

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



CONNECT & PREPARE

SCALING PILOT

LEARNING REPORT

About the Scaling Pilot

Through its partnership with Hey Neighbour Collective, from 2022 to 2023, Building Resilient Neighbourhoods (BRN) helped to bring Connect & Prepare to three new BC municipalities, in collaboration with resident champions, housing operators, local government emergency management and community planning staff, and non-profit organizations. This was a scaling pilot – an attempt to test ways to broaden the reach of the program to more communities and to deepen impact by focusing on reaching more vulnerable or socially isolated residents. Partners in North Vancouver, New Westminister, and Vancouver-Mount Pleasant concurrently implemented localized versions of the Connect & Prepare program in their communities. The shared goals that guided this collaborative work were to:

Shared Goals:

- Strengthen emergency preparedness, intergenerational neighbourly connections, and community resilience in multi-unit housing that includes high percentages of residents who are seniors, with a particular emphasis on low-income rental buildings and resident-groups known to have higher levels of vulnerability to social isolation, extreme heat, and other chronic stresses and acute emergencies.
- Implement and evaluate the Connect & Prepare program to test its success when led by different people and organizations in different social contexts.

Partners in the Connect & Prepare Scaling Pilot included:



Mount Pleasant
Neighbourhood House



NS^{EM}



NEW WESTMINSTER



HEY
NEIGHBOUR!
Collective

city
of north
vancouver



What did we do?

Across Communities (by the numbers)

3

Scaling Pilot Communities

- North Vancouver
- New Westminster
- Vancouver - Mount Pleasant

10

Multi-unit Buildings

7

Non-profit Rentals

3

Market Rentals

3 high-rise (>7 floors)
5 low-rise (<7 floors)
1 low-rise (<4 floors)
1 multi-plex

100%

of **Housing Operators** would recommend the program to other housing operators.¹

95%

of **Residents** would recommend the program to a friend, or relative who lives in multi-unit housing.²

100%

of **Scaling Pilot Partners** connected to populations they wanted to reach, and expanded the reach of their services or programs.³

Resident Impacts

Residents reported the program contributed to neighbours:

97%

better understanding strengths, assets & vulnerabilities in their buildings.

95%

getting to know each other.

95%

becoming more connected with each other.

80%

sharing knowledge, skills, or resources.

86%

taking action to build long-term resilience, and be better prepared for an emergency.²

25+

Connect & Prepare Workshops

80+

Participants

15+

Connect & Prepare Resident-led projects

1. Based on a survey completed by housing operators from 7/10 sites.

2. Based on a survey completed by 56% of program participants.

3. Based on a survey completed by 10 program partners.

Community Activities & Impacts

MP

Vancouver - Mount Pleasant

Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House and the City of Vancouver's Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction Team brought Connect & Prepare to more than 40 residents across 4 buildings in Vancouver-Mount Pleasant. Neighbour groups engaged in activities like hosting gatherings of residents, surveying neighbours' interests, and buying and storing shared emergency supplies. Of the residents who completed the final survey, 96% felt more connected to their neighbours and 80% felt more prepared to take collective action in an emergency.

NW

New Westminster

Seniors Services Society of BC and the City of New Westminister Community Planning Division and Emergency Management Office brought Connect & Prepare to more than 30 residents across three buildings in New Westminister. Neighbour-groups engaged in activities like hosting potlucks for residents, updating neighbour contact lists, and distributing Grab & Go Emergency Kits. Of the residents who completed the final survey, 100% felt more connected to their neighbours and 100% felt more prepared to take collective action in an emergency.

NV

North Vancouver

North Shore Community Resources, Silver Harbour Centre, Lionsview Seniors' Planning, North Shore Emergency Management, and the City of North Vancouver's Planning Department brought Connect & Prepare to more than 30 residents across 3 buildings in North Vancouver. Neighbour-groups engaged in activities like purchasing and storing shared emergency supplies, distributing Grab & Go Emergency Kits, writing their own preparedness guide, and establishing a social committee and floor-connector system. Of residents who completed the final survey, 100% felt more connected to their neighbours and 83% felt more prepared to take collective action in an emergency.

To read more about activities in the other scaling pilot communities along with more detailed learnings and action planning, **see the complete *Scaling Pilot Learning Report on the Building Resilient Neighbourhoods* website.**

What did we learn and achieve?

Resilient Residents



IMPACT:

Through participating in Connect & Prepare, residents strengthened their social connections, shared leadership, emergency preparedness, and resilience.

LEARNINGS: Key Catalyzing Factors

- Supporting the development of resident leaders and champions enhanced collective resilience.
- In safe, well-facilitated environments, deeper social connections and emotional resilience spontaneously emerged.
- Access to ongoing support and community resources increased resident resilience and the likelihood of more long-term, resident-led activities and projects.



Lessons for Action:

1

To maximize long-term impacts, cultivate and support resident leadership to emerge through the Connect & Prepare process.

2

Enhance the possibility of greater group cohesion by providing skilled facilitators who can bring a trauma-informed lens to supporting deeper discussions as they arise.

3

Allow flexible time, especially for residents with more vulnerabilities or disabilities, to accommodate open group conversations about residents' concerns and interests.

4

Create opportunities for neighbour-group leaders to get ongoing supports from workshop facilitators, partners, and/or a "Champions Network" community of practice.



Supportive Housing Operators



IMPACT:

Engaged and supportive housing operators helped significantly increase the effectiveness of the Connect & Prepare program for residents and community partners, and housing operators themselves in turn experienced positive benefits.

LEARNINGS: Key Catalyzing Factors

- Support from housing operators increased resident engagement and the likelihood of successful projects.
- Connect & Prepare has the potential to strengthen positive connections between housing operators and residents.
- Housing operators benefited from increased resident leadership, social connections, emergency preparedness, and resilience.



Lessons for Action:

1

Liaise with housing operators ahead of time to maximize the potential impacts of Connect & Prepare.

2

Be aware that the pre-existing relationship history between a housing operator and the building residents may either promote or hinder resident engagement and leadership, and seek ways to maximize constructive impacts.

3

Ensure positive experiences for both resident-groups and housing operators by discussing the optimal role for the housing operators in the Connect & Prepare program ahead of time.

4

Take advantage of opportunities to integrate discussions of emergency preparedness with some of the common concerns in buildings, such as smoke-detector maintenance and reporting water leaks.



Residents participating in a Connect & Prepare workshop in New Westminster. Photo provided by Seniors Services Society of BC.

Partners Working Together



IMPACT:

Connect & Prepare helped community-based organizations and municipal government staff connect with “harder-to-reach” residents, while these residents benefited from greater shared resilience and awareness of and access to community services and supports.

LEARNINGS: Key Catalyzing Factors

- The Connect & Prepare partnership approach helped deliver the program and expand impacts.
- By coming into buildings to deliver the program, partners expanded their own community outreach and increased the diversity of participation in Connect & Prepare.
- Offering Connect & Prepare as part of an integrated suite of approaches, programs, services, and supports enhanced resident engagement and overall program impacts.
- The adaptability of Connect & Prepare to different partner and resident contexts was crucial for ensuring successful delivery.
- Connect & Prepare contributed to broader civic engagement and developments in municipal policies in relation to neighbourly connections.



Lessons for Action:

1

Continue to seek community-based partnerships to help deliver Connect & Prepare and connect participants with local resources.

2

Enhance the Connect & Prepare training, materials, and supports provided to partners, to emphasize still greater flexibility and adaptability of the core model for different contexts.

3

Encourage partners to incorporate Connect & Prepare into their existing suite of programs, services, and approaches.



Moving Forward with Connect & Prepare

One of the main goals of the scaling pilot was to identify strategic ideas for broadening reach and deepening impacts of Connect & Prepare. The following three priority actions will guide further scaling and development of the program moving forward:

1 Expand the Range of Options and Adaptability of Connect & Prepare

Expand the repository of Connect & Prepare resources, supports, and tools, including more do-it-yourself and “plug and play” modules addressing different content, activities, and resident interests. These tools evolve most effectively in consultation with partners, resident groups, or in a facilitated “champions network” or peer learning environment.

2 Cultivate More Partnerships

Continue working with existing partners who have already made investments and developed skills for delivering Connect & Prepare, and develop new partnerships that can integrate Connect & Prepare into the larger suite of activities for which these government agencies, housing operators, or community organizations are already resourced. These kinds of partnerships not only create efficiencies but also enhance learning, innovation, and impacts.

3 Encourage Policy Changes and New Funding Approaches

Work more proactively with local governments, funders, community organizations, and housing operators to improve understanding of, and develop strong policies for supporting resident connections and shared resilience, especially for those residents who tend to be most negatively affected by chronic stressors and acute emergencies.

