

# HOW TO MAKE VANCOUVER MORE AFFORDABLE? LOOK TO TEXAS

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**V**ancouver's growing housing costs are outstripping income increases in the city.

There's no single, easy to spot cause for Vancouver's growing housing costs. Low interest rates, population growth, and the region's liveability encourage demand. But one factor—constraints on the housing supply—is often overlooked. Vancouver's geography and a substantial amount of protected agricultural land stop the city from growing out, while red tape at city hall makes growing up difficult as well.

In Vancouver, it takes an average of 15 months to get a residential development approved—nearly five months longer than in neighbouring Burnaby. The costs of complying with regulations and development fees add up to an average of more than \$37,000 per new home in Vancouver, while in Burnaby this cost averages at \$17,500. Opposition to new housing

from local council and community groups also deters homebuilders, raising questions about the city hall's priorities as housing affordability is a growing concern.

So what's to be done?

Other growing cities offer important lessons for Vancouver. Houston, one of the fastest growing cities in the United States, issued more building permits between 2010 and 2014 than any other metro area in America. As a result, the region remained affordable to middle-class families during its oil-fuelled growth spurt.

Houston's loose land-use policies and absence of traditional zoning allow the city to grow rapidly as its economy evolves. Houston developers can add density to inner-city neighbourhoods without facing a long and costly rezoning process. Meanwhile, more than two-thirds of new housing in Vancouver requires rezoning, which adds an average of



**THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN THE FRASER FORUM ON MAY 4, 2016**

6.5 months to the approval process. Doing without this layer of regulation creates a capacity for growth that helps maintain Houston’s affordability, and offers lessons for any city expecting to grow.

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Vancouver is internationally known for two things: world-class quality of life and unaffordable housing. Municipal policies play a role in maintaining both of these titles. Vancouver can learn from its peers on the world stage who benefit from reduced red tape, which ultimately lowers housing costs. That would be good news for many Vancouver-area families. 

Read the blog post here [»»](#)



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