

Non-Market Housing: Education & Awareness

Understanding the difference between emergency shelter, supportive housing, subsidized housing, below-market rental housing, and the permanent homes a healthy community needs.



“Affordable housing” is not one building type. Different households need different levels of affordability and support. Clear language helps residents evaluate proposals based on what is actually being offered rather than assumptions or stigma.

Emergency Shelter

Short-term, immediate safety from the elements. Shelter is not permanent housing and does not replace the need for affordable homes.

Supportive Housing

Subsidized housing with on-site supports for people who need help maintaining a successful tenancy. Residents apply, pay rent, and have their own living space.

Subsidized Housing

Long-term housing for eligible low-income households. Rent is commonly geared to household income and residents are expected to live independently.

Below-Market Rental

Rental housing priced at or below local market rates, usually for moderate-income households. Rent is not necessarily calculated from income.

Why Non-Market Housing Matters

The private market does not consistently produce homes affordable to people receiving income assistance, disability benefits, pensions, or low wages. Non-profit, cooperative, public, and Indigenous housing providers help preserve affordability over time.

A balanced community needs options for seniors, families, workers, people with disabilities, youth, Veterans, and people moving out of homelessness.

Questions to Ask About a Proposal

- Who is the housing designed to serve?
- How will rents be calculated and kept affordable?
- What operator will manage the property?
- What supports, staffing, or tenancy services are included?
- How will residents, neighbours, and local services communicate?
- What approvals, funding, and construction timelines remain?
- How will outcomes and community concerns be addressed?

Myth: One Housing Model Solves Homelessness

Reality: Communities need prevention, rent assistance, outreach, shelter, transitional options, supportive housing, deeply affordable housing, and ordinary long-term rentals. People should be matched with the least intensive support that safely meets their needs. Building only one part of the continuum leaves others cycling through crisis.

Learn More & Apply

[BC Housing — Subsidized Housing & Housing Registry](#)

[BC Housing — Supportive Housing](#)

[BC Housing — Below-Market / Market Rent Housing](#)