



Brightside resident relocation study

Summary of results



This project took place on the traditional and unceded territory of the x^wməθk^wəy̓əm (Musqueam), skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and selílwitulh (Tseil Waututh) Coast Salish peoples.

A big thank you to all the residents who participated in this study and provided us with valuable insights into the relocation process.

This study was completed thanks to generous funding from the **Community Housing Transformation Centre** and **Vancity Community Foundation**.



Community Housing
Transformation Centre
Centre de transformation
du logement communautaire

Vancity
Community Foundation



Brightside

70+ Years of Building community

Brightside Community Homes Foundation

Brightside Community Homes Foundation is a charitable non-profit housing provider that is currently redeveloping five of its affordable rental housing buildings across four sites in Vancouver. These redevelopments contribute to the organization's goal to double the number of affordable homes it provides over the next 10 years. The four sites will provide nearly 500 homes once completed.

Brightside engaged Happy Cities to conduct a wellbeing study, engaging directly with residents that have recently been relocated as a result of this redevelopment process. Brightside voluntarily chose to conduct this study to evaluate the impact of its relocation process on residents' wellbeing, and share lessons with the wider housing industry on how to improve this process.

Happy Cities is an urban planning, design, and research firm that uses an evidence-based approach to create happier, healthier, more inclusive communities. We harness the science of wellbeing to advise housing providers, municipalities, developers, and organizations around the world on how to design buildings and urban spaces that support people's health and happiness.

Our [Happy Homes](#) research shows how intentional design can reduce social isolation and boost community resilience in buildings, including a toolkit to help housing providers turn wellbeing evidence into action. As part of our housing practice, we advise non-profit housing operators on how to support resident wellbeing throughout all development stages.

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2. Research process
3. Findings
4. Relocation roadmap
5. Key takeaways

Rendering: Brightside Community Homes Foundation



1. Project overview

Photo: Brightside Community Homes Foundation



Background

- Rental and low-income housing stock is rapidly aging and nearing end of life in municipalities across the Lower Mainland. Many of these aging buildings can no longer meet the health and wellbeing needs of their residents.
- Brightside Community Homes Foundation is redeveloping four of its affordable rental housing buildings in Vancouver, to add more affordable units and to better meet the needs of its residents.
- Redevelopment can pose wellbeing challenges, particularly for vulnerable residents who have low incomes or experience barriers to finding appropriate housing.
- There is a need to develop an equitable, wellbeing-centred relocation process.
- Brightside engaged Happy Cities between March and June 2022 to engage with residents that have recently been relocated due to Brightside's redevelopment projects, to study their satisfaction with the relocation process.

Goals

The study had two main goals:

1. Evaluate the impacts of relocation on resident wellbeing

2. Share lessons with the wider housing industry on equitable tenant relocation best practices

Study participation

Age:



Gender:



Household size:



134

residents
engaged

between March and June 2022

Response rates:

45

survey
responses



23

one-on-one
interviews

The relocation sites

- 1** 2924 Venables Street, in Hastings-Sunrise
- 2** 1425 & 1451 East 12th Avenue, in Grandview-Woodland
- 3** 325 & 349 East 6th Avenue, in Mount Pleasant
- 4** 8725 French Street, in Marpole



About Brightside's relocation process

- Brightside has created a Resident Relocation Handbook that goes beyond the City of Vancouver's minimum Tenant Relocation & Protection Policy requirements.
- Brightside offers current residents the opportunity to remain part of the Brightside community if they wish.
- Brightside provides ongoing updates to residents throughout the redevelopment process, to ensure that relocated residents continue to feel like they are part of the Brightside community.
- Brightside employs Resident Relocation Coordinators to:
 - Assist residents through the relocation process by answering questions
 - Help residents find alternative accommodations that maintain affordability
 - Connect residents with support resources

About Brightside's relocation process

As part of its resident relocation policies, Brightside offers:

- **Compensation**

- \$1,000 per household or one month's rent (whichever amount is greater), to cover costs such as mail transfer and other expenses that may arise from relocation.
- Moving and packing services (alternatively, providing the flat rates prescribed by the City of Vancouver's Tenant Relocation and Protection Policy, plus an additional 15 per cent)

- **Right of first refusal**

- Relocated residents will be offered the chance to come back at rents in proportion with their current rent and/or geared to their household income.
- Depends on a resident continuing to meet Brightside's application and income testing requirements.

2. Research process

Photo: Brightside Community Homes Foundation



Research process

1. Survey

Format: Print + online

Language: English, with translation services offered

Compensation: \$20 honorarium

Response rate: 46 survey responses (34% response rate)

2. Interviews

Format: In-person + phone

Language: English, with no translation services requested

Compensation: \$50 honorarium

Response rate: 23 interviews (17% of all residents, or 50% of those who completed the survey).

3. Data analysis and synthesis

- A)** Univariate analysis
- B)** Cross tabs analysis
- C)** Comparison with 2021 Brightside annual survey
- D)** Qualitative analysis

Wellbeing variables

This study measured six key wellbeing variables to understand how relocation impacted residents' health and happiness.

- 1 Trust
- 2 Tenure
- 3 Sense of belonging
- 4 Social connectedness
- 5 Perceived health
- 6 Spatial inclusion

1 Trust

Trust is at the centre of all healthy relationships, and is closely linked to people's sense of safety.

- Residents who trust their landlords, housing operators, and neighbours are more open to communication and conflict resolution.
- Trust impacts people's willingness and ability to engage with others, participate in activities, and ask for help when it's needed.
- Residents who feel they have input over decisions concerning their home generally trust their community more. They are more likely to spend time outside their units, interact with others, and form deeper social relationships.

2 Tenure

Tenure is the amount of time someone stays in their home, building, or community. It is closely linked to affordability.

- Long-term tenure supports wellbeing by allowing people to form greater social bonds and trust with their community.
- People who live in the same building or neighbourhood for a long time report higher life satisfaction, increased interpersonal trust, and a strong sense of belonging.
- A stable community is important for allowing seniors to age in place.

3 Sense of belonging

Feeling welcome and at ease in a home, space, or community can boost mental health.

- People living in high rises, seniors, youth, recent immigrants, single parents, and adults living alone face a higher risk of experiencing low levels of belonging.

4 Social connectedness

People with strong social connections live longer, sleep better, and report feeling happier.

- Regular social interactions support wellbeing, including both casual encounters in the community and deeper relationships with family and friends.
- Relationships with neighbours can bring benefits including financial savings, trust, and resilience, plus shared childcare, recipes, and meals.

5 Perceived health

Feeling healthy is an essential part of feeling happy. Health includes people's mental and physical condition or state.

- A healthy life includes physical activity. For example, people who walk or cycle have lower health and obesity risks than those who do not, and report higher psychological wellbeing.
- Stress is also a major contributor to poor mental and physical health. When people live in homes with views of nature, they are more likely to have positive outlooks on life and feel less stressed.

6 Spatial inclusion

People need safe, comfortable, and equal access to shared building spaces and neighbourhood amenities.

- Well-maintained, comfortable spaces feel safer, encourage people to spend more time there, and increase social encounters.
- Inclusive shared spaces bridge gaps and build trust between neighbours, facilitating interaction among people of various backgrounds, ages, and household sizes.
- Shared spaces should offer something of interest to people of diverse ages, cultural backgrounds, and abilities.

3. Findings

Photo: Brightside Community Homes Foundation



Satisfaction with Brightside's relocation process

Overall, the majority of residents were satisfied with Brightside's relocation process.

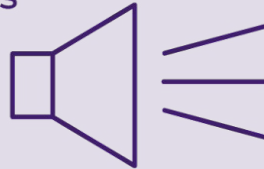
80%

Satisfied or extremely satisfied with the support provided to them by Brightside



80%

Satisfied or extremely satisfied with Brightside's communications during the process



73%

Satisfied or extremely satisfied with the housing choices offered by Brightside



Key trends behind resident satisfaction:

Agreement across categories:

The responses to all three questions were closely linked. With the exception of one person, all residents that selected “satisfied” or “extremely satisfied” in one category were satisfied across all three categories.

Similarly, those who selected “unsatisfied” or “extremely unsatisfied” either were dissatisfied or neutral within the other categories.



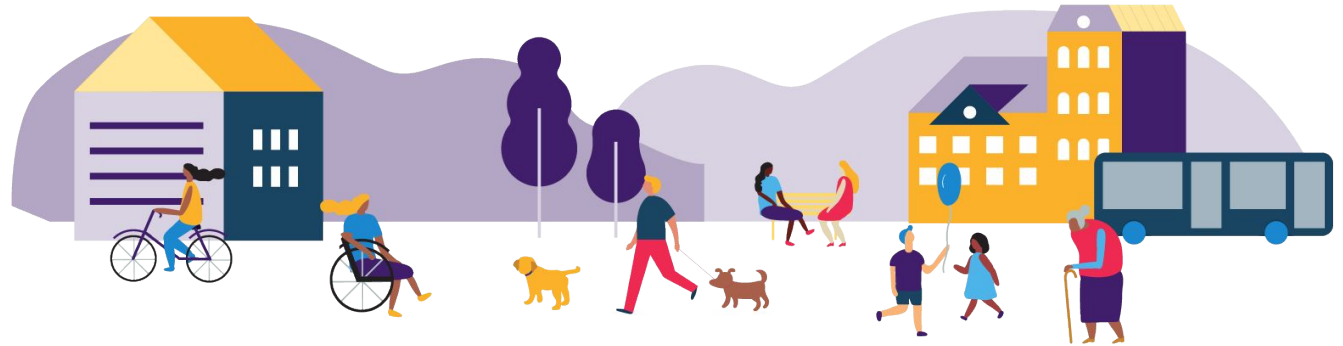
*These findings highlight the importance of understanding residents' individual needs and anticipating impacts **from the start** of the relocation process.*

Factors behind dissatisfaction:

The cross-tab analysis revealed two notable trends among respondents who indicated that they were dissatisfied with the relocation process:

1. These residents were also likely to indicate that their household expenses and commuting time had increased following relocation—two factors that may contribute to dissatisfaction with the move.
2. Contrary to what might be expected, resident dissatisfaction did not necessarily correspond with engaging in few activities, socializing little, or low community trust or health.

Impacts of relocation on wellbeing



1. Trust

Trust is at the centre of all healthy relationships, and is closely linked to people's sense of safety.

Key findings

- Trust is at the heart of people's ability to accept and adapt to a relocation process.
- For many respondents, trust is closely linked to building relationships with staff and neighbours over many years.
- Transparent communication is important to ensure trusting relationships remain intact through the relocation process.

“

Past negative experiences have a huge impact on my ability to trust new neighbours.

Sometimes, it's easier to stay in my own space rather than risk conflict.

— Interview participant

”

1. Trust (continued)

Trust in neighbours:

Two-thirds of respondents indicated that they had more than one neighbour from whom they would ask for a favour.



One-third of respondents indicated that they did not have anyone in the building they would ask for a favour.

Trust in Brightside:

During the interviews, a minority of respondents noted the change in trust between themselves and Brightside as the organization grew to a larger size. For many residents, access to in-person contact from Brightside staff was important to building and maintaining trust.



Trusting relationships with neighbours are particularly important for seniors who may have health and mobility issues, and limited social networks to turn to for help.

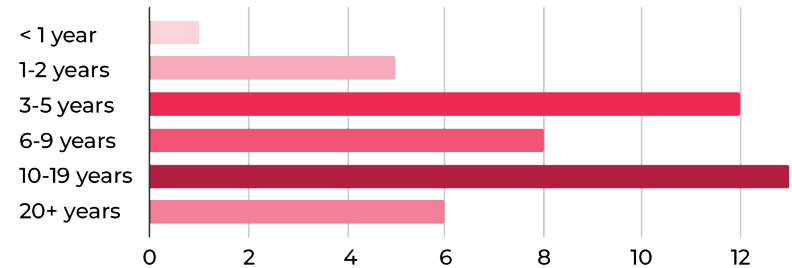
2. Tenure

Long-term tenure supports wellbeing by allowing people to form greater social bonds and trust with their community.

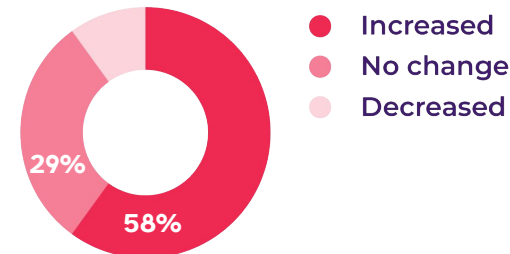
Key findings

- The majority of survey respondents were long-term residents (10+ years) in their home, prior to moving.
- Seniors particularly valued long-term tenure and the ability to age in place. Several respondents noted that they had believed they would live in their previous home (the one they relocated from) until passing away or transitioning into assisted living.
- Affordability is a major issue when moving away from a home where one has been a long-time tenant.
- Cost of rent and utilities were critical factors for residents when choosing where to relocate to.

Length of tenure in previous unit of survey respondents:



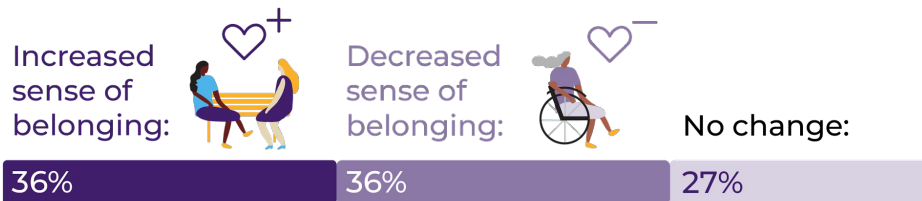
Change in household expenses post-relocation:



3. Sense of belonging

When people feel welcome and at ease in a home, space, or community, it benefits their mental health.

Key findings



“

Social activities at the local community centre have had a really positive impact on my sense of belonging in the new community.

— Interview participant

”

Factors behind an *increased* sense of belonging:

- Residents who relocated with a group of neighbours were generally more satisfied with the relocation process, reported less mental health impacts, and were more resilient through the transition period.
- Residents who moved to a neighbourhood with better amenities, such as community centres, experienced a greater sense of belonging.

Factors behind a *decreased* sense of belonging:

- Residents reported experiencing social isolation due to a lack of relationships with neighbours.
- Residents felt that it takes many years to build a greater sense of belonging.

4. Social connectedness

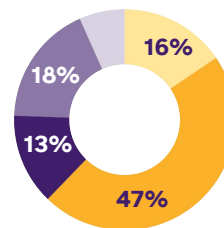
People with strong social connections live longer, sleep better, and report feeling happier.

Key findings

- Of the respondents, 24% would like to know their neighbours better, 46% are unsure, and 29% do not want to get to know their neighbours better.
- There were no statistically significant relationships between social connectedness and satisfaction with the relocation process. However, many participants reported decreased social connection post-relocation.
- Many interview participants described a lack of social community at their current building, reflecting the importance of shared spaces and programming to help people connect.

Connections with friends and family:

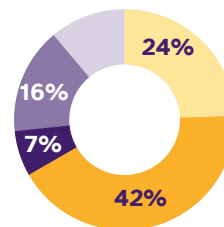
The majority of survey respondents reported having 1-3 close friends.



Number of close friends:

- 0
- 1-3
- 4-6
- +6
- Prefer not to say

Notably, a quarter of respondents don't spend any time with family or friends outside their household.



Time spent with family or friends outside of their household:

- 0 hours
- 1-4 hours
- 5-10 hours
- 10+ hours
- Prefer not to say

4. Social connectedness (continued)

Only 15% of respondents answered that they know many or most of the people in their building.



The majority of respondents (76%) know only a few people in their building.

Nine percent of respondents do not know anyone in their building.

Only 10% of respondents had daily interactions with the neighbours that they know in their building.



The majority of respondents (52%) interacted with neighbours only on a weekly or monthly basis.

A third of respondents interacted with neighbours once per month or less, while 5% never interact with neighbours.



When compared to general Brightside residents, relocated residents were less likely to know people in their building, less willing to meet their neighbours, less likely to talk to their neighbours, and had fewer close friends.

4. Social connectedness (continued)

Decreases in social connection post-relocation:

We surveyed respondents on how their social habits have changed since relocating to their current building:

30%

noted a decrease in interactions with neighbours, like saying hello, chatting, and doing activities together.

25%

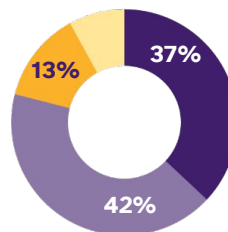
noted a decrease in time spent with family and friends.

8%

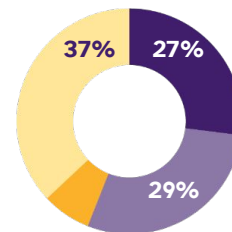
had neither close friends nor neighbours that they trusted in their new building, indicating a higher risk of experiencing social isolation.

Post-relocation survey responses: Changes in frequency that a resident...

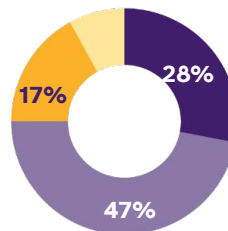
Had conversations with another resident in their building:



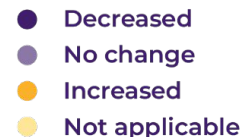
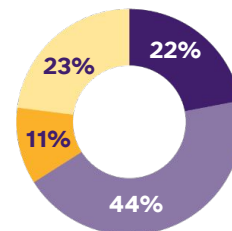
Met a neighbour to do activities:



Said hello to a neighbour:



Saw family or friends:



4. Social connectedness (continued)

Barriers to connecting with neighbours:

Interview participants highlighted reasons for not wanting to meet their neighbours, or not feeling comfortable meeting neighbours, including:

- Lack of trust
- Past experiences of trauma, stigma, or conflict with neighbours
- The perception that one does not have anything in common with one's neighbour
- Preferring to keep to oneself
- Being already satisfied with social connections through work, volunteering, or friends and family
- Health concerns, due to challenges including COVID-19 and bedbugs

Key items for enabling social connectedness with neighbours:

Survey respondents highlighted the importance of the following items for facilitating connections with neighbours:

- Central building amenities
- Community gardens
- Social programming

“

I don't know many of my neighbours and we don't get together socially. It's hard because there's no social space in this building to meet people. It would be great to have barbecues and luncheons to get to know my neighbours better.

— Interview participant

”

5. Perceived health

Feeling healthy is an essential part of feeling happy. Health encompasses both people's mental and physical condition or state.

Key findings

- Interestingly, relocated residents reported being in better health than general Brightside residents, despite several residents in our study reporting mental and physical health impacts from the relocation process.
- However, relocated residents' happiness was more variable than the general Brightside population, indicating that the relocation process did have a significant impact on wellbeing overall.



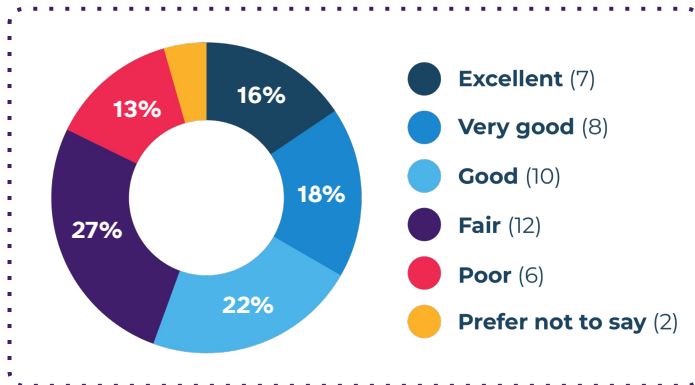
When compared to general Brightside residents (data from 2021 Annual Survey), relocated residents were more likely to rate themselves as 'happy' or 'unhappy'. This finding suggests that respondents either felt positively or negatively about the relocation process, but rarely neutral. As a result, there is no evidence that one group is uniquely happier than the other.



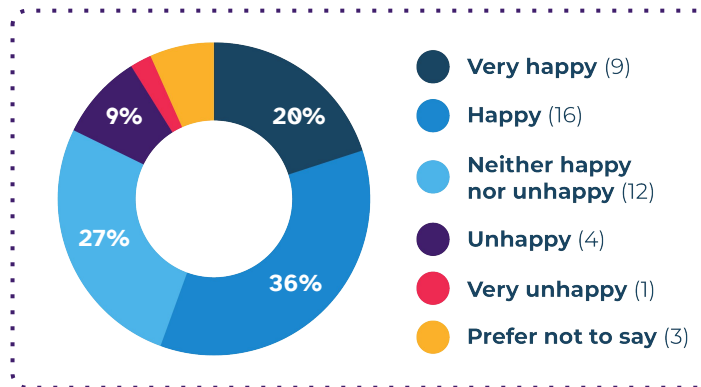
Some respondents who were experiencing health or personal challenges at the time of the relocation process—which also took place during the COVID-19 pandemic—reported long-term impacts on their mental and emotional wellbeing.

5. Perceived health (continued)

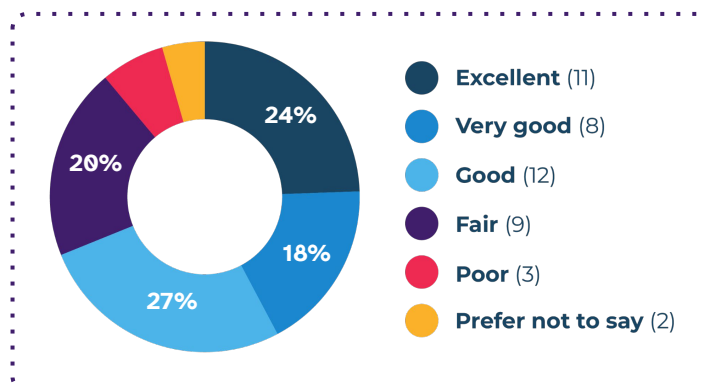
Physical health of survey respondents:



Perceived happiness of survey respondents:



Mental health of survey respondents:



5. Perceived health (continued)

Understanding the impacts of relocation on health:

- 55% of interview participants reported negative health impacts for reasons including:
 - Social isolation
 - Ongoing chronic health issues
 - Physical strain due to relocation
 - Confusion and anxiety adapting to a new area
 - Lack of communication and support
 - Health and safety concerns in their new home (including bedbugs, COVID-19, fear for personal safety, and increased exposure to noise)
- 27% reported minimal negative health impacts or a temporary inconvenience due to anxiety during the moving process
- 18% reported positive impacts on their physical or mental health, explaining that their new neighbourhood better meets their needs

“

It's hard to separate the health impacts from the relocation from the impacts due to COVID-19 and other challenges happening in my life. Overall, trying to adjust to new surroundings and a new location has added anxiety and overall stress, which has impacted my health issues.

— Interview participant

”

6. Spatial inclusion

People need safe, comfortable, and equal access to shared building spaces and neighbourhood amenities for residents.

Key findings

- Generally, respondents were satisfied with the ease of access to various amenities in their new neighbourhoods.
- The majority reported either no change or increased visitation to nearby neighbourhood amenities after relocation, and no change in visits to shared indoor or outdoor building amenities.
- However, residents noted barriers to accessing building amenities in their new homes, most notably due to COVID-19 or bedbugs. Many were interested in using the amenities in their building more.



Although COVID-19 and bedbugs are not necessarily a consequence of relocation, addressing these challenges is essential to helping residents feel comfortable and safe in a new home.



Relocated residents expressed a strong desire for spaces to spend time outside and/or socialize with others.

Access to neighbourhood amenities:

The majority of respondents indicated no change in visits to:

- Neighbours' houses
- Libraries
- Churches and places of worship
- Health clinics

Positively, the majority of residents reported an increase in visits to:

- Parks and plazas
- Community centres
- Restaurants and cafés

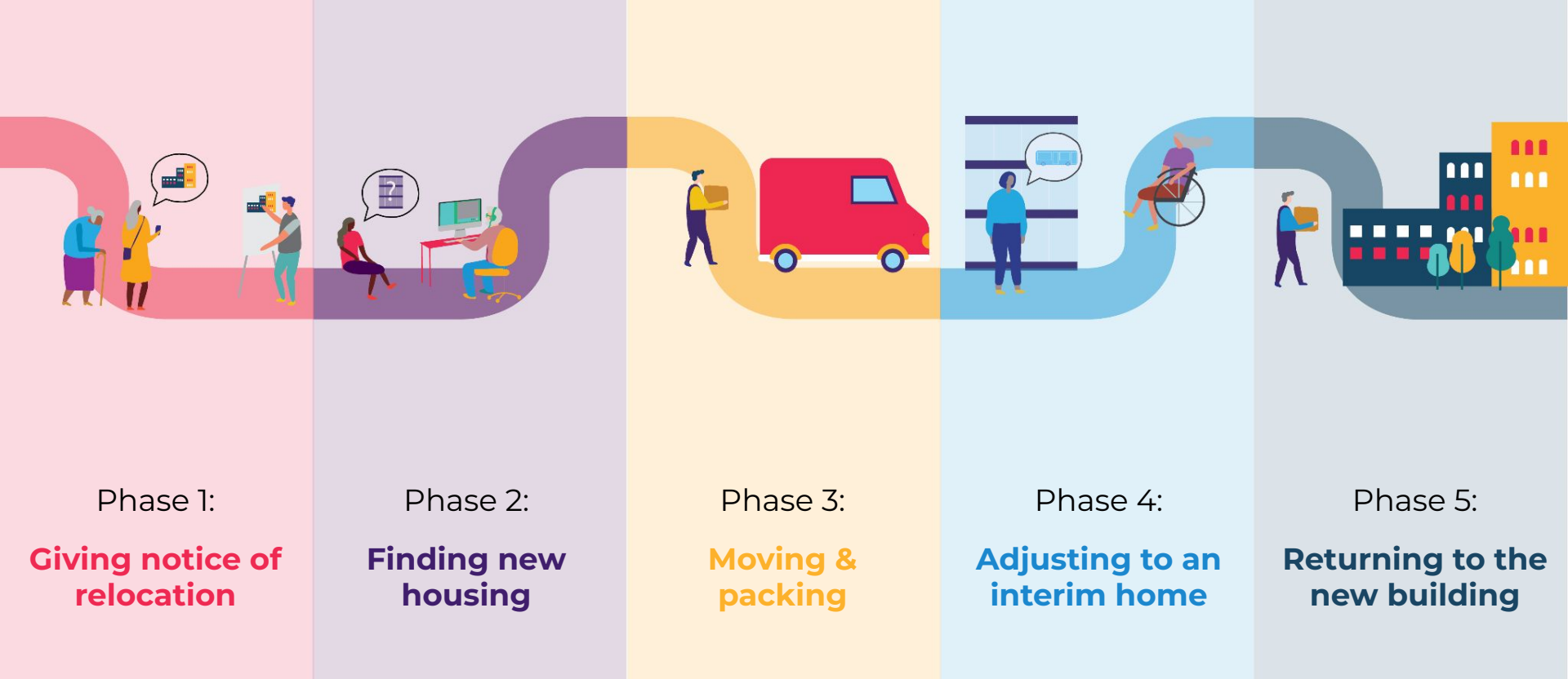
These results suggest respondents were, in general, satisfied—or, at least, not unsatisfied—with the ease of access to different urban amenities in their new communities.

4. Wellbeing-focused resident relocation roadmap

Based on feedback from residents and results from the wellbeing study, Happy Cities developed a Wellbeing-focused Tenant Relocation Roadmap for Brightside, outlining five key phases of relocation. Each phase includes several recommendations for supporting residents' wellbeing throughout the entire relocation process, up until the new building is completely redeveloped.

For more information on the Relocation Roadmap, please contact:

info@happycities.com



Wellbeing-focused resident relocation roadmap

5. Key takeaways

Photo: Brightside Community Homes Foundation



Learnings for the housing industry

A case study for an equity-based tenant relocation process:

- Relocation has significant impacts on resident wellbeing through all six variables measured
- Insights on resident relocation best practices for stakeholders across the housing sector, including:
 - Landlords of rental and affordable housing
 - Tenant advocacy organizations
 - Community service organizations
 - Developers
 - Municipalities
 - Non-profit housing operators
- Defining and establishing an equitable, wellbeing-focused relocation process is essential to support vulnerable residents, including seniors, low-income families, newcomers, and people with mental or physical disabilities.

Additional learnings

Open communication channels between tenants and landlords

- Best practices need to draw on the lived experience of residents.
- To collect data, establish transparent and low-barrier communication channels between tenants and housing providers from the outset of the relocation process.
- During this study, residents expressed appreciation for the opportunity to provide feedback, and were pleased that someone was documenting their experience.

Opportunities for further research

- Collecting data is essential to understanding the wellbeing impacts of relocation policies.
- Non-profit organizations such as Brightside can document and share relocation successes and challenges with the wider industry.
- By increasing their own resident relocation standards, housing providers can set the stage for municipalities to adopt similar tenant relocation policies and protections.



Providing financial compensation to residents who participate in research is crucial. In addition, sharing results from the study back with residents can help build trust, by showing how their comments have been considered.