

A Case Study on Building Relocation, Indigenous-Led Housing, and the Power of Partnership

Across British Columbia, housing systems are under pressure to densify cities, deliver affordable housing, meet climate targets, and advance reconciliation. Too often, these priorities are treated as competing objectives.

In Metro Vancouver alone, an average of 2,700 single-family homes are demolished every year to allow for higher-density development. Renewal Development estimates that approximately 700 of these homes are structurally sound and viable candidates for relocation and reuse [1]. As upzoning policies accelerate redevelopment, demolition rates are projected to rise by 35% over the next decade (Figure 1).

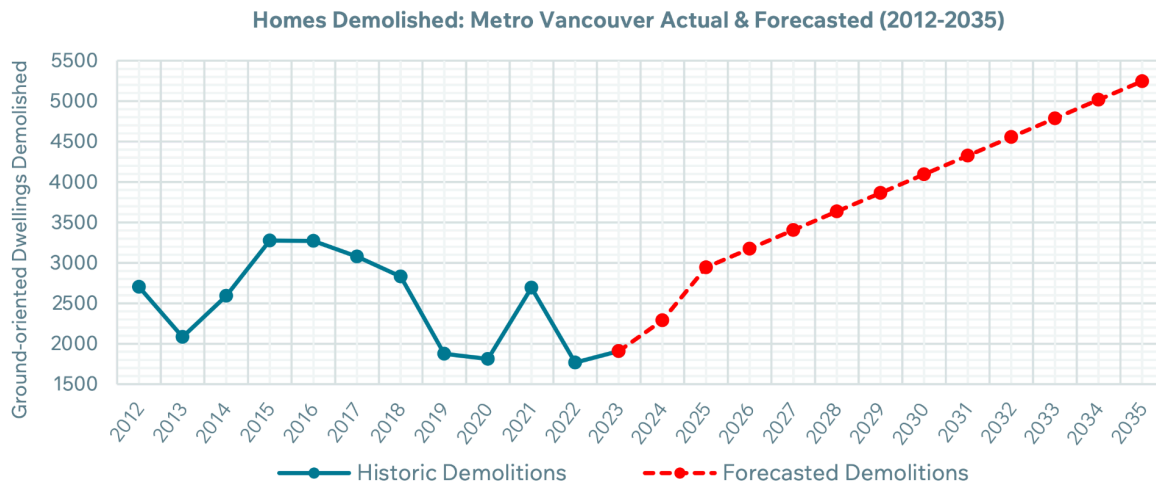


Figure 1: Actual and forecasted home demolition rates across Metro Vancouver from 2012-2035 [1].

Demolition-first approaches destroy embodied carbon, generate massive waste streams, and remove housing assets. At the same time, coastal and Indigenous communities face acute housing shortages. This challenge is not only technical, but systemic.

This case study presents a different path. A path that values existing homes, centres Indigenous leadership, and requires cross-sector collaboration to deliver affordable, low-carbon housing and support urban densification.

The shíshálh Nation Ten Home Rescue Project Case Study

Through a partnership between the shíshálh Nation, Renewal Development, and Wesgroup Properties, ten demolition-bound homes were rescued from an urban redevelopment site in Port Moody and relocated to shíshálh Nation lands in Sechelt, British Columbia. Through retrofit and adaptive reuse, these homes were transformed into 17 long-term, below-market rental units for Nation members.

Originally, the homes were part of a 59-house assembly acquired by Wesgroup for a higher-density redevelopment at Coronation Park. Rather than demolish all 59 homes, Wesgroup partnered with Renewal Development to relocate the homes where possible. Of the 59 homes, Renewal identified ten with the highest potential for relocation.

In spring 2023, the opportunity was presented to the shíshálh Nation. Guided by Chief and Council and aligned with the Nation's long-term housing and land use priorities, the Nation signed an agreement to acquire the homes for use as affordable rental housing. The Nation provided land, infrastructure, and local leadership throughout planning and delivery.

Homes were transported by truck and barge (Figure 2), then modernized with air-source heat pumps, improved insulation, fully electric systems, and renovations. Secondary suites were added to increase housing capacity, resulting in 17 units across ten structures. Exterior cedar elements were incorporated to reflect local cultural context (Figure 3).

All units were completed and handed over by December 2025, with an official ribbon cutting in February 2026 (Figure 4).



Figure 2: Rescued Port Moody homes traveling by barge to Sechelt, BC.



Figure 3: Renovated and repurposed homes, equipped with basement suites, standing on shíshálh Nation.



Figure 4: The official ribbon cutting event in February 2026.

Project Success through Strong Partnerships

This project succeeded because of aligned partnerships operating as a system.

Indigenous Leadership and Co-Design

The shíshálh Nation led land use decisions and housing priorities. Housing delivery aligned with Nation goals for long-term affordability, cultural continuity, and economic participation (Figure 5). Over 70% of trades involved were shíshálh Nation members, supporting workforce development, skills training, and local economic activity.



Figure 5: shíshááh Nation Chief and Council in front of the relocated homes under construction.

Developer Participation

Wesgroup Properties played a critical enabling role by reframing demolition as an opportunity rather than a sunk cost. The developer redirected their demolition funds (approximately \$35,000 per home) to offset relocation costs for the Nation. This shift made the project cost-competitive while supporting sustainability and reconciliation objectives.

Practitioner Coordination

Renewal Development acted as the project initiator and systems integrator: identifying and assessing housing stock, proposing the project to stakeholders, coordinating permitting and inspections, managing transport logistics, overseeing retrofit work, and navigating regulatory complexity across jurisdictions. The delivery model required coordination among municipalities, utilities, movers, contractors, designers, funders, and community leadership.

Trust, Learning, and Iteration

As a first-of-its-kind project at this scale in the Pacific Northwest, the journey was not frictionless. Homes varied in age, construction type, and renovation history. Unforeseen

moisture conditions, non-standard alterations, and logistical challenges required adaptive problem-solving. The team prioritized quality, transparency, and trust over speed, recognizing this as a pilot with learning value beyond immediate outputs.

Environmental, Social, and Economic Outcomes

The project delivered the following measurable benefits:

- Approximately 1,000,000 kg of construction material diverted from landfill.
- Around 230 tonnes of embodied carbon preserved
- 70-80% of lifecycle emissions retained compared to new construction
- Projected total carbon reductions of up to 24% over 60 years
- Rental housing delivered 20-40% below market cost
- 17 long-term rental units delivered on Nation lands
- Over 70% Indigenous trade participation, supporting capacity building and employment

Policy as Scaling Mechanisms

While this case demonstrates what is possible, the building relocation industry in British Columbia remains small and fragmented. Municipal processes often default to demolition, even when homes are structurally sound. Permitting timelines, inconsistent definitions, and lack of financial incentives create barriers to scaling responsible removal. Essentially, innovative practice can lead, but policy must support.

To address these structural gaps, Renewal Development co-founded the [Building Relocation and Deconstruction Association of British Columbia \(BRDA\)](#) in June 2025 (Figure 6). BRDA brings together relocation companies, deconstruction practitioners, policymakers, and advocates to advance responsible building removal as a standard practice.



Figure 6: BRDA's first event, the inaugural Home Demolition Waste Prevention Forum June 2, 2025, New Westminster.

[BRDA's Municipal Action Plan](#) outlines practical tools local governments can adopt today, including:

- Responsible Building Removal Assessments for demolition permits
- Refundable demolition deposits to incentivize relocation or deconstruction
- Early removal permits to decouple building removal from construction timelines
- Density bonuses for developments that relocate or fully deconstruct homes
- Municipal procurement standards prioritizing responsible removal
- Standardized definitions of deconstruction
- Reframing policy language from “demolition” to “responsible building removal”

These tools do not limit densification. They make densification less wasteful, more equitable, and more climate-aligned.

Lessons for Housing Systems Transformations

From this project and relocation work so far, several transferrable lessons emerge:

1. Existing homes are climate assets, not obstacles to progress.
2. Indigenous-led housing delivery can advance reconciliation, affordability, and sustainability when Nations control land, priorities, and participation.
3. Redirecting demolition budgets is a powerful, underutilized financial lever.
4. Partnerships across scales (i.e., community, industry, and government) are critical.
5. Policy reform is the multiplier for pilots becoming best practice.

The future of housing will not be solved by a single solution. It will require a multitude of strategies, including circular ones that preserve existing materials while delivering new housing where it is needed most.

The shíshálh Nation home rescue project demonstrates when communities, developers, practitioners, and governments align, it is possible to densify cities, reduce emissions, deliver affordable housing, and advance reconciliation at the same time.

This is a working model. It is grounded in lived practice, shaped by partnership, and strengthened by learning. The opportunity lies in embedding these lessons into policy, standards, and shared practice so responsible building removal becomes the norm rather than the exception.

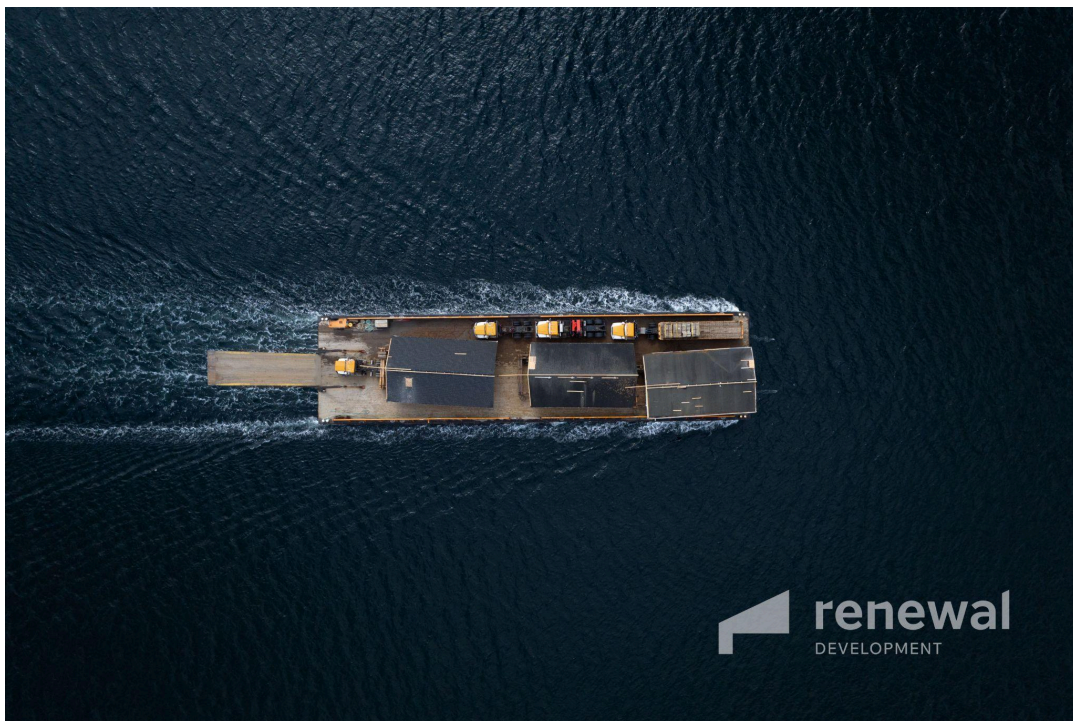


Figure 9: Rescued Port Moody homes traveling by barge to Sechelt, BC.

References

1. Municipal Action Plan (Metro Vancouver 2025). (2025). Home demolition waste prevention: Municipal action plan – Metro Vancouver version. Light House / Renewal Development. [\[Link\]](#).