



BTZx ENGAGEMENT & ACTION REPORT #1

The Intersection of the Housing Crisis and Climate Change

Written By:
BTZx Team

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Welcome to BTZx's Engagement & Action Report

Prepared for

**NOVA SCOTIA'S
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY**

INTRODUCTION

On February 20, 2024, BTZx convened housing and building sector stakeholders for a quick succession of roundtable discussions on the potential of our collective impact if we collaborate when meeting the dual challenges. This is a report on what issues and possible actions were discussed at the action accelerator event.

The Context

Nova Scotia is facing a severe housing crisis. The need for affordable housing is at a critical level, and we cannot afford delays. A massive influx of housing is needed immediately and quickly. In addition, surrounding the effort to respond to the housing crisis is the climate crisis. Where the two crises meet requires a concerted move Nova Scotia toward greener construction and cleaner energy solutions.

As unprecedented numbers of new construction are on the horizon, BTZx sees a vital opportunity to address the housing crisis while embracing net-zero building practices and a low carbon future.

Energy-efficient housing is the intersection for both crisis. Along with renewable energy sources such as rooftop solar, can keep heating and energy operative costs low for decades to come. This saves money and increases comfort for all.

Urgent, innovative solutions are required meet the meet the dual challenges and bridge the gap between affordability and environmental sustainability.

Societal health and resilience are the end results that come with building a sustainable net zero future for all.

Our Methodolgy

We brought together for one afternoon a group of key representatives for a cross-sectoral conversation to uncover actionable strategies and innovative solutions to the intertwined issues of affordable housing and climate change.

To encourage the conversation to productive yet open to spontaneous exploration, we framed the conversation with three pivotal questions.

Three Pivotal Questions:

1. What are the current forces influencing the housing and climate crisis?
2. Where can impactful leverage be found?
3. What innovative solutions can be deployed for sustainable, affordable housing?

The range of participants was chosen to ensure an exploration of the issues from many angles, including policy, planning, economic, and community perspectives.

Who was invited:

- Energy efficiency organizations
- NGOs
- Government agencies and departments
- Private sector
- Urban planners
- Community groups



What We Heard

A summary of discussions

The dialogue centred on several critical issues, notably the acute shortage of housing, the exacerbating effects of inflation and interest rates on affordability, and the significant challenges associated with retrofitting existing buildings to meet new environmental standards.

No one at the Roundtable is under any illusion that a societal-wide shift to net zero housing will be easy. The housing crisis is complex, compounded by climate change – both the need for GHG mitigation and changing weather adaptation. There are also jurisdictional challenges to housing, differing rural and urban approaches to housing, and the impacts of delayed building code improvements.

However, significant opportunities were also highlighted, such as the potential for the federal Housing Accelerator Fund to be directed towards climate-smart housing initiatives, the benefits of strategic urban planning for sustainability, and the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of modular construction methods. Other ideas were discussed, such as property tax relief for non-profit housing, density bonuses, better use of passive house design, more capital for PACE programs, and pathways for rapid adoption of higher tier building codes.

Participants further emphasized the critical role of education for both builders and consumers on sustainable housing, the necessity for innovative financing and incentives for green development, and the importance of community champions in advocating for eco-friendly housing solutions.

The Next Steps

Six Actions and Strategies

The Building to Zero Exchange Roundtables are ultimately about actionable insights and recommendations. These conversations are the start of an ongoing dialogue on solutions.

There is widespread recognition that a **multistakeholder approach** is essential for addressing the challenges at the intersection of the housing crisis and climate change. Government agencies, private sector entities, non-profit organizations, and community groups must collaborate to make potential solutions a reality.

Through partnerships and shared commitments, we can drive systemic changes that not only address housing affordability but also contribute to climate resilience.

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS



1

Educational Initiatives: Launch comprehensive programs aimed at increasing awareness and knowledge about sustainable building practices among builders, developers, and the general public.



2

Modular Construction: Promote the adoption of highly efficient prefabricated and modular construction methods to speed up the housing development process while reducing costs and environmental impact.



3

Green Incentives: Implement financial and policy incentives to encourage developers to pursue green building standards, driving the market towards more sustainable practices.

What We Heard cont'd

LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

4



Policy Advocacy: Champion legislative and policy reforms that facilitate and support sustainable housing projects, ensuring that environmental sustainability is a cornerstone of housing development.

5



Strategic Planning: Develop and execute strategic growth plans that seamlessly integrate sustainability and affordability, ensuring future housing developments are aligned with environmental and societal goals.

6



Community Engagement: Encourage active participation and involvement of local communities in housing initiatives to ensure projects are tailored to meet local needs and preferences, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment to sustainability.



Thank You

If you have questions in general or for your own projects, or if you wish to request a presentation of our results, please reach out to our team. Advancing to a sustainable and inclusive net zero future is a collective effort.

Contact us

Building to Zero Exchange (BTZx)

 info@buildingtozero.ca

 [@Building to Zero Exchange](https://www.linkedin.com/company/building-to-zero-exchange)