



Mike Crane

Opening Doors to Inclusive Independent Living in Whistler

A Housing Needs Assessment for Adults with Developmental Disabilities

PREPARED FOR

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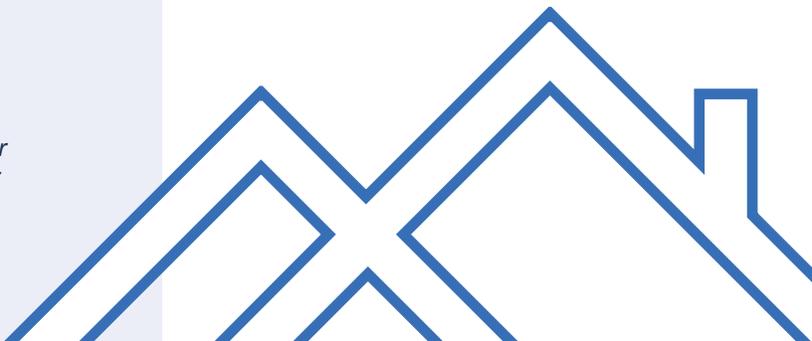
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WISH Society operates in the Resort Municipality of Whistler on the shared, unceded territory of the Lil'wat People, known in their language as Lil'wat7úl, and the Squamish People, known in their language as Skwxwú7mesh. We respect and commit to a deep consideration of their history, culture, stewardship, and voice.





Introduction

Who is WISH?

Established in 2019, Whistler Independent Supported Housing (WISH) is a registered charitable, non-profit society formed by proactive Whistler parents, family members, friends, and community members. WISH is dedicated to advancing opportunities for independent and supportive housing that meets the unique needs of people with development disabilities (DD), ensuring they can live with dignity, stability, and inclusion in the Whistler community.

What is the purpose of this report?

This Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) examines the housing needs of adults with DD to support WISH Society's advocacy, fundraising, partnership development, and operational planning. The report reviews best practices for inclusive housing, analyzes available data related to adults with developmental disabilities, and outlines existing housing and support models. Data findings are informed and validated through input from sector partners and service providers. The report concludes with clear, actionable recommendations to guide WISH's next steps in delivering and sustaining supported housing.

Context

As a purpose-built resort community, Whistler faces unique housing challenges. Whistler is a desirable place to live, visit and recreate. With strong year-round tourism, and limited housing availability, there is intense competition among resort workers, lifestyle residents, retirees, and second homeowners for housing. Further, the gap between local incomes and market rents continues to widen significantly year-over-year, increasing the need for affordable and below-market housing options.

One of Whistler's greatest housing strengths is the Whistler Housing Authority (WHA), which has provided non-market housing for the community's workforce since 1997. WHA is the largest non-market housing provider in the region; it owns and operates 375 rental units and has 987 below-market ownership units in its portfolio. WHA's housing program is widely recognized as a leading model for creating and managing below-market, employee-restricted housing. Its approach - leveraging public land, partnerships, and price controls to ensure long-term affordability - has inspired many other communities. WHA's success is rooted in its mandate to keep housing below market rates and its significant inventory dedicated to housing 75 percent of Whistler's workforce.

However, critical gaps in Whistler's housing landscape remain. WHA's programs are governed by Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) policy, which restricts eligibility to employees of Whistler-based businesses who work an annual average of at least 30 hours per week. Individuals who cannot work full-time are not eligible - a significant barrier for adults with DD who may have the capacity to work but not at full-time hours. Other non-market housing options in Whistler similarly do not provide long-term rental opportunities for people who cannot meet employment-based eligibility requirements.

While WHA is the primary provider, they are not the only organization delivering non-market housing options. Whistler Community Services Society operates a cold-weather shelter program; Zero Ceiling provides supportive housing for youth; and PearlSpace offers transitional housing for people fleeing domestic violence. The Whistler Valley Housing Society operates 50 rental units but, like WHA, follows employee-restricted eligibility criteria.

WISH Society is addressing a critical and longstanding gap: the lack of appropriate, long-term, supportive housing for adults with DD. Through a partnership with Whistler Sports Legacy (WSL), WISH has secured ten residential units within a new 110-unit rental building currently in pre-development at 1080 Legacy Way in the Cheakamus Crossing neighbourhood. Scheduled for completion in 2028, WISH will oversee applications, tenant selection, long-term tenancy management, and the development of a supportive housing framework to enable adults with DD to live independently and successfully in their community.



Methodology

This Housing Needs Assessment was initiated by WISH Society and is not a legislated municipal housing needs assessment; however, it follows a similar, evidence-informed approach. The report is based on a combination of publicly available data and direct input from organizations working with people with developmental disabilities.

Who is the target population?

For the purposes of this report, the target population includes individuals who have a developmental disability (DD). A person is considered to have a developmental disability if they have significantly impaired intellectual and adaptive functioning that began before the age of 18.

While WISH's primary focus is on individuals living in Whistler, the data and recommendations in this report also consider people with developmental disabilities living across the Sea to Sky region, including Squamish, Whistler, and Pemberton.

What data sources were used?

The report draws on information from a range of public, provincial, and sector-specific sources, including:

- Statistics Canada
- Disability Assistance (i.e., Persons with Disabilities, or PWD) data published by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- Community Living BC (CLBC)
- BC Non-Profit Housing Association
- United Nations
- Resort Municipality of Whistler
- Whistler Adaptive Sports Society

These sources provide context on population trends, disability prevalence, housing affordability, funding programs, and best practices.

What engagement was conducted?

To better understand housing needs from a service delivery and community perspective, interviews were conducted with organizations that support people with developmental disabilities or work closely with affected populations in the Sea to Sky region. A total of five interviews were completed. Key themes from these conversations are referenced throughout the report, with a full summary provided in Appendix A.

Engagement Method	Participants	Timing (2025)
Interview	Whistler Adaptive Sports Program Society	September 24
Interview	PALS Adult Services Society (PASS)	September 25
Interview	Community Living BC (CLBC)	October 17
Interview	School District 48	October 31
Interview	Sea to Sky Community Services	November 5



Best Practices: Inclusive Housing for People with DD

The following best practices outlined below are informed by BC-based research, policy frameworks, and sector expertise, and provide the foundation for assessing housing needs and evaluating operational frameworks throughout this report.

1. INCLUSION, BELONGING, & COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

Best practice housing supports people with DD to live as active, valued members of their communities. Inclusive housing is defined not only by the physical home, but by a sense of belonging, social connection, and participation in everyday community life. People want the same outcomes as others: access to transportation, amenities, activities, and meaningful relationships within safe and affordable neighbourhoods.

This approach is consistent with both Inclusion BC's definition of inclusive housing and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which affirms the right of people with disabilities to live in the community on an equal basis with others.

KEY PRINCIPLES

- Sense of home and belonging
- Opportunities for social connection and participation
- Integration into mainstream neighbourhoods rather than segregation



2. CHOICE, CONTROL, & AUTONOMY

Choice and control over one's living environment is fundamental to quality of life. Best practice housing models allow individuals to choose where they live, who they live with, and the type of supports they receive. This includes flexibility in housing and support arrangements that reflect changing needs over time.

Survey findings from across British Columbia demonstrate a strong desire for greater independence, particularly among adults with DD living with parents. Families reported that when individuals move into more independent living arrangements, confidence and personal growth often increase (BC Non-Profit Housing Association, *Inclusive Housing Needs in BC Survey 2020*).

KEY PRINCIPLES

- Choice of residence and living arrangements
- Control over daily routines and personal decisions
- Person-centred rather than program-driven housing



3. ACCESSIBILITY & UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Housing must be physically accessible and designed to support a wide range of abilities. Accessibility includes not only the home itself, but also access to the broader community, such as transportation, services, and public spaces. Without accessible housing, people are effectively excluded from independent living and community participation.

A lack of accessible housing remains a significant barrier across British Columbia, particularly in rural and remote communities.

KEY PRINCIPLES

- Barrier-free and adaptable housing design
- Access to community services, transportation, and amenities
- Housing that can accommodate changing needs over time



4. AVOIDING CONGREGATION & SEGREGATION

Best practice housing avoids large-scale or overly congregated living arrangements that isolate people with DD from the broader community. Inclusion is not defined by a strict numerical ratio, but by how housing is designed, located, and supported to encourage meaningful interaction and participation.

Smaller-scale, dispersed housing integrated into neighbourhoods and complexes is generally more consistent with inclusive, rights-based approaches (InclusionBC, 2025).

KEY PRINCIPLES

- Community-based rather than clustered or institutional models
- Housing integrated into existing neighbourhoods
- Supports delivered in ways that do not segregate residents



5. DIVERSITY & INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT

People with DD have diverse backgrounds, interests, cultures, and support needs. Best practice housing recognizes that there is no single model that works for everyone. A range of housing and support options is required, including independent living with outreach supports and supported living models where appropriate.

In response to BC Non-Profit Housing Association's *Inclusive Housing Needs in BC Survey (2020)*, participants consistently identified the need for flexible housing models that allow individuals to live in their own homes with drop-in or outreach supports tailored to their needs.

KEY PRINCIPLES

- Multiple housing and support models
- Individualized, flexible supports
- Respect for cultural, social, and personal diversity



6. STABILITY, SUSTAINABILITY, & LONG-TERM PLANNING

Housing should provide long-term stability and a sense of permanency. Many families reported having no formal housing plan for their adult children with DD, resulting in uncertainty and risk as caregivers age. Best practice includes proactive planning supports for individuals and families to reduce reliance on aging parents and crisis-driven housing solutions.

Sustainable housing models reduce pressure on families while supporting long-term independence and well-being for residents.

KEY PRINCIPLES

- Long-term housing security
- Support for housing planning and transitions
- Reduced reliance on informal family caregiving





Housing Models & Frameworks

Housing options for people with disabilities in British Columbia are grounded in a significant shift away from institutional care toward community-based, person-centred living. This section outlines that evolution, beginning with the history and closure of institutional housing models in the 1990s, and the policy and funding frameworks that emerged in their place. It then describes current funding mechanisms, including individual funding through CLBC, PWD, and CSIL, before outlining the range of housing models in use today—from supported living environments to more independent housing options.

History & Background

Large-scale institutions were historically the primary housing and care model for people with disabilities in British Columbia and across Canada throughout much of the 20th century. Typically, government-operated or funded, these facilities housed large numbers of people in congregate, campus-style settings - often in rural or isolated locations - and were based on a medical and custodial approach that emphasized centralized care, supervision, and efficiency over individual choice, autonomy, and community integration. Residents generally lived in shared accommodations, followed highly structured routines, and had limited control over daily life, finances, and personal decisions, resulting in separation from family, employment, education, and social networks. Over time, evidence and advocacy highlighted significant shortcomings of this model, including social isolation, lack of dignity and privacy, and barriers to independence and inclusion. In response, and in alignment with evolving human rights standards and disability policy, British Columbia closed large-scale institutions by the 1990s, marking a fundamental shift toward community-based, person-centred housing and support models.

In 2005, Community Living British Columbia (CLBC) was established as a Crown corporation responsible for funding and coordinating disability-support services. CLBC contracts agencies to deliver outreach, employment, and community inclusion services to adults 19 years and older with DD as well as autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) who need significant help with day-to-day tasks.

In 2018, CLBC's "[Re-imagining Community Inclusion](#)" ten-year strategy aims to improve health, employment, and housing outcomes, focusing on facilitating access to affordable housing and sustaining community inclusion through agency partnerships (Source: Government of BC). [Key to Home](#) is a new resource launched by CLBC and Inclusion BC to help individuals with DD, their families and service providers build awareness in their local communities for more inclusive housing.

CLBC funds three service models: staffed homes, shared living and independent living. According to the *Housing and Living Options for People with Disabilities in British Columbia: A Key Informant Study* (University of British Columbia, 2025), mentioned on page 8, B.C.'s housing landscape is framed as a palette of overlapping options rather than a tidy "ladder" of increasing independence.

Housing Models

There are five housing models available for people with DD:

1. Staffed living supports (“Group Homes”)
2. Shared Living
3. Supported-Living Clusters (SLC)
4. Family Home
5. Independent Living (IL) with Outreach

The most appropriate housing solution depends on an individual’s level of support needs. In order to determine the level of supports required, CLBC assesses these needs using the Guide to Support Allocation (GSA). GSA levels are measured on a scale of 1 to 5, with additional “flags” used to identify complex needs. The assessment evaluates disability-related needs across ten life areas to determine appropriate and equitable support funding. Higher GSA levels indicate greater support needs and influence funding levels for services such as home sharing, while flags identify additional considerations, such as significant mental health or substance use challenges, that affect the type and intensity of supports provided.

Each housing model is described in more detail below.

1. STAFFED LIVING SUPPORTS (“GROUP HOMES”)

For individuals eligible for CLBC who require extensive supports with daily living, staffed living provides housing and 24-hour assistance in a home owned or operated by a service organization. Staff do not reside in the home but provide all the supports of daily living. The home holds 3–4 residents with awake-night staff and vehicle access and are reserved almost exclusively for people with high behavioural or complex-medical support levels (GSA 4 – 5). This is the most expensive model; staff homes do provide daily stability and help reduce hospitalization visit.

Sea to Sky Community Services operates two staffed living homes in Squamish, Newport House and Harmony House. Each home allows 3-4 residents and provides a stable home life for adults with developmental disabilities who require full time care. The goal in each home is to provide necessary living supports and encourage residents to be as independent as possible through work, social opportunities, and inclusion in their community. Newport House and Harmony House are examples of staffed living supports.

Further information can be found here: sscs.ca/newport-house

2. SHARED LIVING (HOME SHARE)

Home-sharing is an arrangement where a person with a disability lives in another person’s home and receives individualized supports. The home share provider provides a safe, supportive and inclusive environment, assisting with daily living activities, community inclusions and social connection. The provider receives compensation based on the individual’s level of disability supports needs determined by the GSA. Payment comes from both CLBC and individual contributions. This arrangement is roughly one-quarter the cost of a staffed home and can provide a strong sense of belonging and family-style support.

3. SUPPORTED-LIVING CLUSTERS (SLCS)

Supported-Living Clusters are multi-suite buildings that contain 6-10 fully accessible units. Tenants live independently but benefit with on-call staff overnight and scheduled outreach by day. The arrangement suits tenants who “want their own front door but the security of help next-door.” The cost for CLBC is comparable to the Home-Share.

Tipton Place in Powell River is a 42-unit development built to full wheelchair-accessibility standards and designed using universal design principles. Initiated by a group of local parents, it demonstrates that individuals with disabilities can live meaningful lives in the community with appropriate supports. Residents requiring outreach supports may apply for the Choice in Supports for Independent Living (CSIL) program through the health authorities. Tipton Place is an example of SLC.

Further information can be found here: inclusionpr.ca/pages/inclusion-homes

4. FAMILY HOME

Many people with DD continue to reside in the family home. Families create supportive environments by adapting living space, organizing day-program and managing funding. As caregivers age, the lack of succession plan may cause challenges for both the individual and system. It's important for planning for alternative housing pathways.

5. INDEPENDENT LIVING (IL) WITH OUTREACH

Tenants lease mainstream apartments, often secured through agency-landlord partnerships or portable rent supplements. Individuals receive up to 20 hours of outreach support per week, depending on need.

The rent is subsidized by PWD shelter portion, with additional funding from family or non-profit organizations. This model promotes independence while providing flexible, targeted support.

UNITI's Chorus is a 71-unit apartment complex in South Surrey that serves families, seniors, people with developmental disabilities, essential workers, and students. Clients can reside independently with outreach supports as needed. Chorus allowed the adults with DD first choice of their apartments and to move in first which gave them a position of strength. This is an example of IL with Outreach.

Further information can be found here: uniti4all.com/chorus

Table 1: Summary of housing models for Adults with DD

Housing Model	Typical Setting / Size	Level of support required	Key Features
Staffed Living Supports ("Group Homes")	Shared home with 3-4 residents	Highest support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awake-night staff and vehicle access • For people with complex medical or behavioural needs (GSA levels 4-5) • Provides stability and reduces hospitalizations
Home Share / Shared Living	Individual lives in provider's home	Moderate to High support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person lives with screened provider • Support for daily living, inclusion, and connection • Funded jointly by CLBC and individual contributions
Supported Living Cluster (SLC)	Cluster of 6-10 accessible units in mid-rise or multi-suite building	Low to Moderate support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent units with on-call overnight staff and daytime outreach • "Own front door" with nearby help • Data not consistently tracked provincially
Independent Living (IL) with Outreach	Mainstream apartments, often agency-secured	Low to moderate support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants live independently with flexible outreach support • Rent supported by PWD shelter allowance (\$500/month) • May rely on family or non-profit funding
Family Home	Individual's family home	Low to High support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most common living arrangement • Family provides daily support and structure • Aging caregivers and lack of succession planning are common challenges

WISH Society's Proposed Housing Model

In the new building, WISH has secured 10 units, including a mix of one-bedroom and two-bedroom units. WISH is considering two housing model options.

The first model is **Independent Living with Outreach** model for the one-bedroom units in which the tenant is capable of living independently with the support of outreach workers who provide weekly assistance to help the tenant with life skills.

The second model is a **Home Share/Shared Living** model for the two-bedroom units in which the tenant resides with a live-in caregiver. The live-in caregiver provides guidance and assistance with daily tasks as required. As outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between WISH and Whistler Sports Legacy (WSL), the tenant is the primary leaseholder, and the rent may be paid jointly by the tenant and caregiver.

In both cases, WISH's housing model is designed to support individuals with DD who have low to moderate support needs. By integrating supported housing units within a rental building, individuals are able to live independently while receiving an appropriate level of outreach support based on their assessed needs. These models align with best practices related to diversity, individualized supports, and long-term housing security.

A sustainable funding and operating model is still under development, with key funding considerations outlined below.

WISH's Housing Model: Calculating the Funding Gap

For a typical two-bedroom unit under the proposed home share model, the estimated monthly funding gap is calculated as follows:

- **Rent (two-bedroom unit):** \$2,500 per month
- **Contribution from tenant (PWD shelter portion):** -\$500
- **Contribution from live-in caregiver (50% of rent):** -\$1,250
- **Remaining funding gap: \$750 per month**

Based on this model, WISH estimates an **annual operating deficit just shy of \$250,000**, which would need to be addressed through a combination of partnerships, subsidies, and fundraising efforts.





Funding Options

The funding environment for supportive housing is complex. Although CLBC is a key funding partner in BC, they do not operate housing or offer services directly, instead they rely on contracts with service providers (i.e., non-profit societies) to deliver support services. Housing itself, including ownership, lease, or rental of housing units and long-term property management, must be secured by the service provider (through existing equity or fundraising efforts), and/or through other housing-focused funding partners, such as BC Housing.

Further, people with DD have access to individual funding options, which must be sought and received by each individual or family. The following three funding models are available and described further below:

1. CLBC funded services
2. PWD (Persons with Disabilities) benefits
3. CSIL (Choice in Supports for Independent Living)

1. CLBC FUNDED SERVICES

Most services are delivered through a network of qualified non-profit and private community agencies, individual caregivers, and professionals contracted by CLBC. Alternatively, eligible individuals and their families can receive funding directly (called Individualized Funding or Direct Funding) to arrange and manage their own supports and hire staff.

To be eligible for CLBC services, a person must:

- Be at least 19 years of age or older (these impairments must have started before age 18)
- Meet all the criteria for a Developmental Disability; or
- A diagnosis of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

CLBC staff uses two tools to decide what supports a person receives:

- Guide to Support Allocation (GSA) - evaluate an individual's disability-related needs across 10 different life areas and the five-point scale that goes from needing no support to needing full support
- Request for Service Priority Tool to determine the urgency of an individual's request, ensuring fair distribution of limited funding.

If the person is approved for CLBC-funded services, they can choose support from a local service provider or use the option of Individualized Funding (IF). The funding amounts vary significantly and depend on the specific disability-related needs, required supports, and CLBC's budget. CLBC does not publish the amount of funding available for an individual, service provider, or region.

2. PWD (PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES)

PWD is an official designation under the BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR) that recognizes someone as having a significant and long-term disability. A person must:

- Be 18 years old or older
- Have a severe, prolonged disability lasting 2+ years
- Have major challenges with daily living activities
- Require help from another person, assistance animal, or assistive devices
- Have the disability confirmed by doctor and an assessor

If approved for PWD, the client will receive a monthly Support Allowance and Shelter Allowance (see Table 2) as part of the PWD assistance program, which helps with daily living cost and housing cost.

Size of Family Unit	Minimum Shelter Allowance	Maximum Shelter Allowance
1 person	\$75	\$500
2 persons	\$150	\$695
3 persons	\$200	\$790
4 persons	\$225	\$840
5 persons	\$250	\$890
6 persons	\$275	\$940
7 persons	\$300	\$990
8 persons	\$325	\$1,040
9 persons	\$350	\$1,090
10 persons	\$375	\$1,140

Notably, even the maximum shelter allowance does not bridge the gap between market rents and disability income. **Those on disability assistance require very low rents that generally are found only in non-market subsidized housing.**

A CLBC client can receive both CLBC services and PWD benefits, but they need to apply for PWD through the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR). CLBC clients are encouraged to apply for PWD status because it provides access to the support and shelter allowance.

3. CHOICE IN SUPPORTS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (CSIL)

Choice in Supports for Independent Living (CSIL) provides individuals with physical disabilities and high-intensity care needs with greater flexibility and control over how their home support services are arranged and delivered. Under CSIL, eligible individuals receive funding directly from their local health authority (for Whistler this is Vancouver Coastal Health) to hire, manage, and schedule their own home support workers.

To be eligible for CSIL, individuals must meet the general eligibility criteria for home and community care services, be assessed by a health authority as requiring home support, have high physical care needs and a physical disability, be medically stable, agree to pay the assessed client rate, and be willing and able to coordinate and manage CSIL services.

CSIL funding is not a fixed amount. Instead, it is calculated based on the number of home support hours assessed as required, multiplied by an hourly rate set by the health authority (approximately \$38.19 per hour as of April 1, 2024). This funding model allows individuals to tailor supports to their specific needs while maintaining independence and choice in their living arrangements.



SUMMARY

WISH Society is currently developing a sustainable funding model for supportive housing. At present, there is no clear or dedicated funding pathway for this type of housing, requiring WISH to design an approach that aligns with its target population and operational capacity. As market rents continue to rise each year, the gap between the shelter portion of Persons with Disabilities (PWD) benefits and actual rental costs is expected to widen further.

WISH may explore two potential funding approaches: applying to become a Community Living BC (CLBC) service provider in order to receive funding and deliver support services directly or developing a framework to support individuals and families in accessing individualized funding sources independently. Under the home share model being pursued, the live-in caregiver would be responsible for approximately half of the unit's rental cost. However, **even when all available funding sources are maximized and a portion of rent is offset by a caregiver or home share model, a significant affordability gap is expected to remain.**

In response to this, WISH is pursuing additional strategies to address this funding gap and establish a long-term, sustainable model that supports independent living, including targeted fundraising efforts. Further detail on these approaches is outlined in the *Next Steps* section below.



Data & Demographics

This section summarizes key demographic data from a national, provincial, and local context relevant to people with DD, with a focus on trends that inform governance decisions, funding priorities, and long-term housing and operational planning.

Demographic Trends and Lived Experience

National data from *Statistics Canada's Canadian Survey on Disability (2022)* provides important context for understanding housing needs over the life course. In 2022, approximately 1.5 per cent of Canadians aged 15 and older identified as having a DD. Applied to Whistler's permanent population of 13,982 (Statistics Canada, 2021), this translates to **approximately 210 Whistler residents living with a developmental disability**. Individuals were diagnosed, on average, at age 17, and reported beginning to feel limited by their condition at age 13, underscoring the long-term and early nature of housing and support needs.

Among working-age adults (25 to 64 years) with disabilities, 62 per cent were employed, reinforcing the importance of housing that supports independence, workforce participation, and community inclusion. The survey also found that 68 per cent of individuals with DD required help with at least one everyday activity. Family members living in the same household were the primary source of support in 77 per cent of cases, highlighting the ongoing reliance on informal caregiving.

Provincial Context: Community Living BC

Across British Columbia, demand for services and supports for people with DD continues to grow. Community Living BC (CLBC) acquires more than 1,200 new eligible individuals each year, and the total number of people eligible for services has increased from approximately 12,735 in March 2010 to nearly 29,000 by March 2025 – a 128% increase in clients over the past 15 years. This sustained growth signals increasing long-term demand for stable, appropriate support options province-wide.

Local Snapshot: Whistler

As of 2025, there are 47 households (or family units) receiving Disability Assistance in Whistler (Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, received October 6, 2025). These households include a total of 49 individuals and fewer than 10 children associated with those cases (the exact number of children was not obtained due to data suppression reasons). Disability-specific data at the municipal level is limited, and no Whistler-specific figures are available for adults with DD only.

As of 2025, there are 12 individuals eligible for CLBC funding in Whistler, and a total of 94 individuals in the Sea to Sky region (CLBC, retrieved September 30, 2025). These figures represent the number of adults with a DD, FASD, or ASD who receive services from CLBC and require support with daily tasks. WISH Society has noted that these figures likely underestimate actual need. Based on anecdotal information from clients and residents, WISH estimates that the number of people with DD may be up to 30 percent higher.

When adjusted for underreporting, this suggests a potential target population of **up to 16 individuals in Whistler and up to 122 individuals across the Sea to Sky region** may be eligible for WISH Society's supported housing program. At the same time, the availability of staffed housing is extremely limited: **only eight staffed beds currently exist in Squamish** (operated by Sea to Sky Community Services), **and there are no staffed beds or supported housing units in Whistler**. This significant mismatch between need and supply underscores both the immediacy and scale of the housing gap for adults with developmental disabilities in the region.

Further, Whistler Adaptive Sports, a non-profit charity offering sport opportunity to people with disabilities and neurodiversity, works with 551 unique clients within the Sea to Sky region who access their programs (Whistler Adaptive Sports, received October 9, 2025). Therefore, emphasizing the number of individuals regionally who may require housing or support services beyond those individuals currently receiving PWD benefits or CLBC funding.

Housing Affordability Pressures

Housing affordability in Whistler presents a significant barrier to independent and inclusive living. The *Resort Municipality of Whistler's Vulnerable Populations Housing Needs Assessment (2024)* reported average private market rents of approximately \$3,241 per month for a one-bedroom unit and \$4,677 per month for a two-bedroom unit. These costs are far beyond the reach of individuals relying on disability assistance - where the maximum shelter allowance is \$500 per month- as well as those accessing individualized funding, or modest employment income. As a result, housing options are significantly constrained, housing choice is limited, and individuals increasingly rely on family support or non-market housing solutions.

Summary

While these data sources do not capture the precise number of people with DD living in Whistler who require housing, nor the level of support each individual may need, they underscore the complexity of housing solutions for a diverse population with varying needs. At a minimum, the data confirms that individuals with DD live in Whistler and require appropriate housing options, including independent housing with supports. **Addressing the current absence of supported housing options is therefore a critical and urgent need.**

DATA LIMITATIONS

There are important limitations to the available data for assessing housing need at the local level. Disability-related datasets are not consistently disaggregated by municipality, and publicly available sources do not clearly identify individuals receiving CLBC supports, PWD benefits, or other individualized funding within Whistler. Local figures based on Disability Assistance cases capture only a portion of current need and do not account for individuals living with family, those not connected to formal services, or future housing needs as caregivers age.

As a result, quantitative data alone underrepresents both current and emerging demand. Best practice research, sector expertise, and lived experience are essential complements to available data when informing funding strategies and housing delivery decisions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Demand for housing and supports for people with DD is growing steadily across B.C.
- Local data gaps make it difficult to quantify need precisely, reinforcing the importance of proactive planning.
- Families—often aging parents—remain the primary support system, creating long-term sustainability risks.
- Extreme housing costs in Whistler eliminate private market housing as a viable option for most individuals.
- There is a clear need for non-market, inclusive housing models that support independence, stability, and long-term outcomes.



Next Steps & Recommendations

The following recommendations outline the key actions required to successfully plan, deliver, and sustain WISH Society's supported housing program at 1080 Legacy Way. They are informed by available data, sector best practices, and the lived experiences of people with developmental disabilities and their families. Collectively, these recommendations are intended to guide decision-making related to demand assessment, tenant selection, transition planning, organizational capacity, funding sustainability, caregiver recruitment, inclusive design, and sector leadership, while ensuring transparency, accountability, and long-term program viability.

RECOMMENDATION #1

Assess demand through an interest registry.

CONSIDERATIONS

- While data is available regarding the number of CLBC participants, PWD recipients, and population estimates from Statistics Canada, there is currently no direct indicator of how many people with DD are actively seeking housing in Whistler.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- ✓ To better understand demand, create a "Register Your Interest" page on WISH's website, allowing prospective tenants or their families to submit contact information and receive project updates. This would function as a non-binding registry rather than a waitlist to help inform planning (e.g., current community of residence, interest in a one- or two-bedroom unit, anticipated timeline for housing).

RECOMMENDATION #2

Develop a clear and transparent application system.

CONSIDERATIONS

→ Residents are in critical need of affordable housing and prospective applicants will seek early clarity on eligibility and requirements.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- ✓ To provide clarity and transparency, develop and publicly communicate eligibility criteria, including: confirmation of a developmental disability (including GSA score), location requirements (i.e., Whistler or Sea to Sky residency), and income thresholds (e.g., minimum or maximum thresholds).
- ✓ Develop a clear and easy-to-navigate application process. Ensure the housing application outlines both tenancy-related questions (e.g., anticipated move-in timing, length of tenancy, references) and support-related needs (e.g., daily tasks requiring assistance, current living arrangements).
- ✓ Clearly describe each step in the application process, including whether interviews, reference checks, credit checks, or other verification steps are required.
- ✓ Define and communicate how units will be allocated, e.g., needs-based prioritization or chronological waitlist (i.e., first-come, first-served).
- ✓ Develop standardized communication templates to notify applicants of eligibility, waitlist status, or ineligibility.

RECOMMENDATION #3

Develop a transition or support plan for tenants and their families.

CONSIDERATIONS

→ Transitioning to independent living can be stressful for both tenants and families, particularly for individuals moving from the family home.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- ✓ Develop a guide/manual for prospective tenants and their families outlining tenant expectations, building rules, good neighbour practices, and available supports to increase the likelihood of success.
- ✓ Develop a support framework that includes resources for families on how to support independent living, manage conflict, and maintain a safe and well-maintained home.
- ✓ Offer pre and post-move-in meetings with tenants and families to support a smooth transition and set shared expectations.

RECOMMENDATION #4

Build operational capacity.

CONSIDERATIONS

- The housing units at 1080 Legacy Way represent WISH's first opportunity to deliver housing directly and establish a supported housing program.
- Since its inception, WISH has operated primarily through a volunteer working Board, supplemented by paid contractors and consultants.
- As WISH expands its activities—including fundraising, housing delivery, and support services—additional operational capacity will be required to ensure effective program delivery, accountability, and long-term sustainability.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- ✓ Develop and maintain policies and procedures to support effective and accountable operations, such as tenant selection, record-keeping, complaints and appeals, and privacy policies. These policies will support legal compliance, reduce risk, and ensure consistent and equitable decision-making.
- ✓ Strengthen organizational capacity by hiring paid staff to support housing operations. While volunteer board members play a critical role in governance and strategic oversight, paid staff provide the continuity, accountability, and professional capacity required to manage housing programs effectively.
- ✓ Consider recruiting a housing or program coordinator and engaging specialists as needed who have experience in tenant management and supporting people with DD.

RECOMMENDATION #5

Develop a sustainable funding model.

CONSIDERATIONS

- There is a clear funding gap between what individuals with DD can afford and the cost of housing at 1080 Legacy Way.
- WISH is in the process of establishing a capital campaign with long-term fundraising objectives to help address this gap.
- CLBC and BC Housing are the primary public funders in the housing sector serving people with DD and should be considered in WISH's funding strategy.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- ✓ Apply to CLBC to become a qualified service provider.
- ✓ Apply for funding opportunities with BC Housing that aligns with WISH's housing model.
- ✓ Where funding pathways are limited or unavailable, documenting these gaps will clearly demonstrate the unmet needs to donors and other funding partners.
- ✓ Advance plans for a capital and fundraising campaign to help bridge ongoing funding gaps, including both one-time donations and sustained annual giving to support short- and long-term program viability.

RECOMMENDATION #6

Ensure Continuity and Stability of Caregiver Support.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Home share and shared living models are widely recognized as effective approaches for supporting people with developmental disabilities; however, service disruption resulting from caregiver recruitment and turnover remains a sector-wide challenge.
- Continuity of caregiver support is particularly critical in independent and home share living arrangements, where trust, routine, and consistency are foundational to positive outcomes.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- ✓ Implement strategies such as competitive compensation aligned with local cost of living, guaranteed minimum hours where feasible, and housing-linked incentives such as rent discounts.
- ✓ Develop contingency plans to ensure continuity of support in the event a caregiver leaves, including interim staffing or outreach support until the position is filled.

RECOMMENDATION #7

Pursue inclusive and accessible design.

CONSIDERATIONS & PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Explore inclusive and accessible design features during construction and post-occupancy, including within amenity spaces and common areas, to ensure the building supports residents with a range of abilities, mobility needs, and sensory sensitivities.

RECOMMENDATION #8

Position WISH as a sector leader.

CONSIDERATIONS

- People with DD are underserved not only in Whistler, but across the province. By advancing an innovative and much-needed housing model, WISH has an opportunity to demonstrate leadership in the sector.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- ✓ Participate in provincial working groups, committees, or sector networks to share lessons learned and support the replication of similar housing models in other communities.

Resources

Resource	Type of Information Provided	Website
Community Living BC (CLBC)	Provincial Crown agency responsible for funding and coordinating supports and services for adults with developmental disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Provides information on eligibility, funding models, service delivery, and support planning.	https://www.communitylivingbc.ca/
BC Housing	Provincial agency responsible for affordable and supportive housing programs. Provides funding, policy guidance, and partnerships for non-market housing, including housing for people with disabilities and vulnerable populations.	https://www.bchousing.org/
Disability Assistance (PWD) – BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction	Income and disability assistance programs, including the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) benefit. Provides information on eligibility, shelter allowances, and supplemental supports.	https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/income-assistance
Choice in Supports for Independent Living (CSIL)	Program that provides direct funding to eligible individuals with physical disabilities to manage and purchase their own home support services. Includes eligibility criteria, funding structure, and employer responsibilities.	https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/accessing-health-care/home-community-care/care-options-and-cost/choice-in-supports-for-independent-living
Inclusion BC	Provincial advocacy organization focused on inclusion, human rights, and community living for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Provides research, policy guidance, and best practices related to inclusive housing and supports.	https://inclusionbc.org/
BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA)	Sector association representing non-profit housing providers. Provides research, best practices, training, and reports related to housing needs, including inclusive housing for people with developmental disabilities.	https://bcnpha.ca/
Statistics Canada – Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD)	National data source providing demographic and social data on Canadians with disabilities, including prevalence, employment, support needs, and living arrangements.	https://www.statcan.gc.ca/
United Nations – Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	International human rights framework affirming the right of people with disabilities to live independently and be included in the community. Provides guiding principles for inclusive, rights-based housing and support models.	https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-crpd



Appendix A: What We Heard Summary

Engagement Overview

A total of five interviews were conducted by phone or Microsoft Teams (see list of participants in table below). Each discussion began with an overview of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Whistler Independent Supported Housing Society (WISH) and Whistler Sports Legacy (WSL), which outlines the allocation of ten residential units at 1080 Legacy Way for adults with DD. Interviewees were advised that WISH will operate these units and provide tenancy supports for eligible applicants.

Engagement Method	Participants	Timing (2025)
Teams meeting	Whistler Adaptive Sports Program Society	September 24
Teams meeting	PALS Adult Services Society (PASS)	September 25
Teams meeting	Community Living BC (CLBC)	October 17
Phone interview	School District 48	October 31
Teams interview	Sea to Sky Community Services	November 5

Participants were then asked a series of structured questions about their organization’s role and services, strategies to support tenants with DD to live independently, current challenges or gaps in housing and support services, and potential opportunities to improve housing outcomes. The purpose of the interviews was to gather qualitative insights to inform the Housing Needs Assessment, specifically focusing on the needs of people with DD. Key themes and findings from the engagement are summarized below.

Developing a Sustainable Funding Model

Funding was consistently identified as one of the most significant barriers preventing people with DD from accessing appropriate housing. Individuals receiving the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) benefit have only \$500 per month allocated for shelter, which is far below local market rents. While provincial programs such as Community Living BC (CLBC) provide supportive services, they do not contribute to housing costs. Participants also noted that BC Housing has limited programs tailored to supporting independent living for people with DD, and there is no clear pathway to seek support for unique or specialized operating models. As market rents continue to rise each year, the gap between the PWD shelter portion and actual rental costs widens further.

When asked about the home share model, participants explained that a live-in caregiver's rent contribution can help make housing more affordable for a person with DD. However, due to high market rents in Whistler, an affordability gap often remains.

WISH rates:

- **Rent rate:** \$2,500 for a two-bedroom unit
- **Person with DD pays:** -\$500 (PWD shelter portion)
- **Live-in caregiver pays:** -\$1,250 (half the rent)
- **Remaining rent gap: -\$750**

Did you know that people with DD often move only once in their lives? This is from their family's home to a supported living environment.

While WISH is modelled on PASS, which developed a unique approach to addressing service gaps, PASS established an endowment fund through a lead donor. This endowment now enables long-term, sustainable support for their housing model.

Overall, participants emphasized that, in most cases, the financial burden ultimately falls to families, who are expected to cover the ongoing rent shortfall over the long term.

For many individuals with developmental disabilities, there is a real and ongoing funding shortfall. On average, it can cost approximately \$25,000 per year to provide the supplemental supports required for independent, supported living. This gap is a reality for many families and individuals and is exactly what WISH is working to address.

WISH needs to build financial stability at this scale. Our goal is to establish a \$5 million endowment to ensure long-term sustainability. This would provide approximately \$250,000 per year to support ten residents, or a donation of \$500,000 per resident to help cover lifetime support needs (it goes beyond this generation).

Transitioning Individuals into Housing

Participants emphasized that successful transitions into housing for people with DD require coordinated support for both the individual and their family. For clients, access to appropriate services is essential—including support workers, day programs, and skill-building supports that assist with daily living (e.g., housekeeping, bill payments) and relationship building with peers and neighbours. Several participants noted that support needs vary widely, underscoring the importance of conducting an individualized needs assessment prior to move-in. They also emphasized the importance of flexibility and ensuring that clients can access outreach services or day programs as needed.

Families also require support, particularly when a person with DD is moving out of the family home for the first time. Family-focused support is largely centred on education, such as understanding housing rules (e.g., parking, smoking, good-neighbour expectations), tenancy agreements, live-in care options (where applicable), financial responsibilities, and what independent living will mean for their family member. PASS shared that they hold pre-move-in information sessions with families, inviting property managers and support workers to ensure consistent and aligned communication.

Essential Services and Systems for Independent Living

Participants stressed that successful tenancies for people with DD require consistent, ongoing supports. These include access to:

- Day programs and drop-in services
- Safe, accessible public amenities
- Life-skills training and relationship-building opportunities
- Caregiver supports

Participants noted that WISH could play multiple roles in facilitating these supports—for example, by providing services directly, becoming a CLBC service provider, partnering with existing CLBC-funded agencies, or helping tenants access community programs already in place.

One such program highlighted was the Whistler Adaptive Sports Program (Whistler Adaptive). Although its primary focus is recreational programming, participants emphasized its significance as a source of community inclusion for people with DD in Whistler and the Sea to Sky region. They noted that Whistler Adaptive provides meaningful opportunities for participation, personal development, and connection, all of which contribute to overall housing stability and quality of life.

Considerations for the Live-In Caregiver Model

Overall, participants were supportive of implementing a live-in caregiver (home share) model at 1080 Legacy Way and felt it aligns well with WISH's objectives. They noted that home share models can provide a safe, supportive, and inclusive living environment, offering assistance with daily living activities, community inclusion, and social connection. Participants also emphasized that CLBC is keen to expand home share options.

Participants outlined two primary approaches for delivering a home share model:

1. **WISH-led model:** WISH becomes the contracted CLBC service provider and hires or contracts the caregiver directly. In this scenario, if a tenant moves out, the caregiver relationship remains with WISH.
2. **Family-led model:** Each client or family applies individually for home share support. Here, the caregiver is contracted by the family, and if the client moves out, a new agreement will need to be established with the next client and their family.

CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

Participants highlighted several challenges that WISH should anticipate:

- **Varying client needs:** Caregivers must be flexible and responsive to the client's assessed support level. CLBC determines daily support requirements through its Guide to Support Allocation (GSA) levels, which affect both funding and caregiver time. Higher-needs clients may require more frequent or urgent support; for example, one participant noted that a caregiver may need to pick up a client from a day program mid-day if an issue arises.
- **Caregiver financial capacity:** Caregivers may struggle to afford their portion of rent based solely on caregiver income. Many may require additional employment, which could reduce their availability to support the client.
- **Recruitment and retention:** Whistler's high cost of living, high rental rates, and transient workforce create challenges in attracting and retaining caregivers. Participants stressed the need for a strong recruitment and retention strategy.
- **Succession planning:** Ensuring that no client is left without a caregiver is essential. WISH may need contingency staffing to fill temporary gaps. Robust planning will be key to maintaining continuity.

BENEFITS IDENTIFIED

Participants also noted several advantages of a home share approach:

- **Individualized support:** Supports can be tailored to each client's assessed needs and level of independence.
- **Flexible caregiver compensation:** WISH can set caregiver wages at rates that better align with Whistler's high cost of living, improving recruitment and retention.
- **Greater housing stability:** Because the client, not the caregiver, holds the lease, caregivers may change without affecting the client's tenancy. This provides long-term housing stability for residents.

Leverage Expertise and Build Organizational Capacity

Participants emphasized the importance of drawing on external expertise to strengthen organizational knowledge related to housing for people with DD. As WISH develops a new operating model, expands its role, and navigates a complex funding environment, it will inevitably encounter challenges and gaps in capacity. While motivated families play an important role in advancing housing initiatives, participants noted that expertise must extend beyond the family network to ensure long-term effectiveness.

Key areas where outside expertise will be essential include: assessing applicants' support and housing needs before unit offers; engaging specialists who understand property management and tenancy requirements; and accessing guidance on recruitment, retention, and operational considerations for live-in caregiver or supported-living models.

Participants agreed that diversifying knowledge throughout the organization—particularly through the strategic hiring of staff with specialized skills—will be critical to navigating these challenges and building a strong foundation for long-term housing success.

Integrating Accessible and Appropriate Housing Design

While the interview questions focused primarily on operations and support services, many participants highlighted the importance of accessible and inclusive building design. In addition to ensuring that housing units meet accessible or adaptable standards for wheelchair and mobility-device use, participants highlighted the need for other design considerations—such as features that address sensitivity to light or noise. CLBC noted that some housing providers pursue Rick Hansen Foundation certification to demonstrate best practices in inclusive design. The Whistler Athlete Centre was also referenced as a strong example of universal design in practice.

Participants recommended that WISH explore potential design adaptations both during construction and post-occupancy, including within amenity spaces and common areas, to ensure the building adequately supports residents with diverse abilities and sensory needs.

Build Partnerships and Strengthen Advocacy

Developing a housing program and operating model from the ground up creates opportunities for innovation, community education, and advocacy. Participants emphasized that successful and sustainable housing programs rely on strong partnerships. For example, PASS noted that although their endowment fund allows them to operate without a dedicated funding partner, their model still depends on municipal and developer partnerships. In the Lower Mainland, municipalities require new developments to include a percentage of below-market units, and PASS has been able to partner with developers to secure those housing units for their clients. In another example, SSCS noted that their group homes rely on two funding partners, BC Housing and CLBC. For this model, BC Housing owns and manages the house, and CLBC provides funding to SSCS, the service provider, for 24/7 residential staff.

Participants also highlighted the need for ongoing advocacy within the housing system. This includes advocating to CLBC for rent top-ups and increased housing support, advocating to municipalities to allocate affordable and below-market housing options, and advocating within the community to strengthen understanding and inclusion of people with DD. Engagement in local and provincial committees was also identified as an important avenue for influence. Several participants noted that inviting families to share lived experiences can be a powerful way to challenge assumptions and build empathy among government partners and community members.

Housing providers further emphasized the positive outcomes associated with stable, independent housing. When individuals have secure housing, they are better positioned to build routines, take responsibility, and increase their independence. Participants observed improvements in mental health, daily functioning, and self-reliance among clients who have access to appropriate, stable housing.



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