the “just enough support” model in Canada. The UNITI-Chorus team hopes this building can function as an example for other groups interested in developing housing for individuals with a developmental disability and regularly shares information with interested parties. In addition, UNITI-Chorus is now invited frequently to take part in Federal housing policy conversations.

Lastly, the experience of this first development has further increased the interest of UNITI-Chorus to pursue similar projects. The group is looking to develop a second building to support more individuals with a developmental disability in the future.

4.0 Project Impact

This section provides a description of the impact the UNITI-Chorus building has had on residents with a disability, their families, support staff and residents without a disability.

4.1 Impact on Tenants with a Disability and their Families

A total of two engagements were conducted with residents with a disability and their families. During one session, three family members shared their experience of finding a suitable home for their family member with a developmental disability, while the second session with current tenants of the UNITI-Chorus building uncovered the experiences of tenants living in their new home.

4.1.1 Impact on Families

During the engagement with family members of tenants with a disability, it became clear that all residents had lived in their family home before they moved to the UNITI-Chorus building. The families had been actively looking for different housing solutions while their loved ones lived at home. However, none had been successful. Some families had arranged for their family member to go to respite centres over the weekend, but this had not worked out well.

All families were familiar with the Semiahmoo House Society, and some had been engaged at the beginning of the development process 13 years earlier. When the opportunity came up for their family member to obtain a home in the building, the families indicated they were very excited, but nervous at the same time. One family even went as far as to sell their family home to obtain one of the 60-year lease apartments. The evening before registration opened up, this family slept outside the Semiahmoo House to obtain an apartment the day they became available.

Family Member

"We didn't care, just wanted what we could get, I slept outdoors that night. I thought a huge number of people would be coming so I camped out in front of Semiahmoo House, but I was the only one. One other family showed up at 6am in the morning, so we had first pick."

Two families indicated their family members were nervous but excited about the opportunity. One family mentioned they had many discussions to ensure their family member would be comfortable with the idea of moving to a new home.

During the engagement, all families mentioned how surprised they were with the level of preparation they, and their family member, received from the Semiahmoo House team to get ready for the move. This made them feel comfortable that they were in good hands and allowed them to help their family member with the practical aspects of the move. Two families actively involved their family member in the moving process, by letting them choose furniture and decorate their home. Another family did not involve their family member as he was nervous and had initially indicated he did not want to leave the family home. Therefore, the family focused on reducing stress and not confronting this individual daily about the upcoming move. This turned out to have been a successful approach as the tenant is now very happy in his own apartment.

Family Member

"The Semiahmoo team was incredible when it came to the planning process. All the steps that I take for granted they touched on. They made them realize what the [moving] process would look like and could get them to say what they felt."

The families were all very involved in helping their family members move in. While some families indicated the adjustment period went very quickly, others mentioned there were challenges with finding the right level of support and communication method between staff and tenants. However, it was mentioned that all tenants eventually settled in the building.

Two families indicated the adjustment process for themselves went more slowly than for their family members. Families in particular had to learn how to let go and allow the process to unfold. However, they also indicated they like having more time for themselves now and being able to develop a different type of relationship with their family member.

On the other hand, one family indicated they would like to have more support available in the building due to changing support needs of their family member. They indicated they are in the building almost every day, and were hoping for more measures to allow residents, should their support needs change, stay in the same living apartment.

Family Member

"She loves her independence; I still worry sometimes. [...] Mornings are nicer now and I live only five minutes away. I worry about

eating and exercise. [...] But I am a control freak and micro manager."

4.1.2 Impact on Residents

During the engagement with tenants, it became quite clear they really enjoy living in the building. In particular having their own independence and being able to do more things by themselves such as cooking, doing groceries and laundry, as well as paying bills or sleeping in on a weekday. This was a new experience to them.

Resident

"I like taking care of my home. Doing chores and groceries, and I don't feel lonely anymore. I like being alone to do my own thing and have friends and family over but sometimes I miss my old neighbours."

Tenants also indicated they needed some time to learn what to do in unfamiliar and stressful situations but felt assured they could always get in touch with support staff if they had to. Particularly in the beginning, tenants indicated they were nervous or scared about living alone. Some residents had their parents sleep over the first couple of days to settle in, but now everyone indicated they did not want to move back to their previous home.

Furthermore, many residents mentioned there are more people in their lives now, and they are busier with daily activities such as hobbies and preparing meals. Some indicated they work a couple of days a week and others indicated they would like to work because "living independently is expensive".

Lastly, a number of things residents disliked about the building were also brought up. These were predominantly around noise and sounds from neighbours, indicating it would be important to take soundproofing into account when developing a future building.

4.2 Impact on Support Staff

During the engagement with support staff, we spoke with staff members who worked in the new building or with tenants living in the building. It was noted that all support staff workers had experience or were curious about working in a non-congregated living environment. In addition, the way they described their current roles was very focused on enhancing independence in the lives of the residents, which they indicated as providing more job satisfaction for them.

Some support staff mentioned this was a challenge for them in the beginning. They had concerns about vulnerability and there being enough supports available in the building. However, support staff also mentioned there were a lot of training sessions and engagements together with families. This made them feel heard and increased their confidence in the model.

Support Staff

"There were a lot of meetings ranging from one-on-ones with families, staff or others on

the different [support] approach. We had world café discussions and the luxury of having the leadership spending time and energy to think through potential issues and address our concerns.”

During the move-in process, the support staff confirmed some of the issues identified earlier in this report. In particular, residents needed to learn when and how to engage with support staff and other residents in the building. Some staff had issues with the lack of planned structure in the lives of the tenants with a disability. However, this lack of structure was intentional and allowed for the development of a baseline of what residents needed in terms of support, so they could be calibrated moving forward.

Support Staff

“Moving in was figuring out person by person, day by day, letting the chaos unfold.”

Now that tenants have settled, the support staff are seeing residents growing in confidence. The residents are taking responsibility over their own schedules and while staff initially felt they should step in to remind them about appointments, they are feeling now that the residents can handle it by themselves. For example, one resident with diabetes has started to administer her own insulin, something she had never done before.

4.3 Impact on Residents without a Disability

In addition to tenants with a disability, three residents without a disability were interviewed as part of this study. From these conversations, it was clear that two out of the three had developed strong connections with the building and their neighbours. These two residents had also moved intentionally to the building as they were intrigued by its concept. The third resident was just looking for an affordable apartment and willing to give living in the building a try.

None of the three residents had previously lived next to, or in the same building with, individuals with a developmental disability. All interview participants mentioned they've had a positive experience so far. One resident, a single mother, mentioned she felt safer due to the supports in the building, while another, a senior, indicated she felt less lonely.

Resident

“I know everyone on my floor, with supports or not. I speak more with the individuals with a developmental disability because they are home more often.”

Two of the three tenants who participated in an interview indicated they regularly attend the monthly coffees and annual barbeque events organized by the Semiahmoo House staff. Both residents felt these events were very valuable in staying connected to the people in the building. However, all three participants indicated they received very

little information about the residents with a disability and would have liked to receive a bit more education on developmental disabilities, as well as things they should take into consideration on how to best support their new neighbours.

Resident

"It would have been helpful to know if there were any rules for people, like not giving things to someone who hoards, being aware of dietary restrictions or curfews so we can support the other residents too."

Furthermore, similar to the tenants with a disability, they also mentioned the building was very noisy and could have been soundproofed better.

5.0 Project Description

This section provides a more detailed description of some of the structures and partnerships that made this project possible, including the partnership and organizational structure of UNITI-Chorus, the physical design of the building, the tenants and how UNITI-Chorus ensures affordability.

5.1 Partnership Structure

As mentioned in earlier sections of this report, the UNITI-Chorus building is owned and operated through a partnership of three organizations. The partnership is called UNITI-Chorus. UNITI-Chorus is not a registered entity but a brand-name. The organizations involved in UNITI-Chorus are:

1. The Semiahmoo House Society
2. The Semiahmoo Foundation
3. The Peninsula Estates Housing Society

Having three separate organizations is an intentional choice. First of all, it allows for a separation of housing and supports. This is important because it ensures tenants are not locked into the support philosophy of Semiahmoo House Society. Initially the intention was for the Semiahmoo Foundation to own the building. However, this was not possible because renting out apartments to the general population at market rent is considered an unrelated business activity, which jeopardizes the charitable status of the Semiahmoo Foundation. As a result, it was necessary to include the Peninsula Estates Housing Society into the partnership.

All three organizations are incorporated under the British Columbia Societies Act of 2018 and the Semiahmoo Foundation is a federally registered charity. Each organization has its own board consisting of 11 members, including one self-advocate member with a developmental disability. All boards share the same members, with a different member acting as chair, vice-chair and treasurer for each society. This is important because it allows for an efficient decision-making process. This has allowed the organization to move quickly on a number of occasions since a majority only needs to be achieved once.

All three organizations have members; however, the membership structures differ between the organizations. The Semiahmoo House Society is a membership-based organization with a broad membership. With regards to the other two organizations, the board of directors of Semiahmoo House Society are their only members. This ensures that the Semiahmoo House Society's board has effective voting control of the other two societies at all times.

Board members are carefully selected to ensure they support the vision of the three organizations. During the development process, the development team conducted intensive training and offsites with the board on risk management strategies. This developed a level of trust between the development team and the board members, which helped board members to trust the information and strategies presented by the team throughout the development process.

5.2 Organizational Structure

The three organizations outlined in section 6.1 have different roles within the building. This section outlines the function of each organization.

5.2.1 The Semiahmoo House Society

The Semiahmoo House Society is the central organization in the collaboration. It is also the agency that provides the majority of supports and programs to tenants in the UNITI-Chorus apartments¹¹ from its head-office located adjacent to the UNITI-Chorus building.

5.2.2 The Peninsula Estates Housing Society

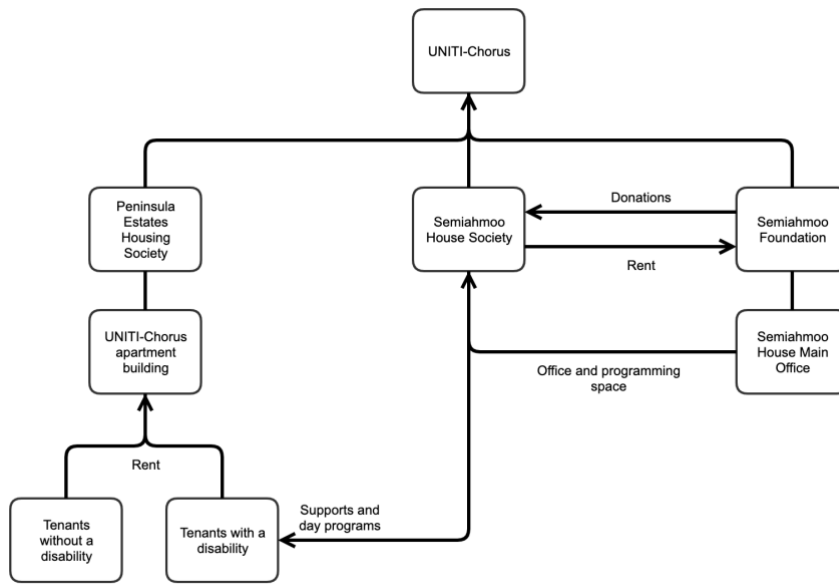
The Peninsula Estates Housing Society owns, operates and collects rents from the UNITI-Chorus building. A property management firm takes care of day-to-day maintenance and operations. The Peninsula Estates Housing Society also owns the Peninsula Estates apartment building in White-Rock South Surrey through an operating agreement with BC Housing.

5.2.3 The Semiahmoo Foundation

The Semiahmoo Foundation is the fundraising arm of the Semiahmoo House Society. The foundation also holds title on the Semiahmoo House Society's main office. The Semiahmoo House Society pays rent to the foundation to cover monthly mortgage payments and the cost of operations.

For an overview of all societies and their relationship with all stakeholders, please see the diagram below.

¹¹ Tenants may choose to use other support agencies if they desire to do so.

Figure 1: UNITI-Chorus Organizational Structure; 2019

5.3 Physical Design and Support Model

This section provides an overview of the design and support model in the building.

5.3.1 Building Design and Amenities

The UNITI-Chorus building is a mid-rise apartment building of 4 storeys with a total of 71 apartments, 21 of which are designated for individuals with a disability. The building has 5 three-bedroom apartments, 16 two-bedroom apartments, 8 one-bedroom plus den apartments, 32 one-bedroom apartments and 10 studios. There are 60 underground parking spots, as well as a number of amenities, including a community living room on the ground floor and an outside community garden/greenspace to help facilitate connection between the various residents in the building.

The exclusion of other common spaces, such as a common dining space or a game room, was a conscious decision in the design because the idea was to build an apartment building that was as typical as possible.

Project Representative

"We often think that it's necessary to have communal dining spaces or a hub. That is not what we built. We wanted an apartment like any other. There is a paradigm around disabilities that somehow it needs to be special, but with proper supports people can live in an apartment like anyone else."

For an overview of the floorplans, please see Appendix D.

5.3.2 Unit Design

All 71 apartments occupied by residents in the building include a full kitchen, washer dryer combination, storage space, bedrooms, bathrooms and living spaces. They also include a patio or balcony for personal outside space.

Apartments have not been developed with wheelchair accessibility in mind. In addition, the apartments currently contain limited accessibility features like a walk-in shower, grab bars, higher toilets, etc. A total of 10% (7 apartments) are adaptable and could be made accessible with some small investments. While accessibility is not an issue for the current residents, given their age and type of disabilities, it could become a problem as the current residents age and their support needs evolve. In addition, the lack of wheelchair accessible apartments currently limits the ability for individuals with a dual diagnosis of physical and developmental disabilities to move into the building.

Lastly, during the conversations with parents, it was mentioned that some of the appliances broke easily and conversations with both tenants and parents indicated the building could be noisy. This suggests that future developments should pay attention to sound absorption and appliance quality during the design and development phase.

5.3.3 Support Model

Semiahmoo House Society provides supports for most of the residents with a developmental disability in the building. Residents can receive some minimal support as required to facilitate independent living, day programming or a combination of the two. The Semiahmoo House Society practices a support philosophy called “Just Enough Support” developed by Helen Sanderson Associates in the United Kingdom.

The primary goal of the philosophy is to increase the chances of individuals connecting with local people in their communities and to increase their circle of un-paid supports. The secondary goal is to prevent over-supporting individuals. The approach suggests over-supporting can undermine people's confidence and abilities, create more barriers to being a part of the community, use unnecessary staff resources and lead to a lack of community involvement, which might cause isolation and loneliness.

A Just Enough Support approach helps support staff, individuals and their families think about “who or what can be” in someone's life, and how various supports can be combined and integrated to provide a life where people can be happy and safe.

5.4 Tenants

This section provides a brief description of the current residents with a developmental disability living in the UNITI-Chorus apartment building.

5.4.1 Tenants by Age

When looking at the residents in the UNITI-Chorus building by age, the data show almost all tenants with a developmental disability (80%) are between the age of 25 and 44 years old. In comparison, when looking at tenants without a disability, there is a wider spread between the different age groups.

Table 1: Tenants by Age: UNITI-Chorus Apartment Building; 2019

Tenants by Age	Tenants with a disability	Tenants without a disability
Youth (24 years or younger)	0.0%	13.2%
Young adults (25 - 44 years)	80.0%	35.3%
Older adults (45 - 64 years)	15.0%	27.9%
Seniors (65+ years)	5.0%	23.5%

Source: UNITI-Chorus 2019

5.4.2 Tenants by Support Provider

All tenants with a developmental disability in the building receive some form of supports. Supports can be organized through the Semiahmoo House Society or residents may opt to find a different support service provider. Residents can also choose a home share arrangement where a roommate provides the required assistance. Currently, 17 residents (85.0%) receive supports from the Semiahmoo House Society. A total of 2 (10.0%) residents have a different support service provider and 1 tenant (5.0%) has a home share roommate.

5.5 Affordability

Individuals with a developmental disability often have limited disposable income available to spend on housing. Based on Disability Assistance rates in British Columbia, residents can only afford rents up to \$375 per month. To make the development feasible, rents could only go as low as 20% to 30% below the average market rent in the area. This was not enough to make the rent affordable to residents living on Disability Assistance (see table below). UNITI-Chorus does help tenants with finding employment and the property management company employs a number of tenants in the building as part of the maintenance staff. However, not all residents with a disability are able to work, indicating families would have to supplement the incomes of their family members to ensure affordability.

Table 2: Rents by Apartment Size: UNITI-Chorus; 2019

Apartment Size	Monthly Rent
Studio	\$725
One-bedroom	\$825 - \$850
Two-bedrooms	\$1,100
Three-bedrooms	\$1,375

Source: UNITI-Chorus 2019

In response to the rent levels, parents organized and advocated for BC-Housing to provide portable housing allowances to their children to cover the gap between the rents and what the individuals could afford. While there was no direct subsidy available, continued pressure resulted in BC-Housing making a \$75,000 lump-sum capital contribution to UNITI-Chorus that they can use as rent supplements for tenants over the next 10 years, under the assumption that after 10 years there will be a federal portable

housing allowance, as announced in the National Housing Strategy, that can cover the gap moving forward.

UNITI-Chorus divided this subsidy over the tenants on an as of need basis. A total of 15 out of 20 tenants receive a subsidy ranging from \$82 per month to \$428 per month. While this is not sufficient for all residents, and parents on some occasions would still need to supplement the rents, it has been a significant improvement to the affordability of the building overall.

6.0 Community Inclusion

6.1 Measuring Inclusivity

My Home My Community has developed an innovative new **Housing Inclusivity Framework** for measuring inclusivity by expanding the existing definition of social inclusion and introducing a housing lens.¹² In this framework, housing inclusivity is defined as “the degree to which a person's home either contributes or presents barriers to their participation in the broader community.”¹³ The framework evaluates the tangible aspects of a housing situation across five domains which, together, lead to socially inclusive outcomes for residents. The five domains are:

1. Person Domain: The individual resident. Aspects pertaining to the individual, including income, functional capacities, support needs, etc., have a significant impact on required living situation and degree to which supports are needed to engage in community;
2. Household Domain: Similarly, the structure and capability set of the household, including income, support needs, etc., impact housing requirements and opportunity to engage in community;
3. Dwelling Domain: The built environment of the unit (which can take many forms) will either present or eliminate barriers to participation and independence;
4. Structure Domain: In the case of multi-unit structures, the building within which the home is situated also has an impact on visitability, accessibility, and opportunity for engagement with the first line of community: neighbours;
5. Neighbourhood Domain: The broader built, social and service environment in which the dwelling and structure are situated, and which affords resources like transportation, opportunities for community involvement, etc. The neighbourhood and its amenities can either present barriers or opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to engage in and be safe in their communities.

What makes the MHMC housing inclusivity framework so innovative, is its ability to distill complex aspects that affect inclusion into an applicable framework.

¹² Canadian Association for Community Living (2019). My Home My Community: Conceptualizing 'Housing Inclusivity': A review of literature on housing, inclusion and developmental disability. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57f27c992994ca20330b28ff/t/5d5582bdbacd560001233e9b/1565885118508/Conceptualizing+Housing+Inclusivity+Lit+Review+-+FINAL+.pdf>

¹³ Canadian Association for Community Living (2019). My Home My Community: Conceptualizing 'Housing Inclusivity': A review of literature on housing, inclusion and developmental disability: 15.

To assess inclusivity in each domain, the framework uses indicators (for example, suitability, affordability, safety, choice and control) that examine the following:¹⁴

- Does the living situation present or eliminate barriers to activities of daily living?
- Is it a home-by-choice, and not the result of congregation of people in a housing unit, development or neighbourhood, based on a demographic characteristic?
- Does the living situation enhance capabilities to:
 - Participate in the social and economic life of their community?
 - Be recognized and valued as a full member of their neighbourhood?
 - Live independently and be included in the community?

6.2 Evaluation

This evaluation uses MHMC's Housing Inclusivity Framework to assess the inclusivity of the Semiahmoo House apartment building.

6.2.1 Person¹⁵

Indicators within the Person Domain:

- Personal Choice
- Social Connection
- Personal Supports
- Safety

The person domain focuses on the individual and evaluates how well they can live in, utilize and benefit from their housing.¹⁶ It also looks at location to assess whether the individual can access services and supports within the housing development or in the broader neighbourhood.

This domain considers the resources a particular person needs to access amenities on an equal basis with others, and to secure safe, affordable housing in inclusive communities.¹⁷ For example, can tenants exercise basic autonomy over the decisions about where and how they live? Do they have opportunity to make voluntary social connections?

The UNITI-Chorus building demonstrates a high level of inclusivity in the person domain. For example, supports and housing are intentionally provided separately through different organizations. This ensure tenants are not locked into the support philosophy of Semiahmoo House Society and can make their own decisions about the supports they receive. UNITI-Chorus uses the Just Enough Support approach which helps individuals, their families and support staff, and think how various supports can be combined and integrated to provide a life where people can be happy and safe to live the life they chose. The goal of Just Enough Support model is to not over support individuals. This over support can undermine a person's ability and independence which then becomes a barrier to accessing the community and therefore impedes a person's inclusion. This model of support also works to increase the chances of individuals connecting with local people in their communities. This encourages individuals to increase their social circle outside of people they pay to support them.

¹⁴ Canadian Association for Community Living (2019). My Home My Community: Conceptualizing 'Housing Inclusivity': A review of literature on housing, inclusion and developmental disability: 16.

¹⁵ Canadian Association for Community Living (2019). My Home My Community: Conceptualizing 'Housing Inclusivity': A review of literature on housing, inclusion and developmental disability: 16

¹⁶ Canadian Association for Community Living (2019). My Home My Community: Conceptualizing 'Housing Inclusivity': A review of literature on housing, inclusion and developmental disability: 17.

¹⁷ Canadian Association for Community Living (2019). My Home My Community: Conceptualizing 'Housing Inclusivity': A review of literature on housing, inclusion and developmental disability: 16.

6.2.2 Household¹⁸

Indicators within the Household Domain:

- Suitability
- Affordability
- Tenure Security
- Digital Connection

This domain refers to the capability of the household for an individual to access suitable, affordable, secure housing that meets the needs of all household members¹⁹. A household is defined by Statistics Canada as “a person or group of persons who occupy the same dwelling. The household may consist of a family group such as a census family, of two or more families sharing a dwelling, or a group of unrelated persons or a person living alone.”²⁰

Within this domain, is the examination of the suitability of housing based on household size. Housing suitability can be determined from whether a dwelling has enough bedrooms for the size of household. CMHC's definition of suitable housing, requires one adult per bedroom, unless they are co-habiting adult couple whereas two adults per bedroom is permitted.²¹ At the household level, the size and type of dwelling will impact an individual's likelihood of experiencing social exclusion.²² Inadequate housing that does not provide sufficient space can impact daily liveability and increase social exclusion, loneliness, and poor health outcomes for members of the household.^{23 24}

All of the units at UNITI-Chorus that house persons with a disability can be considered suitable as they meet CMHC's requirements for suitability. This means that there is no overcrowding occurring which could negatively affect a person's inclusivity by creating a barrier to accessing social and community services.

Affordability is an important aspect of inclusivity. Households experiencing housing affordability challenges are substantially more likely to experience social exclusion than households that are not spending more than 30% of their income on housing.²⁵ For building development to be feasible UNITI-Chorus was unable to provide entirely affordable rents to all tenants with a disability. To assist with affordability, UNITI-Chorus has put measures in place, such as provincial housing benefits and a tenant employment program. UNITI-Chorus will employ tenants with a disability as part of their maintenance staff, this helps individuals offset the cost of rent, make their own money and gives them a sense of purpose and help to foster social relationships throughout the building.

What also increases the inclusivity of the UNITI-Chorus housing, is the autonomy tenants have over their own lives and apartments. For example, tenants can invite guests over and can come and go as they desire. In addition, residents have tenure security in that

¹⁸ Canadian Association for Community Living (2019). My Home My Community: Conceptualizing 'Housing Inclusivity': A review of literature on housing, inclusion and developmental disability: 18.

¹⁹ Canadian Association for Community Living (2019). My Home My Community: Conceptualizing 'Housing Inclusivity': A review of literature on housing, inclusion and developmental disability: 18.

²⁰ (Canada. Statistics Canada, "Data Dictionary" <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/households-menage007-eng.cfm>

²¹ CMHC. "Housing in Canada Online" https://cmhc.beyond2020.com/HiCODefinitions_EN.html#_Suitable_dwellings

²² Stone, "Housing and social inclusion: a household and local area analysis," 50.

²³ Stone, "Housing and social inclusion: a household and local area analysis," 51.

²⁴ Fiona Rajé, "Leave no-one behind: infrastructure and inclusion," K4D, University of Birmingham (2018):2.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5aafd3b7ed915d1d03ce1f22/Infrastructure_and_Inclusion.pdf.

²⁵ Stone, W., et al. "Housing and social inclusion: a household and local area analysis," AHURI Final Report No.207, (2013): 50.

they cannot simply be moved to a different home against their will. They also were not forced to move into the UNITI-Chorus but chose to move there.

6.2.3 Dwelling²⁶

Indicators within Dwelling Domain:

- Accessibility
- Adequacy
- Adaptability

This domain examines how the physical features of a person's home will either present or eliminate barriers to participation and independence²⁷. The connection between this domain and inclusion is fundamental: if one's living environment is inaccessible, both living within the unit and leaving the unit to access the community become difficult²⁸.

Physical barriers can restrict an individual from participating in the community and result in social exclusion.²⁹ Barriers to accessibility include trouble opening doors, difficulty using the stairs, and issues simply getting in and out of their home.³⁰ For example, a doorway that has not been made wide enough to accommodate the size of a wheelchair becomes an accessibility barrier.³¹ An inaccessible doorway can restrict an individual's access to important services – and potentially important social connections.

This domain represents an area where the UNITI-Chorus building could perform better. Within the UNITI-Chorus building there is a lack of fully wheelchair accessible apartments and the limited number of apartments which are adaptable. This limits the ability of individuals with physical disabilities or dual diagnoses to move into the building. In addition, it could become an issue as residents age. However, because UNITI-Chorus is the owner and one of the providers of supports, units could be adapted in the future if this would be required.

6.2.4 Structure³²

Indicators within Structure Domain:

- Resident Mix
- Social Connection
- Linkage to community supports and services

The structure domain evaluates how well the building itself allows for the integration of tenants with a developmental disability.³³ For example, is the building made up of only people with a disability or people without a disability? Are tenants with a disability congregated together on one floor of the building?

²⁶ Canadian Association for Community Living (2019). My Home My Community: Conceptualizing 'Housing Inclusivity': A review of literature on housing, inclusion and developmental disability: 19.

²⁷ Canadian Association for Community Living (2019). My Home My Community: Conceptualizing 'Housing Inclusivity': A review of literature on housing, inclusion and developmental disability: 19.

²⁸ Canadian Association for Community Living (2019). My Home My Community: Conceptualizing 'Housing Inclusivity': A review of literature on housing, inclusion and developmental disability: 19.

²⁹ European Disability Forum, "Disability and Social Exclusion in the European Union: Tune for change, tools for change," (2002):6. http://sid.usal.es/idocs/F8/FD07040/disability_and_social_exclusion_report.pdf.

³⁰ Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, "Maintaining Seniors' Independence Through Home Adaptations a self-assessment guide," (2016):3.

³¹ City of Toronto, "Accessibility Design Guidelines" (2004): 52.

³² Canadian Association for Community Living (2019). My Home My Community: Conceptualizing 'Housing Inclusivity': A review of literature on housing, inclusion and developmental disability: 18.

³³ Canadian Association for Community Living (2019). My Home My Community: Conceptualizing 'Housing Inclusivity': A review of literature on housing, inclusion and developmental disability: 23.

Having only individuals with a disability in a building, or in an area of a building, would make up a non-inclusive living situation.³⁴ Disability advocates and experts with lived experience note that concentrating people with development disability together on the basis of that single characteristic makes it harder for people without a disability to 'see' the individual past the disability, increasing the likelihood of stigmatization and social exclusion. These findings are consistent with research that indicates that "smaller-scale, non-congregated housing in the community is a fundamental condition for social inclusion, self-determination, and wellbeing of people with intellectual disabilities."³⁵

The UNITI Chorus building represents an inclusive, non-congregated living situation. UNITI-Chorus had full control over the design, which allowed tenants to provide input on the building design. It consists of 71 apartments, with 20 apartments reserved for individuals with a developmental disability dispersed throughout. The integration of common spaces such as a lobby, greenspace, and communal lounge area facilitate social connection and interaction between tenants. Semiahmoo hosts building events such as monthly coffees and annual barbeque to encourage social connection between all residents of UNITI-Chorus, which further increases this building's inclusivity in this domain.

UNITI-Chorus facilitates linkages to the community through the Semiahmoo Society which runs community-based programs with connections to other agencies where residents can volunteer and find employment, like working in soup kitchens, and thrift stores.

6.2.5 Neighbourhood³⁶

Indicators within
Neighbourhood Domain:

- Proximity to Services
- Safety

The neighbourhood and its amenities can either present barriers or opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to engage in and be safe in their communities.³⁷

Locating housing in a walkable neighbourhood can have important implications for inclusion. A feature of walkable neighbourhoods is having close proximity to services. Studies suggest that walkable neighbourhoods are healthier than non-walkable neighbourhoods as they encourage diverse modes of transportation other than driving, such as walking, bicycling or using transit. By encouraging more people to walk or be physically active, walkable neighbourhoods facilitate social interaction, social inclusion and access to jobs.³⁸

Having a low crime rate is especially important when examining inclusion for persons with a developmental disability who face high rates of violent victimization. A real or

³⁴BC Non-Profit Housing Association, "Exploring Housing Options for People with Developmental Disabilities in BC," 17.

³⁵ Wiesel, Ilan, "Housing for People with Intellectual Disabilities and the National Disability Insurance Scheme Reforms." Research and Practice in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 2:1, (2015): 46.

³⁶ Canadian Association for Community Living (2019). My Home My Community: Conceptualizing 'Housing Inclusivity': A review of literature on housing, inclusion and developmental disability: 23.

³⁷ Canadian Association for Community Living (2019). My Home My Community: Conceptualizing 'Housing Inclusivity': A review of literature on housing, inclusion and developmental disability: 23.

³⁸ Hulse, K., Jacobs, K., Arthurson, K. and Spinney, A. "At home and in place? The role of housing in social inclusion," AHURI Final Report No. 177, (2003): 24.

perceived lack of safety among one's neighbours is an obvious barrier to inclusion.³⁹ Feeling safe is important for populations with and without disabilities to be able to access their community and community supports. When a person has a positive perception of their own safety, they are less likely to be fearful of being victimized by crime.⁴⁰ However, when an individual is concerned for their safety, they are less likely to participate in their communities, leading to social exclusion.⁴¹

In this domain the UNITI-Chorus building performs well, predominantly because of the walkability of the neighbourhood and access to public transit as well as the close proximity to the Semiahmoo House Society's central building which helps tenants to integrate in the community.

Due to a relatively high crime rate in South Surrey BC, one area where the UNITI-Chorus building could perform better is neighbourhood safety⁴².

6.2.6 Conclusion

Applying the Housing Inclusivity Framework to the UNITI-Chorus development shows that it contributes to a person's social inclusion. One area where UNITI-Chorus could improve on is accessible apartments. However, it is important to note that none of the tenants currently need an accessible apartment. If this need arises, UNITI-Chorus could decide to make adjustments to a unit considering they are the owner of the building. Another area that could be improved upon is safety. While UNITI-Chorus only can mitigate for the high crime rate of South Surrey, in the future when choosing to develop a building it may be in the best interest to locate it in an area with less crime. The high performance in all other domains are a clear reflection of the intentionality and inclusion of all stakeholders UNITI-Chorus has shown throughout each step of the development phase of the building.

7.0 Lessons Learned and Opportunities for Scale

In this section, the observed lessons learned are described and a number of opportunities to replicate the UNITI-Chorus approach for inclusive housing throughout Canada are identified.

7.1 Lessons Learned

Through conversations with project representatives, tenants, families, and support staff, a number of lessons learned were identified that other organizations pursuing similar initiatives should take into consideration.

First of all, it was noted that the length to which the development team went to consult with all stakeholders played a crucial role. This impact was observed along almost every step of the development journey: from the decision to pursue the development of a

³⁹ Canadian Association for Community Living (2019). My Home My Community: Conceptualizing 'Housing Inclusivity': A review of literature on housing, inclusion and developmental disability: 24.

⁴⁰ The Smith Institute, "Communities Social Exclusion and Crime," (2004): 76.

<http://www.smith-institute.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/CommunitiesSocialExclusionandCrime.pdf>

⁴¹ The Smith Institute, "Communities Social Exclusion and Crime,"": 76.

⁴² It is important to note no neighbourhood specific crime data could be obtained and general South-Surrey, BC data was used.

building to identifying tenants, preparing tenants to move into the building, and developing trust between the development team and the board so they could make timely decisions. All these touchpoints ensured the development process could be successful in the end.

In addition, it was identified that it is important to involve people who share similar values. This ensured the entire organization, from the board to the support staff, were on the same page with the approach and the risks this might bring.

Another key lesson was to involve professionals, such as construction managers and development consultants, at the appropriate time in the process. Working with a development consultant earlier could have prevented the redesign of the building as a consequence of involving architects too early. It would also have helped to smoothen the rezoning procedure and prevented the transfer of the land from the foundation to the Peninsula Estates Housing Society.

From a design perspective, the apartments could have been developed with higher quality appliances, more noise reduction measures to ensure tenants don't hear their neighbours and higher levels of accessibility in mind, so tenants with or without disabilities can age in place.

Lastly, while the tenants with a disability received a lot of support before moving in, residents without a disability indicated they could have used more information about how to interact with and support their neighbours with a disability, where appropriate or necessary.

7.2 Opportunities for Replication

Based on the sections in this case study report, there are a number of aspects to this demonstration project that could be replicated throughout Canada.

7.2.1 Opportunities for Replication and Scale

UNITI-Chorus has been able to develop an inclusive community where individuals with a developmental disability can thrive. The organization has accomplished this without significant previous development experience and limited government funding, indicating that other organizations could be able to accomplish something similar.

Many support agencies throughout Canada, like Semiahmoo House, have group home properties that could be repurposed or sold to purchase land or buildings. This is particularly true in more urban areas where land and house prices are high, in combination with a dense population that could support rental or condominium apartment buildings.

In addition, the National Housing Strategy includes a number of programs that provide more financial assistance than UNITI-Chorus had at the time, including funding for 2,500 units for individuals with a developmental disability. Of these programs, the Co-Investment Fund and the Rental Construction Financing Initiative are the most significant ones. There could be opportunities to use these programs in the near future to replicate the model pioneered by UNITI-Chorus.

7.2.2 Drawbacks

While there are a number of opportunities that became evident from this case study, there are also some drawbacks compared to other development pathways. Developing a building is a risky undertaking that could take a number of years. For example, it took UNITI-Chorus almost 10 years from purchasing the land to constructing the building.

Furthermore, the board and the development team of an organization must trust each other and be comfortable with taking these risks before embarking on such a project. This is not always the case.

In addition, even with the capital grants and loans, a building might still not be affordable to tenants with a developmental disability. UNITI-Chorus relies on a one-time transfer of \$75,000 in lieu of a portable housing benefit to bridge the gap from what tenants can afford and what rents must be charged to ensure a feasible project.

The type of building and support model demonstrated by UNITI-Chorus is also set up to support individuals with light and moderate support needs. While this model in general can support peoples of all abilities, there would need to be changes in the building design and support model for organizations attempting to use this approach to support people with more diverse needs.

Lastly, BC Housing is a major funder of affordable housing in British Columbia. Other provinces and territories cannot always rely on similar organizations for funding, or the availability of portable housing allowances to maintain tenants to remain housed. This indicates that other projects who use this model may need to rely on municipalities willing to waive or defer property taxes and fees or parents making continuous financial contributions to maintain housing affordability for their family member.

8.0 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A: Case Study Approach

8.1.1 Case Study Approach

This section describes the research team's approach to collecting data and engagements conducted during this study.

8.1.2 Lines of Inquiry

To guide all the research activities, the following lines of inquiry were developed for this case study:

Table 3: Lines of Inquiry

<p>Project relevance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes this project stand out compared to other housing models for individuals with developmental disabilities? <p>Development Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the key stages in the development journey of the demonstration project? • What is the governance structure of the demonstration project and what are the benefits of this governance model? • Who were the key stakeholders involved in the development process; what roles did they play? • What were the key challenges and lessons learned in the development process? • Were there any challenges in the tenant selection for each demonstration project and how were these overcome? • What was the collaboration experience like between multiple partners and stakeholders? • How could this process be replicated in other communities? 	<p>Supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the experience of residents with the delivery method of supports? • What levels of support can be delivered in the demonstration project? • How were the supports as well as the community linkages developed to promote the inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities in the wider community? <p>Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the housing and support situation like of residents before they became involved with the demonstration project? • What is the impact of the demonstration project on residents and their families? • To what extent have the residents been able to reach their short, medium and long-term goals (including supports, employment opportunities, community engagement, life skills and self-esteem, improved housing, etc.)?
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8.1.3 Sources of Information

To answer the lines of inquiry identified above, a number of data collecting activities were undertaken as part of the development of this case study. The data collecting process was conducted in two phases. The first phase involved transferring readily available data from UNITI-Chorus to the consulting team while the second phase consisted of a number of engagements with the UNITI-Chorus team, tenants, their families, support staff and neighbours.

Collecting Readily Available Information

The research team submitted an information and data request to UNITI-Chorus in April 2019. This list included a request for relevant documentation and background reports as well as quantitative data such as the number of tenants supported, their age, rent ranges etc. For an exact overview of the data requested and received see Appendix A of this report.

All the data received from UNITI-Chorus was anonymized and did not provide identifiable details about specific residents.

Engagements

In addition to the readily available data, a total of 4 engagement sessions were conducted with a range of key informants as well as 4 interviews with neighbours and tenants in the UNITI-Chorus building without a disability. This includes the following sessions:

1. A session with project representatives and key decision makers was conducted on July 8th, 2019. A total of four people participated in this session.
2. A session with family members of residents was conducted on July 10th. A total of three people participated in this session.
3. A session with residents with a disability was conducted on July 10th. A total of six people participated in this session.
4. A session with support staff was conducted on July 8th. A total of three people participated in this session.
5. A total of four interviews with tenants without a disability were conducted on July 18th.

A total of 20 individuals were interviewed or participated in an engagement session. For an overview of each session's format, questions and materials, see appendix B of this report.

Please note, because the research team was not able to visit South Surrey, all engagements were conducted via videoconference calls except for the engagement with residents with a disability. To allow for an engaging session, online sticky note sessions were used through a tool called Stormboard.

The engagement session with residents with a disability was conducted in person by the UNITI-Chorus staff. To help the staff conduct these sessions and take notes, a step by step self-facilitation guide was developed by the research team. For an overview of this guide, see Appendix C.

8.2 **Appendix B: Data Needs & Engagement Guide**

8.3 **Appendix C: Self Facilitation Guide**

8.4 **Appendix D: Floorplans**

Appendixes and video documentary to support this case study are available on the My Home My Community website: www/myhomemycommunity.ca