

BPIBS Compendium Contribution

The Value of A **Nexus Approach** and
**Systems Framework: A Just
Housing System that Works
Hard(er) to Equitably** Support and
Uphold **Rights** and **Welfare**

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Housing as a Just Sustainability Issue and Social Determinant of Health

Fundamentally, a just housing system is one which equitably supports and upholds human (and environmental) rights and welfare.

Just Sustainability

“Integrating social needs and welfare offers us a more ‘just’, rounded, equity-focused definition of sustainability and sustainable development while not negating the very real environmental threats. A ‘just’ sustainability is therefore: “The need to ensure a better quality of life for all, now and into the future, in a just and equitable manner, whilst living within the limits of supporting ecosystems” Agyeman, et al., 2003, 5

Housing is a Just Sustainability issue as it lies at the intersection of environmental (e.g.: energy, materials), socio-cultural (e.g.: social connection, food), and economic systems (e.g.: affordability).

Social Determinant of Health

*Social determinant(s) of health are “the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, and people’s access to power, money and resources – have a powerful influence on health inequities. This model emphasizes that health is not only determined by individual choices and access to healthcare, but by other systems such as food and **housing**. Importantly, this model acknowledges the structural determinants of health which aligns with and supports justice. McLaren & McGibbon, 2025*



Justice: Multi-ideological concept grounded in the fair treatment of all people, where systemic injustices are tackled and political, economic, and social **rights** are upheld.

Nancy Frasers Theory of Justice: Achieving justice, or overcoming injustice, means “dismantling institutionalized obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others, as full partners in social interaction”. Fraser’s theory involves three interconnected dimensions of justice (the “what”), including the political dimension of representation, the economic dimension of (re)distribution, and the cultural dimension of recognition. Fraser, 2005

Equity: A term synonymous with **fairness**, equity involves recognitional, procedural, and distributional dimensions.

Intersectionality: Intersectionality reveals how **overlapping identities interact** to create (unique) experiences of oppression (or privilege). Crenshaw, 1989

A nexus approach vs. systems framework – what's the difference?

A systems and nexus approach are related, but different. Both stem from the idea that knowledge and practice from different disciplines must be brought together to address challenges in ways that increase justice and equity in outcomes

A systems framework is broad and encompasses a wide array of systems and structures. It is used to examine different issues, and related drivers, impacts, and solutions by identifying relationships, interdependencies, and feedback loops.

A nexus approach is less broad than a systems framework and focuses on the intersection of just a few systems. A nexus approach can help identify and leverage compatibilities between systems, and efficiently and comprehensively tackle multiple issues together rather than separately.

A nexus approach vs. systems framework – what’s the difference?

Think about the critical systems that intersect with housing (e.g.: human health, climate and environment, economy).

Explore linkages using a systems framework to reveal issues and interventions that help to improve outcomes.

Identifying the critical systems that intersect with housing, as well as issues and interventions will vary based on who’s asked.

The centering of a just sustainability and determinants of health lens which embraces intersectionality and equity, will help ensure we are including the voices of all people, particularly those who are most disadvantaged, as well as environmental impact considerations.

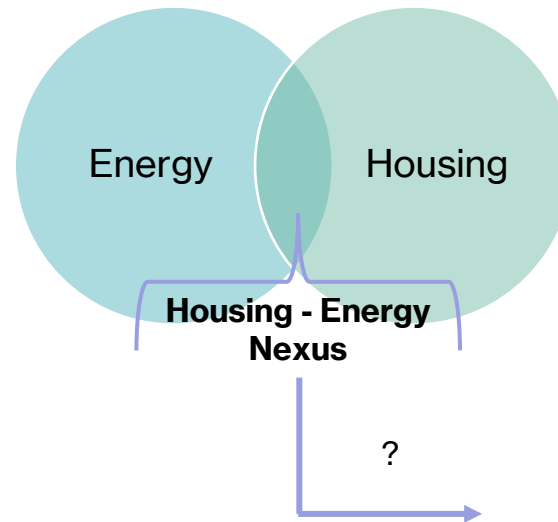
Examples:

The Housing-Energy Nexus

The Housing-Transportation Nexus

The Housing-Heat-Health Nexus

The Food-Housing Insecurity Nexus



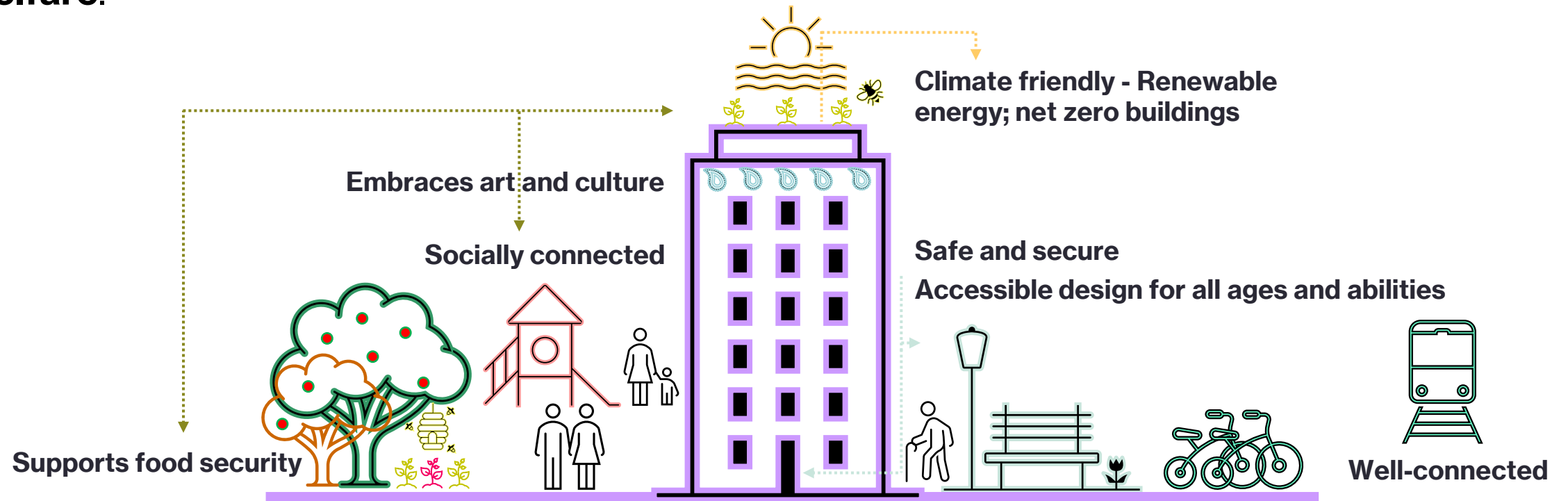
SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK

- What is the issue?
- What are the drivers and impacts of issue?
- What are potential interventions / solutions to the issue?
- How might outcomes be improved?

The perspective and opinions of people asked will impact the answers given.

The value of the approach: housing that works hard(er)

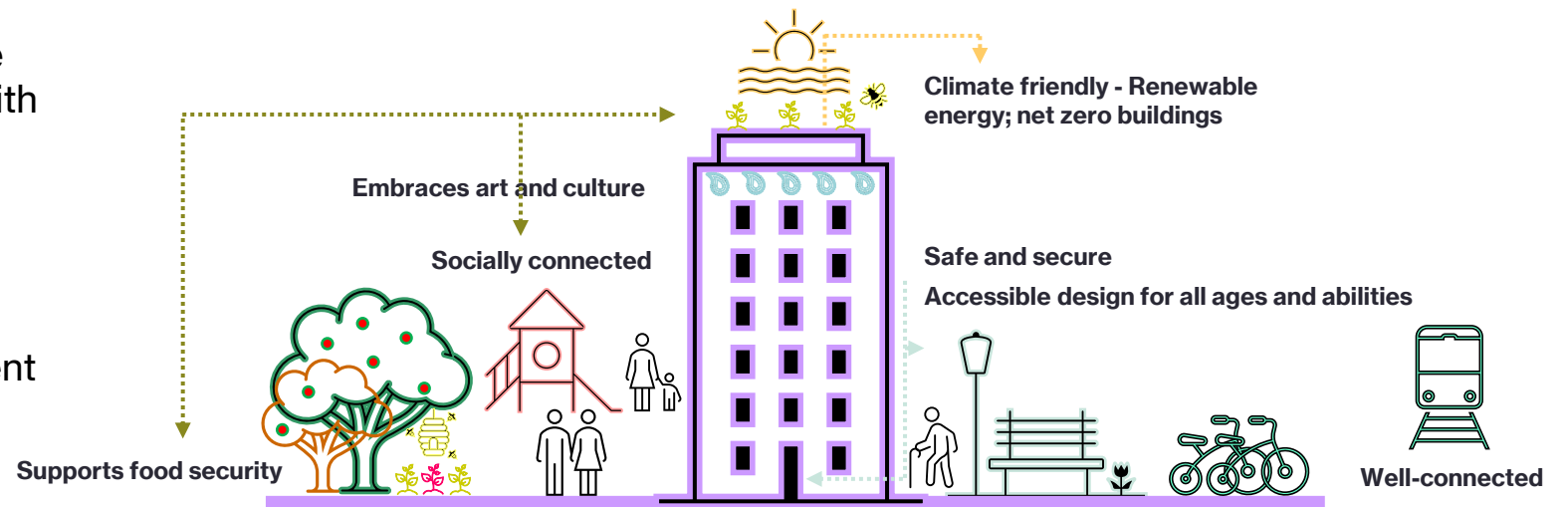
The value of a nexus approach and systems framework in planning for a just housing system, is in its ability to **identify and leverage compatibilities** between systems, and **efficiently and comprehensively tackle multiple issues together** rather than separately. In short, a **nexus approach** and **systems framework** **supports the development of a just housing system that works hard(er) to equitably support and uphold human and environmental rights and welfare.**



The value of the approach: housing that works hard(er)

Examples of housing that works hard(er) to support human and environmental welfare are buildings that provide residents with:

- Amenity spaces in buildings that facilitate social connection and neighbourliness, with consideration given to cultural assets
- Food spaces that provide residents with access to food; Food spaces may double as common spaces
- Lower energy costs
- A safe, secure, and accessible environment
- Connection to sustainable travel alternatives



Different pathways exist for achieving the above, including but not limited to **building codes, development policies, housing provider-led priorities and programs, partnerships** between housing providers and other organizations.

Case Examples

<p>“The Guild” Community Housing and Nutrition Access Centre</p> <p>New York City, USA</p>	<p>Food-Housing Nexus</p>	<p>Grand Street Guild (the “Guild”) is an affordable housing development corporation in New York City, that provides below-market rents to its residents.</p> <p>The Guild’s apartments are in Manhattan’s Lower East Side and Chinatown neighborhoods, which have higher rates of food insecurity (18.5% and 20.7%, respectively for 2023) than the citywide average of 14.6%.¹⁸ The resident population includes a mix of age groups with a significant proportion of older adults and seniors.</p> <p>The Guild also addresses food and nutrition insecurity by operating a Nutrition Access Center (NAC) that distributes free produce to its residents. Since 2021, the NAC has offered a monthly free fresh food box to all Guild residents. NAC users experienced significantly lower levels of indicators of food insufficiency compared to non-users and reported improvements in their ability to afford balanced meals and reduced worry about food running out. As well as this, users reported increased fruit and vegetable consumption, cost savings, and enhanced community connections.</p> <p>https://thenyh.org/projects/nutrition-access-center/</p> <p>https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19320248.2025.2601888?src=</p>
<p>The Housing Transportation Cost Burden Study</p> <p>Metro Vancouver, Canada</p>	<p>Housing-Transportation Nexus</p>	<p>In 2025, Metro Vancouver provided an update to their groundbreaking Housing and Transportation Cost Burden Study published in 2015. This study applies a nexus approach to contextualize and address the combined cost burden of housing and transportation and the impact this burden has on different households.</p> <p>https://metrovancover.org/services/regional-planning/Documents/housing-and-transportation-cost-burden-study-update-2025.pdf</p>

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