

Evolution of the City's Low-End Market Rental (LEMR) Program

The City's Low-End Market Rental (LEMR) Program entails the delivery of affordable rental housing for low and moderate-income households. LEMR homes are secured through a density exchange at the time of rezoning. The Program was established in 2007 and has been adjusted several times to support the needs of Richmond residents while being responsive to changing market conditions. The timeline provided below outlines how the LEMR Program has evolved since its initial creation.

2007

LEMR IS INTRODUCED | The City creates the LEMR program as part of its 2007 Affordable Housing Strategy. Large apartment buildings (more than 80 homes) are required to set aside at least 5% of the building area as affordable rental housing.

Rent rates are tied to BC Housing's Household Income Limits (HILs) by unit type. The rents are set at 30% of these HILs, divided by 12 months, upholding affordability for low and moderate-income households.

As part of the program, small-scale developments can choose to provide the City cash-in-lieu of built LEMR homes, providing funding for future housing initiatives.

2018

THE PROGRAM EXPANDS | A new 10-year Affordable Housing Strategy raises the required share of LEMR homes from 5% to 10% and extends the applicability to smaller buildings—60 homes or more, down from 80.

LEMR rents are set at 10% below CMHC's average market rents at the time. Income thresholds are set at 10% below BC Housing's HILs.

2021

A HIGHER RATE DOWNTOWN | The LEMR contribution rate for developments in Richmond's City Centre increases from 10% to 15% while the rate is held at 10% outside of the City Centre. Rent and income limits remain unchanged from 2018.

2022

MARKET RENTAL REQUIREMENTS INTRODUCED | The City's Official Community Plan is updated to introduce market rental housing policies. These policies require that 15% of the residential floor area of developments with more than 60 units be set aside as market rental housing, protecting these homes as long-term rentals.

In the City Centre, 15% of a building's residential floor area must be set aside for LEMR housing. Of the remaining residential floor area, 15% must also be set aside for market rental housing. This layered approach ensures new buildings contribute to both more affordable LEMR homes and additional market rental homes, giving residents more long-term renting options as the city grows.

2024

KEEPING RENTS REALISTIC | The City updates how LEMR rent and income limits are calculated so the program stays financially viable for operators who run these homes long term.

Rents are tied to 10% below the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)'s average market rent for Richmond. For tenants in LEMR homes pre-dating this change, rents are updated every year as allowed by the Residential Tenancy Act (RTA). New tenants' rent rates are set at the new CMHC average benchmark.

2025

NEW RULES FOR TENANTS | Council adopts a new policy (Council Policy 5475) covering parking, household assets, and income changes. LEMR tenants must have household assets under \$100,000 to qualify, and building owners may now charge tenants for parking.

This policy also allows for accommodations to be made in instances of short term and non-reoccurring exceedances in a household's income. The purpose is to provide flexibility as one's living circumstances change.