

Property Photo Update Initiative (Nanaimo) 2009

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 testing this method as a possible way to more efficiently and cost effectively update our ever-increasing inventory of properties (BC Assessment currently values almost two million properties throughout the province). This Nanaimo property photo update initiative is a test of how well and how quickly we can update our residential inventory.

Q. How many Nanaimo properties are involved in this project?

About 27,000 homes—all residences inside Nanaimo's city limits. See attached map.

Q. Why did you choose Nanaimo?

- The city contains a wide range of different kinds of homes, which will enable BC Assessment to most accurately determine the length of time it takes to reassess every kind of residential property.
- The high quality of Nanaimo's electronic data related to residential permits supports BC Assessment's standards.
- The city has excellent geographic information systems (GIS) imagery on hand which supports and is compatible with the technologies we're testing

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

This is the only residential property photo update Initiative currently planned for Nanaimo.

Q: Will BCA be expanding this initiative to other areas of the province?

We will need to examine our results of the Nanaimo initiative before deciding whether to expand this method of updating our property photos elsewhere in the province.

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 Nanaimo 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, 250-753-6621

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 parts 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?

No. This street-front photo initiative will help BC Assessment to maintain a more accurate, equitable assessment roll which will result in a more fair distribution of property taxes.

Q. Will I face repercussions from the City of Nanaimo if I have made changes to my home without a permit and you record it in a photograph?

The data we collect becomes part of our assessment roll records and this information is available to taxing jurisdictions upon request.

Area of Work

Assessment Area 240 – Nanaimo

