

BC Assessment

Property Photo Update Initiative – Surrey, White Rock, City of North Vancouver

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why is it necessary for BC Assessment to take photos of properties?

BC Assessment's mandate is to ensure that all properties in British Columbia are accurately, fairly and equitably assessed. To keep our information up to date, we periodically take front perspective and aerial photographs, visit property owners and conduct residential questionnaire campaigns in which owners complete a form that asks a number of questions about their property, such as number of bedrooms and bathrooms and building dimensions.

Q. What's so different about this photo update initiative?

Instead of appraisers walking from house to house to inspect properties and take photos, we have contracted a private company, Yotta MVS, Inc., to update property assessment-related information using digital camera equipment mounted inside a van.

Q. What's the purpose of this initiative?

BC Assessment is employing this method to more efficiently and cost effectively update our ever-increasing inventory of properties (BC Assessment currently values almost two million properties throughout the province).

Q. How many properties in Surrey, White Rock and the City of North Vancouver are involved in this project?

There are about 84,000 homes in Surrey, 3,800 homes in White Rock and 5,500 homes in the City of North Vancouver.

Q. Has this been done elsewhere in the province?

This initiative was tested last year in Nanaimo and in the Districts of North and West Vancouver.

Q: How often will BC Assessment do this in my neighbourhood?

This is the only residential property photo update initiative currently planned for Surrey, White Rock and the City of North Vancouver.

Q: How are the pictures taken?

A white van containing state-of-the-art digital camera equipment will stop in front of every home in Surrey, White Rock and the City of North Vancouver and take a photo of each residence. Photos will only be taken from the street.

Q: Will the mobile photo van be marked with any kind of identifying signage?

Magnetic signs on both sides of the van will read: BC Assessment, Property Photo Update Initiative.

Q. How will you ensure that the pictures don't include any information unrelated to the property?

BC Assessment's contractor, Yotta MVS, Inc., is under a contractual obligation not to photograph any personal information related to:

- images of people on the property, including partial images comprised of portions of faces and/or bodies;
- visible signage on a residence (excluding civic number), including political signage, business signs, signs with the names of the people living at that property, plaques and any other type of signage that may relate to the identity of a person;
- views of the interior of the residential improvements which are normally enclosed (eg. images that show the inside of a home via a window or open doorway, or the interior of an enclosed vehicle shelter such as a garage)

Q. What do you do with the pictures?

The pictures will be used by BC Assessment to provide more accurate residential property assessments. As well, property owners who appeal their assessment can request information on comparable sales which would include the new pictures. Comparable sales information has always included photos.

Q. Will my property taxes change as a result of this initiative?

Not necessarily. The City of Surrey, the City of White Rock and the City of North Vancouver (which are your taxation jurisdictions) set the property tax rates, not BC Assessment. BC Assessment determines the market value of properties and it is these assessments that then form the basis of an equitable tax distribution amongst properties.

Q. Will I face repercussions from the City of Surrey, City of White Rock or the City of North Vancouver if I have made changes to my home without a permit and you record it in a photograph?

BC Assessment has no information about actions that these jurisdictions may take, but please be assured that the image in the photograph is taken from the public street. If the changes to your home are visible from the street, the district may already be aware of them. If the changes are not visible from the street, then the photograph will not show the changes.