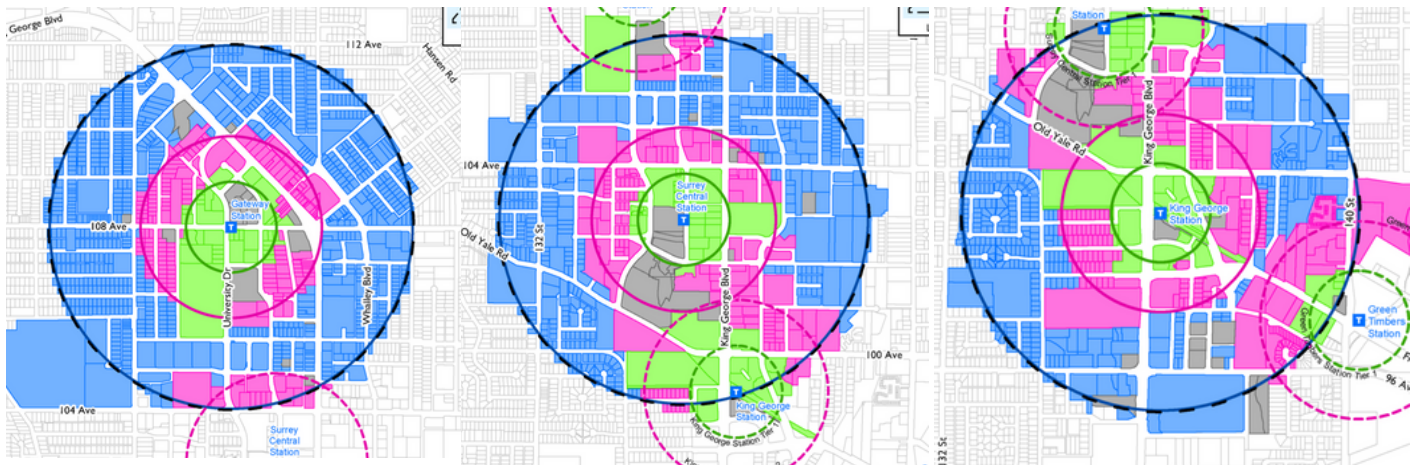


DENSITY AND DEMOVICTION ZONES

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT AND SURREY'S TENANT DISPLACEMENT CRISIS



BC ACORN

www.acorncanada.org



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INTRODUCTION



What is ACORN

ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) Canada is a multi-issue, membership-based community union of low- and moderate-income people. We believe that social and economic justice can best be achieved by building community power for change. We have 177,000+ members organized into 30 neighbourhood chapters in 10 regions across 6 provinces. ACORN members are low- and moderate income tenants who are bearing the brunt of the housing crisis.

DEMOVICTION ZONES: THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM



Surrey's affordable housing stock is under threat. New Provincial Housing legislation called Bill 47 was introduced in late 2023 and is now being implemented. It requires municipalities to allow high-density development around all transit-oriented areas (TOAs) – Skytrain station and bus loops – within 800 or 400m respectively. This practice, known as up-zoning, aims to increase housing density near transit services. This can be beneficial in neighbourhoods dominated by single-family homes where community opposition has long stymied high-rise and rental development, resulting in a lack of much-needed housing options. However in cities like Surrey, which lack adequate rental replacement and tenant relocation policies, the new legislation could turn these Transit-Oriented Areas into Demoviction Zones, where existing affordable housing is destroyed without replacement and tenant communities are economically evicted from the neighborhood.

Not enough time has passed yet for the affects of Bill 47 to have manifested, but we already know many of the implications of widespread up-zoning in areas with affordable housing. In many Surrey neighbourhoods including Whalley and Guildford, updated community land use plans in recent years sparked many landlords and developers to begin considering putting in applications to redevelop purpose-built rentals. As the first wave of buildings facing demoviction in Whalley begin, we can extrapolate to consider what the effects of Bill 47 will be for the thousands of tenants living in transit-oriented areas throughout Surrey.

The size of the problem is huge: ACORN's research indicates that **approximately 3,886 affordable rental units in Surrey are in a Demoviction Zone and at risk of being demolished**, representing over **27% of Surrey's entire purpose-built rental housing stock**. Broken down by housing type, over 31% (2,686 units) of all market rentals are at risk, as well as over 24% of non-market rental units (1,032).

For many families, a green development application sign in their neighbourhood is the first warning that they may soon face displacement from their community and potentially lose stable housing altogether. This looming crisis represents one of the most significant threats to Surrey tenants in recent decades. This report outlines the scope of the problem and the urgent actions council must take to prevent Surrey from becoming the next Metrotown.

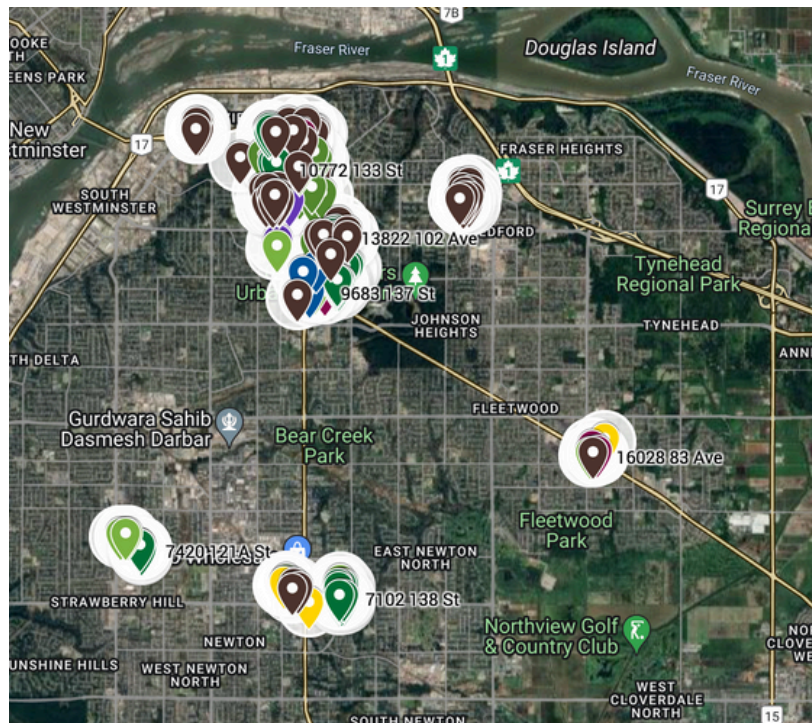
METHODOLOGY



A dataset of all purpose-built rental buildings registered within Surrey was obtained from Surrey City staff in March 2023. This dataset was then uploaded to My Maps, to view the spatial arrangement of the buildings. In May of 2024 Surrey City Council enacted BYLAW NO. 21275 designating Transit-Oriented Areas (TOAs) around twelve Skytrain stations (five existing and seven planned for the future Skytrain extension to Langley) and three bus exchanges. Council released maps detailing the exact boundaries of the up-zoned areas around transit hubs, mapping exactly which properties are included in the Transit-Oriented Areas or demoviction zones.

By visually comparing the map of all existing purpose-built rentals to the mapped TOAs, all purpose-built rentals not within the TOAs were removed from the data set. The remaining data set was then exported to Excel and sorted by housing type into three categories: market rentals, non-market rentals and mixed. The housing type of each purpose-built rental was already designated within the dataset provided by the City.

Buildings completed after the year 2000 were removed from the dataset, as recently constructed units are less likely to be in danger of being redeveloped. The number of units within each building was then summed to arrive at the final number of units within the TOAs. This process was repeated for the dataset of all purpose-built rentals, to arrive at the percentage of the purpose-built rental housing stock in TOAs across the City.



My Maps representation of the purpose-built rental housing that exists within Demoviction Zones—in Transit Oriented Areas around Skytrain stations and bus loops. Each pin represents one building, with different types of housing designated in different colours.

KEY STATISTICS



Rental Housing Type	Number of Purpose-Built Rental Units within Demoviction Zones	Total Number of Purpose-Built Rental Units In Surrey	Percentage of Surrey's Purpose-Built Rental Housing Stock within Demoviction Zones
Market Rentals	2,686	8,601	31.2%
Non-Market Rentals	1,032	4,285	24.1%
Mixed	168	1,180	14.2%
Total:	3,886	14,066	27.6%

Need For Housing In Surrey

According to the most recent Surrey Housing Needs Report, updated in March 2022, close to 30% of Surrey residents are renters, and that number is expected to grow. The City needs over 20,000 units of market and below market rental housing before 2031 to meet the demand for safe and affordable housing. The report itself does not take into account potential losses in affordable housing to redevelopment.

Current Surrey City policy dictates that rental housing being redeveloped must be replaced one-to-one, and rented at 10% below the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) reported average rent for the City.

However, current City policy does not guarantee that units built to replace demolished housing will be affordable, as it's ultimately up to the discretion of Surrey City staff and Council what the terms of the redevelopment application will be. A previous demoviction of Brookmere Gardens in 2021, an affordable apartment building in Guildford, required the developer to replace all of the 424 demolished rental units, but did not stipulate that they be rented at affordable rates. Not only will mass redevelopment in demoviction zones lead to tenant displacement, it could also lead to a net reduction in Surrey's affordable purpose-built rental housing stock.

EXISTING RELOCATION POLICY



Existing Anti-Displacement Policies in Surrey

Surrey's current tenant protections are insufficient to prevent mass displacement. In 2018 Surrey adopted a new Rental Housing Redevelopment Policy, laying out what requirements exist for developers hoping to get a redevelopment project approved by City Council and what tenants are owed as compensation.

The Rental Housing Redevelopment Policy requires tenants be informed of an impending demoviction and be offered assistance in finding a new apartment, 3 months free rent, and the promise of the right to move back into an apartment in the completed redeveloped building.

In practice, ACORN has observed these already weak protections being ignored by developers. Some developers use pressure tactics and buyouts to clear out buildings long before redevelopment is approved by the City. In other cases, redevelopments are approved with no signed agreement existing guaranteeing that tenants can return to the redeveloped building. Even when developers are acting in good faith and the existing policy is enforced, these existing tenant protections cannot help a demovicted family stay in their neighbourhood when market rents are double—or more—of what they used to be paying. Tenants demovicted for redevelopment are commonly downgrading the size and quality of their housing and taking a rent hike to stay in Surrey, or being forced to leave the City or stable housing altogether.

CASE STUDY: DEMOVICTIONS AT ELIZABETH MANOR



Built in 1971, Elizabeth Manor is a 54-unit, three-story apartment building in the heart of Whalley that was unanimously approved for demolition in July 2024 by Surrey City Council. Current rents in the building range from \$800 to \$1,600 per month, making them among the most affordable non-subsidized rents in the Lower Mainland.

Under the City of Surrey Tenant Replacement and Tenant Relocation Assistance Policy, the landlord must offer three months' rent to tenants facing demoviction and assist them in finding new apartments, which consists of showing rental advertisements to tenants. Tenants organized with ACORN to oppose the development application, as its approval by the council means displacement without adequate compensation or affordable alternatives. Tenants are currently holding out and fighting for more than the three-month compensation required by the Rental Replacement and Tenant Relocation Assistance outlined in the City of Surrey's 2019 housing strategy.

ACORN Tenant Union member Arun Joy Mulalckal, a resident of Elizabeth Manor, has lived in the building for over five years with his family and pays \$935 a month for a two-bedroom apartment. The rent he will be forced to pay after demoviction will likely be over \$2,200, meaning that the three months' compensation amounts to less than one and a half months' rent in a new building, followed by a 100%+ rent increase.

"If we have to move my family will be priced out of North Surrey, away from transit and my daughter's school. The whole neighborhood will be facing demoviction soon. How many hundreds of people have to be displaced before City Hall steps up to help us?"

The Rental Replacement policy states that the developer must offer tenants the right of first refusal to move back into the new building, but without rents being stabilized and capped so that tenants can remain in the community paying the same rent, all tenants are set to be displaced from Whalley.

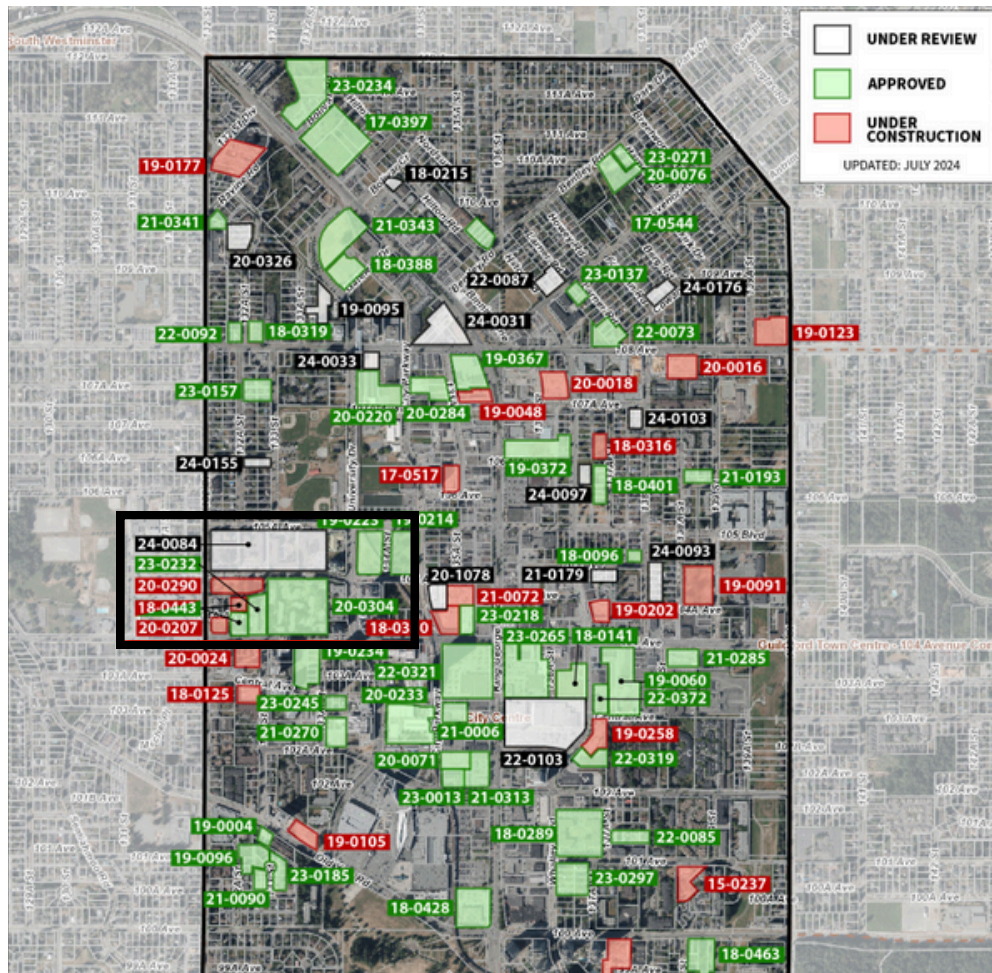


CASE STUDY: DEMOVICTIONS AT ELIZABETH MANOR



At the time of this report's release, more than six additional affordable purpose-built rental buildings within 2 blocks of Elizabeth Manor are also in the process of getting approved for redevelopment by City Council. Bristol Estates (13315 104 Ave), once home to 150+ families is now almost entirely vacant pending demolition. Ashira Court (13245 104th Ave, 40 apartments) will reportedly face redevelopment within two years. North of Elizabeth Manor, Regency Manor (13270 105A Ave, 80 apartments), Regency Court (10520 132 St, 80 apartments), Regency Square (13325 105 Ave, 83 apartments) and Parkside Apartments (13352 105A Ave, 78 apartments) all have a pending redevelopment permit as of spring 2024.

If approved for demolition, those apartments together with Elizabeth Manor would result in **almost 500 units of affordable rental housing lost in a 2 block radius**. It's clear that when Elizabeth Manor tenants are evicted, even those families that can afford to pay double or triple their current rent may find themselves without any stable housing to move to in the neighbourhood. Across the street from Elizabeth Manor, owners of units in newly-built strata condo towers are advertising two bedroom units for upwards of \$2,700.



Map of ongoing redevelopment in Surrey Central, obtained from the with the Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Association at surreycitycentre.ca. Black rectangle encompasses the two block radius around Elizabeth Manor, showing the number of apartments with pending or approved development applications.

THE SOLUTION: SURREY ACORN'S STOP TENANT DISPLACEMENT PLATFORM



The good news is ACORN has a solution. By implementing Anti-Tenant Displacement policies like what organized ACORN tenants fought to win in Burnaby in 2019, there's time to stop mass displacement of tenant communities. Now widely considered the strongest anti-tenant displacement policy in North America, Burnaby adopted the Tenant Assistance policy in 2019 in response to organized tenants pushing back against the demoviction crisis around Metrotown. The Burnaby-model makes sure tenants can stay in their own neighbourhoods while still allowing for redevelopment, by making developers help tenants find interim housing and provide rental top-ups so tenants can afford to remain in their communities while construction is ongoing.

ACORN's Surrey Tenant Platform is calling for strict anti-tenant displacement policies based on the Burnaby-model to keep tenants housed affordably along with standard of maintenance by-laws and landlord licensing to ensure landlords keep buildings livable.

Surrey ACORN's Stop Tenant Displacement Platform

The City of Surrey must enact the following policies:

One to One Rental Replacement

- Ensure all tenants are able to move back into an apartment in their redeveloped building at the same rent as they were paying.
- Landlords or developers must provide the City with a log of tenants names, contact info, and lease information.
- From the start of the redevelopment process the City must ensure that tenants and developers are fully aware of the right of tenants to remain in the community.



Moving Assistance

Tenants need to be made aware of where they can move as part of the redevelopment process. This must include:

- An apartment in the area that is of similar size. It cannot be up to the tenants to fend for themselves to find suitable housing.
- Financial assistance to ensure that costs associated with moving are not paid for by tenants.
- Rental Top Ups that last until the new development is complete to ensure that a tenants' rent is not increased beyond the provincial rent guidelines.

Landlord Licensing

- Updates to Surrey's Standard of Maintenance Bylaw so that standards can be upheld in all rental properties in Surrey
- Proactive system of enforcing Surrey's Standard of Maintenance Bylaw through a Landlord Licensing program

The City of Surrey must view affordable housing as a prized possession that must be protected at all costs. City's housing policy must reflect that housing supply built on the backs of low-income tenants has a negative impact on the housing crisis.

CONCLUSION



Without action from Surrey City Council it's clear that thousands of Surrey tenant families are at risk of being forced out of their homes and neighbourhoods. The affects of destroying tenant communities are too many to name, both for families being displaced and the schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods that will lose valued community-members who are forced to leave the City for more affordable rents.

By adopting strong anti-displacement protections Surrey Council can avert the worst of the damage, and protect valuable rental housing.

Change is possible when enough people come together. Go to our website at acorncanada.org to sign the online action calling on the City of Surrey to act on the demoviction crisis today.

