

**Edmonton Area Community Plan
on Housing and Supports: 2011– 2015**

Acknowledgements

The development of this Community Plan was made possible through the participation of the Community Plan Committee and the hundreds of individuals who participated in the consultation process.

The contributors from the Community Plan Committee were:

Alex Abboud, Homeward Trust Edmonton
Alex Sawchuk, Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta
Angela Carifelle, Wicahitowin Secretariat
Beverly Allard, Representative of Homeward Trust's Aboriginal Advisory Council
Bryan Kapitzka, Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues
Cam McDonald, Representative of the Inner City Executive Directors
Daryl Kreuzer, City of Edmonton
Dave Ward, Homeward Trust Edmonton
Debbie Halverson, Alberta Health Services
Debbie Houle, Wicahitowin Secretariat
Giri Puligandla, Homeward Trust Edmonton
Jay Freeman, Edmonton Homeless Commission
Jenny Getzinger, Service Canada
Jill Kelland, Alberta Health Services
Kate McIver, Service Canada
Kathy Landry, Alberta Health Services
Keily Soobiah, Service Canada
Kelly Wagar, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
Kris Knutson, The Mustard Seed
Kyla Fisher, Homeward Trust Edmonton
Lorette Garrick, Representative of the Inner City Executive Directors
Lyndsay MacKenzie, City of Edmonton
Marie-Josée Cloutier, Service Canada
Norma Chitrena, Human Services, Government of Alberta
Norma Giroux, Representative of Homeward Trust's Aboriginal Advisory Council
Pamela Spurvey, Edmonton Drug Treatment and Community Restoration Court
Roberto Peterson, Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness
Susan McGee, Homeward Trust Edmonton
Susan Sarrasin, Capital Region Housing Corporation
Tim Howard, Canadian Home Builders Association- Edmonton Region
Walter Trocenko, City of Edmonton

The firms Nichols Applied Management Inc. and Soles and Company assisted with the development of this plan.

Thank you to the hundreds of individuals and organizations that participated in the development of this plan, especially as part of the consultation process. Without these contributions, the plan would not truly represent the views and needs of the community.

Funded by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy. The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

Canada

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Executive Summary

Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports: 2011 – 2015

Executive Summary

Introduction

Housing is a foundation for individual and family safety, security and stability. While the Edmonton area is widely regarded as one of the most livable and affordable metropolitan regions in the country, thousands of people in Edmonton and other municipalities in the region struggle to find and keep adequate, affordable housing. It is estimated that there are approximately 47,000 households in the Edmonton area that are paying too much for their housing relative to their incomes or living in housing that is not suitable for their needs or in need of major repairs. The shortage of affordable housing in the Edmonton area not only places considerable stress on many households, it also detracts from the quality of life the region offers and constrains the region's competitiveness in attracting people to support its growing economy.

A portion of those in the community facing challenges finding and keeping suitable, affordable housing are homeless. Although considerable progress has been made in reducing the incidence of homelessness in Edmonton in recent years, there are still many in the community without homes. The most recent homeless count in Edmonton conducted in Fall 2010 identified 2,421 homeless individuals. Although the decline of 600 from the homeless count two years earlier is worthy of celebration, the community is committed to drive this number down further. Both *A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 Years*, the Government of Alberta's ten year plan to end homelessness and *A Place to Call Home*, Edmonton's ten year plan to end homelessness, have the goal of ending homelessness by 2019.

There is a strong tradition of community-based planning around issues of affordable housing and homelessness in Edmonton and the community is recognized for its leadership in collaborative action on these issues. The Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports: 2011-2015 is the third community plan to be developed by the community over the past decade. However, it is the first community plan to address housing and support needs in the broader Edmonton area, which includes not only the City of Edmonton, but also the other municipalities in the region.

A Plan to Address Priority Housing and Support Needs in the Edmonton Area

The population of the Edmonton area is growing. It is forecasted that by 2015 the region's population will be approximately 1,236,500, about 77,800 more than today. There are also some important shifts occurring in the region's demographics that affect housing and support needs in the community. The number of residents who are seniors is increasing, Aboriginal people are moving to the community in increasing numbers, and the community's immigrant population and cultural diversity are increasing.

The policy environment for housing and supports in the community has also shifted. The community has embraced the housing first approach to ending homelessness, with a focus on the rapid movement of homeless individuals and families into permanent housing, and then providing them with the supports they need to restore their stability and maintain their housing.

Ensuring our growing and diverse community has suitable, affordable housing and supports for all residents is complex. It requires strong

commitment and focused collaborative action on the part of governments, housing providers, management bodies, community organizations, businesses, and citizens.

The Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports: 2011-2015 outlines what the community intends to do to respond to priority housing and support needs in the Edmonton area for the next five years and strengthen the information base upon which funding, implementation and future planning decisions are made.

This plan is the product of a very collaborative, community-driven process. Its development was guided by a Community Plan Committee made up of representatives of a diverse group of public, non-profit, industry and community organizations, and informed by an extensive community consultation process that engaged over 350 people with a broad range of perspectives.

The vision guiding the development of this plan is that community partners work together so every person in the Edmonton area has the opportunity to live in a home that is:

- affordable;
- safe;
- adequate and suitable to their needs; and,
- situated in an area with access to supports that allow them to stay in their home and enjoy a good quality of life.

The Community Plan Committee is confident that through focused, collaborative action, this vision will become a reality.

The adoption of the housing first approach to ending homelessness in the community has fundamentally shifted how housing and

support needs are viewed and delivered in the community. To reflect this shift and frame the analysis done to support the development of this plan, a new housing and support framework has been developed. The framework distinguishes between non-market housing (i.e., housing constructed and/or operated with some financial subsidization) and market housing (i.e., housing constructed and/or operated with no financial subsidization). Within the non-market housing category, there is further categorization by expected length of tenure, type of housing and associated supports.

The analysis of current and future housing and support needs in the community identified the following gaps requiring action over the next five years. Descriptions of the different housing and support categories can be found in the glossary in Appendix A.

Housing and Support Category	Current Gap	Forecasted Gap
Short Term Accommodation	1,300	1,300
Permanent Supportive Housing	2,100	1,150
Supported Housing	3,000	2,000
Affordable Housing	19,000+	22,000

All of these gaps are of concern, and all call for collaborative action from the community, with funding support from both the provincial and federal governments.

Through the consultation process and the Community Plan Committee's work, five factors were identified as foundations for the success of this plan. These are:

- Collaboration, dialogue, and engagement;
- Enhanced strength of sector and use of resources;
- Effective monitoring and evaluation;
- Community and region-wide inclusion; and,
- Harm reduction and client choice.

This plan has five key areas of focus, and establishes goals for each. Implementation strategies to guide the community in taking action to achieve the plan's goals are outlined in Section 4.2.

FOCUS AREA: HOUSING SUPPLY

Goals:

1. Increase opportunities for home-ownership and equity building for low-income families
2. Increase the supply of market and non-market rental units that are suitable, adequate, accessible, and affordable
3. Restore and adapt the existing stock of non-market housing to make facilities and units suitable, adequate, and accessible
4. Acquire and commit land for future non-market housing developments
5. Develop short-term and flexible approaches to increase the affordability of housing for people in need
6. Develop a balanced approach for both building new units, as well as buying existing stock, in order to meet the overall needs of those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness

7. Engage neighbourhoods and communities in achieving positive outcomes for housing and service delivery across the region
8. Mobilize underutilized non-market housing units to address system gaps

FOCUS AREA: SHORT-TERM AND PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Goals:

1. Create more interim and permanent supportive housing units for those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness
2. Address the needs of vulnerable populations that do not have access to transitional, interim, or permanent supportive housing
3. Increase housing and culturally appropriate support services for Edmonton's increasing Aboriginal population
4. Collaborate with government bodies to ensure regulatory measures do not prevent the creation of further permanent supportive housing

FOCUS AREA: SUPPORT SERVICES

Goals:

1. Increase accessibility of information, resources, and access points for housing and support services
2. Develop a coordinated approach to appropriately match people to the range of housing and support services available in the region
3. Improve access to treatment, continuing care, and managed transition from institutional care
4. Increase housing and culturally appropriate support services for Edmonton's increasing Aboriginal population

FOCUS AREA: PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Goals:

1. Develop early intervention services to prevent homelessness or harm resulting from crises or emergency situations
2. Enhance and coordinate outreach programs to connect people to housing and support services
3. Support and implement initiatives that prevent homelessness and/or remove barriers to accessing housing
4. Enhance rapid exit and re-housing programs to improve timeliness of access to housing and support services

FOCUS AREA: CAPACITY BUILDING AND EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

Goals:

1. Increase the capacity of the non-profit sector to develop and/or maintain non-market housing units and deliver a range of support services for people
2. Increase systems-level planning and information exchange that includes government, the non-profit sector, and the private sector
3. Conduct research and data analysis to determine the best practices for intervention and prevention responses for people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness
4. Promote knowledge sharing and evidence-based decision-making across the housing sector

This Plan will play an important role in supporting and complementing many municipal, regional, provincial, and federal plans, initiatives, and policy objectives.

The development of this plan, while a significant accomplishment, is only a beginning. We will continue to collaborate in developing detailed plans for accomplishing the Plan's ambitious goals. We will also be vigilant about monitoring our progress toward achieving these goals.

This Plan will be adjusted as needed if circumstances change or new information becomes available to ensure we are responding appropriately to housing and support needs in our community over the next five years.

1. Introduction

1. Introduction

1.1 The Community's Plan

Housing is a foundation for individual and family safety, security and stability. Suitable, affordable housing helps people to be able to thrive; to be able to pursue their dreams and goals without worrying about whether they will be able to pay their rent the next month, or have a place to sleep the next night. Ensuring a growing and diverse community has suitable, affordable housing and supports for its residents is complex. It requires strong commitment and focused, collaborative action on the part of governments, housing providers, management bodies, community organizations, businesses and citizens. The Edmonton area is fortunate to have many individuals and organizations, and all orders of government, strongly committed to ensuring suitable, affordable housing and supports are available in the community.

The community has a long history of collaboration to address housing issues, with strong leadership both within government and the community. Collaboration has been an underpinning of community planning to address housing and support needs over the years, and more recently, contributing to the development of both the Province of Alberta's and City of Edmonton's ten year plans to end homelessness. Through its collaborative planning efforts, the community has seen what it can accomplish when it comes together to pursue shared goals and priorities.

The Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports: 2011-2015 outlines what the community intends to do to meet

“The Community Plan is the product of a very collaborative, community-driven process...made up of representatives of a diverse group of public, non-profit, industry and community organizations.”

non-market housing and support needs in Edmonton and the surrounding area for the next five years, and strengthen the information base upon which funding, implementation and future planning decisions are made.

The *Community Plan* is the product of a very collaborative, community-driven process. A Community Plan Committee made up of representatives of a diverse group of public, non-profit, industry and community organizations guided its development. The Committee's work was informed by an extensive community consultation process that engaged over 350 people spanning a wide range of demographics and interests, including youth, seniors, newcomers to Canada, members of the Aboriginal community, people fleeing violence or sexual exploitation, those leaving institutions, people experiencing complex behaviors, people experiencing homelessness, agencies serving people in need, builders, developers, realtors, community leagues, and others.

1.2 Purpose

The Community Plan:

- Defines a new Housing and Support Framework and identifies existing and projected gaps in the availability of different types of housing and supports;
- Identifies the goals and implementation strategies the community intends to pursue over the next five years;
- Endeavors to link together various housing and support service initiatives and projects in the community;
- Encourages collaborative effort on the part of all orders of government, including Aboriginal governments, the non-profit sector and the private sector to achieve the identified goals;
- Provides information about the many people in the Edmonton area who are struggling to find and stay in affordable, safe, suitable and adequate housing and the diversity of need within the community;
- Identifies groups that are significantly more likely to require housing and support services;
- Highlights the important role that housing and supports play in improving the health and well-being of residents, the quality of life the community offers, and the economic prosperity of individuals, families and the community;
- Identifies how housing and supports are integral to the achievement of outcomes identified in many government plans and strategies for health care, labor market development, economic competitiveness, education and training, livability, land use, transportation, and neighborhood revitalization;

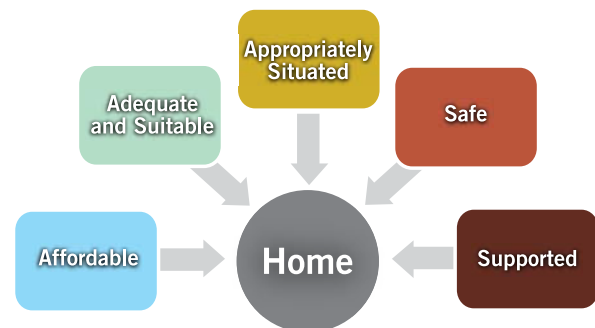
- Will help to inform the decisions of some funding bodies; and,
- Provides a process for addressing new or changed housing and support priorities that emerge over the next five years.

1.3 Vision

The *Community Plan* was developed with the vision of ensuring that community partners work together so every person in the Edmonton area has the opportunity to live in a home that is:

- affordable
- safe
- adequate and suitable to their needs, and
- situated in an area with access to supports that allow them to stay in their home and enjoy a good quality of life

Figure 1.1 Vision



1.4 A Principle-Based Plan

The Community Plan Committee identified a set of principles to guide the development of this plan, and decisions about investments in housing and supports in the Edmonton area over the next five years.

- **Every person in the Edmonton area has access to a safe, affordable, suitable and stable place to live.**

The *Community Plan* embraces the philosophy of housing first that every person has a right to a safe, secure home. The focus of the Community Plan is on helping vulnerable residents attain and maintain affordable housing and the supports they need.

- **Housing and support services contribute to building strong and vibrant communities.**

Investments in housing and support services benefit communities. The *Community Plan* supports the creation and maintenance of inclusive and welcoming communities where households of various income levels can thrive.

- **Housing and support services are responsive to the needs and backgrounds of individuals and families.**

The housing and support service needs of individuals and families in the Edmonton area are diverse and can change over time. A variety of options are needed in the community, with effective processes to link individuals and families with appropriate housing and supports.

- **Meeting the housing and support service needs in the Edmonton area is a shared responsibility requiring strong collaboration.**

Action is needed on the part of all governments – federal, provincial, municipal and Aboriginal – the private and non-profit housing industry, service providers, community groups, Aboriginal and ethnic communities, and citizens to address the housing and support service needs in the community. Strong collaboration and partnerships will allow us to be more effective in meeting community needs.

Clear roles and responsibilities assist in strengthening partnerships and collaborative efforts.

- **Investments in housing and support services are evidence-informed and cost-effective.**

Information systems and research will help ensure that housing and support services are focused on clear outcomes, efficient and effective.

1.5 Role of Homeward Trust in the Community Plan

The Community Plan Committee that oversaw the development of this plan was brought together through the efforts of Homeward Trust Edmonton.

Homeward Trust is a non-profit organization that uses a community-based approach in pursuing the goal of ending homelessness in Edmonton. Its primary role is to coordinate a response to housing needs by working together with local agencies and all orders of government. Community engagement and involvement are the foundation of Homeward Trust's work.

Homeward Trust was created in 2008 to bring the community planning and research mandates of the Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing together with the project-financing mandate of the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund.

Coordinating the development of the *Community Plan* is a responsibility mandated in Homeward Trust indenture (the document that created Homeward Trust).

Homeward Trust's role does not end with the development of this plan. The implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the plan will be led by Homeward Trust and the Community Plan Committee over the next five years.

2. The Need for a Community Plan

2. The Need for a Community Plan¹

2.1 Community Context

There are many aspects of the Edmonton area that need to be considered in planning for and delivering housing and supports. These include:

- History of Community Planning on Housing Issues
- Community-Based Housing and Service Agencies
- Community Leagues
- Correctional Facilities
- Addiction and Mental Health – Edmonton Zone
- Supportive Living and Group Homes
- Climate
- River Valley and Parkland
- Economy
- Population and Income
- Core Housing Need
- Vulnerable Populations

2.1.1 History of Community Planning on Housing Issues

There is a strong tradition of community-based planning around issues of affordable housing and homelessness in Edmonton. The community is recognized for its leadership in collaborative action on these issues. The *Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports: 2011-2015* is the third in a

“There is a strong tradition of community-based planning around issues of affordable housing and homelessness in Edmonton.”

series of community-driven housing and homelessness plans developed over the past decade.

The first two community plans were developed by the Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing. The Joint Planning Committee was established in 1990 to bring representatives from the Government of Canada, the Government of Alberta and the City of Edmonton together with stakeholders from the private and non-profit sectors to coordinate and integrate housing policies and programs and solicit community input into the development and implementation of housing plans and initiatives.

- The first community plan, the *Edmonton Community Plan on Homelessness, 2000-2003*, was developed in response to the Government of Canada’s National Homelessness Initiative (NHI). This plan focused on strategies to prevent and reduce homelessness.
- The second community plan, the *Edmonton Community Plan on Housing and Support Services, 2005-2009*, focused on addressing homelessness, low income-housing and related support services in Edmonton and introduced the concept of a continuum of non-market and market housing options.

¹ The information presented in this document was current as of October 2011.

2.1.2 Community-Based Housing and Service Agencies

The Edmonton area is home to a diverse range of municipalities and agency stakeholders that provide services to people in need and play significant roles in addressing housing and support needs in the community. There is variation in the extent to which decision-making is centralized and efforts are coordinated across municipalities within the Edmonton area.

The Edmonton Homeless Commission, established to champion the City's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness and the United Way of the Alberta Capital Region play key roles and lead collaborative efforts to address poverty and homelessness in the community. Several large housing management bodies, including Capital Region Housing Corporation and the Greater Edmonton Foundation, provide thousands of non-market affordable housing units for those in core housing need. Homeward Trust Edmonton, as the managing agent of the province's Housing First program and federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) funds housing projects and plays a key role in bringing together a wide range of community-based and public stakeholders for service planning and delivery.

The Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (ECOHH) was established 25 years ago in response to a collective recognition of the need for and benefits of community planning, coordination of resources, and sector advocacy. ECOHH members include many well-established social service organizations in the community that provide housing and support services

individually, in addition to coordinating their work through interagency collaboration. A range of services and non-market housing focusing on mental health, addictions, children and families, seniors, immigrants, and correctional transitions are provided by a number of agencies. Many of these agencies have city or region-wide mandates, but are located and provide services primarily in central Edmonton. However, there has been some extension of service delivery to other parts of the community by some agencies and faith-based groups. Some services are now available to people in need in west central, north central, northeast, and southeast Edmonton.

While there is great strength owing to the number and respective capacities of individual stakeholders in the housing sector, competition for resources can make coordinated action challenging.

2.1.3 Community Leagues

Edmonton has a long history of civic engagement at the neighbourhood level. In 1907, Edmonton became the first city in Canada to establish the "community league" structure for engaging citizens in their local communities, based on the "Social Centre Movement" model from Rochester, NY. The Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues (EFCL) has been a source of stability and a common voice for the City's community leagues for the last 90 years, representing the concerns of citizens to Edmonton City Council and other orders of government. The EFCL is now comprised of more than 150 community leagues across the city. EFCL and individual community leagues play a

key role in the review and development of area plans, revitalization efforts, and new developments. Community leagues have been key contributors in discussions surrounding consultation and planning for non-market housing developments in the past few years, which has prompted a need to identify new approaches for community engagement and the distribution of supportive housing and social supports throughout the region.

2.1.4 Correctional Facilities

There are a number of correctional facilities in the Edmonton area. This is an important consideration in planning for housing and supports in the community, as many individuals gravitate to Edmonton without pre-arranged housing when they are released from these facilities. The correctional facilities in the community span a range of types and sizes. They include the Edmonton Remand Centre, which will be replaced by a new facility in 2012 with an expected capacity of over 2,800 inmates; the Edmonton Institution, a maximum security federal institution; the Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Centre; the Stan Daniels Healing Centre, an alternative corrections facility for Aboriginal men; and several other facilities for young offenders, women, and minimum security inmates.

Edmonton is also home to several Community-Based Residential Facilities (CBRFs, sometimes called “half-way houses”) that are associated with Correctional Service Canada. CBRFs offer an alternative to conventional forms of incarceration by acting as a bridge between an institution and the community to promote the successful reintegration of offenders.² Community Residential Facilities – a subset of CBRFs – are operated by non-

governmental organizations or private aftercare agencies that provide a structured living environment with supervision, programs and interventions to assist offenders with a gradual and structured transition to the community. Edmonton has seven CBRFs,³ with a total of approximately 200 beds.

2.1.5 Addiction and Mental Health – Edmonton Zone

Addiction and mental health services for seniors, adults, children and youth in the Edmonton area are now provided by Alberta Health Services. This includes all services previously delivered by the Regional Mental Health Program, Capital Health, and AADAC in the Edmonton area. Services are coordinated with Covenant Health, which operates the Misericordia and Grey Nuns Hospitals and the new Villa Caritas. Services and supports include:

- In-patient acute care (children, adults and seniors)
- In-patient rehabilitation
- Residential addictions treatment
- Community-based mental health services
- Outpatient programs
- Rehabilitation services, including day programs, recreation, employment and housing supports
- Crisis response service, including partnerships with Edmonton Police Service and the RCMP
- Emergency room mental health teams
- Community-based addictions services
- Specialized group interventions and clinics (e.g. early psychosis, eating disorders)

² Correctional Service Canada. Quick Facts – Community Corrections.

³ Correctional Service Canada. Community Based Residential Facilities – Prairie Region.

- Peer support and peer education initiatives
- Forensic assessment and community services
- Capacity building programming
- Concurrent disorders programming and clinic

Contracted Addiction and Mental Health Services

Alberta Health Services contracts with numerous community agencies and providers to augment services and supports to individuals with addiction and mental health concerns. These include housing supports, practical living supports, independent living skills supports, addictions after care, pre-treatment and residential treatment, day programming and capacity building.

Alberta Hospital Edmonton

Alberta Hospital Edmonton is a 400-bed comprehensive psychiatric treatment facility located in northeast Edmonton that provides specialized hospital-based psychiatric and mental health services. There are only three such facilities in Alberta. Alberta Hospital Edmonton serves all of Northern Alberta and people from the Northwest Territories. Alberta Hospital's programs include Northern Alberta Forensic Psychiatry Services, a comprehensive and secure unit for people deemed not criminally responsible due to mental illness. Many of the patients discharged from Alberta Hospital Edmonton come to the city looking for housing.

Housing Initiatives

The Director of Cross Level Services and Supports is responsible for advancing

“Alberta Health Services contracts with numerous agencies and providers to augment services and supports to individuals with addiction and mental health concerns.”

supported housing in Alberta Health Services – Edmonton Zone. Since 2008, many relationships have been developed between AHS and housing providers/operators in the community. Some new initiatives that have been implemented are:

- Cornerstone Apartments – transitional independent living for women
- YMCA Transitional Housing – units set aside and supported by AHS, Addiction and Mental Health staff
- Housing Outreach Stabilization Team – work with identified facilitators to provide supports to clients, and capacity building and education
- Anderson Hall – supported transitional living for young adults using a peer model
- DiverseCity Housing – targets homeless individuals using a scattered site, independent living model supported by an Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team
- Ottewell Manor – a partnership with Greater Edmonton Foundation to provide supported lodge level affordable living to individuals 55 and over with mental health concerns (to open Spring 2012)

Addiction and Mental Health - Edmonton Zone Highlight

Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy

In September 2011, the Minister of Health and Wellness released *Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy*. This important strategy was jointly developed and is supported by 16 provincial government ministries. The strategy aims to transform Alberta's addiction and mental health system. The ultimate goal is to reduce the prevalence of addiction, mental health problems and mental illness in Alberta through health promotion and prevention activities and to provide quality assessment, treatment and support services to Albertans when they need them.

The strategy identifies the following five strategic directions:

- Build healthy and resilient communities
- Foster the development of healthy children, youth and families
- Enhance community-based services, capacity and supports
- Address complex needs
- Enhance assurance

Particularly relevant to the Community Plan is the identification of the need to “partner with other ministries, stakeholders and service providers to facilitate ready access to a range of housing options and community supports that are matched appropriately to the continuum of needs of individuals impacted by addiction, mental health problems and mental illness”. The initiatives to be pursued to address this priority are:

- Establish a clear framework of supportive housing, treatment and care options, provider roles and funding accountabilities.

- Use the housing and supports framework to map available housing options to identify major housing and service gaps.
- Review specialized centers focused on tertiary rehabilitation, concurrent disorders, and psychiatric care services to ensure needs are being met, and expand access to appropriate community residential treatment spaces.

The strategy also identifies initiatives to be pursued to address the needs of people with complex needs, a vulnerable population identified by the Community Plan. These include:

- Identify and mitigate high priority service gaps, which include community-based and residential care services.
- Establish a clear framework to enable ministries and service providers to work in an integrated, coordinated manner for the benefit of people with complex needs.
- Formalize and implement an integrated system model of case management for people with complex needs, so various partners involved in the individual's life work together to address the needs of the individual and the family.

Expanding access to appropriate community residential treatment spaces and providing timely access to safe and secure community residential addiction and mental health services targeted to people with complex behaviours and those with intermittent escalation of chronic addiction and mental health conditions are also high priorities under the strategy.

“Supportive housing facilities include supportive living facilities, group homes, and assisted living options for people across the age range and spectrum of disabilities and health conditions.”

2.1.6 Supportive Living and Group Homes

Supportive housing facilities include supportive living facilities, group homes, and assisted living options for people across the age range and spectrum of disabilities and health conditions. They are located throughout the Edmonton area and include residential care facilities for adults with developmental disabilities living in a group setting, community living for persons with mental illness or acquired brain injury, frail seniors, and other vulnerable groups. Persons living in these facilities may have come from more institutional settings or be expected to need them in the future. They may receive varying degrees and types of support, often depending on eligibility for provincial funding programs or ability to pay for privately delivered services. Because of the wide variety of providers, including private, non-profit, and public operators, it is very difficult to determine the numbers of units that exist in the Edmonton area.

2.1.7 Climate

The Edmonton area is one of the northernmost metropolitan areas in Canada. Average daily temperatures are below zero five months of the year. In January 2011 the lowest temperature reached was – 39.8 degrees Celsius. The average daily temperature that month was – 13.1 degrees Celsius.⁴ The cold winters intensify the urgency of planning and provision of housing and supports in the community due to the very real risk of death and permanent disability (such as frost-bite amputations) for those left exposed to sometimes life-threatening conditions.

This harsh climate is particularly difficult on the homeless population. The Winter Emergency Response program has been in place for five years. This program funds extended hours at drop-in centres to provide warm safe places for people to go from November to April, along with a mobile unit that provides cold weather supplies and emergency transportation for those sleeping out in the cold.

2.1.8 River Valley and Parkland

The North Saskatchewan River Valley System constitutes the largest continuous collection of urban parks in North America, offering more parkland per capita than any other city in Canada. The river runs from the southwest to the northeast of the Capital Region, forming a border for all of its counties and diagonally bisecting Edmonton with steep cliffs and lush boreal forest along its banks. Its network of tributaries includes countless creeks, smaller rivers, and forested ravines providing natural beauty for neighbouring residential communities throughout the region.

⁴ Environment Canada. *Daily Data Report for January 2011 (Edmonton International Airport)*.

Many people sleep rough in the river valley either part-time or year-round. According to the Homeless on Parklands Committee, there were 1,200 encampments in the river valley throughout the year in 2010. People living in the river valley pose a significant challenge in terms of outreach services. Interactions between people living in the river valley and the residents of adjacent residential communities can also lead to issues.

2.1.9 Economy

The Edmonton area's economy is closely linked to the province's energy sector, which is vulnerable to shifts in global energy prices and international financial markets. Edmonton is the closest metropolitan area to the extensive oil sands in northern Alberta, and local businesses are major suppliers of the products and services required for the construction and operation of huge oil sands projects. This has resulted in the region experiencing extended periods of strong growth over the years ("booms"), punctuated by occasional, sharp downturns ("busts").

Through most of the 2000s, the Edmonton region experienced a period of sustained economic growth. Much of this was driven by activity in the oil and gas sector. As the world's economy entered a recession and oil prices experienced a decline beginning in 2008 and into 2009, Edmonton's economic growth slowed.⁵ The region's economy has picked up again, creating more employment opportunities for those who lost their jobs during the economic downturn. As of June 2011, Edmonton's unemployment rate was 5.6%, down 1.0% from one year prior. This was the second lowest rate of any major Canadian city.⁶

Alberta is poised for another period of significant economic expansion. The value of major construction projects currently planned, underway or recently completed in the province exceeds \$186 billion, with oil sands projects accounting for 60% of this amount.⁷ Given its proximity to the oil sands in northern Alberta and its status as an international oil, gas and petrochemical industrial centre, the Edmonton area is projected to grow steadily over the next decade as global energy demands increase.

If the supply of affordable housing in the region does not increase to accommodate the anticipated labor force growth in the years ahead, the region will be constrained in achieving its potential for economic growth and prosperity. While a stronger economy will generate new job opportunities, attract people, raise living standards, and increase tax revenues in the region, it will also:

- lower vacancy rates and drive up rental costs;
- lengthen waiting lists for non-market housing;
- accelerate the conversion of rental properties into condos;
- make it more challenging to secure housing units for Housing First clients;
- increase the cost to purchase a home; and
- inflate the cost of developing or redeveloping both non-market and market housing.

History has demonstrated that a period of strong economic growth will increase the demand for and cost of housing, making it harder for those in the community who

⁵ City of Edmonton. Business and Economy – Economic Data – Long-Term Economic Outlook. April 2011.

⁶ Statistics Canada. Table 5.1 - Labour force characteristics by census metropolitan area (seasonally adjusted) — 3 month moving average.

⁷ Alberta Finance and Enterprise. Inventory of Major Alberta Projects. May 2011.

are homeless or with lower incomes to find suitable affordable housing. In *Standing Still in a Booming Economy*, the Edmonton Social Planning Council reported that despite living in a growing economy, one in seven households in the Edmonton area was living below Low-Income Cutoff thresholds in 2007. While many households in the community were realizing the benefits of the region's strong economic growth, many others were finding it increasingly difficult to find decent, affordable housing for themselves and their families. Finding affordable rental housing was the most frequently cited concern of focus group participants brought together to inform the Edmonton Social Planning Council's research.

One of the developments during the region's last economic boom was the establishment of "tent city" near downtown Edmonton in 2007, when there was a particularly acute shortage of affordable housing in the community. An estimated 200 homeless people lived in tent city, some for several weeks. This brought the severity of the community's shortage of affordable housing and issues about how homelessness was being addressed into the public's eye.

Many of those participating in the consultations for this Plan - from elected officials, to developers and agency workers - urged the Community Plan Committee to take swift action to 'get ahead of' what they predict will be a major housing crisis when Alberta's economy improves within a year to 18 months. Several projects in Alberta's Industrial Heartland and Fort McMurray have received approval, and will once again attract workers who need accommodation. This increased demand will impact those individuals who are living

in low cost accommodation as landlords can be expected to increase rents in response to increased demand. There is concern that many residents currently living in low cost housing will be at risk of becoming homeless should rent increases force them from their current accommodation.

In an era of changing demographics, characterized by an aging workforce, a lower birthrate, and changes in social values, a stable entry-level workforce is needed to ensure the Capital Region's future growth and global competitiveness. What is needed to attract and retain a stable workforce is a diversity of housing types and build forms that provide a range of affordability and tenure options.

Capital Region Housing Plan: Strategy and Implementation Plan, 2009

2.1.10 Population and Income

The Edmonton region has experienced strong population growth over the past several years. The area's population continued to grow even during the recent economic downturn. The primary source of population growth is in-migrants, from elsewhere in Alberta, Canada and from other countries. The region's current estimated population of 1,158,700⁸ accounts for approximately 31% of Alberta's total population. It is estimated the area's population has increased by over 136,800 since the last Community Plan was developed.

Continued strong population growth is expected over the period of this plan. It is

⁸ Estimated from the Population and Employment forecast issued in December 2009 as an addendum to the *Capital Region Growth Plan: Growing Forward*.

forecasted that by 2015 the region's population will be approximately 1,236,500,⁹ about 77,800 more than today.

There are some important shifts taking place in the community's demographics:

- **Population is aging.** Although still young relative to many other metropolitan areas in Canada, the region has a growing population of seniors. In 2006, 11% of Edmonton area residents were age 65 or older, and 10% were between ages 55 and 64.¹⁰ By 2041, it is projected that about one-third of Edmonton's population will be age 55 or older. Incomes tend to decline and become more fixed as people age. The incidence of low income among seniors in the community is higher among those who live alone, particularly females. Roughly 40% of seniors living alone in the

Aboriginal Population

- The number of people living in Edmonton identifying as being Aboriginal increased by 27% – from 40,930 to 52,100 – between 2001 and 2006.
- About 55% of the Aboriginal population is Métis, and about 40% are First Nations. Inuit residents account for a relatively small proportion of Aboriginal residents.

Statistics Canada, Federal Census 2001 and 2006.

Edmonton area are considered to be low-income.¹¹

- **Aboriginal population is increasing.** Aboriginal people are increasingly choosing to live in urban areas in Alberta. Aboriginal people from northern Alberta communities, First Nations Reserves, and Métis Settlements are moving to the region in increasing numbers, sometimes for short periods of time, but often permanently. In 2006, 5.1% of the population in the Edmonton area reported being Aboriginal. Edmonton currently has the second highest Aboriginal population among major urban centres in Canada (behind Winnipeg), and is expected to have the largest Aboriginal population among cities in Canada by 2017. Two in five Aboriginal residents fall below the poverty line in Edmonton, and roughly 40% of Edmonton's homeless population is Aboriginal.
- **Immigrant population and cultural diversity are increasing.** Immigrants and temporary foreign workers are accounting for a growing number of residents in the region. There were 189,775 immigrants living in the Edmonton Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) in 2006, accounting for 18.5% of the population. Three in ten immigrants are currently in a low-income situation, which is twice as high as the Canadian-born average in the community. One in four immigrant households spend more than 30% of their income on shelter, and 18% live in crowded housing conditions.¹²

⁹ Estimated from the Population and Employment forecast issued in December 2009 as an addendum to the *Capital Region Growth Plan: Growing Forward*.

¹⁰ Statistics Canada *2006 Census*, Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE.

¹¹ City of Edmonton. *Edmonton Seniors: A Portrait*. 2010.

¹² City of Edmonton. *Discussion Paper Series: Influences on Edmonton's Future, Discussion Paper #4: Cultural and Demographic Change*

According to family income data derived from 2009 personal income tax returns, the Edmonton area had the third highest median total family income (\$86,250) in Canada. However, there is considerable income disparity among households – and different types of households – in the community. For example, the median income of persons who are not part of a census family (e.g. singles living alone or with others) was \$28,800 in 2009.¹³

In 2007, the incidence of low-income in the community (using the Low-Income Cut-Off or LICO as the measure)¹⁴ was 10%. The downturn in the economy in 2008 and 2009 likely increased the number of households in the region experiencing financial hardship due to job losses and an increase in the Consumer Price Index.¹⁵

2.1.11 Core Housing Need

While the Edmonton area is widely regarded as one of the most livable and affordable

metropolitan regions in the country, thousands of people in Edmonton, Strathcona County, St. Albert, Stony Plain, and other regional municipalities are struggling to find affordable housing for themselves and their families. Shortages in the availability of both non-market and market affordable housing are placing significant burdens on many households and affecting the quality of life and economic competitiveness of the region.

The reality is that thousands of households in the Edmonton area are making tough decisions on a daily basis about paying rent or purchasing food. Many are living in unhealthy or overcrowded housing that does not meet their needs.

Approximately one in ten households in the Edmonton area is in **core housing need**. This means that some 47,000 households in the region are currently either paying too much for their housing or living in housing that needs major repairs or is not suitable in terms of size according to national occupancy standards.¹⁶

According to the 2006 Census

- There are over 405,000 households in the region.
- Most of these households live in single- or semi-detached houses (63%) or apartments (26%). The remainder live in row housing, mobile homes or other accommodation.
- Almost seven out of every ten households in the region own their home. Three in ten households rent.
- The vast majority (94%) of homes in the region are in good condition and don't require major repairs.

¹³ <http://www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/famil107d-eng.htm>. Retrieved October 6, 2011. The median income is the level at which half of all families had incomes above this level, and half had incomes below this level.

¹⁴ Using the Low-Income Cut-Off (or LICO) as the measure of low income. Households with incomes below LICO cutoffs are likely to devote a larger share of their income to the necessities of food, shelter and clothing than other households.

¹⁵ Edmonton Social Planning Council. *Tracking the Trends 2011: Edmonton's Increasing Diversity 11th Ed.* Employment and Consumer Price Index

¹⁶ Housing is considered to be affordable if housing costs are less than 30% of before-tax household income. The estimate of 47,000 households in core housing need is based on a) CMHC's core housing need ratio for the Edmonton Census Metropolitan Area (CMA); b) Statistics Canada's July 2010 population estimate for the Edmonton CMA, and c) the 2006 Census estimate of 2.5 persons per household in the Edmonton CMA.

The incidence of core housing need is higher among renter households in the region, as compared to households that own their homes. Approximately 25% of renter households in the region (almost 29,000 households) are in core housing need.¹⁷

2.1.12 Vulnerable Populations

Through the consultation process, ten populations were identified as having increased vulnerability of being in core housing need or homeless. These populations are:

- People on low-incomes
- Aboriginal people
- Newcomers to Canada
- Seniors and older adults
- Youth and young adults
- Families with children
- Women experiencing sexual exploitation and violence
- Persons with physical disabilities
- Persons with complex behaviors: mental illness, addictions, developmental disabilities, brain injuries
- Persons leaving incarceration

A detailed report of the consultation's findings on these populations can be found in Appendix B.

2.2 The Public Policy Environment

Access to housing and supports plays a central role in supporting individual, family and community health and well-being, quality of life and economic prosperity. Housing is key to the

achievement of a wide range of public policy objectives identified in federal, provincial and municipal plans and strategies.

Figure 2.1 provides an overview of the key plans and policy initiatives that have influenced the evolution of planning for housing and supports in the community.

2.2.1 Municipal Policy Objectives

The City of Edmonton acts as advocate, coordinator, and housing and service provider through multiple channels, including the Housing and Economic Sustainability Branch, the Community Services department and homeED.¹⁸ From a policy perspective, it has adopted, or is in the process of developing, several plans and initiatives that address affordable housing and support issues. These include:

- *The Way Ahead*, Edmonton's strategic plan for 2009-18. A priority for the first three years of this strategy is to "increase the supply and range of affordable housing to meet citizens' needs."
- *A Place to Call Home*, Edmonton's ten year plan to end homelessness, which was released in January 2009. This plan received the unanimous endorsement of City Council. The Edmonton Homeless Commission was established to champion the implementation of this plan.
- *Cornerstones: Edmonton's Plan for Affordable Housing* is the City of Edmonton's plan to increase the number of long term affordable housing units and advocate for increases in income supports and support services funding for

¹⁷ CMHC Housing in Canada On-line 2011, based on 2005 income data and 2006 Census data for the Edmonton CMA.

¹⁸ homeED provides affordable rental housing for residents with low incomes.

Figure 2.1 Key Plans and Policy Initiatives

1999	2000	2001	2002	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
	Edmonton Community Plan on Homelessness			Edmonton Community Plan on Housing and Support Services						
Homelessness in Edmonton: A Call to Action		Building Together: The City of Edmonton Low Income and Special Needs Housing Strategy			Cornerstones: Edmonton's 5-Year Plan for Affordable Housing Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord		City of Edmonton First Place Home Ownership Program	A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness Edmonton Area Housing Plan		
			Canada-Alberta Affordable Housing Program Agreement			Report of the Alberta Affordable Housing Task Force	Alberta Continuing Care Strategy	A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 Years Alberta Affordable Supportive Living Initiative (ASLI)	Becoming the Best: Alberta's 5-Year Health Action Plan Aging Population Policy Framework	Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy, September 2011
Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI)			Canada-Alberta Affordable Housing Program Agreement			Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) (replaced SCPI)		Canada's Economic Action Plan	Federal Government 3-Year Renewal of Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS)	CMHC Affordable Housing Framework (2011-2014)

- Community Plans
- Municipal and Regional Plans and Initiatives
- Provincial Plans and Initiatives
- Federal Plans and Initiatives

lower income Edmontonians in need of housing. The plan was approved in 2006. The Cornerstones Plan is noteworthy in that it establishes an active role for the municipality in the development of affordable housing units. A proposal for renewal of the program will be considered by Edmonton's City Council in late 2011 or early 2012. The initial goal was that an additional 2,500 affordable housing units would be created over the five-year period 2006-2010 under the Cornerstones Plan. A number of grant programs were established for the construction, purchase

and/or renovation of housing. One of these is the Secondary Suites, Garage Suites and Garden Suites Grant Program. The City also initiated two rent supplement programs under the Cornerstones Plan.

- In 2009, the City of Edmonton began to reassess its policies relating to the location of non-market housing, particularly with respect to thirteen "high threshold neighbourhoods", most of which are in the inner-city. A proposed protocol, involving hard caps on the number of non-market units in each of these neighbourhoods, was

presented at the April 21, 2010 meeting of City Council's Executive Committee. This proposal was referred for further discussion and review. At the July 13, 2011 Executive Committee, an alternate proposal – with a community consultation framework intended to craft an individual response for each distressed community – was brought forward instead and received the Committee's endorsement for further development. The result is expected to be presented in early 2012.

2.2.2 Regional Policy Objectives

The establishment of the Capital Region Board in 2008 to plan for and manage the long-term growth of the region was a key development to encourage collaborative planning among the municipalities in the Edmonton Region. Because of the importance of affordable housing to the Region's economic development in the years ahead, the Board was given a mandate to encourage the development of both non-market and market affordable housing in the Capital Region. As part of the *Capital Region Growth Plan*, the Capital Region Housing Plan was prepared in 2009. This Plan identifies the general location of social housing in the Region and options to increase market affordable housing.

The principles of the *Capital Region Board Housing Plan* are:

- Recognize that non-market (social) housing requires sustainable, predictable, and adequate levels of funding in the form of capital and operating dollars from the provincial government, with support from the federal government.

- Leverage partnerships with the private sector, public sector and non-profit organizations to provide a broad range of affordable and safe housing for all income levels that meets the diverse needs of the Capital Region.
- Respect the unique needs of the Capital Region municipalities and create choice and diversity of housing options to enable the Capital Region to attract and retain the workforce necessary to be globally competitive.
 - o Plans, policies and programs must be responsive to housing needs and market conditions.
 - o To respond to local needs, solutions may be different in different communities.
- The location of housing is based on integrated planning for efficient land-use that considers access to necessary amenities like transit and support services and that achieves affordable, appropriate types of housing stock and densities for both renters and owners.
- Build sustainable and inclusive communities that respect and support families of all income levels who represent the diversity of people who contribute to the prosperity of the Capital Region.
- Foster collaboration among the Capital Region municipalities to achieve regional housing needs based on housing investment priorities and innovative housing solutions.

The goals and strategies of the *Capital Region Board Housing Plan* are summarized in Appendix F.

2.2.3 Provincial Policy Objectives

The Government of Alberta has a critically important role - and lead jurisdictional authority - in addressing the housing and support needs of low-income households and homeless people within the community. Relevant plans and initiatives of the province include:

- Providing funding for expanding the supply of affordable housing in the province in response to *Housing First: An Investment with a Return in Prosperity*, the report of the Alberta Affordable Housing Task Force. Under the Housing Initiatives grant program, funding is provided to municipalities, non-profit groups, and the private sector to develop housing for lower-income and homeless Albertans, including seniors, persons with special needs, and those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- Developing and implementing *A Plan for Alberta*, the provincial ten-year plan to end homelessness. The plan is being implemented through seven community-based organizations (CBOs) in cities across the province. Homeward Trust is the CBO for the Edmonton area. The Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness (ASAH) reports to the Minister and provides an external perspective on the progress of the ten year plan.
- Establishing the Capital Region Board to ensure that the pressures of urban development on housing and homelessness will be managed effectively.

Alberta Housing and Urban Affairs has identified the following policy linkages in its 2011-2014 Business Plan:¹⁹

- Continue to provide capital funding to support the development of 11,000 affordable housing units by 2012, and to continue to address the ongoing need for affordable housing for seniors, families, people with disabilities, and the homeless.
- Develop a five year affordable housing plan to enable the ministry to assist those most in need and to ensure Alberta is well positioned to attract and retain labour through access to affordable housing.
- Develop a strategy to leverage assets, regenerate aging properties and ensure the long-term sustainability of provincially owned housing.

“The Government of Alberta has a critically important role - and lead jurisdictional authority - in addressing the housing and support needs of low-income households and homeless people within the community.”

These plans and initiatives also support – and are supported by – other provincial government priorities and initiatives, such as:

- Strengthening public health, mental health, and healthy living through the development and implementation of *Alberta's 5-Year*

¹⁹ Aspects of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs' work have been transferred to the new Ministries of Human Services and Municipal Affairs effective October 12, 2011.

Health Action Plan, Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Action Plan 2011-2016, and a new Aboriginal Health Strategy.

- Promoting social inclusion and workforce development and participation. For example, implementing *Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce* the province's labour force development strategy, which emphasizes increasing opportunities for all Albertans to engage in the labour market, supporting Aboriginal workforce and economic development, and supporting the settlement and integration of immigrants.
- Implementing Alberta Supports, a social-based assistance initiative to improve access to information, services and supports for vulnerable Albertans.
- Collaborating with First Nations and Métis agencies, governing bodies and organizations to improve the design and delivery of off-Reserve/off-Settlement services.
- Continuing to implement the *Safe Communities Initiative*.
- Implementing the province's *Continuing Care Strategy*, which is intended to provide new ways of delivering services, offering more choice in housing and supports for seniors and persons with chronic illnesses or disabilities.
- Defining the Government of Alberta's roles and responsibilities in responding to the needs of an aging population and setting out the provincial government's key policy directions in preparing for an aging population in the *Aging Population Policy Framework*.

2.2.4 Federal Policy Objectives

The Government of Canada has been involved in housing and support initiatives for a number of years. The National Homelessness Initiative (NHI), which was in place between 1999 and 2007, had an initial focus on addressing short-term emergency housing needs in communities, and supporting community-driven planning to address longer-term needs and prevention. As the initiative evolved, its scope was expanded to assist individuals and families to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency through longer-term solutions such as transitional and supportive housing. One of the components of the NHI was the Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative (SCPI). The SCPI was developed to assist in creating a more integrated and inclusive approach to addressing homelessness in Canada. The Urban Aboriginal Homelessness (UAH) component of the NHI provided flexibility in meeting the needs of homeless Aboriginal people through culturally sensitive services.

The Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) began April 1, 2007, and has been renewed until March 31, 2014. The HPS has three main initiatives: the Homelessness Partnership Initiative (HPI), the Homelessness Accountability Network and the Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative. The Homelessness Partnership Initiative (HPI) is the cornerstone of the HPS. It emphasizes a housing first approach to addressing homelessness and recognizes that the first step is often to provide individuals with transitional and supportive housing. The HPI has four funding components:

- Designated Communities
- Outreach Communities (now called Rural and Remote)
- Aboriginal Communities (now called Aboriginal Homelessness)
- Federal Horizontal Pilot Projects

In September 2008, the federal government committed more than \$1.9 billion to housing and homelessness over five years. This included a commitment to maintain annual funding for housing and homelessness until March 2014. As part of this commitment, the Government of Canada has renewed the HPS at the current funding level of \$134.8 million per year, from April 2011 to March 2014. Homeward Trust is the community organization administering Designated Communities and Aboriginal Communities funding in Edmonton. The Rural and Remote funding stream gives preference to communities smaller than 25,000, and presents an opportunity for many of the smaller municipalities in the Capital Region.

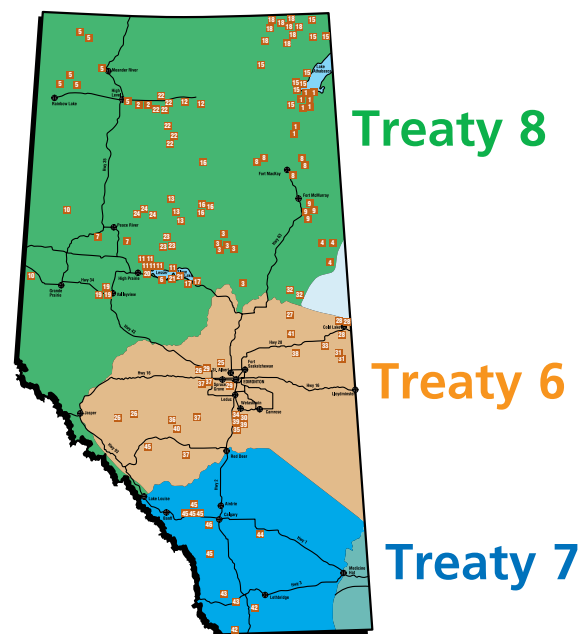
In July 2011, the Government of Canada announced a new Affordable Housing Framework, which will provide \$1.4 billion from 2011 to 2014 nationwide. Under the new Framework, provinces and territories have the flexibility to invest in a range of programs and initiatives to achieve the overall intended outcome of reducing the number of Canadians in housing need. Initiatives under the Framework can include new construction, renovation, homeownership assistance, rent supplements, shelter allowances, and accommodations for victims of family violence. A bi-lateral agreement between the government and each province will guide

funding allocations. The Canada – Alberta Affordable Housing Program Agreement will see \$238 million invested in housing.

2.2.5 Aboriginal Policy Context

The Edmonton area is located within the borders of the Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations and is the nearest major centre to Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta and the Métis Settlements in northern Alberta. The Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations, Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta, the Métis Settlements General Council, and the Métis Nation of Alberta, along with the federal and provincial governments and the City of Edmonton, all play important roles in addressing housing and support needs of Aboriginal people in the community. Figure 2.2 illustrates the First Nations Treaty territory, and the reserves within Alberta's borders.

Figure 2.2 First Nations Treaty Territory



City of Edmonton

- Edmonton City Council's Declaration, *Strengthening Relationships between the City of Edmonton and Urban Aboriginal People*, is a foundation for building stronger relationships between the City of Edmonton and Aboriginal people living in Edmonton. The Urban Aboriginal Accord was created by the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee (EAUAC) in response to the Declaration.
- The Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee (EAUAC) works with individuals, groups, agencies, and other levels of government in addressing the issues and concerns of Aboriginal people living in the City of Edmonton.

Provincial Government

- The Ministry of Intergovernmental, International and Aboriginal Relations works with Aboriginal communities, the federal government, industry and other stakeholders to promote social and economic opportunities to enhance the quality of life of Aboriginal people in Alberta.
- *The Government of Alberta's Aboriginal Policy Framework* has been in place since 2000. The Framework focuses on improving socio-economic opportunities for Aboriginal people and communities and clarifying roles and responsibilities of federal, provincial and Aboriginal governments and communities with respect to Aboriginal issues.

Federal Government

- The *Urban Aboriginal Strategy* (UAS) is a community-based initiative of the Government of Canada to improve social and economic opportunities of Aboriginal people living in urban centres. Through UAS, the Government of Canada partners with the Aboriginal community and local organizations, municipal and provincial governments, and the private sector to support projects that respond to local priorities and the UAS priority areas of improving life skills; promoting job training, skills and entrepreneurship; and, supporting Aboriginal women, children and families.
- The Wicihitowin Circle of Shared Responsibility and Stewardship is a community-driven model that acts as the steering committee for Edmonton's UAS. The Wicihitowin Circle brings urban Aboriginal people, agencies, and governments together to address needs of Edmonton's urban Aboriginal residents.
- *The Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy* (ASETS) links training to labour market demand, delivering a range of employment programs and services for Aboriginal people. In Edmonton, Rupertsland Institute and Oteenow Employment and Training Society hold ASETS agreements.
- Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) works with Aboriginal communities to enhance the role of Aboriginal communities in corrections and the reintegration of Aboriginal federal offenders into communities. Under Section 84 of the *Corrections and Conditional Release*

Act, where an inmate who is applying for parole has expressed an interest in being released to an Aboriginal community, CSC can give the community the opportunity to propose a plan for the inmate's release to, and integration into, the community. Some of the accommodation needs of Aboriginal federal offenders are met through healing lodges such as the Stan Daniels Healing Centre in Edmonton, operated by Native Counselling Services of Alberta.

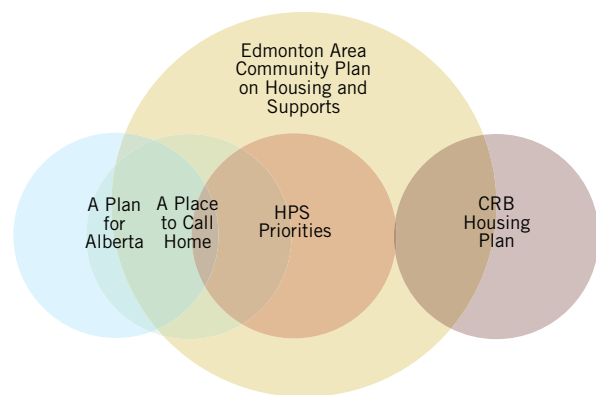
- Through the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement approved in 2007, Aboriginal people affected by Residential Schools in Canada can access special programs to address the intergenerational effects of their legacy. The Common Experience Payment (CEP), delivered by Service Canada in partnership with Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, offered cash payments to Residential School survivors based on length of stay. The Independent Assessment Process (IAP) is a parallel out-of-court settlement process for resolution of claims of abuse and other wrongful acts suffered at Residential Schools. The Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program, delivered by Health Canada and the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, provides mental health, counseling, and healing services to former Residential School survivors participating in the Settlement Agreement process, as well as their families.
- In 2008, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established as an independent national body to address the legacy of Residential Schools in Canada,

the “keystone” of the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement. The TRC’s mandate is to guide and inspire First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and other Canadians in a process of truth and healing toward reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.

2.3 Ten Year Plans to End Homelessness

Figure 2.3 depicts where the Community Plan fits in the current plan landscape. The size of each circle does not represent the scale or impact of each plan, but rather reflects their respective scope and the specific types of housing and/or client groups they represent. The ten year plans and HPS Priorities address homelessness, while the Capital Region Board Housing Plan addresses affordable housing. The Community Plan touches on all of these and other related issues.

Figure 2.3: The Planning Landscape



“Both the City of Edmonton and the Government of Alberta have adopted ten year plans to end homelessness by 2019.”

2.3.1 Ending Homelessness with Housing First

Both the City of Edmonton and the Government of Alberta have adopted ten year plans to end homelessness by 2019.²⁰ These plans call for a fundamental shift in how homelessness is addressed in the community by embracing a housing first philosophy, which focuses on the rapid movement of homeless individuals and families into permanent housing, and then providing them with the supports they need to restore their stability and maintain their housing (i.e., “supported housing”).

Implementation of the Housing First program in the community officially began on April 1, 2009, following a successful pilot project. Central to housing first is the premise of choice: clients are able to choose their apartment, their furniture, and their goals. As homelessness is often accompanied by other difficulties, such as mental illness, addiction, financial difficulties, and under-developed life skills, many Housing First clients require multifaceted supports to resolve the underlying causes of their homelessness.

Preventing homelessness and strengthening the information available to support decisions about actions to end homelessness are key components of these plans. Implementation of the provincial and municipal plans to end homelessness is funded by the Government of Canada, the Government of Alberta, and contributions from municipalities.

2.3.2 Early Successes in the Implementation of the Ten Year Plans

Important strides have been made toward the goal of ending homelessness in the community over the past two years, with more than 1,500 people finding housing as of September 1, 2011 and receiving the supports they need to remain housed.²¹ As the management agency for the community’s initiatives to end homelessness, Homeward Trust works in partnership with other community agencies to deliver the Housing First program.

Priority is given to serving chronically homeless individuals under Housing First. These are individuals or families who have been continuously homeless for a year or more, or experienced episodic homelessness at least four times over a three year continuous period.

Action is being taken on several fronts to end homelessness in the Edmonton area. These include:

- **Housing First teams** that help people who are homeless to secure housing and provide or coordinate services for them to support them in transitioning to their new lives off the street and not fall back into homelessness. There are currently eight Housing First teams in the community.

²⁰ The Government of Alberta’s Plan is called *A Plan for Alberta*; the City of Edmonton’s plan is called *A Place to Call Home*. The goals and strategies of these plans are summarized in Appendix E.

²¹ Homeward Trust Edmonton

Additionally, an Aboriginal Housing First team and an Assertive Outreach team will be in place by 2012, in addition to a new initiative serving those exiting the Gunn Centre.²² Of the existing teams, six are intensive case management (ICM) teams that locate housing and provide mobile support services for clients; two are assertive community treatment teams (ACT) that use a Pathways to Housing approach to assist high needs clients find housing and remain successfully housed; and, two are teams that offer specialized supports (addictions and clinical support, financial literacy and budgeting) to all Housing First clients after they are housed. The services Housing First clients receive vary in intensity and may include mental health and addictions services, support in developing daily living skills, participating in recreational and community activities, re-establishing family connections, money management, and accessing employment or training.

“Important strides have been made toward to the goal of ending homelessness in the community over the past two years, with more than 1,500 people finding housing as of September 1, 2011 and receiving the supports they need to remain housed.”

- **Supporting those leaving hospital or prison.** People being discharged from hospital or prison are particularly vulnerable to becoming homeless. DiverseCity and Pathways to Housing both provide specialized clinical support for individuals leaving correctional or psychiatric facilities, ensuring people find housing and are provided with needed supports.
- **Landlord relations.** Efforts are made to secure housing for Housing First clients in the private market whenever possible. Establishing and maintaining good working relationships with landlords and property management companies has been key to the early success of the program. The Housing First teams provide assurances to landlords that rents will be paid and clients will be supported in complying with tenancy expectations. As of September 1, 2011, over 140 landlords and property managers were providing units for Housing First clients in 395 buildings across Edmonton.²³
- **Rental assistance.** Homeward Trust coordinates a rental assistance program for Housing First clients unable to pay all of their living costs for a period while they are making adjustments in their lives to become more self-sufficient. In addition those currently participating in Housing First, 531 households in the Housing First and associated graduate program were receiving rental assistance as of September 1, 2011.²⁴
- **Reducing isolation and loneliness.** Many Housing First clients choose to live away from the inner city, in areas removed from where they had experienced

²² Gunn Centre offers temporary accommodation and support services for men who are homeless, at risk of becoming homeless, and currently unable to provide for their basic needs without assistance.

²³ Homeward Trust Edmonton

²⁴ Homeward Trust Edmonton

homelessness. This can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness as they adjust to new surroundings. Follow-up support workers aid clients in finding meaningful daily activities, and connecting them to community groups and services. A volunteer friendly visitor program called Welcome Home – led by the Capital Region Interfaith Initiative, which represents more than 20 religious and spiritual communities – is also under development.

- **Construction of new housing units.** As there is an insufficient number of affordable housing units in the community to achieve the goals of the plans to end homelessness, the construction of additional units is needed. The City of Edmonton’s plan to end homelessness calls for the construction of 1,650 modest sized units and 1,000 new permanent supportive housing units by 2019.
- **Furniture Bank.** In 2009, Homeward Trust opened a furniture bank. Now operating as a social enterprise, Find: Furnishing Hope allows Housing First clients to select essential household items they need to set up their new homes, such as furniture, kitchen utensils and linens with assistance from community partners such as the Bissell Centre, Edmonton Homeless Commission, Habitat for Humanity, John Howard Society, Social Enterprise Fund, and United Way of the Capital Region. Items are acquired in large part through donations from individuals, companies, and community groups and pre-owned furniture sales to the general public and provided free of charge to clients.
- **Outcomes Measurement and Case Management Tools.** Efforts to Outcomes™,

developed by Social Solutions Inc., is a comprehensive case management and database system that has offered a platform for consistent data collection across Housing First teams. It has been implemented in the community to support ongoing planning and improvements in service delivery to better meet the needs of Housing First clients.

- **Alberta Homelessness Research Consortium (AHRC).** Increasing research capacity within the province in relation to homelessness issues and identifying best practices in addressing homelessness is a key component of the province’s ten year plan to end homelessness. The Alberta Homelessness Research Consortium was initiated by the Government of Alberta in 2010 to build capacity to co-ordinate and conduct research that supports the goal of ending homelessness in Alberta.
- **Identification for the homeless.** Not having the personal identification needed to secure housing and access programs and services is often a major problem for homeless people. One of the strategies under the province’s plan to end homelessness is to simplify personal identification requirements for accessing programs and services. Through the leadership and collaboration of Alberta Housing and Urban Affairs and Service Alberta, new forms and processes have been developed to allow shelters and homeless-serving agencies to serve as a homeless person’s proof of Alberta residency and to provide assistance to help individuals obtain personal identification. In addition to the work at the provincial level, the Edmonton ID Working Group has

received funding from the United Way and the Homeless Commission to establish an ID storage service at Boyle Street Community Services.

- **Aboriginal relations.** Housing First teams participate in an Aboriginal Diversity Training workshop to enhance their understanding of Aboriginal culture. This training supports the delivery of housing support services to Aboriginal people in the community in culturally appropriate and sensitive ways. In 2010, Homeward Trust contracted Blue Quills First Nations College to undertake a study of the experience of Aboriginal people in the Housing First program. The results have informed planning around delivery of services for Aboriginal clients, including an Aboriginal Housing First Team.
- **Harm reduction.** In Edmonton, Housing First uses a harm reduction approach, whereby policies, programs, or practical strategies are designed to reduce harm and the negative consequences related to substance abuse, without requiring the cessation of substance use as a condition of housing. Harm reduction is typically characterized by meeting substance users “where they are at”, addressing conditions and motivations of drug use along with the use itself, and acknowledging an individual’s ability to take responsibility for their own behavior.

The success of these initiatives is reflected in the results of the most recent homeless count in Edmonton in October 2010. The city’s homeless count decreased for the first time since the count was first conducted in 1999. 2,421 homeless individuals were counted in

October 2010, down from 3,079 counted in October 2008 – a decrease of 21%.²⁵ While the economic downturn was a factor in this decline, the extensive work that is being done to end homelessness in the community is also demonstrating that it is making a difference.


2.3.3 Lessons Learned from Implementation of Ten Year Plans

While much has been accomplished since work began on implementing the plans to end homelessness, much has also been learned about what needs to be done to continue to make solid progress toward the goal of eliminating homelessness in the Edmonton area by 2019. Key learnings include:

- **There is still great need for more permanent supportive housing in the community.** The Housing First program is intended to provide housing and support services for clients to assist them to eventually transition successfully

“While much has been accomplished since work began on implementing the plans to end homelessness, much has also been learned about what needs to be done to continue to make solid progress toward the goal of eliminating homelessness in the Edmonton area by 2019.”

²⁵ Source: 2010 Edmonton Homeless Count, Homeward Trust Edmonton



to independent living. Experience has shown that some people's needs are so complex that they may never be able to live independently. Permanent supportive housing is often a more appropriate response than supported housing for these individuals.

- **The shortage of affordable housing is a constraint to addressing homelessness in the community.** Having an adequate supply of affordable housing units is necessary if the goal of eliminating homelessness in the community is to be achieved by 2019. This becomes even more important if anticipated economic growth limits opportunities for clients to access market rental units.
- **More needs to be done to “close the front door” into homelessness.** While the community is making good progress in “opening the back door” out of homelessness, ending homelessness requires ongoing effort to prevent homelessness in the first place. Helping individuals and families with rent and utility payments and providing them with support services so they do not get evicted can be more effective and less costly than allowing them to slip into homelessness.
- **The availability and adequacy of income support and mainstream services affects success in addressing homelessness issues.** To remain successfully housed, those who have been homeless require sufficient income and/or rental assistance to allow them to pay their housing costs. It is very challenging for people reliant on income support to afford housing and cover their other living costs.

Individuals who have been or are at risk of homelessness also need access to appropriate mainstream services, such as health care services, mental health and addictions services, and employment and training services, to be able to have stability in their lives and maintain their housing.

- **Outreach is important.** To provide as many doors out of homelessness as possible, further strengthening of outreach services to homeless individuals using shelters, living on the street, or living rough in parkland is needed.
- **Community engagement and consultation is important.** As we move forward with the implementation of the plans to end homelessness, community engagement and consultation will become increasingly important to ensure ongoing support for the actions being taken (e.g. development of new independent and supportive housing units).
- **Need to continue to work on breaking down silos.** Homelessness is complex, at both an individual and a community level. While progress has been made in breaking down “silos” in addressing homelessness issues in the community, more still needs to be done to achieve stronger collaboration and coordination.

3. Housing and Support Framework and Gaps

3.1 From “Continuum” to “Framework”

In the previous Community Plan, a model called “The Housing and Support Services Continuum” depicted a spectrum of accommodation options to meet a range of needs and standards, including physical adequacy, affordability, and on-site support needs. The continuum is often used in reference to a model of housing and support services whereby people progress from one end of the spectrum (short-term accommodation) toward the other (safe and affordable market housing). While it was a useful model when the last Community Plan was prepared, it is no longer an accurate portrayal of how housing and support services are now delivered in the community.

A new housing and support framework was developed to support the preparation of this new Community Plan (see Figure 3.1). The new framework distinguishes between non-market housing (i.e., housing constructed and/or operated with some financial subsidization) and market housing (i.e., housing constructed and/or operated with no financial subsidization).

Within the non-market housing category, there is further categorization by expected length of tenure (non-permanent accommodation or permanent housing), and type of housing and associated supports. Non-permanent accommodation includes shelter spaces and short-term accommodation with appropriate supports for individuals and

families in transition. Permanent housing includes permanent *supportive* housing (i.e., congregate living units with on-site staff); *supported* housing (i.e., independent housing units where residents receive supports from service providers who come to their homes and/or from service providers they are linked to externally); and, affordable housing (i.e., independent housing units constructed and/or operated with some financial subsidization where residents access any needed supports independently through mainstream service providers).

The framework identifies two categories of market housing: market affordable housing (i.e., housing developed or acquired as a result of some type of incentive other than capital or operating financial subsidization) and pure market housing (i.e., housing developed and acquired with no incentives or financial subsidization).

The framework shows the range of non-permanent accommodation and permanent housing and supports addressed by this plan. The framework extends from shelters on the left to market housing on the right. Under this framework, individuals and families are provided with the most suitable housing and supports for them, depending on their circumstances. By taking a more client-centered approach, we are able to meet people “where they are at”, and provide them with the most suitable housing and supports for their needs, oftentimes with no expectation that they will transition to another form of housing. While people may move within the framework at various stages and times, there is no stigma associated with people not moving “up” the framework.

Figure 3.1 Housing and Support Framework

		Non-Market Housing					Market Housing	
Duration	Non-Permanent Accommodation		Permanent Accommodation			Market Housing		
Category	Shelter Spaces	Short Term Accommodation	Permanent Supportive Housing	Supported Housing	Affordable Housing	Market Affordable Housing	Pure Market Housing	
Units Description	Emergency shelter	Short-term accommodation for people in transition	Congregate living	Independent living	Housing cost (capital/operating) subsidized	No subsidies (capital/operating). Incentives to build or purchase	<i>(Outside of scope)</i>	
Supports Description	On-site or facilitated access to supports	Supports linked to needs and goals (on-site, external, or mobile)	On-site / staffed supports	Supports (external or mobile) linked to needs	Supports accessed through mainstream services			
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency shelters • Domestic violence shelters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodations for awaiting/ leaving hospital, addictions treatment; leaving corrections; waiting for permanent housing; newcomers. • Transitional Housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential living - group homes and harm-reduction housing • Seniors lodges • Assisted and enhanced assisted living facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive Case Management/ Assertive Community Treatment Housing First Teams • Seniors other self-contained units with some daily living/ health supports • Rent supplements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-contained seniors/daily living units • Community housing with rent geared to income • Rent supplements • Habitat for Humanity • Co-op/Co-Housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoning/density incentives • Market entry (first-time buyers) programs • Co-op/Co-Housing 	<i>(Outside of scope)</i>	

3.2 Gap Analysis

One of the main objectives of the community planning process is to identify gaps in the availability of different types of housing and supports in the community. This effort has been informed by:

- Data included in the City of Edmonton's and the Government of Alberta's ten year plans to end homelessness;
- Population and housing forecasts developed by the Capital Region Board;
- Analysis of the current and forecasted supply of and demand for affordable housing in the Edmonton area; and
- An extensive consultation process involving over 350 people.

Key findings from the gap analysis are summarized below. Appendix C provides more detailed estimates and outlines the methodology used for estimating the non-market housing gaps in the community.

The gap estimates are based on information available when this plan was being prepared and the current knowledge and expectations of many of those active in the community in planning, managing and delivering housing and related support services. The estimates reflect anticipated shifts in the types of short-term accommodation and housing needed in the community to continue to apply the housing first approach to ending homelessness (i.e., a reduced need for shelter spaces and an increased need for permanent supportive and supported housing).

Due to widely recognized challenges in acquiring complete and up-to-date numbers

for existing inventory and the necessarily arbitrary nature of forecasting future social, economic, and political conditions, there is reserved confidence on the part of the Community Plan Committee for the supply and demand estimates provided in this section. One of the first steps in implementing this plan will be to firm up information about the current supply of various types of non-market housing in the community. As the plan is implemented, the assumptions used in deriving the estimates will be tested and adjusted as new or updated information becomes available about demand pressures in the community, available funding, and the plans of key players in the sector.

Gap Analysis Assumptions

Estimating current and forecasted gaps across housing categories requires a number of assumptions to be made about the current unmet need, future changes in need, the funding that will be available, and changes in the supply of the different types of housing. The key assumptions that have been applied to estimate current and forecasted gaps for each category of housing are:

- *A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness* will be implemented as planned;
- The City of Edmonton will finish implementing the Cornerstones affordable housing program, committing the last of the funds under this program;
- Funding from other orders of government, including Housing and Urban Affairs' Affordable Housing programs and the Federal Government's HPS program, will continue through current commitments;

- The City of Edmonton’s Cornerstones Direct to Household rent supplement program and the province’s rent supplement program will not be extended beyond December 31, 2011;
- The future growth in non-market housing demand will be as estimated in the Capital Region Board’s Housing Plan, and predominantly in the affordable housing category.

It is important to note that very few of the new units forecasted to come forward as additional supply during the life of the Community Plan have been confirmed. The majority of planned additional units represent future conceptual plans by housing organizations or are based on broad government commitments and funding trends. In many ways, expected contributions to reduce the gaps identified in this section are dependent on political will, the availability of public revenue, and support from the wider public.

3.3 Estimates of Current and Forecasted Gaps

As illustrated in Figure 3.2, there are over 27,000 units of different types of non-market housing in the city of Edmonton.²⁶

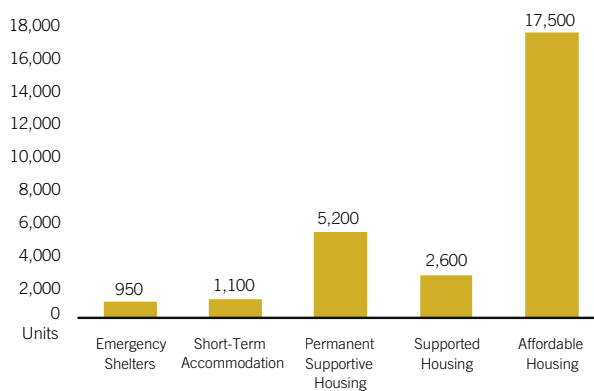
Almost two-thirds of these units (17,500) are non-market affordable housing units, including:

- 11,000 affordable rental units, the majority of which are managed by the Capital Region Housing Corporation, the Greater Edmonton Foundation, and homeEd;
- 5,200 units delivered through current rent supplement programs;

- Approximately 80 Habitat for Humanity homes; and,
- Over 1,000 cooperative housing units.

The remaining almost 10,000 units consist of other types of permanent non-market housing (i.e., permanent supportive and supported housing) and non-permanent accommodation (i.e., shelter spaces and short-term or interim accommodation).

Figure 3.2 Current Supply – Non-Market Housing



3.3.1 Homelessness

The most recent homeless count, conducted by Homeward Trust in October 2010, identified 2,421 homeless individuals in Edmonton.²⁷ Of this population, roughly two-thirds were absolute homeless, and approximately one-third were sheltered homeless. The 2010 results represented the first time the homeless population declined since the initial count conducted in 1999. Over 600 fewer homeless people were counted in 2010 versus 2008.

²⁶ The gap analysis has been restricted to the city of Edmonton, as complete information for the entire region is unavailable at this time.

²⁷ 2010 Edmonton Homeless Count, Homeward Trust Edmonton.

3.3.2 Shelter Spaces

Shelter spaces are provided for people in emergency housing need. Shelters may have support services on-site or provide facilitated access to external services. While mats or spaces in shelters are not considered to be true housing units, they play an important role in the community's response to the needs of individuals and families without permanent housing.

There are approximately 950 emergency shelter spaces in Edmonton, operated by a variety of non-profit organizations. The Government of Alberta reports that the portion of the emergency shelter system it funds is currently operating at about 70% of capacity.²⁸ While the system as a whole is not at full capacity, some individual shelters are, particularly those targeted to vulnerable populations like youth, seniors, and women fleeing violence.

The implementation of *A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness*, with its focus on homelessness prevention and shortened lengths of stay in emergency shelters, will decrease demand for shelter spaces over the next five years. *A Place to Call Home* targets a 50% reduction in the need for shelter capacity in Edmonton by 2014.

3.3.3 Short Term Accommodation

Since the last community plan was prepared, there has been a significant shift in the positioning of short term accommodation to meet housing and support services needs in the community. Previously, the predominant

type of short term accommodation was transitional housing. Typically, transitional housing is temporary accommodation (up to 3 years) for individuals seeking to stabilize their housing situation while resolving other issues in their lives, such as addictions and/or mental health or abuse, or participating in training or employment programs. Individuals and families living in transitional housing have access to a mix of supportive services that help them move toward self-sufficiency and more independent living. Since the development of the ten year plans, transitional housing has shifted toward interim accommodation, which is shorter-term accommodation for people in transition, either in their living situation or in their life situation. Interim accommodation facilities are typically operated by non-profit organizations supporting specific client groups, including people:

- waiting for or leaving hospital;
- waiting for or leaving addictions treatment;
- leaving correctional facilities;
- in the process of being re-housed through Housing First;
- waiting for permanent housing; or
- who are newcomers to the community.

Supports offered in interim accommodation are linked to needs and goals, and can either be on-site, external or mobile to residents. Unlike typical transitional housing, there are generally no or few specific program requirements of those staying in interim accommodation.

This shift toward interim accommodation by no means eliminates the need for transitional housing. In some cases transitional housing is the more appropriate type of housing and

²⁸ Housing and Urban Affairs, Alberta Daily Shelter Summary. Average of monthly overnight usage and capacity statistics, 3 month sample (July 2010, October 2010 and February 2011).

support. In particular, youth under the age of 18 and women fleeing violence or sexual exploitation often benefit from longer stays in transitional housing and the types of supports available to residents in these facilities.

The experience in implementing the housing first model over the past two years has identified a clear need to increase the number of interim accommodation units in the community available for people transitioning from homelessness to permanent housing and people who may previously have been living independently who are waiting for another type of housing (e.g. supportive), or to enter a hospital or treatment program. Increased access to interim accommodation for these people will complement ongoing housing first initiatives.

As illustrated in Table 3.1, it is estimated that there are currently 1,100 units of short term accommodation in Edmonton, which is estimated to be 1,300 units below what is currently required at this time to meet the needs of:

- people who are currently homeless;
- people awaiting transfer to supportive housing or independent housing;
- people requiring additional services before moving into a different type of housing;
- people in supported housing who are in the middle of being re-housed;
- individuals with needs relating to mental illness, family violence or addictions; and,
- newcomers to the community without housing.

Table 3.1 Short Term Accommodation

Current Supply	Current Gap	Forecasted Gap
1,100	1,300	1,300

Gap forecasted to persist

The gap analysis indicates that there will continue to be shortfall of an estimated 1,300 units of short term accommodation in the community in 2015 unless steps are taken to increase the supply or reduce the demand for this type of accommodation.

3.3.4 Permanent Supportive Housing

Permanent supportive housing is congregate living with on-site, staffed supports. It includes:

- group homes with on-site supports for people with disabilities (including adults with developmental disabilities choosing to live in a group setting);
- secure, supported units for people with mental illness and/or addictions; and,
- seniors housing with some on-site supports, such as meals, housekeeping, and possibly some care (e.g. assisted living facilities and lodges).

The gap analysis for permanent supportive housing in the Edmonton area was constrained by the availability of information about the current inventory of this type of housing in the community. There are also concerns about whether funding for the forecasted supply of

new permanent supportive housing will be forthcoming.

The analysis relied on information provided by Alberta Health Services and available information about seniors lodges in the community. Subsequent information obtained from Alberta Seniors about licensed supportive living facilities in the region highlight the need for partners (including Alberta Health Services, Alberta Seniors, operators of assisted living facilities, Alberta Human Services and members of the Community Plan Committee) to work together to gather the information required to derive more solid estimates of current and forecasted supply and demand for this type of housing.

Based on the information available at the time this plan was developed, it is estimated that there are currently approximately 5,200 units of permanent supportive housing in Edmonton.

There is an estimated need for another 2,100 units of this type of housing at this time, with the greatest need (an estimated 1,800) being for residential and lodge units, including units in facilities using a harm reduction approach.

Table 3.2 Permanent Supportive Housing

Current Supply	Current Gap	Forecasted Gap
5,200	2,100	1,150

Gap forecasted to decrease

Based on current known plans and projections of future demand, the gap in permanent supportive housing in the community is expected to decrease from an estimated 2,100 units currently to 1,150 units by 2015.

3.3.5 Supported Housing

Supported housing differs from permanent supportive housing in two key ways:

- People living in *supported* housing live in self-contained, affordable units; people living in *supportive* housing live in congregate settings.
- Required support services for people living in *supported* housing are provided either externally or brought to the client; people living in *supportive* housing receive some 24/7 on-site support.

In essence, a supported housing “unit” is simply an affordable housing unit in which a tenant receives coordinated services to support them to live independently in the community. Mobile services allow for supports to be delivered across the region and give clients the opportunity to live in neighborhoods of their choice while they continue to receive the supports they require. Services can be increased, decreased, or otherwise tailored depending on the needs of the individual. People currently living in supported housing units include:

- Housing First clients housed in affordable housing units and supported through Intensive Case Management (ICM) or Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams; and

- Seniors or others in self-contained subsidized housing units requiring some daily living or health supports, often through mainstream services like home care.

Supported housing units can be either non-market or market affordable units. For example, many of the units secured for Housing First clients over the past few years have been affordable market units that became available through involving providers of market housing in the program. At any one time there are between 1,000-2,000 Housing First clients in supported housing in the community. As people ‘graduate’ they typically continue to live in their rental unit with a time-limited rental subsidy. Rent supplements are one potential solution to achieve the affordability of the unit over a longer term. The demand for units for Housing First clients can be expected to fluctuate as the Housing First program continues to be strengthened, and implementation of the plans to end homelessness proceeds.

As illustrated in Table 3.3, the current supply of supported housing in the community is estimated at 2,600 units/housing opportunities, including:

- over 1,000 for Housing First clients, the majority of which are market units;
- over 1,000 seniors self-contained units with home care; and
- 500 other types of supported units.

The current unmet need for supported housing is estimated at 3,000 or more units.

Table 3.3 Supported Housing

Current Supply	Current Gap	Forecasted Gap
2,600	3,000	2,000

Gap forecasted to decrease

The continued implementation of the City of Edmonton’s ten year plan to end homelessness over the next five years will result in a significant increase in the supply of supported housing in the community. The plan calls for:

- 1,100 new units for singles or couples;
- 450 units through ACT; and
- 200 units through the ICM program.

However, the demand for supported housing is also expected to increase over this period as a result of people moving to the community.

The gap in supported housing is estimated to decrease from its current level of over 3,000 to 2,000 by 2015. To reduce this gap further, more will need to be done to increase the supply of supported housing in the community (e.g. by expanding community capacity to respond to client needs using a mobile service model) and reduce the demand for supported housing (e.g. by increasing the availability of permanent supportive housing in the community to allow for a more appropriate response to the needs of some of those currently in supported housing).

3.3.6 Non-Market Affordable Housing

Non-market affordable housing units have received a direct financial subsidy (capital, operating or both) to lower the cost of the housing. Supports are not linked to residency in housing units, but can be accessed as required by tenants through mainstream services. Examples of non-market affordable housing include:

- community housing with rent-geared-to-income;
- rent supplements;
- self-contained seniors units;
- Subsidized ownership programs, such as Habitat for Humanity.

Non-market affordable housing is by far the largest category of non-market housing in terms of both current supply and demand in the community. As illustrated in Table 3.4, the current supply of non-market affordable housing in Edmonton is estimated to be about 17,500 units.

The Capital Region Housing Corporation (CRHC) is the largest supplier of non-market affordable housing at present, managing 4,600 units of community housing and 450 units of affordable housing, and 5,200 equivalent rent supplement units. HomeEd manages a portfolio of approximately 800 units, while various other non-profit and private organizations manage an additional 6,400 units.

The current unmet need for affordable (non-market and market) housing is estimated to be over 19,000 units. This unmet need manifests itself in waiting lists for community housing and rent supplements, and a high proportion of rental households in the community being in core housing need.²⁹

Known plans to bring additional supply forward in the planning period include:

- 250 units of self-contained seniors' housing for the Greater Edmonton Foundation;
- 110 units of new CRHC-owned affordable housing;
- Over 800 units of affordable rental housing, and 400 secondary suites, through the City's Cornerstones program; and
- Approximately 500 units of affordable housing funded through Housing and Urban Affairs.³⁰

Table 3.4 Non-Market Affordable Housing

Current Supply	Current Gap	Forecasted Gap
17,500	19,000+	22,000+

Gap forecasted to increase

The gap in affordable housing in the community is forecasted to increase from over 19,000 units currently to nearly 22,000 units by 2015.

²⁹ Rental households in core housing need (relatively low-income and facing housing costs higher than 30% of monthly income) currently in market housing are a good proxy for unmet demand for non-market affordable housing. Of the current population in core housing need, 75% are estimated to require affordable housing, with the remainder requiring other types of non-market housing.

³⁰ Estimates based on HUA housing announcements, assuming future allocations to Edmonton similar to current and past funding (roughly 30% of total units developed in the province). HUA funding for homelessness units have been counted through the Plan to End Homelessness estimates of future supply.

This estimate is based on the expected portion of new residents in the community requiring non-market housing.³¹ It does not account for people currently housed in other types of non-market housing in the Housing and Support Framework moving into affordable housing, such as Housing First clients ‘graduating’ from the program to higher levels of self-sufficiency.

The estimate is also based on the assumption that both the City of Edmonton’s and the Province’s rent supplement programs will end later this year, as planned.

The shortage of non-market and market affordable housing in the community was the greatest need brought forward in the consultations. Affordable housing is needed by a broad range of lower-income residents across a range of demographics, including some seniors, single parent families, newcomers, Aboriginal households, young families and those who are working at low income jobs.

There is strong encouragement for mixed-income and mixed-use housing, smaller buildings with fewer units, and a desire to revitalize the cooperative (co-op) housing model.

As discussed in the next section, history and forecasts of private sector involvement in providing affordable housing suggest that there may be limitations in the market’s capacity to meet the needs of people requiring affordable units, especially if the region’s economy grows as anticipated over the next five years.

3.3.7 Market Affordable Housing

As indicated in Section 2.1.11, there are 47,000 households in the Edmonton area in core housing need, meaning they are paying more than 30% of their income for housing, are living in overcrowded conditions, or their housing is in need of major repairs. Of the total number of households in core housing need, over 60% or 29,000 households are living in rental units.³²

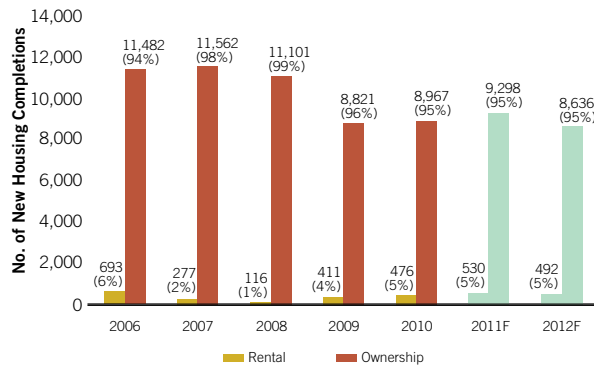
Key factors contributing to the challenges many find in securing and maintaining affordable housing in the Edmonton area include:

- **The limited addition of new rental housing.** Many low-income households in the region rely on rental housing, as home ownership is simply beyond their financial reach. The conversion of many rental units to condominiums in recent years, coupled with the limited number of new rental units being constructed, has contributed to a tight rental market. Figure 3.3 compares housing completions intended for the rental market with housing completions intended for the ownership market in the region. While approximately 30% of households in the Edmonton area rent, new rental housing has accounted for only between 1% and 6% of new housing completions since 2006.

³¹ The Capital Region Board estimates of additional growth to Edmonton over the next five years, 20%, or approximately 5,500 people, will require non-market housing. Of those 5,500, it is assumed that the majority (75%), will require affordable housing with no further supports.

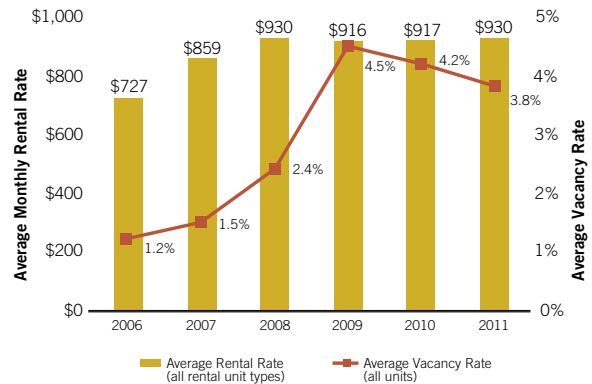
³² CMHC Housing in Canada On-line 2011, based on 2005 income data and 2006 Census data for the Edmonton CMA.

Figure 3.3 New Housing Completions: 2006-2012



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Housing Now -Edmonton CMA 2006-2011*

Figure 3.4 Average Rental and Vacancy Rates



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Rental Market Reports - Edmonton CMA: 2006-2011*

- Very low apartment vacancy rates, especially during economic upswings.** Alberta's economy is vulnerable to fluctuations in the world price of oil and shifts in the global economy. Prior to the global recession in 2008 and 2009, the job growth created by a strong economy was drawing people from throughout Canada and elsewhere in the world to the Edmonton area, placing upward pressure on rents and pushing down the rental vacancy rate. In 2006, the vacancy rate in the community was extremely low (1.2%), but has subsequently seen a rise. Toward the end of 2010, the vacancy rate stood at 4.2%.³³

- Rents going – and staying – up.** The average rent in the region increased from \$727 in 2006 to \$917 in 2010, an increase of 26%. Although vacancy rates have risen in the past few years, average rental rates have come down only slightly. CMHC has forecasted an increase in rental rates as more privately rented condominiums are pulled from the rental market for potential resale, more people come into the region for work, and modest increases to multi-family developments do not keep pace with demand.³⁴

	2006		2007		2008		2009		2010	
	Average Rent	Vacancy	Average Rent	Vacancy	Average Rent	Vacancy	Average Rent	Vacancy	Average Rent	Vacancy
Bachelor	\$561	1.4%	\$658	2.5%	\$707	2.4%	\$704	3.4%	\$708	4.5%
1 Bdrm	\$666	1.2%	\$784	1.5%	\$847	2.2%	\$841	4.5%	\$843	4.1%
2 Bdrm	\$808	1.1%	\$958	1.3%	\$1034	2.5%	\$1015	4.7%	\$1015	4.2%
3+ Bdrm	\$902	1.2%	\$1060	2.4%	\$1170	3.7%	\$1180	4.6%	\$1171	3.7%

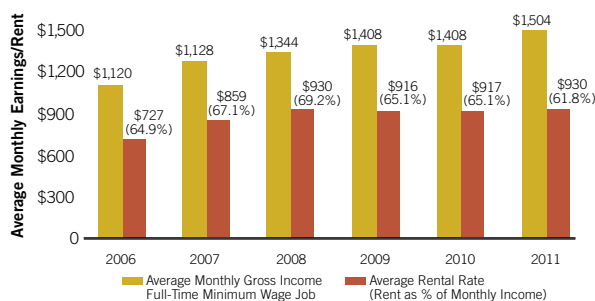
Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Rental Market Reports - Edmonton CMA: 2006-2010*

³³ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Rental Market Reports - Edmonton CMA: 2006-2011*.

³⁴ Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Spring 2011.

- Average rent in the community is 65% of the gross monthly income of a resident working full-time in a minimum wage job.** Although average weekly earnings for Edmonton are expected to rise due to reduced unemployment and increased demand for labor, people working for minimum wage will face increasing pressure as rental rates increase and their take-home pay remains low despite a modest increase in 2011. As shown in the figures below, people making minimum wage can expect to pay almost two-thirds of their income toward rent. Those receiving income support through programs like Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped or Alberta Works will face an even higher level of unaffordability. These households may see their rent account for three-quarters or more of their monthly core benefits.

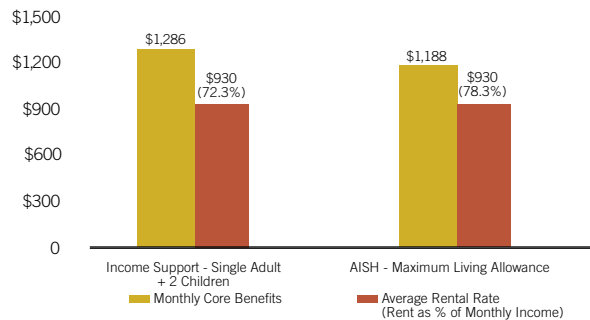
Figure 3.5 Average Monthly Gross Income and Average Rental Rates



Note: Percentages in brackets below Average Rental Rate is the percentage **represented by rent** of the average monthly gross income of residents working in minimum wage jobs for the same time period.

Sources: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Rental Market Reports - Edmonton CMA: 2006-2011 and Alberta Employment and Immigration.

Figure 3.6 Monthly Core Benefits and Average Rental Rates



Note: Percentages in brackets below Average Rental Rate is the percentage **represented by rent** of the monthly core benefit payment. Income Supports based on Expected to Work program. AISH benefits based on maximum available living allowance.

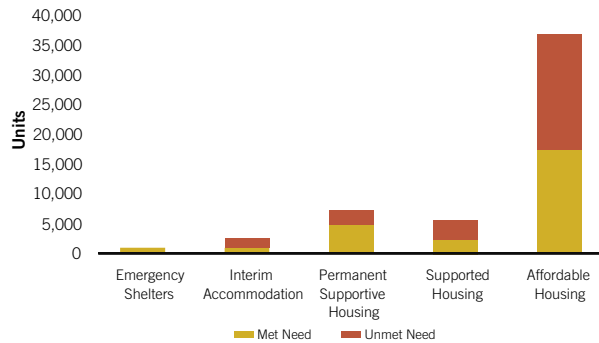
Sources: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Rental Market Reports - Edmonton CMA: 2011; Alberta Employment and Immigration Alberta Works - Financial Benefits Summary August 2011; Alberta Seniors and Community Supports - AISH Facts April 2010.

Market provision of affordable units is the greatest unknown quantity both in terms of existing inventory and future supply. However, the private sector has considerable flexibility and potential to respond to demand if conditions are amenable, and can play an important role in reducing the intimidating gap between demand for and supply of affordable units in the region over the next five years.

3.3.8 Summary of Housing Gaps

Figure 3.7 presents the current supply and unmet demand (gap) across the housing categories. It summarizes the gap estimates presented in Sections 3.3.2 to 3.3.6 above.

Figure 3.7 Current Supply and Unmet Demand (Gap)



All categories of housing, with the exception of emergency shelters, have supply gaps at this time. The unmet demand is large relative to the current supply particularly in regard to short term (i.e., interim) accommodation, supported housing and affordable housing. Figure 3.7 also shows that by far the largest relative difference in supply and demand is in the affordable housing category.

Figure 3.8 summarizes the forecasted estimates of additional supply and unmet demand in 2015. The figure indicates that:

- Shelter spaces will be reduced with no new growth in demand, reflecting the reduced need for shelter spaces with the ongoing implementation of the plans to end homelessness;
- Forecasted new supply for short-term accommodation matches the additional demand coming forward;
- Additional supply will outpace forecasted demand growth in both permanent supportive and supported housing, which indicates some 'gained ground' in terms of supply gaps in these categories; and,

- Growth in demand for affordable housing is forecasted to outstrip increases in supply, indicating 'lost ground' in terms of closing the supply gap in this category.

The data presented in these graphs assumes the forecasted additional supply is realized.

Figure 3.8 Additional Forecasted Supply and Demand (2011-2015)

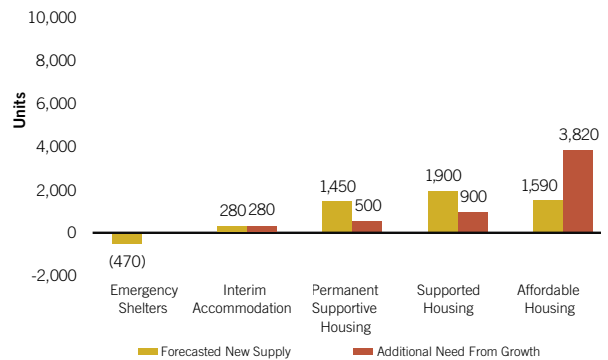
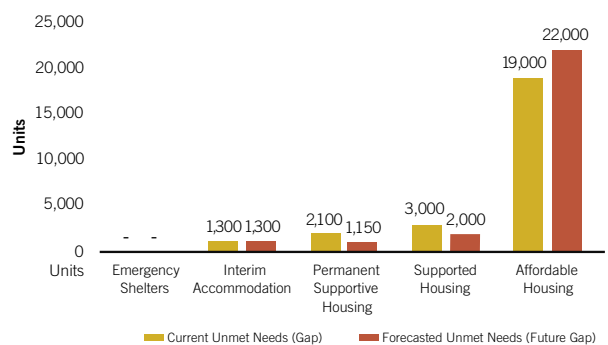


Figure 3.9 presents the change in housing gaps as forecasted between 2011 and the end of this plan.

Figure 3.9 Change Between Current and Forecasted Gaps (2011-15)



4. The Community Plan

Out of the consultations and planning work over the course of several months, the Community Plan Committee has identified a path forward for delivering housing and supports in the Edmonton area. The plan begins with five Foundations for Success, strategic approaches that will create the framework and environment necessary to achieve the community's goals. These foundations were identified through the consultation process, and are elaborated on in Appendix B.

Additionally, through the consultation process, it became clear that there are five Focus Areas that require the plan's attention:

- Housing Supply
- Short-Term and Permanent Supportive Housing
- Support Services
- Prevention and Early Intervention
- Capacity Building and Evidence-Based Practice

From there, the plan outlines 24 goals under the Focus Areas, with corresponding implementation strategies. These goals are what the community intends to accomplish, and in broad terms, how it will go about pursuing the goals.

Through these goals and strategies, the Community Plan will play an important role in supporting and complementing many municipal, regional, provincial, and federal plans, initiatives, and policy objectives. By supporting the achievement of the goals of other plans, initiatives, and policy objectives, the Community Plan reinforces

their importance and will contribute to their success. Throughout the consultations we heard that the goals and strategies of the ten year plans worked well for the chronically homeless population, but did not help to address the needs of other vulnerable populations in the community. Not only do the goals and strategies of the Community Plan come from what the community identified as needs, but they also focus on the areas that have yet to be addressed through the implementation of the ten year plans and HPS priorities. The Community Plan benefits from the lessons learned over the past few years in implementing the ten year plans to end homelessness.

Many of the goals and implementation strategies in the Community Plan are aligned with relevant aspects of the HPS Edmonton priorities, A Place to Call Home (Edmonton's ten year plan), A Plan for Alberta (Alberta's ten year plan), and/or Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy. A table is provided in Appendix H that cross-references specific goals, strategies, and priorities between the Community Plan and these reference documents.

The adoption of this plan, while a significant accomplishment, does not mean the community's planning work is completed. With involvement from the community, more detailed implementation plans that outline who is involved, and specifically how the goals will be accomplished, will be developed. Through the plan's lifespan, ongoing monitoring, review, and if needed, updating of priorities, goals and strategies will occur. This process will be stewarded by Homeward Trust and the Community Plan Committee, with involvement from community stakeholders.

4.1 Foundations for Success

A. Collaboration, Dialogue, and Engagement

The community's approach to housing and supports is evolving. In recent years, particularly through efforts like the development and implementation of the ten year plans, many silos that once existed between organizations and sectors have been broken down. There is a desire amongst all stakeholders to further increase collaboration and partnerships.

Participants urged the Community Plan Committee to move beyond consultation to create an ongoing dialogue. Business and community groups, in particular, emphasized their desire to be involved regularly, and to increase collaborative efforts.

Dialogue is critical to creating greater engagement and collaboration amongst stakeholders. Through this process, information and knowledge is shared, leading to a greater understanding of other organizations and institutions. Furthermore, common ground is identified, which lays the foundation for collaborative efforts. The community recognizes the need to involve and engage all stakeholders – traditional or not – in efforts to deliver housing and supports in the Edmonton area.

Collaboration, dialogue, and engagement are the means to establish truly systems-level

planning. Systems-level planning involves all stakeholders - community, non-profit sector, private sector, government, and vulnerable populations - to identify key issues and barriers, uncover factors contributing to these, and capitalize on opportunities to collaborate and achieve a shared vision.

B. Enhanced Strength of Non-Profit Sector and Use of Resources

Housing and service providers face many challenges in their work, particularly related to resources at hand. With limited resources, and in many cases funding that is not guaranteed to continue into the future, it is very challenging to build efficiencies through longer term planning. The community also recognizes that it is essential that public dollars are used effectively, appropriately, and in a

transparent manner. The community has been successful in leveraging resources and using them creatively and as efficiently as possible. As long as public funding is limited, it is essential this continue.

Nonetheless, limited resources can only be stretched so far before housing and service providers

reach their limits. Accessing greater resources through diversifying and increasing revenue sources, enhancing partnerships, and aligning efforts to remove duplication, are all essential.

“We don't want to just be consulted with once a year, or issue by issue. We don't want to simply be a 'check mark' on your list. We want to be part of the ongoing dialogue that forms and shapes our community. We will be stronger if we dialogue together, and often.”

—consultation participant

Enhancing human resources is crucial as well. Initiatives to attract and retain workers, to reduce burnout amongst staff at agencies, and to ensure mentorship and succession plans are in place, were all identified through the consultations as being important steps toward increasing the sector's capacity to deliver housing and supports.

C. Effective Monitoring and Evaluation

Building on the foundation of effective use of resources, evaluation and monitoring are recognized as critical for accountability and continuous improvement in housing and service delivery. Collection of data and information that enables monitoring and evaluation is key.

In order to be as effective as possible, data collection and analysis must not only be widespread in its breadth, but also in its participation and dissemination. Collecting relevant data is the first step; ensuring all relevant organizations are participating and sharing this data is the second. The more information there is at hand, the better the analysis will be able to inform decision-making in the future.

Evaluation is important for two purposes: first, to understand whether or not a program is successful, and second, to use that knowledge to inform development of other programs. The

community has embraced an evidence-based approach, which is a foundation for service delivery in programs such as Housing First.

D. Community Consultation and Region-Wide Inclusion

Consulting and working collaboratively with neighbourhoods throughout the region to achieve positive outcomes for clients and communities is essential. We need to consider the community context when developing and delivering housing and supports. Both clients and community representatives identified the need for this in the consultation process. Clients in particular expressed their desire to have appropriate housing in neighborhoods of

choice, where they can focus on stability and growth in their lives.

Communities are generally supportive of broad housing initiatives. Opposition to specific social and affordable housing projects often arises from a lack of information about the project, the individuals it serves and how it will fit into the community. Greater awareness of the benefits of social and

affordable housing, along with consultation and collaboration in developing projects, are key steps toward gaining overall community approval. Initiatives like the Housing Support Framework being developed by the City of Edmonton in 2011 are strong steps toward achieving this.

“We need to look at success stories and say why? What made this project a success and this other one a failure? How can developers, administrators and agencies develop their own best practices? Through evaluation.”

—consultation participant

Inclusion on both sides – proponents involving communities and communities welcoming different types of housing – will achieve better results for everyone.

E. Harm Reduction and Client Choice

The community supports the principle of housing first, and does not believe there should be preconditions to someone achieving safe, appropriate, and affordable housing.

In order to achieve this, a harm reduction approach is critical. Many in need of housing will have experiences or attributes that may present barriers. Some vulnerable populations, by the very nature of their circumstances, are more likely to be struggling with addictions or substance abuse, or have a criminal record – all of which pose barriers to attaining and maintaining housing. Denying housing based on factors known to exacerbate the risk of homelessness serves neither the client nor the community.

Housing first strategies have been endorsed as a best practice by members of the community, and a key component of this is client choice. This empowers the client to make choices regarding addictions, personal growth and development, in an environment that is appropriate and suitable for them. Housing provides a secure foundation upon which every person can enjoy stability and growth in their lives.

“The community supports the principle of housing first, and does not believe there should be preconditions to someone achieving safe, appropriate, and affordable housing.”

4.2 Focus Areas, Goals and Implementation Strategies

Focus Area: Housing Supply

The demand for affordable housing has grown faster than the supply in the Edmonton area, leading to thousands of households living in core housing need. Increasing the supply of rental units – both market and non-market – is critical to reducing the incidence of core housing need in the region. There is an opportunity for private and non-profit organizations to work together to provide additional housing.

One of the challenges identified is that regulations – in particular bylaws and policies at the municipal level – can make it challenging to deliver affordable housing units. In particular, zoning bylaws often include requirements for amenities that drive up the cost of building but may not be necessary for residents, or are directive in terms of what developments can occur where.

Additionally, addressing community concerns about new housing developments has become a major issue for increasing supply. A framework for community consultation can lead to greater involvement and input into the final product. Early consultation and neighbourhood planning will address communities’ desire for greater dialogue. Effective public awareness and education programs will form a strong compliment to those efforts.

While the unmet need for affordable housing is great, investment in increasing supply must be balanced with preservation and enhancement of existing units. This means ensuring they are well-maintained, and are still serving the best purpose. It is not enough to just secure funding to build new units. Housing providers must also have adequate resources to allow them to ensure their properties are well-maintained.

While effective planning and creation of new units play important roles in meeting community demand for affordable housing, approaches such as rental assistance have also proven invaluable in addressing the gap in housing. Strategies to alleviate rental market volatility during periods of rapid population growth in the region are essential to prevent housing insecurity for those most vulnerable. Regular forecasting will help the community be proactive in identifying trends and preparing a response that increases housing stability.

Approaches to home ownership can be a strong path to housing stability. The City of Edmonton's First Place (first-time homebuyers) program has demonstrated success in promoting home ownership. Co-operative housing, a shared ownership model, has traditionally been one way of increasing housing stability. A related development is the interest in co-housing models, where residents own their own homes, centered around shared amenities.

Land-banking is an effective way of acquiring land, and allowing for a longer planning and development horizon. In addition to getting access to land, it is critical that the development be coordinated in the best manner possible. A framework beyond any single organization will help ensure that sector-

wide, we are utilizing surplus and underutilized land effectively to ensure the housing supply can meet demand now and into the foreseeable future.

Goals and Implementation Strategies

1) Increase opportunities for home-ownership and equity building for low-income families.

- Explore the merits of using cooperative housing models to promote more affordable home ownership options.
- Implement policies and programs to encourage the development of housing opportunities for first time home buyers, building off the strengths of the City of Edmonton's First Place program.
- Explore partnership opportunities that encourage the development of affordable home ownership properties.

2) Increase the supply of market and non-market rental units that are suitable, adequate, accessible, and affordable.

- Encourage the construction of new rental housing through collaboration amongst the private and non-profit sectors.
- Explore regulatory and procedural changes that can promote the building of new market rental units.
- Identify opportunities to create additional units within existing non-market affordable housing properties.

3) Restore and adapt the existing stock of non-market housing to make facilities and units suitable, adequate, and accessible.

- Complete an inventory of non-market housing in need of repair or adaptation.

- Identify resources from public and private sources that could be used for renovating or adapting non-market housing units.
- Work with non-profit housing providers to ensure they have sufficient reserves for maintenance, repair, and renovation of new and existing units.

4) Acquire and commit land for future non-market housing developments.

- Create and maintain an inventory of brown fields, government-owned, and other underutilized available land in the region.
- Employ land banking strategies to facilitate the creation of new units and long-term planning of affordable housing development.
- Work with private, public, and non-profit stakeholders to create a framework for utilizing surplus and underutilized land for affordable housing.

5) Develop short-term and flexible approaches to increase the affordability of housing for people in need.

- Promote the continuation and growth of rental assistance programs that help to fill the need for affordable housing.
- Examine approaches that help ensure housing stability for people in need during rental market volatility.
- Conduct regular forecasting to anticipate market changes that could trigger proactive approaches to prevent housing instability.

6) Develop a balanced approach for both building new units, as well as buying existing stock, in order to meet the overall needs of those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

- Enhance relationships with major private and non-profit landlords and housing providers to access more existing units.
- Develop compensatory strategies that encourage no net loss of affordable housing stock during periods of market volatility.
- Assess the viability of using existing underutilized market or non-market structures for housing.

7) Engage neighborhoods and communities in achieving positive outcomes for housing and service delivery across the region.

- Create and implement public awareness and neighbor education programs for all categories of non-market housing for individuals who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.
- Develop a framework for community consultation with involvement from neighborhood and community members.
- Work with communities to identify opportunities for collaborative planning and project development.

8) Mobilize underutilized non-market housing units to address system gaps.

- Explore best practices for maximizing system capacity.
- Establish a system to track and re-purpose underutilized non-market units.
- Engage management bodies and other non-market housing providers to collaborate to address emerging needs and increase system efficiency.

Focus Area: Short-term and Permanent Supportive Housing

While emergency shelters that connect people to permanent housing play a role in meeting the needs of some, modest interim housing should play a more prominent role by providing a safe and secure home base for people to start a new life. Specific sub-populations that can benefit from well designed short-term housing programs include:

- People discharged from institutional care or corrections, to increase the likelihood that they will be successful in the community and reduce the chance of recidivism or relapse.
- Homeless youth, seniors leaving abuse, and women escaping exploitative or violent situations. These groups face particular vulnerability if they are not protected and provided with supports to help them overcome past trauma and gain skills to foster independence. Transitional housing focusing on empowerment and healing can lay the foundation for newfound independence and quality of life.
- Edmonton's growing Aboriginal population, which would benefit from short-term housing such as welcome centres with interim housing that offer supports and are culturally appropriate. This would help those who are new to the community become more comfortable with their new

community while they secure permanent housing.

- The area's increasing immigrant population. Short-term housing and services that are tailored to the cultural diversity of newcomers to Canada would assist these residents with their settlement in the community. While there are many mainstream programs that offer services in different languages and access to culturally appropriate foods, activities, and workers, there are few available within the housing sector.

“That vacancies exist while people wait for placement is a direct result of a lack of coordination within the system. There is a growing desire among operators to work together in a manner that ensures their resources are being used effectively.”

One of the key findings from the consultations was that there are inefficiencies in the way existing non-market housing is used. That vacancies exist while people wait for placement is a direct result of a lack of coordination within the system. There is a growing desire among operators to work together in a manner that ensures their

resources are being used effectively. Applying tools such as “innkeeper” unit management software across providers would create an integrated system in which vacancies become opportunities.

Ultimately, the goal is for everyone to find a permanent place to live. Many people living with mental illness, brain injury, developmental disabilities or other cognitive impairments are extremely vulnerable and require permanent supportive housing. Applying a harm reduction model for new permanent supportive housing

developments would provide a place for people who have essentially exhausted all their options due to the complexity and intractability of their conditions. As much as possible, units should be barrier-free to accommodate the needs of persons with physical disabilities and frail seniors.

Housing providers identified barriers to developing future units in policy and legislation which constrain them in addressing the gap in permanent supportive housing in the community. For example, requirements for amenities in permanent supportive housing that are unlikely to be used. The zoning pertaining to these projects is also confusing. Clarifying, and where appropriate, reducing barriers, will facilitate the development of supportive housing in appropriate sites.

Goals and Implementation Strategies

1) Create more interim and permanent supportive housing units for those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

- Prioritize new permanent supportive housing projects that incorporate a harm reduction philosophy.
- Secure interim housing spaces for those waiting to enter treatment, support programs, and permanent housing, as well as those who are new to the community.
- Provide more permanent supportive housing for people with complex behaviors, people with physical disabilities, and seniors.

2) Address the needs of vulnerable populations that do not have access to transitional, interim, or permanent supportive housing.

- Create supportive units that accommodate the cultural needs of immigrants and refugees.
- Secure short-term supportive accommodation for individuals discharged from treatment, hospitals, and corrections facilities.
- Secure more transitional housing for youth, and people leaving sexual exploitation and violence.

3) Increase housing and culturally appropriate support services for Edmonton's increasing Aboriginal population.

- Provide appropriate cultural supports to Aboriginal people in transitional, interim, or permanent housing.
- Support the work of Aboriginal community-led initiatives to take leadership and operational roles in the development, coordination, and delivery of housing and support services for Aboriginal people.
- Build awareness of Aboriginal peoples' history and culture among housing and service providers.

4) Collaborate with government bodies to ensure regulatory measures do not prevent the creation of further permanent supportive housing.

- Work with municipalities to determine optimal sites for building new permanent supportive housing.
- Clarify zoning bylaw and use-class definitions to facilitate the development of permanent supportive housing and short-term accommodation.

Focus Area: Support Services

One of the primary learnings from previous community plans – and confirmed more recently through delivery of the Housing First program – is that supports are integral to ensure people are successful in maintaining housing. Many people – in both supported and supportive housing – require access to services on a timely, appropriate basis. The ten year plans and their adoption of the housing first approach have been fundamental “game changers” in this respect. Intensive Case Management and Assertive Community Treatment teams, the Rapid Exit program, and the Clinical Access Team have provided a much wider range of comprehensive supports than has ever been available in the Edmonton area. However, the community has been clear in its desire for application of these best practices to a wider set of equally vulnerable people.

For many families and individuals, the right help delivered at the right time and in the right location can be the difference between staying housed and having to face the prospect of homelessness. Currently, drop-in centres and agencies offering information and services are centrally located in the inner city or in Edmonton’s core. Distributing access points for information and linkages to housing throughout the region can help people experiencing difficulties address their needs in the neighbourhoods in which they live. In addition to expanding access and information points across the region, it is crucial for there to be a coordinated approach to connect people to the appropriate housing and services available to them. This will help clients to navigate the complexities of the system, allow

for a central information source and intake system and enhance capacity to meet the targets of Edmonton’s ten year plan to end homelessness.

One of the critical times to reach someone is when they are leaving a formal care setting, such as a corrections facility, child protection, or after long stays in hospital. Many do not have a place to go and end up homeless or in poor housing situations. Proactive measures to reach people before they are discharged will reduce the number of people who end up in this situation. Initiatives that were led by Alberta Housing and Urban Affairs to improve discharge planning are critical in bringing key institutional players like corrections and health services on board in our collective efforts to end homelessness. A related challenge is the delay many experience waiting to access treatment, care, or supportive housing. System-level planning and strategies to eliminate these delays and provide people with the services and supports they need in a timely manner will build on the community’s current work and enhance service outcomes for people in need.

As noted in previous focus areas, the delivery of culturally-appropriate support services is essential to serving Aboriginal people in the most effective manner possible. The planned implementation of an Aboriginal Housing First Team delivered by an Aboriginal-led agency is an important step in the right direction. Raising awareness of their cultural history and encouraging collaboration among Aboriginal government and agencies can ensure that cultural appropriateness is a prominent consideration in service delivery.

Goals and Implementation Strategies

1) Increase accessibility of information, resources, and access points for housing and support services.

- Ensure services are available for those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness where needed, including neighborhoods where Housing First clients are housed.
- Develop a Housing Link that encompasses a network of access points and drop in centres throughout the region to connect people to housing and support services 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Engage community-based social service and health providers to offer information and linkages to housing and support services.

2) Develop a coordinated approach to appropriately match people to the range of housing and support services available in the region.

- Develop and disseminate information resources that can assist vulnerable people in accessing programs for housing and support services.
- Work with community-based and public providers to develop a coordinated intake system to facilitate access to Housing First and other housing programs.
- Use evidence from delivery of Housing First and identified best practices to enable enhancements and new approaches as necessary to meet ten year plan targets.

3) Improve access to treatment, continuing care, and managed transition from institutional care.

- Support cross-ministerial efforts to enhance discharge and continuity planning for people leaving hospitals, corrections facilities, child protection, and institutional care.
- Enhance the availability of in-reach programs for corrections facilities, hospitals, and addictions treatment facilities to help people bridge to community-based housing and support services.
- Support efforts to facilitate timely access to addictions treatment, mental health care, continuing care, and supportive living accommodations.

4) Increase housing and culturally appropriate support services for Edmonton's increasing Aboriginal population.

- Support the work of Aboriginal community-led initiatives to take leadership and operational roles in the development, coordination, and delivery of housing and support services for Aboriginal people.
- Build awareness of Aboriginal Peoples' history and culture among housing and service providers.
- Facilitate collaborative planning among agencies providing housing and services to Aboriginal people.

Focus Area: Prevention and Early Intervention

There is general consensus among stakeholders that we need to balance our current reactive stance to homelessness with a good measure of prevention. Progress has been made through the ten year plans' Housing First program, such as the landlord relations component, that are proactive in keeping clients in housing. These approaches need to be expanded to cover other at-risk populations. Early intervention through collaborative problem-solving is likely to head off these crises and reduce the number of people who experience homelessness.

An effect of the current housing shortage is that there are many people waiting to get into suitable housing. Finding ways of moving people into housing at a faster rate, and implementing effective intervention strategies to eliminate the need before it arises, is an important message that came out of the consultation process. For those who have a home, connecting with landlords and working with them to either allow some leniency or linking people at risk of eviction with resources can prevent them from losing their housing.

Throughout the region, there are numerous access points and outreach programs that do an excellent job at reaching and helping people in need. However, better coordination and more direct linkages to housing are needed to further strengthen the community's capacity to serve people experiencing homelessness in the community, especially those sleeping rough. Programs like warming centres and mobile outreach during the winter season should not only give the homeless refuge from the cold but also connect them with housing and

services providing long-term safety. Initiatives like the Assertive Outreach Team, part of the Housing First program, are the first steps towards reaching and connecting to homeless people region-wide.

Fundamentally, a preventive approach should extend further "upstream" than simply avoiding eviction or quickly re-housing people. Achieving the ultimate objective of long-term stability and resiliency requires addressing social needs, such as establishing cultural connections, building support networks, and supporting repatriation of children into healthy family environments, among other actions to provide needed foundations for self-sufficiency and wellness. Basic considerations such as transportation to required services, enough money to afford essentials like food, utilities, and child care, and access to social services and primary health care cannot be overlooked. Breaking down existing "silos" and adopting a cross-ministerial and cross-jurisdictional approach will help connect people to essential services and programs that help them overcome personal challenges and capitalize on their strengths. Non-profit and private sector organizations have important roles to play in providing training, skills development, employment bridging, and other opportunities.

Goals and Implementation Strategies

1) **Develop early intervention services to prevent homelessness or harm resulting from crises or emergency situations.**

- Provide short-term rental assistance and rapid re-housing services to at-risk or newly homeless people who have lived independently in the past and have no major barriers or risk factors.

- Support the development of an early warning system to assist in identifying high risk eviction situations in collaboration with landlords, property managers, service providers, and vulnerable people.
- Provide a coordinated, year-round response to address emergency situations in the winter, and people camping in the river valley at all times during the year.

2) Enhance and coordinate outreach programs to connect people to housing and support services.

- Develop and implement a coordinated outreach system that connects teams reaching people sleeping rough or panhandling with Housing First and other housing and support programs as appropriate.
- Increase the efficiency of outreach services through coordination and partnership among existing teams.
- Address gaps in outreach services to ensure contact with vulnerable populations who are sleeping rough or panhandling.

3) Support and implement initiatives that prevent homelessness and/or remove barriers to accessing housing.

- Support cross-ministerial initiatives and engage provincial ministries to ease access to government programs and services.
- Provide programs that help people develop skills, knowledge, relationships, and resources to reduce their risk of becoming or staying homeless.

- Facilitate access to mainstream programs including income support, disability benefits, primary health care, counseling, and family services.
- Provide programs and service linkages to help people in areas that can contribute to their resiliency and independence, such as developing their employability, social support networks, and cultural connections.

4) Enhance rapid exit and re-housing programs to improve timeliness of access to housing and support services.

- Enhance and expand existing rapid exit and diversion programs that connect people to housing and support services.
- Implement programs that prevent people currently on housing waiting lists from experiencing prolonged core housing need or becoming homeless.
- Continue to develop relationships with private landlords to work collaboratively to quickly mobilize available market units.

Focus Area: Capacity Building and Evidence-Based Practice

Essential to the success of this Community Plan and initiatives throughout the region is using evidence-based practices and ensuring sufficient capacity to meet the demand for housing and supports. The adoption of evidence-based practices has spurred success in programs to end homelessness, among other initiatives. There is also a growing recognition of the need to continually research and refine policy and practice.

Fundamental to being able to implement best practices is having adequate capacity within individual organizations and across the sector. Building and developing this capacity through human and financial resource development will be a major focus over the next five years. It is imperative that we have adequate resources and apply them as efficiently as possible. There is growing recognition of the need to draw on a more diverse stream of revenues, for example through private sector contributions or initiatives such as social enterprise. The critical importance of recruiting, retaining, and developing staff was also identified through the consultations. There is a great need to reduce burnout among staff, offer competitive compensation, and plan for retiring leadership. The latter is a growing concern not only given the aging of our workforce nationwide, but also because a tremendous amount of knowledge and expertise is held by a relatively small group of individuals.

As noted in the Foundations for Success, stakeholders desire more collaboration with other housing and service providers. There is consensus that greater collaboration will lead to better results. A first step is to establish a

regular dialogue between public, not-for-profit, and private sector groups. This will facilitate information and knowledge sharing, and discussion about opportunities for collaboration and leveraging the resources of each willing partner. Identifying points where efforts intersect and encouraging collaboration at these intersections can open a new horizon of possibilities.

The community planning process can facilitate this by identifying and mapping current responsibilities and common activities. From there, regular knowledge and data sharing will help build more effective approaches from all stakeholders.

For evidence-based practices to be effective, we must constantly be learning more about clients, their needs, and how best to serve them. Expanding the amount and quality of data collected and analyzed will produce better outcomes for all housing and service providers. Just doing research and analysis is not enough. It is just as important to share findings and learnings widely, allowing as many groups as possible to apply emerging best practices. Creating additional mechanisms for sharing this information, and the number of people who benefit from it, is key to ensuring housing and supports are delivered as effectively as possible in the community.

Goals and Implementation Strategies

- 1) Increase the capacity of the non-profit sector to develop and/or maintain non-market housing units and deliver a range of support services for people.**
 - Address gaps and reduce duplication sector-wide to ensure effective use of resources.

- Enhance and diversify revenue streams by creating a better balance between private and public funding sources.
- Build capacity for staff recruitment, retention, and succession planning within the non-profit sector.
- Increase the knowledge of front-line staff to meet peoples' unique needs.

2) Increase systems-level planning and information exchange that includes government, the non-profit sector, and the private sector.

- Coordinate a regular forum for public, non-profit, and private sector groups to share knowledge and explore opportunities to address systemic barriers.
- Map intersections among government, private and non-profit sector responsibilities and activities to encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing.
- Facilitate regular data sharing and planning updates across relevant ministries, jurisdictions, and sector stakeholders.

3) Conduct research and data analysis to determine the best practices for intervention and prevention responses for people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

- Work with agencies serving people who are homeless and at-risk of homelessness to explore challenges and opportunities to better track clients, services and outcomes and share information across platforms.
- Develop a data analysis framework for utilization of data for program improvement and publication of research literature.

- Promote sector-wide participation in collecting and utilizing data.
- Engage academic researchers to build research capacity in the community.

4) Promote knowledge sharing and evidence-based decision-making across the housing sector.

- Explore mechanisms for disseminating research findings to public, private, and non-profit stakeholders.
- Promote participation of public and non-profit stakeholders in utilizing data for decision making and information sharing purposes regarding systemic barriers.
- Ensure that training, conferences, workshops, and other professional development opportunities are available for all agencies in the sector, to improve outcomes for those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

4.3 Implementation and Performance Measurement Plan

This plan covers the 2011-15 timeframe. With the participation of all stakeholders, we are confident the goals will be met, and the community will provide appropriate, effective housing and services to people in need.

Responsibility for the implementation of the goals and implementation strategies identified in the Community Plan will be shared with the federal and provincial governments, regional municipalities, quasi-governmental and coordinating bodies, public and non-profit affordable housing providers and community organizations, and private developers and builders.

Homeward Trust will be responsible for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Community Plan over the next five years. The Community Plan Committee will meet as required, monitoring and reviewing progress, and preparing annual progress reports.

Implementation of the Community Plan

Implementation of the Community Plan will take place in three phases:

The first phase will involve gaining community endorsement of the plan. Homeward Trust will provide the Community Plan to community stakeholders and seek their endorsement of the plan.

In the second phase, relevant community stakeholders will be engaged to develop detailed implementation plans. These “work plans” will identify specific contributions,

“The Community Plan is just the start. The detailed implementation plans and subsequent work of moving initiatives forward, and monitoring and reviewing progress, will be key to ensuring appropriate responses to the housing and support needs in the community over the next five years.”

leadership, and tactics required to move the plan forward.

The third phase involves regular monitoring, reviewing progress and making adjustments to goals and strategies as required throughout the Community Plan’s life. As the housing and support sector is in a state of constant flux, it is imperative that the data and forecasting methodologies used to develop the Community Plan are reviewed and updated periodically. For example, changes in housing and construction prices could dramatically affect the community’s ability to implement the plan.

The Community Plan is just the start. The detailed implementation plans and subsequent work of moving initiatives forward, and monitoring and reviewing progress, will be key to ensuring appropriate responses to the housing and support needs in the community over the next five years.

Appendix A

Appendix A: Glossary

Aboriginal People: A collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. The Canadian constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people: Indians (commonly referred to as First Nations), Métis and Inuit. These are three distinct peoples with unique histories, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs. (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010/ Aboriginal Relations, Government of Alberta)

Absolute Homeless: Individuals and families with no housing alternatives. They may be sleeping 'rough' on the street, in a stairwell or campsite. (Homeward Trust, Homeless Count, 2010)

Acceptable Housing: Housing that is in adequate condition, of suitable size, and affordable. (Human Resource and Skills Development Canada, *Reference Guide*, 2010)

Adequate Housing: Dwellings not requiring any major repairs, as reported by residents. (HRSDC, 2010)

Adequate Income: Income for an unattached individual or family that is above the low income cut-off for its family size and urbanization classification. (HRSDC, 2010)

Affordable Housing: Housing that is modest in terms of floor area and amenities, that meets household needs and that has rents or payments below Average Market Rent in the community or area in which the unit is located. (Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of Alberta, 2011)

Alberta's Industrial Heartland: Alberta's Industrial Heartland is Canada's largest hydrocarbon processing region. The region's 40+ companies provide fuels, fertilizers, power, petrochemicals and more to provincial and global consumers. The region is comprised of 582 square kilometres (225 square miles) of industrial land. This includes 533 square kilometres (205 square miles) within the City of Fort Saskatchewan and the Counties of Lamont, Strathcona and Sturgeon, in addition to 49 square kilometres (20 square miles) in the City of Edmonton (industrial area known as the Edmonton Energy and Technology Park). (Alberta's Industrial Heartland, <http://www.industrialheartland.com/>)

Assertive Community Treatment (ACT): An interdisciplinary team of professionals available around the clock to provide treatment, support and other needed services. The ACT team will typically engage people immediately after they have secured permanent housing and will regularly offer a variety of services to choose from. Services may be delivered in people's homes or in community offices or clinics. ACT teams might include social workers, physicians, nurses, occupational therapists, psychologists, counselors, addictions specialists, housing specialists, employment specialists, administrative assistants, and other professionals. (Homeless Commission, <http://www.endedmontonhomelessness.com/about-homelessness/glossary.aspx>, 2008)

At Risk of Homelessness: This population includes individuals or families who are at imminent risk of eviction from their current housing, who pay too high a proportion of their income for housing or who live in unacceptable housing or housing circumstances. Also included are the following:

- those who do not have suitable housing in place prior to being discharged from the criminal justice system, leaving a health care facility after an extended stay or exiting the child welfare system
- individuals or families living in secured supportive housing, who may not have the necessary resources to live without some type of support. (HRSDC, 2010)

Capital Funding: One-time funding provided by any order of government (Federal, Provincial or Municipal) to reduce the requirement for mortgage funding to finance the development and construction costs of a housing project proposal. (Edmonton Joint Planning Committee On Housing, *Edmonton Community Plan on Housing and Support Services 2005-2009*, 2005)

Capital Investments (facilities): This includes the construction, renovation, or maintenance of shelters/housing and any physical structure from which support services are delivered. This can be pre-development, land and/or building purchase, new construction, renovations and/or purchase of furnishings or equipment. (HRSDC, 2010 Modified)

Case Management: A collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation, and evaluation of the options and services required to meet an individual's health and human service needs. It is characterized by advocacy, communication, and creative resource management to promote quality, cost-effective outcomes. (Homeless Commission, 2008)


Chronic Homelessness: Homeless persons or families who have been continuously homeless for a year or more, or have experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. (Homeless Commission, 2008)

Client: A person served by or utilizing the services of a social agency. (Merriam Webster dictionary)

Community: The human and social activity of a neighbourhood, district or city as a whole who share social interaction and some common interests. (City of Edmonton Municipal Development Plan and Transportation Master Plan)

For the *Community Plan's* purposes, the community incorporates funders, housing providers, service providers, clients, and all other organizations that make up the housing sector.

Community-based Residential Facilities (CBRFs): Community Residential Facilities are operated by non-governmental organizations or private aftercare agencies that provide a structured living environment with 24-hour supervision, programs and interventions to assist the offender with a gradual and structured transition to the community. (Correctional Service Canada, 2010)



Community Housing: Also called “subsidized,” “social” or “public” housing, community housing is provided to very low-income households who are capable of living independently, without a need for support services. On-going subsidies (either to publicly-owned operators or to community-based, non-profit housing corporations, or to private landlords through the Alberta Rent Supplement Program) enable rents to be paid by residents on a “rent-to-income” basis (usually 30% of gross household income). (EJPCOH, *Community Plan*, 2005 (adapted))

Cooperative Housing: Co-op housing is collectively owned and managed by its members (the people who live there). Co-op members actively participate in decision-making and share the work involved in running the housing community. Members of a co-op must volunteer and take part in the management of the building. (Capital Region Board Housing Plan, 2009)

Core Housing Need: A household is said to be in core housing need if its housing falls below at least one of the adequacy, suitability or affordability standards, and would have to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable. (HRSDC, 2010)

Edmonton Area: For the purpose of the plan, the Edmonton Area encompasses the City of Edmonton, and it’s bordering communities. These include those communities that are part of the Capital Region Board.

Emergency Shelter: Basic shelter to address homelessness (HUA, 2011)

Harm Reduction: Any policies, programs, or practical strategies designed to reduce harm and the negative consequences related to substance abuse, without requiring the cessation of substance use. Harm reduction is typically characterized by meeting substance users “where they’re at,” addressing conditions and motivations of drug use along with the use itself, and acknowledging an individual’s ability to take responsibility for their own behavior. Examples of interventions include safer use, managed use, and non-punitive abstinence. (Homeless Commission, 2008)

Homeless: Persons or families living on the streets or in other places that are not intended or suitable for permanent residence. (Homeless Commission, 2008)

Housing First: Describes the approach or model of programs that aim to help homeless persons or families quickly access and sustain permanent, affordable homes. The key principles that distinguish a housing first approach from other strategies include:

- An immediate and primary focus on obtaining permanent housing that is not time-limited.
- Varied, flexible, and responsive support services are offered around the clock, often including aggressive outreach by an ACT team (definition below).

- Access to permanent housing is not conditional upon engaging any support services, and vice versa. The only way people lose their housing is by violating their lease agreement.
- Financial assistance, often in the form of rent subsidies, security deposits, income supports, as well as assistance with budgeting and financial literacy.
- Assistance with the development of relationships with landlords, negotiating lease agreements, paying rent on time, and searching for appropriate housing.
- Case management services help people keep their housing and become successful at improving their overall well-being and independence. (Homeless Commission, 2008)

Intensive Case Management (ICM): Housing and Urban Affairs uses the following descriptions of the types of intensive case management:

- 1) **Low Intensity Case Management:** Temporary assistance in order to obtain housing and retain it *for* People who are:
 - Experiencing homelessness (residing in emergency or short-term supportive housing or on the street) *and*
 - Experiencing difficulty exiting homelessness on their own *and*
 - Do not have major barriers (e.g. serious mental or physical disabilities, chronic addictions) *and*
 - Who have lived independently in the past.

Low Intensity Case Management is a model that provides clients with short-term low-intensity case management services and financial support.

- 2) **High Intensity Case Management:** High Intensity case management assistance in order to obtain housing and retain it *for* People who are:
 - Experiencing homelessness (residing in emergency shelters or short-term supportive housing or on the street) *and*
 - Have one or more major barriers (e.g. serious mental or physical disabilities, chronic addictions, lack of employability) *with*
 - A primary focus on the chronically homeless.

High Intensity Case Management is a model that utilizes Intensive Case Management or Assertive Community Treatment Teams to assist people who experiencing homelessness and with a major barrier obtain and retain permanent housing and to stabilize with an emphasis on greater independence over time (but not necessarily full independence.)

3) **Mixed – Low and High Intensity Case Management:** Case management assistance in order to obtain housing and retain it for people who are:

- Experiencing homelessness (residing in emergency or short-term supportive housing or on the street) *and*
- Experiencing difficulty exiting homelessness on their own *and*
- May or may not have one or more major barriers (i.e. a mixed clientele.)

The client group served will be mixed, as a result the project type will be mixed and the subsequent intervention will vary based on the individual client's needs. (HUA, 2011)


Interim Accommodation: Programs that provide temporary housing for clients who are waiting for entry into a housing program, are being re-housed, or for clients needing short term accommodation that are entering or exiting institutions, treatment centres and other programs. Interim Accommodation is meant to be short-term and is linked to permanent housing solutions. (Homeward Trust, 2011)

Low Income Cut-Offs (LICO): Measure used by Statistics Canada to delineate family units into “low income” and “other” groups. A family unit with income below the cut-off for its family size and urbanization classification is considered a “low income” family. Any family with income above the cut-off is considered to be in the “other” category. (HRSDC, 2010)

Market Affordable Housing: Rental or ownership housing that receives no direct government subsidies, is modest in form and specification and is capable of being produced for moderate-income households without up-front or on-going direct government subsidies (e.g. through regulatory change, efficient design, tax incentives, etc.). An example is secondary and garage suites. Generally, it applies to households earning moderate incomes (i.e. between 100% and 150% of the median income for their household size. (City of Edmonton, 2011)

Mixed-Income Housing: Development that is comprised of housing units with differing levels of affordability, typically with some market-rate housing and some housing that is available to low-income occupants below market-rate. The “mix” of affordable and market-rate units that comprise mixed-income developments differ from community to community, and can depend, in part, on the local housing market and marketability of the units themselves. (City of Edmonton, 2011)

Mixed-Use Housing: A development that mixes compatible residential, commercial, institutional and recreational land uses, and may do so within an area of land, and/or within buildings, in order to increase density, reduce development footprint through intensification of land use, and to improve public accessibility to the range of mixed land uses. (CRB, 2009)



Non-market Housing: Non-Market Housing is defined as housing that is operated and funded or created through direct government subsidies and includes different categories of housing based on the associated services needed by the clients. Non-Market Housing is further segmented into the categories of Affordable Housing and Subsidized Housing:

- Affordable Housing is rental or ownership housing that generally does not require on-going (operating) subsidies and is both affordable and targeted for long-term occupancy to households with incomes between 100 percent and 80 percent of the median renter income for their household size;
- Subsidized Housing is primarily rental housing that requires on-going operating subsidies to make it affordable on a long-term basis to households with incomes that are generally between 80 percent and 65 percent or less of the median renter income for their household size. (CRB, 2009)

Non-profit organizations: Entities, normally without transferable ownership interests, organized and operated exclusively for social, educational, professional, religious, health, charitable or any other not-for-profit purpose. A not-for-profit organization's members, contributors and other resource providers do not, in such capacity, receive any financial return directly from the organization. (Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants Handbook, section 4400)

Permanent Supportive Housing: Housing for individuals and families that include supports and services integrated into the housing, and no length-of-stay duration. Services depend on clients' needs and are provided to help residents maintain independence and stability to promote social inclusion. (HRSDC, 2010)

Prevention: Programs that provide support to clients who are at imminent risk of homelessness and provide support to prevent new cases of homelessness. (HUA, 2011)


Private Sector: The part of the economy that is run by individuals and companies for profit.

Pure Market Housing: Rental or owned housing that receives no direct government subsidies and, as such, has rents and purchase prices that are determined through market forces. (City of Edmonton, 2011)

Rent Supplement: A subsidy that enables a low income renter to live in acceptable housing owned by private landlords, not-for-profit or co-operative housing groups. (HRSDC, 2011)

Sheltered Homeless: Individuals and families counted at an emergency accommodation and who expect to be on the street at the end of their stay. (Homeward Trust, Homeless Count, 2010)

Short-Term Supportive Housing: Temporary Housing with support to assist client movement into permanent housing. (HUA, 2011)



Support Services: Services directed at supporting individuals and families with daily living (e.g., referrals, individual case management, personal identification, transportation, legal/financial assistance and child care). (HRSDC, 2010)

Supported Housing: Primarily rental housing for which on-going operating subsidies are provided to increase affordability to residents, but where residents receive outreach support services to enable them to retain their occupancy. Examples include Housing First and Subsidized Seniors Self-Contained Housing where residents receive Home Care supports. (City of Edmonton, 2011)

Supportive Living (for the purpose of the Community Plan, Supportive living is incorporated with Permanent Supportive Housing): Supportive living accommodations provide supports and services to meet the housing, health and personal support needs of a wide range of people. In addition to providing a place to live, accommodation related services in supportive living accommodations can include meals, housekeeping and social activities. Residents may also receive professional health and personal support services through home care.

The Supportive Living Accommodation Licensing Act requires supportive living accommodations (a place of care for persons who are aged or infirm or require special care) to be licensed if they provide accommodation and support services for four or more adults. (Seniors and Community Supports, <http://asalreporting.gov.ab.ca/astral/glossary.htm>)

Transitional Accommodation: Housing facilities that provide services beyond basic needs and that, while not permanent, generally allow for a longer length of stay than emergency housing facilities (up to three years). These facilities offer more privacy to residents than emergency housing, and place greater emphasis on participation. This is targeted to those in need of structure, support, and/or skill-building to move from homelessness to housing stability, and ultimately to prevent a return to homelessness. (HRSDC, 2010)

Vulnerable and at risk Populations: Refer to population groups in a particular cultural, historical, political, and social context that make them susceptible to adverse social conditions. (Canadian Institutes for Health Research/City of Edmonton, *The Way We Live*, 2010)

Youth: Any individual who is between the ages of 15 and 30 (Government of Canada's Youth Employment Strategy) or between the ages of 13 and 25 (Human Services, Government of Alberta). The specific definition used will be flexible, depending on the specific activity or strategy and partners involved.

Appendix B



Appendix B

Edmonton Community Plan for Housing and Supports 2011 - 2016 Community Consultation Report

Prepared for
Edmonton Community Plan for Housing and Supports Committee

By SOLES & COMPANY
Workplaces and organizations for the 21st century

SOLES & COMPANY
Workplaces and organizations for the 21st century

August 2011



Thank you

Thank you to the 120 housing clients who took part in interviews, and the 350-plus representatives of community agencies, community leagues, businesses, the interfaith community and several levels of government who participated in consultation groups.

Thank you to the Edmonton Community Plan on Housing and Supports Committee, who guided the direction of the project.

Thank you to the staff of Homeward Trust Edmonton who provided on-going assistance, support, information and passion throughout the consultation process.

Thank you to Nichols Applied Management consultants who cooperated during their parallel project, and who made available much information.

*Katie Soles
Soles and Company
July 2011*

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You are welcome to share some or all of this report for the purpose of enhancing adequate, suitable and affordable housing for all those who reside in the Edmonton Region. If you use information from this report, please acknowledge the source.

For further information:
Soles and Company
1363 Falconer Road NW
Edmonton Alberta T6R 2C5
Phone (780) 433-8936
Cell (780) 919-7608
E-mail katie@solesandcompany.ca

This report summarizes what was said by consultation participants and what was included in research information provided to Soles and Company by Edmonton Community Plan on Housing and Supports Committee, Homeward Trust Edmonton, and Nichols Applied Management. Every effort has been made to reflect accurately the meaning of discussions and written information provided during the consultation.

Information or opinions reported in this document do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Soles and Company or the Edmonton Community Plan on Housing and Supports Committee. Themes, findings, and conclusions are based on the understanding of Soles and Company.

Edmonton Community Plan for Housing and Supports - 2011 - 2016 Community Consultation Report

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Executive Summary

The consultation project

The Community Plan Committee instructed its consultation team to conduct a community consultation to gather input, build relationships and share best thinking about housing and supports in the region. The intent was to ensure those in the housing community felt listened to, heard and respected. As well, the Committee felt Edmonton was ready to move to a new level and lay groundwork for greater collaboration.

Extensive public and stakeholder discussion groups and interviews were held in early 2011. Rather than using a “them come to us” approach, the consultation team attended meetings of the groups. Over 350 key stakeholders were consulted. As well, over 120 housing clients were interviewed in late 2010 and early 2011. The theme of consultation and interview questions was, “What needs to be in a Community Plan on Housing and Supports?”

The findings

Three priority housing needs identified most often by clients and consultation participants were affordable housing, interim or transition housing, and increasing the supply of supported and supportive housing for vulnerable individuals.

- **Affordable housing.** About 47,000 households (about one in ten) in the Edmonton region have core housing needs. “Core housing need” means that they cannot obtain housing in good repair and suitable for the number and type of people who live there for a cost of 30% or less of their household income.¹ New housing options do not match the needs of those in core housing need. Consulting participants are concerned about what will happen for mid- to low-income households already stretched financially when the next boom arrives.
- **Interim and transition housing.** Consultation participants identified a lack of interim accommodation, and lack of housing with appropriate supports for people in a major transition. Two major limitations were identified by consultation participants.
 - Lack of suitable places where clients can move when they are ready to leave transition housing creates a bottleneck in the housing system. Clients with no other suitable place to go are in spaces that could be used by others in need of transition housing.
 - On the other hand, for some clients, transition time limits are not long enough. Clients must sometimes leave transition housing before they have had time to learn new skills, heal, stabilize and/or find more permanent housing.
- **Housing supports for vulnerable individuals.** Consultation participants identified that the major stressor for clients, and also the greatest barrier to meeting core housing needs was the lack of **financial resources**. A second barrier was lack of **social supports** to assist people in making the changes they want to make in their lives.

¹ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) states that, “Affordability... is recognized as a maximum of 30% of household income spent on shelter.” www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/corp/faq/faq

A systemic approach

Many of the barriers to meeting core housing needs are system barriers. A systemic approach that takes into account the bigger context and underlying sources of problems is needed. Strategic processes to foster a systemic approach include:

- Manage complex change;
- Explore solutions to contentiousness and conflict within the community;
- Engage the skills and talents of diverse stakeholders;
- Address the urgency to “get ahead” of a potential housing crisis;
- Make creative use of existing resources;
- Ensure on-going engagement, evaluation and monitoring.

What people said: messages from clients and stakeholders

Two recurring themes from clients and all types of stakeholder participants were:

- Lack of supportive housing creates a negative and expensive domino effect;
- The community is strongly committed to continue the focus on ending homelessness, while simultaneously working to assure adequate, suitable and affordable housing for all.

As well, each sector had unique perspectives.

- **Clients** said that, while basic needs are similar for many types of people, the ways to address those needs are different from one group to another. Clients also said they want to be able to move away from the inner city and still have access to services.
- **Community agencies** talked of system barriers (such as the housing criteria being narrower than client needs, and limited access to addictions and mental health services), a desire for a prevention component and the need to strengthen their relationships with communities.
- **Community leagues** wanted role clarification for the many players, consultation before decisions are made, and housing projects good for the community as well as individuals. Community leagues were offended by accusations of NIMBYism and offered many ideas for how to incorporate expanded housing opportunities into their communities.
- **The inter-faith community** described their Capital Region Interfaith Housing Initiative which has formally pledged support for Edmonton’s *10 Year Plan to End Homelessness* and has involved over 100 people from 23 different religious traditions.
- **The business community** encouraged system thinking. They want to be players in incorporating their urban design and innovative housing expertise into the development of adequate, suitable and affordable housing throughout the Edmonton region.

Conclusion

Since the last Community Plan on Housing, a change in philosophy has shifted our thinking. However, systems take longer to change than philosophies. Change can be both chaotic and exhilarating. The *Community Plan on Housing and Support* reflects new ways of thinking, and has the potential to lead us into new and healthy ways of housing – and being a community.

1.0 The Consultation Project

Purpose

The Edmonton Community Plan for Housing and Supports instructed its consultation team to conduct a community consultation to gather input, build relationships and share best thinking about housing and supports in Alberta's Edmonton region.

The intent of the consultation process was to ensure that those in the Edmonton housing community in all of its breadth and depth felt listened to, heard and respected. It was our aim that participants 'recognize themselves' in the final plan, and become champions of the tough decisions that need to be made as the plan becomes reality.

In addition, the Community Plan Committee felt that Edmonton as a population had become very experienced at consultation. There was a strong desire to move to a new level of interaction, where participants were collaborators at the same table, where they were involved in meaningful solutions, and where the groundwork was laid for beginning or reinforcing long standing relationships.

Who was consulted

During the consultation process, three types of people were interviewed, surveyed or engaged in individual or group discussion.

- **People who have housing needs.** Extensive consultations encompassed a wide range of demographics: youth and seniors; newcomers to Canada and those people identifying as Aboriginal (First Nations, Inuit and Métis); people fleeing violence or sexual exploitation and those leaving institutions; people experiencing mental illness, developmental or physical disabilities; sexual minorities; people experiencing homelessness and those at risk of becoming homeless.
- **People in direct contact with individuals who have housing needs.** These included representatives of agencies who have a mandate to deal with housing needs as well as agencies who serve clients who have needs that affect their housing requirements.
- **People (stakeholders) whose support or help is useful** and/or who are affected by housing policies and actions. These included, for example, the business community, builders, developers and realtors; elected and government officials; and community leagues.

What participants were asked

The consultation process followed an Appreciative Inquiry Model. This is a paradigm for organizational development, planning and social innovation. By asking positive questions, we can generate new images of the future by drawing on images evoked by the best of the past and present. It was also consistent with our intent to acknowledge and build upon the significant work that had already been done in the community.

The over-arching theme of all of the consultation questions was: “What needs to be in a Community Plan on Housing and Supports? If we assume that, ‘If it is not in the Plan, it is unlikely to get funding’ what do we want to make sure is included?”

Sub-theme questions included:

- What is currently working well?
- What needs to be amplified?
- What strengths or resources exist to help meet those needs?
- What new initiatives and strategies need to be in the Community Plan?

Group consultation methodology

Extensive public and key stakeholder discussion groups and interviews were held between January 19 and March 31, 2011. Over 350 key stakeholders were consulted.

The consultations were done in a non-traditional way. Rather than having ‘them come to us,’ at our convenience, wherever possible we chose instead to attend existing meetings of a variety of committees, collaboratives, and ad hoc gatherings, sitting at their table in their community. Some of these were special meetings specifically to discuss the Community Plan, while others were simply an addition to a regular agenda. By meeting individuals and groups where they typically gather or at a location that is accessible to them, we were able to honour their gatherings, as well as gain greater input from a multitude of diverse stakeholders.

In addition there were three specialty Think Tanks,

- Advocacy and Government Relations
- Use of Social Media
- Communications Strategies

We also held a large group gathering for Aboriginal people and those agencies serving Urban Aboriginal clients.

Please refer to the Appendix for a list of groups who participated in group consultations.

Client interview methodology

The Community Plan Committee emphasized the importance of hearing from actual clients—those people who needed housing. Thus, one hundred and twenty one (121) client interviews were conducted between December 2010 and January 2011.

The interviews were held in conjunction with those conducted for REACH Edmonton for A Safe Community 24/7 Service. Many of the agencies serving clients who will access 24/7 services are also the agencies dedicated to providing housing and support services to those same clients. This collaborative approach yielded rich results for both REACH and the Community Plan Committee and yielded more integrated outcomes, while minimizing disruption to the clients.

Following its practice of drawing heavily on the expertise of the community, Homeward Trust and REACH facilitated two meetings in which community agencies designed an in-depth client interview methodology, interview guide and process. The client interviews consisted of 60 questions that were a combination of multiple choice and narrative response.

The interviews were conducted by twelve partnering community agencies' staff with whom the client already had a trusted relationship. The clients were given \$20.00 gift cards for participating in the interviews. It should be noted that the process was not intended to be statistically reliable, but rather falls into the category of Action or Social Research.

2.0 Priority housing needs

“If you think the issue is just about the built form, or is just about housing, you are dead wrong. We need to balance the social, economic and environmental needs of people in addition to housing.”

(Business consultation participant)

“Housing is a vital platform for individuals' health and wellbeing, for an inclusive society, and for healthy communities.”

Jackson Andrew (2004):

Home Truths: Why Housing Matters to Canadians

Consultation participants agreed that it was critical to ensure that all citizens have the opportunity to live in housing that meets the core housing standards of adequate, suitable and affordable.²

One of the queries directed toward consultation participants was: “What needs to be in a Community Plan on Housing and Supports? What unmet needs exist that should be included in the Community Plan?”

The three housing needs identified most frequently were:

- Affordable housing,
- Interim or transition housing, and
- Increasing the supply of supported and supportive housing for vulnerable individuals.

2.1 Affordable housing

“There is an urgent need for more affordable housing and market affordable housing. The current demand far exceeds supply. It is predicted to get worse as Alberta returns to a ‘boom’ economy. What is now a troubling shortfall is destined to become critical—and that will negatively impact our City.”

Consultation Participant

The lack of affordable and market affordable housing was the greatest need expressed in the consultations. It is an area of housing needed by lower-income residents and may include newcomers to Canada, Aboriginal households, older adults, single parent families, families with children and those who are working at low income jobs.

The following statements are representative of those made by numerous participants during the consultations.

“These people are invisible and unheard. They can’t be seen by the public, aren’t on the streets, and do not have a champion like the homeless did. But trust me, this is where my colleagues and I spend all of our time—trying to find appropriate housing for people who simply need a little help.”

“This [affordable housing] is obviously a priority. The waiting lists are unacceptable, and that is just for those places that have waiting lists. We really need to put the same energy into this as we put into ending homelessness.”

2 different Consultation Participants

An invisible situation

When discussing the need for affordable housing, people cited the Tent City of 2007 as the city’s defining moment in the commitment to end homelessness. Several mused:

“Maybe we should recreate a ‘mock’ tent city somewhere to demonstrate the number of people on the waiting lists for housing. We need community housing. How do we prove it?”

“What would the reaction be if we could visibly see all of those on the waiting lists...if they camped in Churchill Square?”

“You need to create a crisis! You need to get the public and the political forces to realize that this is a crisis that is just below the surface and will explode if something isn’t done.”

3 different Consultation Participants

Lack of Supply

Respondents across the spectrum expressed concern about the lack of affordable housing units. Much of the Capital Region Housing Corporation’s current housing stock is aging and in need of repair. Private sector units are at risk of rent increases or condo conversions as the economy improves. These factors combine to add to the unit shortage that already exists.

“No one is building and apartments are being converted into condos. Condo conversions hurt both the community and the affordable housing stock.”

Consultation Participant

Participants in the public and private sector acknowledge that ‘quick fixes’ are not the answer. The need for long term planning with requisite funding attached is key to revitalizing existing housing stock. Participants urged sound planning and the integration of existing properties into long term reconstruction.

“Quick turn renos will not work —many properties are too old. The renos are expensive, and then only good for 10 to 15 years. We need 40 year funding, we need to be able to tear down and rebuild. This would work well in communities where the community is acclimatized to this type of housing.”

Consultation Participant

Consultation participants suggested the rebuilding of existing properties in communities that are already accepting of community or public housing.

“For example, a Londonderry property is long established and accepted by the community. There is lots of space, it is a great development. Eventually it will revert back to City. Unfortunately it is old and there are many issues. For example, some units are closed due to asbestos. At this age, renovations are not a good investment. It has great redevelopment potential and is an excellent model that could be expanded, but funding is needed to redevelop the site.”

Consultation Participant

Participants urged that, where appropriate, current properties be restored and adapted, incorporating universal design principles wherever possible. Participants caution that thorough inspection and review is needed to ensure informed decisions are made regarding any renovation or new construction. Participants would like to see the approach be, “Repair what can be repaired and rebuild what cannot be restored and adapted for the long term.”

Expand the type of units available

In addition to supply being impacted by age, condo conversions and market demand, participants were also concerned about the type of units that were available. Creativity and innovation were encouraged. Smaller buildings with fewer units were preferred to those of 45 units or more. Town housing and mixed housing were regularly suggested.

Several groups emphasized a revitalization of the Co-operative Housing Model, where everyone had a role, responsibility and pride of place. Asset building models were also encouraged. The ability to apply rent to ownership or to have a home buyer's initiative was strongly promoted.

Developers, landlords and housing agencies were united in their belief that different configurations of housing would result in a triple win for the community, the builder, and the residents.

"We need to be buying up all those drug houses owned by absentee landlords, renovating them, and then offering incentives for families to move into our communities. It would be good for us, and good for them."

Consultation Participant

Participants felt that communities need to be educated as to the wide range of non market housing options. Currently the community is not seen to make a distinction between the various types of non market housing and tend to 'paint all projects with the same brush.'

"We need more mixed use buildings. They are key to an economically viable housing strategy".

"Out of the 12 sites there is negative reaction by the community to all affordable housing. People view affordable housing in the same category as shelters, halfway houses, or transition housing. They do not make the distinction between different types of non market housing."

"Mixed housing would be a solution to many issues. The community may be more accepting. Those in social/community housing could move into affordable housing while staying in the same building and community. Diverse population is healthier for the community."

3 different Consultation Participants

Barriers to affordable housing

Point system. One of the challenges faced by housing providers, agencies trying to access housing for clients, and people on wait lists is the "Point System" that allocates housing based on a point system legislated by the province.

“The same legislated Point System for evaluation has been in place since 1994. It has never been updated despite the changes since then. There are people who will never make the points even though they may be high needs. For example, people on social assistance, they will never make the points. They are deemed to be taken care of. Where are they? Where do they go? “

Consultation Participant

Funds vs. needs. Another barrier often cited by participants was the perceived disconnect between funds the provincial government provides to build housing complexes compared to the needs of those who will live in the housing.

“Bachelor and 1 bedroom units are being funded when the shortage is with 2 to 4 bedroom units.”

“Housing decisions are made not by per person but per unit, not per bedroom but per unit. This creates a vacuum between need and reality. There is also a vacuum in building new facilities.”

2 different Consultation Participants

2.2 Interim and transition housing

In addition to affordable housing, the second housing priority identified by consultation participants was the need for interim or transition housing. This priority was identified by clients, community agencies, law enforcement and institutions.

Though consultation participants sometimes used the terms “interim” and “transition” interchangeably, in this report (and among housing agencies), the terms have different meanings.

- **Interim housing** means housing where a person lives temporarily until a specific kind of alternate housing is available. For example:
 - George’s House provides interim accommodation for persons who want to enter an addictions treatment program, while they are awaiting a treatment space and/or accommodation through Housing First;
 - Crossroads provides a safe interim place for women who have been sexually exploited, while they are awaiting more permanent accommodation through Housing First.
- **Transition housing** means housing that a person lives in during a time of change in his or her life, until the person’s circumstances change so that a different type of housing is appropriate. For example:
 - If a woman and her children leaving an abusive relationship live in a “Second Stage Housing” apartment created specifically for that sub-population while she regains her health and acquires employment skills and reliable income, that apartment could be considered “transition housing.”

- If a man leaving incarceration lives in a Community-Based Residential Facility (half-way house) with others recently released from prison, with the understanding that he will leave the facility when he and his parole officer are confident that he is able to live on his own successfully, that could be considered “transition housing.”

All of the people identified as vulnerable populations expressed the need for interim or transition housing.

“I came out of 4 weeks of addictions treatment, ready to start a new life and I had nowhere to go, no place to stay. A police officer spent hours on the phone trying to help me.”

“When I got out of jail I had no place to live. It was a Friday afternoon and no one was around who could help.”

2 different Consultation Participants

Transition times

Consultation participants identified times of transition as those in which clients are particularly vulnerable. Nowhere is this more evident than when clients are attempting new beginnings with virtually no supports. Clients leaving incarceration, addictions treatment, hospital and mental health institutions often have nowhere to go and literally nowhere to live. Clients waiting to participate in the Housing First program have a similar challenge.

Living on the street or in emergency accommodation puts all these clients at risk to lose momentum, reoffend, or slide back into addictions. The need for well staffed interim or transition units where clients can receive counseling and life planning and find stable housing is a critical prevention measure.


Living in a community

Agency workers and those who have experienced incarceration suggest that group homes offering a supportive environment are essential requirements for this population.

All groups that had housing needs experienced some sort of need for transition or interim housing. For example, Aboriginal people and newcomers to Canada, though culturally very different, experience similar challenges as they migrate into the city. “Welcoming centers,” with on-site interim accommodation and access to culturally appropriate information and services, were seen as critical for both Aboriginal people and newcomers. In particular, Aboriginal people new to the city may benefit from a cultural centre that could foster connections with community members and help them link to services or housing.

Two philosophically different approaches

Several consultation participants pointed out a difference in philosophy between the “Housing First” model and transition housing. The “Housing First” philosophy is that, no matter what the person’s



skills or needs are, the first task is to arrange for the person to be in a home, and then to wrap around any required services. On the other hand, the underlying philosophy of transition housing implies that individuals need to be “ready” for permanent housing.

In the Housing First model, the nature of supports changes as the person’s needs and skills change but the person remains in his or her home. In the transition housing model, the assumption is that once a person has acquired the necessary learning, skills, health or stability through transition housing, the person will move on to some other type of accommodation.

Regardless of on-going discussions about the philosophy and eligibility criteria for transition housing, two existing challenges were mentioned frequently by consultation participants: the lack of permanent supported housing, and the time frames during which clients are eligible to live in transition housing.

A bottleneck: transition to what?

Central to the success of transition housing is the ability of clients to transition to appropriate long term housing. Clients and workers suggest that a major barrier is the lack of appropriate housing for transition housing clients to move into when they are ready.

“The reason current transition housing ‘isn’t working’ is that it has failed to be transition housing. The lack of places to transition into creates massive bottlenecks.”

Consultation Participant

Lack of suitable places where clients can move if they are ready to leave transition housing creates a bottleneck in the housing system. Clients with no other suitable place to go are in spaces that could be used by others who would benefit from the services available in transition housing. For example, some residents at Urban Manor have lived there for more than 10 years because there is simply no permanent supported housing with a “harm reduction” approach.

There needs to be a direct and facilitated path to supported housing for those needing social or financial supports and greater access to affordable permanent supported housing alternatives.

Time enough for transition

Most interim or transition housing facilities have a time limit. Newcomers to Canada say that the amount of time people can stay in current transition facilities is too short for newcomers with little economic and social capital. Newcomer families are spending savings or accumulating high debt while looking for accommodation, thus putting them in a deficit position from which it is difficult to recover. The lack of orientation to the city and to programs and services delays their ability to participate fully in the community.

“Why are we so addicted to transition? Just when people start to settle into some kind of stability, we make them move. Why couldn’t different levels of support move instead of making people move?”

Consultation Participant

As well, the time frame for healing, skill development, transition and stability for people leaving residential treatment programs, people leaving incarceration, or people leaving violence or sexual exploitation, is unique to each individual. Prescribed time frames may not fit their needs.

2.3 Increase in housing supports

In addition to the need for more affordable housing and more interim and transition housing, the third priority identified by consultation participants was the need for additional housing that provides appropriate social or financial support for vulnerable individuals.²

Consultation participants identified that the major stressor for clients, and also the greatest barrier to meeting core housing needs was the lack of **financial resources**. This was followed by lack of **social supports** to assist people in making the changes they want to make in their lives.

Financial support

Rent is more than 30% of total household income for many low income families. This situation crossed all segments of the respondents, and caused the most anxiety and distress.

“The gap between the supplements available and the cost of an apartment is an ever widening chasm that our clients face daily. A \$300 housing allowance doesn’t begin to cover the average 1-bedroom apartment rent of \$800.”

Consultation Participant

The lack of finances causing people to worry constantly about housing was seen as a major factor leading to poor health. Several participants pointed us to a study conducted by the Wellesley Institute.


“Poor housing is directly linked to poor health. Numerous research reports funded by the Wellesley Institute and others point to a good home as one of the most important determinants of health. Inadequate housing and homelessness leads to increased illness and premature death.”

Wellesley Institute (2010): Precarious Housing in Canada

Lack of financial resources had other far reaching implications, including whether children could be repatriated with their parents.

² Within the housing community, the term **“supportive housing”** refers to congregate facilities in which staffed supports are located on-site; **“supported housing”** refers to housing in which supports are not on site, but are brought into a client’s home. Examples of people living in the two different categories of housing include:

- **Supportive housing:** a group of adults with developmental disabilities who live together in a group home with 24/7 staff available; older adults who live in a lodge or assisted living facility.
- **Supported housing:** Housing First clients in market or non-market housing who are supported through intensive case management or assertive community treatment (ACT) teams; older adults or others who live in self-contained units and who receive mobile health supports or assistance with daily living



“The hardest part of my life is not having enough money to take care of my 3 children with high housing costs, children’s school expenses and other costs.

Consultation Participant

Rent supplements: a short-term response to a long-term problem

Providing rent supplements for low income families is a method to make more housing units available to them. One benefit of rent supplements is that they are flexible, nimble and can be implemented quickly. However, rent supplements are a band-aid response – a short term solution to a long term problem. Even though we need short term responses, the longer term solution is to create more affordable housing stock. (Other sections of this report describe some of the challenges in doing that.)

“If we don’t build more housing stock and the province doesn’t increase rent supplements, what will happen when we get swings in the economy? Private landlords influence the balance of the affordable housing market when the economy is in an upswing. Rent supplements provide short term political gain for long term problem.”

Consultation Participant

Consultation participants urged that the Housing Plan keep working on the long term solutions of increasing affordable housing stock, even while using rent supplements as one of the short term measures to assist families who cannot afford adequate, suitable housing.

Within consultation participants, there were two schools of thought regarding the administration of rent supplements. Some believe that rental supplements should go to tenants, not to landlords, while others believe that the current system of providing the rent supplements to landlords is appropriate.

“Giving the rent supplement to the landlord may be fine when the economy is in a downturn, but it does not hold up in good times, or when the economy turns around. It creates an unstable market. In a strong economy, landlords don’t rent to our clients because they can get more for rent from other people.

“If the supplement is direct to tenant it is more of an even keel, and often they can find housing. The relationship we develop with private sector landlords is essential. We need a Housing Service Delivery Plan. How do supplements fit in with the community field?”

Consultation Participant

Those who advocated giving rent supplements directly to tenants pointed out that this would be empowering and respectful. It could also prevent some landlords from raising rents artificially. However, a few consultation participants were concerned that if rent supplements were given directly to tenants, some might use the supplement funds for purposes other than housing. As well, some consultation participants believe that providing rent supplements to landlords provides an incentive to landlords to make rental units available to tenants who could not otherwise afford them.

Special financial pressures and possible solutions

While financial worries existed across the entire range of those consulted, the newcomer community expressed particular vulnerability. Their circumstances reveal distinctive financial barriers such as high debts for refugee loans and difficulty in finding employment. As well, families often need to send money 'home' to support family, thus increasing their burden here. As for their Canadian counterparts, long waiting lists for subsidized housing means that families are spending their savings or accumulating high debt while waiting for subsidized housing.

The Plan does not have authority to increase the amount of Alberta Income for Severely Handicapped (AISH), rent supplements, or other forms of assistance. However, the Plan may want to consider partnering to provide Financial Literacy Services to clients. Edmonton has best practice, evidence-based services such as The Hub and the Asset Building Collaborative which consist of over 40 member agencies. Consultation participants suggested that these organizations be considered as a service provider for housing program clients.

Cheaper than the alternatives: the economic case of providing financial support

Participants in all consultations emphasized that an economic case must be made for the hidden costs of those living in poverty.

For example, research³ indicates that the types of crimes women are most often charged with are theft under \$5000, common assault, and welfare fraud. Two out of three of these crimes are linked to poverty and are often crimes of desperation either to support the needs of their families or to end up in jail where food and housing will be provided. Researchers suggest that court and incarceration costs, as well as the cost to house children in foster care, would be better spent on strategies to help the women escape from poverty.

Participants suggested that the same type of cost analysis done by the Mayor's Committee to End Homelessness be replicated for other stressed areas within the housing framework. In *A Place to Call Home*, analysis demonstrates that the cost of caring for some chronically homeless individuals can be as high as \$134,000 per year when emergency medical services, hospital visits, police intervention and shelter use are factored in. In contrast, it costs \$34,000 per year to house a homeless individual and provide wrap around service.

When presented with an economic argument, the citizens of Edmonton embraced Housing First. The general public has historically seen the issue of poverty (unemployment) as the foremost issue in making communities safer (John Howard 2002). The figures in *A Place to Call Home* extend the argument beyond the realm of social responsibility and make a compelling economic case. Consultations emphasized the need to conduct similar Return on Investment studies for other elements of housing.

³ C. MacFarlane and K. Milaney (2008). *Crimes of desperation: Implications for policy and system reform*. Poverty Reduction Coalition, Calgary.

Social support

The dearth of regular, intensive support services was repeatedly highlighted by agencies, clients, building operators and landlords. Consultation participants spoke with deeply held compassion, expressing empathy for both the client in need of support, and the “frazzled and over burdened case worker.”

A wide range of groups felt that Housing First demonstrates the success of a strong built-in support system for clients. The community is eager to replicate that philosophy and best practice for clients who may not qualify for Housing First, or who simply need support while they are trying to make positive changes in their lives.

Six areas where social supports are needed

Agency workers readily identified several areas where supports were not adequate.

- **Mental Health and Addictions** – Lack of timely mental illness and addictions treatment was one of the greatest perceived gaps identified by among those consulted – including participants who worked in the fields of mental health and addictions treatment. In addition to reliable and available mental health counseling, participants were concerned about the lack of resources for victims of trauma and abuse. As well, waiting lists for addictions treatment are vast and there is a lengthy lull between the time people make the commitment to ‘get clean’ and the actual time they can access treatment.

Clients, community agency representatives and mental health and addictions workers were concerned about wait times and inability to provide treatment when it was needed. This is a resource issue that prevents treatment professionals from providing the appropriate level of service within the time frame that would have optimum results.

- **Housing First supports** were seen as critical and raised the bar for a new style of support service delivery. There were several anecdotal stories, however, about the breakdown of the model and lack of rigor in delivering wrap around service. Management bodies, clients and agency workers reported that case workers and other services were irregular and ‘not delivered as advertised.’ Despite this, the concept of wrap around services has been applauded and quickly recognized as a best practice.
- **Support after Housing First.** Participants expressed concern for those Housing First clients who may need continuing long term supportive housing when Housing First support ends. Clients graduating from the Housing First programs need an assessment and provision of services. Participants expressed support for models emphasizing sustainability for support (and operations) services; longer than one year was seen as imperative.
- **Harm reduction models** were considered essential elements of any housing plan. Women in particular were seen as underserved by harm reduction strategies, and had few options with housing that supported them in their addictions.

- **Transient populations.** Strategies to ease transient populations into regular housing were identified as important. Related to that, participants suggested that people stay longer and get established in a community. “As soon as they become strong, they have to move.”
- **The cost of NOT helping.** A recurring theme was the high cost of NOT having appropriate services. Hospital beds are often an expensive fall-back when community supports are lacking. Participants would like less reliance on costly hospital stays and more focus on addictions beds and other best practices.

Greater support for clients; greater Community League support

The Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues (EFCL) indicated that their members’ tolerance for social housing projects would increase if there was assurance that the necessary support would be in place. (As well, housing clients said they would be more inclined to live outside the downtown core if needed services were available in other communities.)

“We don’t disagree with social housing. We just want it shared, and we want people to have access to those supports they need.”

Community League Consultation Participant

Community people perceived that promises were made to provide services and supports, but once clients were in the community, the promised services and supports did not appear to be provided. Participants pointed out that social agencies are taxed to the limit, and any community housing initiative must factor in and provide resources for wide ranging social agency involvement.

“Social agencies are over saturated. If the province is getting into the housing game, they need to go all the way. We need mobile services, satellite services, and in situ services. Supports are critical. Clients with minimum supports do not succeed. The current system sets them up for failure. If you are putting people in need in our community, you also need to provide them with services they need to be successful. Anything less creates adversarial feelings.”

Community League Consultation Participant

The concept and principles of Housing First resonated with community representatives as it did with other groups. They urged the Community Plan to incorporate Housing First principles in their truest form in all housing planning.

Community League members also suggested that a **community development mindset** be applied when planning housing and support services. They felt that the Community Plan needs to envision a model that is quite different from the status quo.

“Social agencies need to be integrated within the whole community, and build the whole community, not just work with single clients who are clustered in the community.”

Community League Consultation Participant

Builders, developers and management bodies welcome social supports

Builders, developers and management bodies all endorsed the need for services to support the residents of their properties. They expressed a strong belief in the value of supports and services and acknowledged that although it was not their mandate nor skill set, the benefits of services to tenants extended beyond the individual tenant and benefitted the entire property.

“We recognize the importance of support services in helping people maintain their housing. We believe in the importance of addressing the issues at hand. We understand that some people need supports. We recognize that we do not have that mandate or skill set but we work with others so that clients can receive the necessary support services.”

Consultation Participant

Partnerships and relationships were central to builders, developers and management bodies when facilitating the supports required.

“We build strong relationships with agencies, we form partnerships, provide space for on site or mobile supports.”

“We do Housing well, and work with others to ensure the support side is also managed.”

“We are troubled by our inability to assist mental health clients. Mental health issues require supports and if they are not properly housed they are subject to illegal group homes. We do not have the skill set to assist them; we need their workers to support them. Somehow we need to make a stronger connection so Mental Health agencies and ourselves can provide on-site services to this vulnerable group.”

“We want to develop buildings that include a day care, social area and support offices.”

4 Different Builders and Management Body Consultation Participants

Management bodies were interested in partnering with community groups that may want to create a community of support within one of their buildings. For example, the Somali community offers supports for seven families if they can be housed in one building, or for new single moms who can support each other by living on the same floor in a welcoming building.

Older adults too

Older adults who want to have a ‘home for life’ or ‘age in place’ also emphasize that if the right supports were available, they would be able to live in their own homes in familiar communities, and delay or even eliminate their need to move to supportive housing.

3.0 Meeting priority housing needs

3.1 The issue: systemic challenges

The keys to solving housing unaffordability are easy to identify: either raise incomes or reduce shelter costs. But actual solutions are complex.

Conference Board of Canada (March 2010): Building From the Ground Up: Enhancing Affordable Housing in Canada

Respondents clearly articulated that the plan must view housing and supports from a systemic perspective. They indicated that Edmonton has moved beyond “an inventory of supply and demand” and requires a bold and proactive housing strategy that recognizes the comprehensive and complex nature of housing and supports.

When taking a system-wide approach, it is helpful to identify some of the systemic barriers. Consultation participants identified many of these, and also directed us to a study about systemic barriers to housing in the Edmonton Region.⁴ Consulting participants’ identifications of systemic barriers are reported throughout this report, and are similar to those identified in the study.

The study identified 49 barriers (“barriers” are defined as “indicators of concern”) that could be addressed in the short, medium or long term. These barriers were grouped into categories as follows.

Access to housing / access to social housing

- Documentation (photos that are costly and complex to acquire; application forms difficult to complete)
- Eligibility (criminal record; policies about rent supplement may mean being removed from waiting lists; misunderstandings about who is eligible for what housing)
- Access to emergency shelter (shelters are often full; hard for adults with children; some shelter eligibility requirements)
- Rent supplements (misunderstandings about eligibility; damage deposit requirements or eligibility; family size; point system; disincentive for work income)
- Limited resources of social housing authority; rent supplements still not enough to cover rent and damage deposits

Capacity to maintain housing

- Concerns about rent increases, eviction policies
- Unable to move from social housing until pests eliminated
- Loneliness if move from homelessness into public or private housing
- If hospitalized, can lose their space in interim or transition housing and have nowhere to go when discharged

⁴ Ann Goldblatt and Roxanne Felix (May 2010), *Systemic Barriers to Housing Initiative: An Exploration for the Housing Support Services Hub*

Outreach support

- Some want help with other immediate issues (e.g. medical needs) before housing
- Hard to “outreach” people who must keep moving
- From street to housing needs one-to-one support (Housing First model)

Access to income for basic needs and for physical and mental health requirements

Access to services

- Workers with large caseloads are hard to reach
- It is hard to have relationship with one person who knows you. Agencies are changing from relationship-based practices to call centre models.
- Some needed services do not exist

Each one of the systemic barriers identified in the “Systemic Barriers to Housing” study was mentioned by consultation participants of this project. This lends credibility to the findings of both projects.

More importantly, the findings of both projects reinforce that in order to attain the goal of adequate, suitable and affordable housing for the citizens of Edmonton region, it will be necessary to take a systemic approach.

A “systemic approach” means taking into account at least four factors.

- **Context** - See the “topic” (in this case, adequate, suitable, affordable housing) in a bigger context.
- **Sources** - Address underlying sources of problems as well as the immediate symptoms. For example, the sources of “lack of affordable housing” include social, economic, employment, regulatory, technical and environmental factors. A systemic approach addresses these underlying sources of the problem, as well as tackling “supply” issues.
- **Questions** - Determine the right questions before jumping to answers. Often, asking different questions helps all those involved to shift their thinking, understand the issues in a broader and deeper way, and thereby open up possibilities for new solutions.
- **Engagement** - Involve a cross section of stakeholders. A systemic approach does not just invite people to show up and listen. It asks people to engage in new learning, address disagreements and common ground, take issues to new levels, and create new solutions.

A systemic approach to Edmonton region’s housing needs: must address issues that cut across social, economic and environmental circumstances;

- will require the help of government, business, communities and community agencies; and
- may challenge the mandates of local, provincial and federal government organizations.
- It will take strategic processes to encompass all of that.

3.2 The solution: strategic processes

Participants readily acknowledge that ‘*A Place to Call Home*’ and the adoption of a Housing First philosophy and program has radically altered the way we view homelessness and housing and supports. “If it wasn’t for Housing First, we couldn’t even have this conversation,” was a common sentiment. Respondents believe that Housing First was a ‘game changer’ that resulted in an already innovative community demanding increasingly comprehensive and collaborative approaches to a housing and supports strategy.

The community suggested that the complexities of the housing and supports sector require a Plan that embraces several strategic processes:

- Manage complex change;
- Explore solutions to contentiousness and conflict within the community;
- Engage the skills and talents of multiple stakeholders;
- Address the urgency to “get ahead” of a potential housing crisis;
- Make creative use of existing resources;
- Ensure on-going engagement, evaluation and monitoring.
- **Manage Complex Change**

Whether participants called it a Tipping Point, a Sea Change, or a Cultural Shift, there is a groundswell of recognition that the community is ready to examine previous fundamental assumptions about the way they do business. This spirit of reflection and exploration is occurring not only in the realm of housing and supports, but is being experienced in a myriad of agencies and service providers across a variety of disciplines. Philosophies, attitudes, beliefs, systems and practices are being challenged across the board.

As might be expected, this change is not without resistance and tension. This is a basic tenet of change. Change without resistance means that the status quo has not been challenged, and that the change is minor. Change may be accompanied by a perceived sense of loss: loss of turf, status, independence, funding, well loved practices and programs.

There is a need for strong and compassionate change management processes as the community moves from one way of being to a way that as yet is not fully formed. A strong change and transition strategy is an integral component of implementing the *Community Plan on Housing and Supports*.

- **Explore solutions to contentiousness and conflict within the community**

The polarization between individual Community Leagues and those agencies providing non market housing cannot be underestimated. A legacy of misunderstanding, frustration, and perceived NIMBYism hinders the most well intentioned discussions.

In the threshold communities, both the Community Leagues and the agencies feel they are working towards the common good, and both invest countless hours and resources on the issues of housing and support services in inner city communities.

The *Community Plan for Housing and Supports* must include a process to resolve the tension and conflict that exists and, together with Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, develop a long term strategy to build the relationship between these vital entities.

- **Engage the skills and talents of diverse stakeholders**

One way to help reduce contentiousness is to have a realistic and non-judgmental understanding of the perspectives, strengths and limitations of different sectors. That helps to create reasonable expectations of one's own and other sectors.

Consultation participants directed us to a report of the Conference Board of Canada, which includes a summary of “who is good at what” in helping to address housing issues.

The Conference Board of Canada⁵ has found that:

- **Private companies** are the most efficient at innovating to drive down housing costs when markets are competitive. They have the best economies of scale and the core competency to deliver housing to the marketplace.
- **Government and civil society organizations**, by contrast, are more efficient as client advocates, which establish building parameters but do not interfere in the execution of development projects.
- **Governments** can also engineer deals—such as land grants, higher-density incentives, and lower development charges—to encourage the development of more affordable units.
- **Civil society organizations** are efficient operators. Not only are their core operating costs low, but they can also engage a small army of volunteers and are connected to their communities in ways commercial enterprises are not.

During collaborative change management processes, inviting each sector to be engaged in ways that capitalize on their strengths will increase the likelihood of success.

⁵ Conference Board of Canada (March 2010), *Building From the Ground Up: Enhancing Affordable Housing in Canada*.

- **Address the urgency to “get ahead” of a potential housing crisis.** Dozens of respondents – from elected officials to developers to agency workers – urged the Community Plan Committee to take swift action to ‘get ahead’ of what they predict will be a major housing crisis when Alberta’s economy improves within a year to 18 months.

Several projects in the Industrial Heartland and Fort McMurray have received approval and will once again attract workers who need accommodation. This implies that the increased demand will impact those individuals who are now living in low cost accommodation as landlords increase rents to take advantage of the increased demand.

Respondents fear that those residents currently living in low cost housing will be at risk of becoming homeless should rent increases eliminate their current accommodation. Elected officials and planners in particular were concerned that, ‘We missed it during the last boom; let’s make sure we have strategies in place for this go-round.’

Respondents were quick to state that working on strategies to secure affordable housing did not diminish their commitment to Housing First and plans to end homelessness. They felt that what needs to be adopted is not an “either/or” strategy but a “both/and” mindset that simultaneously supports plans to end homelessness AND needs for affordable housing.

- **Make creative use of existing resources.** From government to developers, from realtors to landlords, from social workers to planners, all expressed a need to develop mechanisms to apply the right resources to existing supply. Citing a 30% vacancy rate across 27 management boards, a senior government official as well as consultation participants likened housing to world hunger.

“There’s not a food shortage problem—there’s a policy and distribution problem. The same is true in housing. There may be plenty of units, but there is no clear strategy that identifies and best utilizes those units.”

Consultation Participant

Participants want the Plan to be creative when exploring the use of existing housing stock. They advise the Community Plan Committee to look at availability of units as a whole system, rather than a series of silos. New ways of thinking could result in innovative applications for current stock, and solutions that extend beyond traditional approaches.

- **Ensure ongoing engagement, evaluation and monitoring.** Stakeholders have moved beyond one-time consultation. They want meaningful, ongoing engagement to understand complexities inherent in housing and support and deepen their exploration of solutions. They want ongoing dialogue and ‘musing together,’ resulting in stronger relationships as housing and supports are developed and delivered.

The provision of housing and supports to people in need is a complex, sophisticated and resource-heavy business. There is a strong need for the development of system wide evaluation and monitoring strategies to measure outcomes, track progress and demonstrate accountability.

4.0 What people said: messages from clients and stakeholders

4.1 Messages from all types of participants

Whether the consultation participants were clients, community agency staff, community league members, members of faith communities, business people or government representatives, three messages were heard again and again.

- Lack of supportive housing creates a negative and expensive domino effect;
- A focus on women with children has an expanding positive impact;
- The community has a strong commitment to continuing the work to end homelessness, while moving on to address other housing challenges.

Lack of supportive housing creates a negative and expensive domino effect

“Doctors, from an ethical point of view, are reluctant to discharge people to the streets, with no housing to go to. There are over 50 beds that have had people in them for over 2 years just because they have nowhere else to go.”

Health Care Provider Consultation Participant

The consultations revealed that there is a need for Supportive Housing—those units that offered congregate living and had onsite, staffed supports.

The consultation participants suggested that a certain percentage of our population will likely never be able to live in total independence. For example, many people with developmental disabilities (PDD), the 20% of clients who are unable to manage in the Housing First program and people who have experienced sexual exploitation, need more intensive supports that provide immediate help, which then builds trust. Our aging population suggests a growing need to consider the supportive housing needs of seniors. Hospital beds are often used in the absence of supportive housing, creating pressure in the health care system.


Youth was also a priority identified among the category of people who need more support than is presently available. Inner City Youth Housing was cited as a good example of a model of supportive housing for this population.

A focus on women with children has an expanding positive impact

“Heal the Woman, heal the family; heal the family, heal the community.”

Consultation Participant

Some consulting participants urged the planning committee to consider focusing on women as a priority. Many respondents believe that if women can be healed and rise out of poverty, the subsequent ripple effect could last generations. Thus, supportive housing units that enable women to heal, stabilize, have their children returned to them and live together in a healthy, supportive, congregate environment was seen as a priority.



Participants also challenged the concept of families constantly having to transition out of supportive housing, suggesting instead that supportive housing could provide affordable, long term solutions.

“It [providing affordable long-term solutions] is much cheaper than transitioning. We make these women and their kids move over and over.”

Consultation Participant

A strong commitment: Continue the focus on ending homelessness

The community is very aware of the province’s *Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness* and the city’s *Place to Call Home*. The philosophy of Housing First has received overwhelming support, and its impact can be felt throughout the housing sector.

“We need to learn from the best practices of ending homelessness and then expand them to include those who may not be eligible for this version of Housing First.”

Consultation Participant

Participants cite a distinction between Housing First the philosophy, and Housing First the program. Any critique of Housing First tends to be related to the specific program elements, for example, the criteria, which are determined by the province and which continue to evolve.

A common comment was that, **“One size does not fit all,”** when it comes to housing homeless people. Now that over 1000 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness have been housed, people are eager to apply the Housing First philosophy to other target groups. Consultations suggested that there is a need to reach out to those ‘living rough’ in the river valley or on the streets.

“In 2009 there were 1600 encampments in the river valley. Through our collaboration with outreach workers, park rangers and social workers, we have reduced it to 1270 encampments in 2010.”

“We need a city wide outreach effort to connect with those folks living rough, and build the relationships that could lead to them choosing to become housed.”

2 different Consultation Participants

4.2 Messages from clients

Section 4 of this report includes information about the pressures and housing needs of ten different groups who may have special housing needs, as reported by people who have these needs and people who are in direct contact with them.



The ten groups include:

- People with low incomes,
- Aboriginal people,
- Newcomers to Canada,
- Seniors and older adults,
- Youth and young adults,
- Families with children,
- Women experiencing sexual exploitation and violence,
- People with physical disabilities,
- Persons with complex mental, emotional or cognitive challenges such as mental illness, addictions, developmental disabilities, fetal alcohol syndrome, brain injury or concurrent conditions,
- Persons leaving incarceration.

Some individuals fit into more than one group – for example, a youth or young adult could have a low income and also have mental health or addictions challenges. More information about the unique needs of each of these groups is in Section 5. Some recurring thoughts from all ten groups include the following.

Basic needs, though complex, are similar across populations, yet the strategies to meet these needs must not be uniform in their delivery.

Even though some needs appear to be the same across populations, moving people beyond the most basic of needs requires a complex series of responses. The strategies to meet these needs must not be uniform in their delivery.

For example, all groups have a basic need to feel safe within their environment. An older man with physical frailties might feel safest in the home and neighbourhood in which he has lived for many years. A woman who has been sexually exploited might feel safe in an environment with other women and with a support worker, where no one will judge her and where there are safeguards so members of her former life cannot find her.

Data from client interviews suggests that when designing supports, the service must first address the basic needs a client wants to have met. The service should then quickly connect each client with an individual case worker in a specialized cluster of helpers who will guide the client's service plan in creative and customized ways.

Clients want to live away from the inner city

Close to 100% of the clients participating in the client interviews, regardless of gender, age or race, identified that they would prefer to live away from what they called “the downtown street scene,” where they would have easier access to jobs and to clean and safe housing.

“The hardest part is living in the inner city where I always fall back into the life.”

“My top 3 worries are getting a job, maintaining a job, and finding a place to live away from the inner city so I can beat my addictions.”

“I would like to live in a condo tower in a dense area out of the core of downtown that had stores, banks, and coffee shops.”

3 different Client Consultation Participants

Clients want to have access to a cluster of services. In addition to providing help for individuals, these services should also address the needs of families as a unit, and not just the needs of an individual who may be the one family member that initially requires services.

Though clients say they want to live away from the street scene, inner city agency workers report that clients who leave the inner city almost always return to the inner city to “hang out” or visit friends. Conscious linkages should be made to create safe and inclusive communities that would welcome those moving into their community, and help newcomers to the community to address the issues that accompany transitioning to communities outside of the inner city.

Clients suggested that living outside of the downtown core would be facilitated if there were mobile services that could come to them, or were located in their neighbourhood. In particular, newcomers and immigrants would prefer to live further out from the inner city in areas where larger units are available to accommodate their families. They felt unable to move away from the inner city due to the difficulty in accessing services that seem only to be available in the downtown area.

Provide access to addiction and mental health services

Many clients would like housing support to include easy access to addiction and mental health services. Both clients and community agency representatives made repeated reference to the dearth of these resources. Continuing to strengthen partnerships and collaboration between housing services, local community agencies and provincial resources available through bodies such as Alberta Health and Wellness, Alberta Justice and Attorney General, and Alberta Supports will help address these client requests.

4.3 Messages from key stakeholders

Community agencies, community leagues, the faith community and the business community all have a stake in meeting Edmonton region’s housing needs. Their comments are reflected throughout this report. Each of these stakeholder groups also had unique perspectives.

The community agency perspective

Making a difference in changing, challenging times

The agency workers who dedicate themselves to working with vulnerable populations were the mainstay of the consultation process. They collaborated in designing and conducting client surveys, scheduled and attended numerous consultation sessions, provided clarification and research to the consulting team, and demonstrated great patience in explaining the inner workings of the complex social system within which they are working. Our interpretation of the input of those working with clients is interwoven through every aspect of the report. However, a few themes unique to the agencies themselves are included in this section.

The challenges facing the non-profit sector are great. They include diminishing resources and increasing demands, instability in funding, pilot projects with cumbersome administrative requirements and limited sustainability, and the ever increasing needs of vulnerable client groups. Administrative duties and arduous grant application processes often pull the most talented workers away from 'doing the work' or create burdensome working hours.

Clients empathize with the agency workers.

"There are so many of us that the case workers are tired and burnt out. I think I am tired, but when I see how tired they are from trying to help, I just suck it up."

Client Consultation Participant

There is a philosophical movement towards collaboration and it is increasingly required by funders and governments. While there is a natural talent among these groups to collaborate, participants identified several barriers.


Current grant structures often pit agency against agency, while funding for other projects demand a collaborative approach.

"Don't expect us to collaborate in the morning and compete in the afternoon."

"Who is doing my regular work while I am off collaborating? Collaboration is done off the side of my desk..."

2 different Agency Consultation Participants

There has long been a call to 'professionalize the work' and to increase the pay levels of those doing this difficult and complex work. While there are many excellent workers in the non-profit sector, the low pay scale serves as a deterrent for long term commitment, and the sector loses dozens of talented workers to higher paying jobs, often outside the non-profit arena. This leads to a reduction in 'bench strength,' and as the most experienced leaders approach retirement could create a void in succession planning.



Despite these challenges, the strength of the non-profit sector is growing and continues to build. Several initiatives are shifting the culture and the way they do business, and dialogues continue at a very deep level.

Specific issues for agencies

Housing First program criteria is narrower than the total community housing needs.

When the province's ten-year ***Plan to End Homelessness*** was announced, the province consciously and deliberately chose to focus first on applying the "Housing First" philosophy to assist people who were chronically homeless. Addressing homelessness among other vulnerable populations was to follow later during the ten-year implementation.

A positive consequence of this focus was that the Housing First *philosophy* (as opposed to the Housing First *program* and funding criteria) was embraced by the community. Agencies acknowledged that Housing First was a game changer, and transformed the landscape of ending homelessness. Housing First created a paradigm shift in the community.

The funding and the criteria of who is eligible for the Housing First *program* is determined by the province. Many agency consultation participants felt that the qualifiers deployed by the province were too narrow, and created a 'two tier system', promoting a case of 'haves and have nots' within the community. For example, an agency's chronically homeless clients who are eligible for the Housing First *program* (which has very specific targets and resources) may receive services and supports that other clients of the same agency do not receive.


The Edmonton community has adopted and adapted to the Housing First *philosophy* and is now onto "next steps," of applying the same philosophy to other vulnerable populations. However, the Housing First *program* requirements have not changed. Though the funding and eligibility criteria of the Housing First program are set by the province, local agencies that administer the program have been the brunt of criticisms from those who believe the program mandate is too narrow.

Agencies would like the Housing First program mandate to be expanded in light of the learning of the past three years. Data about Housing First results in the first three years of implementation show that it is working as intended. Local agencies are ready to apply the philosophy to other vulnerable populations who can benefit, and they would like program funding to enable them to do that.

"The provincial Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness will only serve us well—and not limit us—if we can set predictors of needs. The situation has changed and we need to respond to that. The Plan needs to be updated annually. "

Community Agency Consultation Participant

The rate of change in a community is greater than the rate of change in a provincial department. Communities can change more quickly and easily than provincial bureaucracies. The province is



slower than communities to adapt criteria to fit changing conditions and new learning. Edmonton community agencies urge measures to expand the definitions, eligibility criteria and resources available through the Housing First program, so that the philosophy can be applied to house more in-need individuals.

Access to addictions and mental health services present a large gap for clients and impact their ability to maintain their ongoing wellbeing

One of the major topics of discussion and a source of deep frustration was the perceived disconnect between health and housing.

“The hardest thing for me right now is my addictions; I need help, I want to get into recovery.”

“There is nowhere for me to go for treatment.”

“I spent 24 years in addiction. I can’t be 100% successful after a 4 week program. I needed a place to live and supports once I got out of treatment.”

3 different Client Consultation Participants

Addictions were consistently identified in the top five barriers to acquiring and keeping housing, and were also identified as a major stressor. While clients report that they want to overcome addictions, access to addictions and mental health services continue to present a large gap. Those who have worked on their addictions either while incarcerated or as part of a program often have no housing when they are released from treatment.

If they do manage to find housing, they want to live away from the inner city so they will not fall back into the world of substance abuse.

No coordinated response. In their *Access to Health Care* document (2007), Prostitution Awareness and Action Foundation of Edmonton (PAAFE) suggest that there is no coordinated response for addictions and mental health issues. Often these two problems go hand in hand, yet addiction treatments, when available, keep patients from accessing proper medication for mental illness.

Agencies reinforced that the waiting time for treatment is too long. When individuals cannot get the help they are seeking at the moment they decide it is needed most, they will often go back to their harmful habits.

Provincial mandate. Community agency workers emphasize that addictions and mental health services are the mandate of the province. An ever widening chasm exists between the capacity of the province to provide service and the needs of the people desperate for that service. Participants told us that partnerships with the province are vital to resolve the situation.



“If Edmonton is ever to achieve an end to homelessness, creative and sustained partnerships with the province are vital to resolve this [addictions and mental health] service gap.”

Community Agency Consultation Participant

Agencies pointed to the cross ministry efforts of SafeCom as a model that seemed to demonstrate systemic approaches.

Prevention

Agency workers repeatedly emphasized the need for a prevention component in any plans that are developed. Even when prevention strategies were included in plans, the funding often is directed towards problem solving rather than prevention. Some prevention initiatives would include poverty reduction strategies, assistance for those at risk of homelessness, a tenant association for those in community housing, addictions and mental health treatment available at the time it is needed, and integrated case management.

“We don’t need to list anything new. We just need to be able to implement the prevention strategy outlined in A Place to Call Home.”

Consultation Participant

Strengthening relationships with communities


Agencies have the support of clients, management bodies and the faith community when urging community people to work together with them to determine the kind of community in which everyone could co-exist.

Agencies spoke of their clients being shunned by community members, and expressed concern that clients living in community housing were denied memberships in the Community League where they lived.

“The governance structure of Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues demands zero accountability from individual community leagues to the Federation or to the City. Someone needs to challenge them and hold them accountable.”

Consultation Participant

Agencies commended position papers on non market housing prepared by the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues (EFCL). At the same time, agencies pointed out that individual community leagues do not need to endorse the position papers and could independently forge their own positions. For example, Oliver Community League indicated support for non market housing in their community, but that is not the case with others, particularly in those areas that have a high concentration of social housing.



Agencies expressed a desire to bridge the gulf that exists between the non market housing proponents and the communities. That is something that both agencies and communities are interested in exploring and resolving.

The community perspective

Community Leagues

Community Leagues were clear and articulate in their assessment on current housing practices and their views on what should be in a strong Community Plan on Housing and Supports. Their discussions can be organized into 6 themes: role clarification; consultation processes; capacity of care; community building; types of housing, and what should be in a community plan.

Role clarification

Community leagues would like clarity on the role of Homeward Trust Edmonton, the City of Edmonton, housing management bodies, and the province. They found the roles and responsibilities confusing, thus making it difficult to advocate to the appropriate jurisdictions.

“The Community Plan needs to adhere to provincial and federal guidelines. The current plan works around and/or violates guidelines.”

Community League Consultation Participant

The community leagues feel that the very structure of the various administrative bodies places them at a disadvantage.

“There is a tremendous power imbalance between the communities and the numerous administrations. We rely on part time volunteers, where our side isn’t recognized, fighting the same battle over and over. The other side has communications and lobbying professionals, huge, expensive infrastructure, and admin. support. How are community leagues supposed to get on equal footing to address issues?”


Community League Consultation Participant

Consultation processes

Community league members felt that consultations held on proposed buildings were conducted too late in the process. They expressed concern that they were asked for their opinion after a site and unit type had been chosen. They would like to be involved earlier on in the process.

“If it is to be a true Community Plan, then come to the community WELL IN ADVANCE. Come to us before the City even gives out a permit so that we can plan together. They come to do ‘consultations’ once everything is approved, and then accuse communities of being reactive. We want to be proactive! Come to us earlier in the process.”

Community League Consultation Participant



The Community Plan needs to have processes in place so community members can be engaged in an earlier stage of planning. Community league members would like to redefine the time frame of consultations. They further felt that planning needs to shift from what they viewed as prescriptive to a more collaborative framework.

“We have to participate in the discussions early so that we can offer input from the beginning. Now we are a Johnny Come Lately and always seem to fight from a deficit position. It does not need to be like this.”

“Consultation should not be: ‘Here’s what we are doing, where it’s going and how it’s going to look. What do you think?’ Instead it should be, ‘What are the values we want to promote? What are the needs? What should be developed? Should it be built? Where should it go? What will this give the client group we are focusing on? What will this give the community?’”
2 different Community League Consultation Participants

Though consultation participants did not identify exact steps to make possible the earlier consultation they desire, a logical follow-up to their comments would be to start collaborating with communities as soon as the desire is identified to provide housing support within a neighbourhood. First steps could include an explanation of the intent of new housing initiatives, and a collaborative effort to define the decision making criteria that will be used, and the exact steps to involve the community in planning, designing and implementing the initiative.

Capacity to care


The area that drew the most discussion was the dialogue concerning the capacity to be a welcoming and caring community. Participants were careful to explain that their concerns over social housing had more to do with their capacity to care for one another as neighbours than it did with the “NIMBYism” (“Not In My Back Yard”) of which they felt accused.

“We are VERY offended to be labeled as “NIMBY” just for disagreeing with planning decisions in our community. Calling us NIMBY is labeling and shuts down conversation. There needs to be a collaboration and negotiation. As soon as we question anything, we are called a name, and then the problem is us. We are owed an apology.”

“The Community Plan needs to answer the questions, ‘What is a healthy, whole community? How do we create the best balance so that we can create win-wins and ALL enjoy a healthy, whole community?’ This would allow us to truly support and be good neighbours to those in social and affordable housing.”

2 different Community League Consultation Participants

“The community needs and wants to be able to help and support new residents. We need to be able to care for our neighbours. We have to develop a caring capacity. Right now our caring capacity is stretched to the limit. We are at our breaking point.”



“The Plan needs to create a model where what is good for the people in social housing is also good for the community.”

2 different Community League Consultation Participant

One Community League participant suggested four “planning questions” that would help.

“When we put in a building, we need to work on the following:

- *How is it going to help the person in the house?*
- *What are the supports to make that person successful?*
- *How is it affecting other services to the community? (Fire, police, EMS?)*
- *How are these housing units and these residents going to contribute to the well being of our community?”*

Community League Consultation Participant

Supports and services

As was discussed in the earlier Section on Supports and Services, Community League members recognize the important role support services play when integrating people into communities.

“The key is support services. They must be wrap around, or mobile, easily accessible in areas other than the downtown core.”

“Service and support delivery should be in-situ. We need to revisit the Housing First model, and expand it to other clients.”

2 different Community League Consultation Participants

Please see Section 2.3 for more on community league members’ views about support services.


Moratoriums and hard caps in certain neighbourhoods

Participants were eager to point out that social housing was not an issue that they objected to; rather it was the location and concentration in downtown neighbourhoods that they struggled with. Participants attending the consultations felt the Community Plan needed to stop concentration in the downtown area, and increase density in other communities.

“We don’t disagree with social housing. We just want it shared, and we want people to get the supports they need to be able to thrive.”

“We want to create balance—we need to look at all communities and disperse needs in different areas. There are 233 other communities, and LRT combined with mobile services make it possible for social housing to be located there.”

2 different Community League Consultation Participants



“The Community Plan Committee needs to understand that wanting a hard cap in certain communities is NOT NIMBYism. We are just full, and want to be good neighbours and a good community to those who are already housed and living in our community.”

“Don’t over saturate the communities. Our issues are capacity of care---we are unable to be good neighbours and build good communities if we are so overloaded.”

2 different Community League Consultation Participants

Community League participants suggested several assessment methods to determine whether a particular community is an appropriate location for a proposed housing project.

“If there is a Community Plan, there needs to be a Gatekeeper Mechanism. Measures need to be in place that looks at a formula--% of poverty, % of social housing in a certain community. Once a community reaches a certain threshold, there are limits on developments in that community.”

“Analyze the demographics of a community when making planning decisions.

- *There needs to be social support for the clients.*
- *There needs to be capacity building supports for the community.”*

“When the City’s indicators and Quality of Life indicators suggest that we are over our capacity, we, as a community, need to be able to say ‘No—we need to build our community.’”

3 different Community League Consultation Participants

Types of housing

Participants urged creativity, innovation and new concepts when building housing. Offering dignity to individuals living in housing units was a key discussion point.

Some ideas the groups generated include (in the participants’ own words):

Use varied models

- The City needs to become CREATIVE in its social and affordable housing approaches. There are dozens of successful models to draw from.
- The Community Plan should look at successful models - Co-op housing in Riverdale for example. Look at Co-op housing where there is built-in cooperation, ownership, control.

Provide a mix of types of housing

- Housing needs to provide dignity, and be integrated with different populations being housed, and be integrated within the communities.
- The Community Plan must recognize the great need for group homes of all types, particularly for those with developmental disabilities.
- Housing should be mixed, affordable, non market.

Create opportunities to become owners

- Consider programs that build equity for renters. Equity in property builds pride and a sense of place that the whole community can participate in.
- Consider under-market housing that is bare bones that people can purchase. People can move in and finish the work (e.g. .painting, flooring) themselves.
- We need incentives to build market family housing and maximize return in quality investments.

Smaller is better

- Look at different models of social housing. Right now, there is a bias against smaller models. The smaller the better. The Community Plan needs to get away from 50+ units where everyone needs significant support. It creates an unhealthy and unsafe environment for both the tenants and the community.
- Smaller is better. Do not build so many large units where people will feel institutionalized and ghettoized.

Fit housing seamlessly into the community

- Housing should be indistinguishable from others in the community; a better standard of housing.
- The Community Plan needs to create supportive networks vs. ugly buildings that have no caretakers or no supports.
- There needs to be dignity for individuals. There is no dignity in living in ‘the drunk house’ or the ‘transition house.’

Essential ingredients in a Community Plan

When asked what specifically should be included in a Community Plan on Housing and Supports, participants had a variety of elements that they thought essential. What follows is a sample of Community League members’ suggestions.

De-concentrate poverty

- “The Community Plan needs to address how to de-concentrate poverty from core areas. The City needs to identify its priorities. The problems people are having are being foisted upon communities instead of the City having a plan to deal with the problems.”
- “The Community Plan must address the issue of concentration; we simply do not have the caring capacity or the community support in the over burdened communities. The Community Plan must explore the unintended consequences, and the potential harm that may be caused to community. The plan needs to include strategies to mitigate unintended consequences.”

Ensure supports

- “The Community Plan needs to ensure supports are there. Seventy homeless units in seven blocks without supports is not healthy for anyone, the community or the residents.”

Integrate into the community

- “The Community Plan needs to support a common sense vision where housing is integrated and marginalized people are welcome. We need to plan for a Win-Win situation.”
- “The Community Plan should build homes, not just housing. Let’s improve the look and the integration into the community.”

Be proactive and balanced

- “The Community Plan should be proactive rather than reactive and adversarial.”
- “The Community Plan must balance the research agenda, and ensure all aspects are represented.”

Respect the community and individuals

- “The Community Plan must include a goal that specifies, ‘We shall do no harm to communities.’ Or, ‘The plan will build both the capacity of the individual being housed, and the neighborhood in which they live.’”

Remember the working poor

- “Do not forget the working poor. The Community Plan needs some housing in wealthier communities or close to jobs (e.g., University, shopping districts). Working poor should not have to be so far from jobs.”
- “The Community Plan needs to target all the people in need of non market housing. The issue of social housing isn’t just impacting the homeless; there are many people in need.”


Measure and evaluate

- “The plan must include a data driven feedback mechanism to measure if what the plan is doing is working well. The outcomes need to be measured along a number of variables: the outcomes for communities, and the outcomes for clients.”

Faith community

The interfaith community in the Edmonton region joined forces in the name of social justice, and committed to support *A Place to Call Home* and support the affordable housing initiative.

Leaders of the newly formed **Capital Region Interfaith Housing Initiative** formally pledged their support for the *10 Year Plan to End Homelessness*. The Initiative involves over 100 people from 23 different religious traditions. They have joined forces with the Homeless Commission to announce



the new Welcome Home program. This program is funded in part by Enbridge in partnership with United Way, with a \$100,000 directed United Way donation for the first year.

During consultations, interfaith representatives suggested that safe, stable and affordable housing plays an important role in creating thriving communities and individuals.

“When formerly homeless people are housed, loneliness, isolation, a longing to return to street life and return to addiction is a very real part of adjusting to new surroundings. There is a role for congregations in those communities to offer a welcoming and consistent presence”

Interfaith Consultation Participant

Participants felt that their commitment to social justice compelled them to, “tackle the incredibly complex process that can only be realized through the involvement of all sectors of Edmonton society, including the faith community.”

Those planning the interfaith initiative saw affordable housing and ending homelessness as a natural fit with their advocacy on other social justice issues such as the importance of a living wage, the need for resources in mental health, and day care for the working poor. Participants spoke of their commitment to motivate their fellow congregation members to help bridge the gap that exists between community members and vulnerable populations living in social housing.

“We need to mobilize the middle class; educate and hold a mirror up to how we can create a welcoming community.”

“We need to support organizations that are supplying housing, and also work to understand those who may not welcome and may object to housing in their community. We need to find ways that we can all coexist.”

“Agency workers are true social justice advocates. Social Services doesn’t provide them the resources to do true social justice work and it is frustrating for them. Social Service is able to provide the basics. Social justice works for sustainability as a society. We need to support the agency workers that are in our community.

3 different Interfaith Consultation Participants

At the time of consultations, participants were finalizing the development of a Congregational Housing Guide to support and encourage congregations to address the issues surrounding homelessness and affordable housing. Participants suggested that the Congregational Housing Guide could offer ways for community members and congregations to become involved in ending homelessness and ensuring safe, stable and affordable housing.

“Congregations ask, ‘What can people in congregants do?’ We can educate, create volunteer commitments, become Welcome Home ambassadors, host community debates and lead political advocacy campaigns.”

Business and industry

Business representatives including urban planners, developers, builders, realtors, business owners, revitalization zone and Chamber of Commerce members offered considerable time and insight to the consultation process.

Systemic perspective

Business participants urged the Committee to think beyond housing and look at the issue from a systemic perspective.

“If you think the issue is just about the built form, or is just about housing, you are dead wrong. We need to balance the social, economic and environmental needs of people in addition to housing.”

Business Consultation Participant

Urban planning

Participants viewed the situation from an urban planning perspective and urged the committee to do the same. One of the challenges facing the development community is the lack of integration between the many plans that exist, leading to gaps and missed opportunities.

“It can’t just be about housing. It needs to be about urban revitalization. Housing is just one ingredient. We can revitalize and create amazing communities”

Business Consultation Participant

Transportation

Business participants also suggested that housing plans need to factor in transportation nodes for access to social supports, employment opportunities, health care and stores. (This is consistent with what clients said; they identified transportation as the most important criteria once they had safe, affordable and adequate housing.)

Business participants cautioned against narrow thinking about the development of lands around LRT stations.

“LRT stations should be a local hub with coffee shops, retail opportunities and community gathering spaces. Mixed housing can be adjacent. Sound planning and leading edge urban design principles will lead to better designs with the same intended positive outcomes and none of the unintended consequences.”

Business Consultation Participant

Spread out from the core

Business representatives also encouraged spreading out from the city core, and purchasing, redeveloping, repurposing and beautifying buildings in older communities. Former strip malls in older communities could be transformed to include day cares, ethnic shops, social agency offices, gathering places and become community hubs.

Be creative and innovative

Creativity and innovation were constant themes in the discussion with the business groups. This included everything from continuing to provide incentives for new developments, to having secondary suites, to creating well designed communities on surplus school sites, to repurposing schools.

“Use some imagination and creativity. They should discuss possibilities and potential with us about what would work, how we could create excellence in social housing. We see what is happening in building and development around the world. It is possible to create innovative, elegant social housing in communities.”

Business Consultation Participant

Gathering best practices and success stories of innovations was strongly encouraged.

“We need to leverage success stories and become an agent of change. We have brilliant builders, brilliant developers. We can do better.”

Business Consultation Participant

Shift our thinking


Business participants felt the plan needed to “strongly recommend that there be a shift in thinking, that the many barriers, rules, regulations and bureaucratic shenanigans be reviewed, and that urban design principles be applied when planning social housing.”

“The regulatory environment that builders and developers are forced to operate within has us hamstrung up the yin yang with rules. It’s like the City doesn’t want to have world class urban design.”

Business Consultation Participant

Shifts in thinking encompassed several areas:

- From prescriptive (this is what you must build) to descriptive (here’s what we need; how can you help?)
- From ‘what is wrong with our solutions?’ to ‘what is wrong with how we define the problem?’
- From supports and surroundings that allow clients to survive, to the supports and surroundings that allow clients to thrive.



Issues of supply with existing units, or available land on which to build new units was described as an oversupply at the periphery of the city, and an under supply in the core area. Once again, the issue of urban design was raised, with emphasis on viable transportation.

“There is a family I know of in social housing in Mill Woods. The parents both got jobs at Wal-Mart in Windermere. It is a 10 minute drive. In order to get to work, they have to take the bus either to downtown or to the university. They then transfer to Riverbend and walk over two kilometers along six lanes of traffic. On a good day they can do it in 90 minutes.”

Business Consultation Participant

Strategic relationships

The importance of ongoing strategic relationships was emphasized. Business participants urged the Community Plan committee to move beyond consultation and toward ongoing dialogue. Many commented that the processes involved in the non market housing arena were unfamiliar to them.

“I didn’t know much about this before tonight and I have been a developer for years. I think we have something to offer. We could help fight lots of battles for you. We could help with all kinds of ideas. Maybe you need us and architects and planners on your board.”

Business Consultation Participant

“We don’t want to be consulted just once a year, or issue by issue. We don’t want to be simply a ‘check mark’ on your list. We want to be part of the ongoing dialogue that forms and shapes our community. We will be stronger if we dialogue together, and often.”

“Where is the interactive forum? We need to figure out how to facilitate dialogue throughout the year.”

2 different Business Consultation Participants

Evaluate

The business community also emphasized the need for evaluation, and for a constant examination of what worked and what didn’t.

“You won’t find a lot of support if it is just throwing money against a wall to see what sticks. Communities, building practices and urban design are constantly evolving. We have to have evaluations that are action oriented and always ask ‘how can we improve?’”

Business Consultation Participant

5.0 Needs Assessment: Vulnerable Populations

In addition to interviews and consultations with clients, community agencies, community leagues, the faith community and business about general issues in regard to housing in Edmonton, the second major source of information was more detailed information provided by clients and agencies about the particular needs of different groups.

Clients pointed out that, though some types of needs apply to several different groups, the ways of addressing those needs must be custom designed for each group and individual. Insight into the needs of particular groups follows.

5.1 People with low incomes

"I need to have help with damage deposits when I move."

"My rent is too high for the assistance I receive. Do I have electricity or food? That's a decision I make every month."

"I need to have a little help paying for bills like for example EPCOR, a phone, expenses."
3 different Client Consultation Participants

Consultations identified that that the major stressor for clients, and also their greatest barrier, was lack of financial resources. Many people with special housing needs have low income, and this adds to their stress. In turn, the added stress can intensify the impact of other vulnerabilities. **About one in five residents in the region lives in a low income household.**

Certain groups are more likely than others to have a low income. These include, for example, newcomers to Canada, Aboriginal people, lone parent families, people with mental illness, youth and young adults and people with physical disabilities – all groups that may have unique housing needs.

Key issues

Core housing need

People with low incomes are more likely than others to be in core housing need. A household is considered to be in core housing need if its housing does not meet one or more of the three standards of adequacy, suitability and affordability.⁶

It is estimated that about 47,000 households in the Edmonton region (just over one in ten) are in core housing need.⁷


⁶ Core housing standards are defined as follows:

Adequate housing does not need major repairs according to residents.

Suitable housing has enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of the resident households according to National Occupancy Standard requirements.

Affordable housing costs less than 30% of before-tax household income.

⁷ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), *Housing in Canada On-line 2011*, based on 2005 income data and 2006 census data for the Edmonton Census Metropolitan Area.



The incidence of core housing need is highest among households whose residents are newcomers to Canada, lone parents with children in the residence, Aboriginal people, non-family households⁸ and senior-led households.

According to federal and provincial government sources, in the Edmonton region:

- Among newcomer households:⁹ 2,160 (26.7%) are in core housing need;
- Among lone parent households: 9,530 (24.2%) are in core housing need;
- Among Aboriginal households: 4,370 (19.8%) are in core housing need;
- Among non-family households: 22,955 (19.1%) are in core housing need;
- Among senior-led households: 10,575 (15.1%) are in core housing need.

Core housing at affordable rent

“One of our clients who qualifies for AISH has a monthly income of \$1,980 and a rent of \$1,650. That leaves \$330 for food, incontinence products, medications...”
Consultation Participant

Many low-income households in the Edmonton region live in rental housing because home ownership is beyond their financial means. In recent years, conversion of rental units to condominiums, combined with a limited number of new rental units being constructed, has contributed to a tight rental market. As well, rents are going up and staying up. This creates an increasing financial squeeze for low income households.

In the Edmonton region, rent is more than 30% of total household income for many families. This crossed all segments of the client respondents, and caused the most anxiety and distress. **About one-quarter of renter households (almost 29,000 households) are in core housing need.**¹⁰

For low income households, the pressure is enormous. Adequate, suitable housing that costs 30% or less of before-tax income is hard to find.

“For a resident working full time in a minimum wage job, average rent in the community is 65% of the before-tax monthly income.”
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC):
Rental Market Reports, Edmonton Census Metropolitan Area, 2006-2010

If a household must spend 65% of its before-tax monthly income on a place to live, that does not leave enough income to provide for other basic needs. In that situation, any unexpected or emergency expense is a disaster. A family living in this precarious situation is under unrelenting stress all the time.

⁸ A “non-family household” is either one person living alone or a group of two or more people who live together but do not constitute a “census family.”

⁹ “Newcomer households” are those that immigrated to Canada within the past 5 years.

¹⁰ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), *Housing in Canada On-line 2011*, based on 2005 income data and 2006 census data for the Edmonton Census Metropolitan Area.

“Eviction prevention”

Participants described a previous program they called “eviction prevention,” that provided short-term rental assistance for people whose rent had been or was about to be increased. The program intent was to provide short-term help until renters could find alternative accommodation or had the income to pay increased rent. Some participants said the discontinuation of the program has created hardship.

Consultation participants talked about the need for rental assistance, and also talked about needing access to information and support if they have been evicted because of increased rent or condo conversion.

Unrelenting stress, far reaching impact

The lack of affordable housing was the greatest need expressed in the consultations. Tens of thousands of low income people struggle to find and maintain affordable housing. Many make tough decisions daily about paying rent or buying food. Many live in unhealthy or overcrowded housing.

Poor housing is directly linked to poor health. Numerous research points to a good home as one of the most important determinants of health. Inadequate housing leads to increased illness and premature death.¹¹

Housing assistance for people on low income

Consultation participants encouraged town housing, mixed housing and smaller buildings with fewer than 45 units.

Several groups suggested a revitalization of the Co-operative Housing Model, where everyone had a role, responsibility and pride of place. In addition, asset-building models were encouraged.

Participants strongly promoted a home buyer’s initiative or opportunities to apply rent to ownership. As a short-term strategy, participants would like rental assistance programs to be provided until Edmonton region has a larger supply of affordable non-market and market housing.

“What are we going to do when the economy swings around in the next year and rents skyrocket? Where are these people going to go?”


Consultation Participant

5.2 Aboriginal people

*Why didn’t I learn about sweat lodges and smudges until I was 27 and in jail?
It could have made a real difference if I knew these things while I was growing up.”*

Consultation Participant

¹¹ Wellesley Institute (2010), *Precarious Housing in Canada*



Between 2001 and 2006, the number of Aboriginal people living in Edmonton increased by 27%, to 52,000 from 40,930. The community's Aboriginal population growth rate is about 2.5 times higher than the non-Aboriginal population. If the Aboriginal population continues to grow at this rate, it will increase by 45% by 2017.¹² About 55% of the region's Aboriginal population is Métis and about 40% are First Nation. Inuit residents account for a small proportion of Aboriginal residents.¹³

On average, Aboriginal residents are younger and more mobile than non-Aboriginal residents. Half of Aboriginal residents in the region were under the age of 24 in 2006, compared to one-third of non-Aboriginal residents.¹⁴ The Aboriginal population, especially First Nation, tends to be mobile. Of every 100 Aboriginal residents in Edmonton in 2006, about 35 had moved within the previous year. Of these, 25 had moved within the City.¹⁵

The incidence of low income is higher among Aboriginal residents than non-Aboriginal residents. Two in five Aboriginal residents are in a low income household –more than twice the proportion of non-Aboriginal residents. First Nation residents are more likely than Métis residents to have a low income.

Of those who completed a client survey, 68% identified themselves as Aboriginal, which suggests over-representation of Aboriginal people among those receiving services. A significant proportion of homeless adults in our community (38%) are Aboriginal. Edmonton's most recent homeless count identified 863 homeless Aboriginal adults.¹⁶

Key issues

Impact of family patterns, low income and high mobility

For many Aboriginal individuals and families, doubling up with other households is a way to avoid homelessness and address housing affordability challenges. Landlords may object to relatives moving in with tenants for extended periods of time. Evictions are not unusual. A lack of housing stability means that Aboriginal households are more likely to need to search for housing and move. This can be particularly disruptive for children in the households.

Culturally appropriate approach

Consultation participants appealed to the Community Plan to exercise care, thought and collaboration when planning housing and support strategies for Aboriginal people. For crisis shelter, food and safety, those interviewed did not feel they needed services from an Aboriginal agency. Once those basic needs were met, culturally based services were seen as important.

Consultations suggest that within the Aboriginal population, the journey to wholeness and wellbeing can only be achieved through healing, and healing is best accomplished by reconnecting with traditional Aboriginal spirituality and practices.


¹² City of Edmonton, *Community Strategies 2010-2012 Business Plan*.

¹³ Statistics Canada, Federal Census 2001 and 2006.

¹⁴ Statistics Canada, Federal Census 2006.

¹⁵ City of Edmonton, *Aboriginal Edmonton: A Statistical Story*, 2010.

¹⁶ Homeward Trust Edmonton, *2010 Edmonton Homeless Count*.



Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations apply for funds. There was a sense that due to funding initiatives, “a lot of people are jumping on board” to serve Aboriginal people without first understanding the population or the services that are already being provided. Participants emphasized that there should be a mandatory requirement for cultural training for service providers – “ideally everyone from janitor to CEO” – to increase empathy and understanding.

Provide support for Aboriginal women

“Heal the woman, heal the family. Heal the family, heal the community.”¹⁷
Consultation Participant

The fracturing of family was a major concern to Aboriginal consultation participants. Participants emphasized that focusing efforts on healing women would result in healthier families. The subsequent ripple effect could last generations.

Of all women in Canada, Aboriginal women are most at risk for sexual exploitation, violence and addictions. Some may live in unhealthy dangerous relationships to avoid homelessness or to feel safer while being homeless.

Many women have children who have been apprehended. Attempts to repatriate them with their mothers often fail, particularly if the mother experiences repeated incarceration.

Participants explained that women leaving addictions treatment or incarceration were particularly vulnerable and needed strong support in a mutually supportive environment to help ease the transition.

Living in community could reflect a welcome return to a traditional way of living, and enable Aboriginal women to live together with their children in a supportive environment.
Consultation Participant

A Community Plan that recognized the need for women to have their children returned to them and live together in a healthy and supportive community environment was seen as a priority.

A greater role for Aboriginal people

Housing options owned and managed by Aboriginal organizations were explored. Participants felt there was a need for mentorship, peer training and capacity building to make Aboriginal owned and managed properties a reality. One participant suggested, “When people have been managed all of their lives they may not know how to manage, but it is up to Aboriginal people who have learned how to manage to share their knowledge. It is also up to us to ensure that we retain, as a group, the principles of [Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession] OCAP.”

¹⁷ During the consultation process, this quote from an Aboriginal consultation participant became a “mantra” for many in the housing community.

Appropriate housing characteristics

Sense of community. Participants cautioned against clustering Aboriginal services and housing in the inner city. They were concerned about creating what they called an “urban reserve.” At the same time, participants acknowledged the strengths of having a community and would welcome a plan that sensitively addressed opportunities to take part in traditional cultural and spiritual practices.

Appropriate, suitable, affordable. Aboriginal participants emphasized that housing needs to be safe and well maintained. Units need to be of appropriate size and with a sufficient number of bedrooms for larger families.

Support while settling in. Aboriginal people moving into the city from Métis settlements or reserves may benefit from a variety of supports to assist in the transition. Besides assistance to find adequate and affordable housing, many Aboriginal families and individuals could benefit from help to learn about and access needed health care, transportation, child care, school and employment services.

5.3 Newcomers to Canada

“People often come here expecting a land of opportunity. They are here to create a better life for themselves and their families. But they become disillusioned. A recent report said that, on average, it takes more than ten years for newcomers to Canada to achieve the same financial status they had when they left their country of origin.”

Foreign Student Worker

Newcomers to Canada are an increasing proportion of Edmonton region residents, and the proportion is growing. Newcomers to Canada include:

- **Recent immigrants** – those who have lived in Canada for less than five years, and who intend to make Canada their home;
- **Refugees** – people outside of their country of nationality or habitual residence who are unwilling or unable to return to that country because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, political opinion, nationality or membership in a particular social group;
- **Temporary foreign residents** – for example, students, workers or others whose immigration status requires them to leave Canada within a designated time.

Between 2001 and 2006, the foreign-born population in the Edmonton region grew by 14.9%, outpacing the total growth in the region’s total population (10.6%). It is estimated that approximately 32,000 recent immigrants lived in the Edmonton region in 2006. More than nine out of ten (92.6%) lived in Edmonton.¹⁸ In 2008, approximately 7,500 new permanent residents to Canada and almost 8,300 temporary foreign residents arrived in Edmonton.¹⁹

¹⁸ Statistics Canada (2006 Census), *Immigration in Canada: A Portrait of the Foreign-born Population, Portraits of Major Metropolitan Centres*.

¹⁹ Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2008), *Immigration Overview: Permanent and Temporary Residents*.

Key issues

Housing and support issues of refugees and recent immigrants are inter-related, but revolve around financial pressure, availability of appropriate housing, and settlement and employment support.

Finances

While financial worries existed across the entire range of those consulted, the newcomer and immigrant community expressed particular vulnerability. Their circumstances reveal distinctive financial barriers.


- **High debt ratio.** Due to refugee loans and settlement costs, many newcomers to Canada have a high debt ratio. The dedication to repaying these loans often has parents working several low paying jobs, which puts tremendous stress on the family.
- **Difficulty becoming established in the labour market.** Although recent immigrants, on average, have a higher education level than Canadian-born residents, they often struggle to establish themselves in the labour market because their foreign qualifications are not recognized or because they do not have the English language skills sought by employers. This can be discouraging.
- **Gender issues.** There are gender issues unique to cultural mores. For example, women often experience a lack of control of financial resources, and the limited availability of adequate affordable child care make job search or getting to appointments difficult.
- **Supporting family back home.** Many newcomer families send money 'home' to support family members in their country of origin. That increases their financial burden here.

The difficulties faced in securing good, well-paying jobs often translate into difficulties securing suitable, affordable housing and can also contribute to housing instability. Recent immigrants in low paying jobs can be vulnerable to job loss when business or local economic conditions change. Even small drops in income or increases in living costs force households to find cheaper, less suitable housing or to move to another part of the community.

This instability can be detrimental for children and for the ability of families to integrate into communities. Participants suggested that the Community Plan call for increased rent subsidy for existing rental units, increased number of subsidized housing units, and low cost or free housing for recent newcomers.

Availability and adequacy of housing

Lengthy waiting lists and inadequate housing were viewed as key issues. The majority of newcomer families have several children. Larger families have difficulty finding low cost housing. Although homelessness is not common among recent immigrants, overcrowding is. Often, more than one generation or one family will live together in order to be able to afford housing. This can lead to stress and be detrimental to mental and physical health.



Recent buildings have emphasized bachelor or one bedroom units, which are not suitable to the majority of the newcomer population. In addition, participants said that low cost housing may not be adequately maintained or may be located in neighbourhoods viewed as unsafe. The Community Plan on Housing and Supports should address the demand for larger housing units in safe communities.

As well, supports are required to provide assistance to help newcomers access neighbourhoods, schools for children, and employment opportunities. The Plan could include opportunities for education and awareness about tenant rights and responsibilities.

Situations of abuse

All cultures have incidents of abuse within families. No culture condones abuse within families. However, perceptions of what constitutes “abuse” vary from one culture to another. Consultation participants repeatedly said that the incidence of violence against women in the newcomer community is significant.

Newcomers who are being abused may not know that violence against family members is a crime in Canada. They may lack language skills or knowledge of resources to be able to seek help. They may not have support people in Canada who can recognize signs of abuse and respond. Supports and services need to be culturally appropriate for newcomers in abusive situations.

Participants suggested that culturally sensitive emergency accommodation and services for women and families would be important in a Community Plan. They also suggest income support to help families move from short-term interim housing to long-term homes. There may be a related need for support with legal, separation, custodial, and financial issues.

Limited Availability of Culturally Appropriate Services

Participants acknowledged the good work being done by newcomer serving agencies, but felt that demand for services far exceed the supply. An interim residence that served as a welcoming centre, providing accommodation, orientation to the community and to programs and services, was seen as important in a housing strategy for newcomers.

All services need to be culturally appropriate; for example, respecting traditions regarding gender roles. As families move into longer term housing, they will continue to require mobile supports such as child care and access to service brokering for schools, employment, medical and other services, and access to neighbourhoods.

“Let’s face it. We need people from other countries. We need foreign workers to generate the labour force we need to support our economy.”

Business Consultation Participant

5.4 Seniors and older adults

Albertans said that as seniors, they will want to live in their own homes for as long as possible. Individual seniors, in consultation with their families, decide where they live – or age in the right place – based on factors such as cost, access, proximity to services and personal preferences.

To remain successfully in their own homes, seniors need affordable housing and services, access to adequate supports and more choice in housing. The Alberta and municipal governments, not-for-profit agencies and the private sector need to work together to improve the affordability and choice in housing for seniors.

Alberta Seniors and Community Supports (2008):

Demographic Planning Commission Findings Report

The Edmonton Region's population, while young in comparison to other major centres in Canada, is aging. About 130,000 residents in the region (about 11% of the total population) are age 65 or older.²⁰

The proportion of seniors 55 and older is increasing. If present trends continue, by 2041, 32% of Edmonton's residents will be age 55 or older. Life expectancy is increasing. Females have a longer life expectancy than males but the gender gap in life expectancy is expected to narrow in the future.²¹

Most seniors and older adults²² in the region live in their own homes and require little or no assistance. However, some seniors and older adults face significant challenges in obtaining affordable housing and support. Older adults' incomes tend to decline and become increasingly fixed over time. It can be difficult for residents with low fixed incomes to afford a decent standard of living.

Seniors who live alone tend to have lower incomes than those who live with others. In the Edmonton region, more than one-third of people 65 and older who live alone have a low income, and 15% are in core housing need. Women are more likely than men to be in a low income situation.

Key issues

Changing housing requirements


Participants across the board expressed concern for housing for older adults, particularly in light of an aging demographic.

Several groups also identified that people between 50 and 64 years of age were emerging as a vulnerable population. They cannot get into seniors' housing but are not a priority with Edmonton Region Housing. Consultation participants also expressed concern for older refugees and immigrants, indicating a lack of culturally sensitive accommodation.

²⁰ Statistics Canada, 2006 Federal Census.

²¹ City of Edmonton, *Edmonton Seniors: A Portrait*.

²² In this report, "older adults" refers to citizens 65 and older. The City of Edmonton defines "seniors" as age 55 and older. Some information in this section is for the City of Edmonton rather than for the region as a whole.



As people age, they are less likely to continue to live in houses. Just under one half of those aged 80 or over live in a house. The aging of the population can be expected to increase the demand from seniors and older adults for apartments, which will put pressure on the region's rental housing and condominium markets.

Demand for other types of housing can also be expected to increase with the growth in the number of seniors and older adults. These demands might include smaller homes, secondary suites, town houses, assisted living and continuing care.

Increasing need for support

Currently Edmonton has a shortage of housing options for seniors 55 and older who require something between independent and institutional living. As well, the unmet need for long-term care continues to exist all over the province. In Alberta, about 1,000 people are waiting in the community and an additional 700 people are waiting in acute care hospitals for a long-term care bed.²³ This province-wide situation has an impact on the Edmonton region.

As individuals age, they tend to require more supports to allow them to live healthy, independent lives. Those who live alone are more likely to require assistance with home care, personal care and home maintenance. One of the realities for seniors and older adults is their housing and support needs can change abruptly. A fall, a rapid deterioration in health or the loss of a spouse can quickly shift the housing and support needs of a person who was previously living independently without any external supports.

Agencies that provide housing and supports for seniors are challenging themselves to think beyond 'our usual silos' and consider a seamless service approach. They suggested the Community Plan consider four risk factors unique to seniors:

- lack of information to navigate "the system;"
- social isolation;
- transportation;
- home supports.

Short term accommodation for seniors

Participants identified an increase in abuse of older adults, and are forecasting that numbers will continue to rise. They predict an increase in the demand for the current capacity (7 units). Older adults who are abused face unique challenges. For example, an Aboriginal senior may want to leave an abusive relationship but may have intergenerational child care responsibilities. 'Where do they all go?' Seniors seeking refuge from abuse need short term accommodation to bridge them to new permanent housing and any required supports.

²³ City of Edmonton, *Edmonton Seniors: A Portrait*.

Need for affordable seniors housing with support services

People working for senior serving agencies report that there are leading edge models for senior accommodation. Most supportive service models are designed for those with money. The best models are delivered for profit.

Seniors are being housed in apartments and using retirement income to utilize services. These seniors who need support are self managing their services (Home Care, meals, etc.) instead of using assisted living because assisted living costs more than they can afford.

In addition to a need for increasing the number of supported and supportive housing units for seniors, participants suggested that the Community Plan could challenge assumptions and explore creative, nontraditional solutions. They suggest that as a community we need to ask, “Look at seniors and others in need of housing; how do we create a community where we watch out for each other?” They suggest the Community Plan consider small cooperative environments, as well as mixed age groups.

5.5 Youth and young adults

“For youth on the fringes of high risk behaviour, you have to be where they are in that moment. While we are designing programs and filling out grant applications, the predators are already out there, befriending and recruiting and exploiting.”

Consultation Participant

The October 5, 2010, Homeless Count identified 43 youth under the age of 17 living independently and homeless. Also on the day of the count, a total of 98 youth stayed in shelters – 58 youth at the Hope Mission’s Youth Shelter, 25 at the Youth Emergency Shelter Society’s Shelter and Sky program, eight at the Youth Emergency Shelter Society’s Start House, and seven at Catholic Social Services Safe House.

The 2006 report, “A Survey of Homeless Youth” by Carlee Crerar, surveyed 106 youth, of whom 55% had no fixed address. Of the 106 respondents, around 30% were staying with friends, relatives, or significant others, while 15% were sleeping on the street.

During the Community Plan consultation process in 2011, the majority of those consulted who were in a sexual minority were under the age of 30. This, and information provided anecdotally through agencies and service providers, points to how stigma, stress, family alienation and lack of support available to sexual minorities results in poverty and at-risk lifestyles.

Key issues

An under-served population

Almost all consultation groups suggested that youth and young adults were underserved and represented a 'huge gap' in the housing and supports world. Priority should be given to addressing youth housing and support needs to prevent homelessness from becoming an entrenched way of life for some youth.

Many youth may struggle with housing issues for a time (for example, while pursuing post-secondary studies or establishing themselves in the labour market) but do not require any special housing and supports. However, some youth have significant need for help to ensure they have suitable housing and supports.

Multiple needs; ups and downs

Those who work with at-risk and high-risk youth say youth often have no place to go, no means, no family, no transportation and no place to stay. Besides youth who have lived in Edmonton region for a while, youth come to Edmonton from all over Alberta, Canada and the U.S. They come here, find or create a 'squat' and try to survive.

"When young people come into the city, if they have no support, it takes just three days for them to be involved in drugs or survival sex or both. That means we have just three days to connect with them, earn their trust and provide the help they need."

Person who works with high-risk and at-risk youth in Edmonton

As well as survival needs, youth on their own or youth estranged from their families may also have physical or mental health concerns or addictions challenges. Given their situation and their age, youth may be volatile.

"Aging out"

Consultation participants pointed out there is a great difference between what help is available for a 15-year-old and an 18-year old. Youth age 17 and under are within mandate of Child and Family Services and other government agencies. They have access to financial, medical, education and housing support.

When a youth turns 18, that mandated help officially stops. Youth are expected to be independent adults. Those in the care of Child and Family Services as of their 18th birthday may, if deemed appropriate by a caseworker, continue to receive some financial help and assistance with education, counselling and medical expenses until they are age 22. Other youth 18 and over are simply on their own, expected to have adult capabilities.

Systemic barriers: organizational silos

Barriers to service exist between various governing bodies. As a result of competing legislation and regulations, youth fall through the cracks when it comes to non-market housing. Meanwhile, in the market, prospective landlords are often reluctant to accept youth renters who have no phone number, no address, no references, and who may (the landlords assume) have drug or alcohol problems. The Committee was challenged to consider new and innovative ways of developing youth housing models.

Housing models for youth

Some youth may need emergency accommodation on occasion. Some may need only affordable rental housing, possibly with short-term support. Some may need interim accommodation while they arrange for permanent housing. Some may need longer term supportive living arrangements where they receive daily living help, life skills development and psycho-social supports until they are ready to assume adult responsibilities. Whatever their situation, youth require specific interventions and support services. Participants suggested these characteristics.

- **Incorporate capacity and asset building.** In addition to core housing, youth housing programs should help them to connect to education, employment and living skills. Several participants described programs to increase young people's financial literacy to help them budget and to save for school expenses and damage deposits. Participants also talked of helping youth move from professional supports to "natural supports" and become integrated into a community.
- **Demonstrate acceptance, tolerance and respect.** Experienced caseworkers offer the following considerations when dealing with youth or any high risk population.

The (behaviour) of high risk clientele is unacceptable and intolerable for many uninformed, untrained service providers... [High risk clientele] behaviours are rooted in the severe deprivation of basic needs and healthy socialization... The understanding of this and the response to crisis and 24 hour day and night time services with specialized training and education is critical.

City of Edmonton (2010): Taskforce on Community Safety: Healthy Individuals Subcommittee

Focus on transition times. Housing and support are especially critical at times of transition, such as moving into a new community or coming out of a treatment program, incarceration or some other residential facility. Currently there is not enough housing for those under 18 living on their own.

Suggestions for models of supportive housing for youth included:

- Adapt the Housing First model specifically to youth (for example, establish a youth Housing First team). This was repeatedly recommended for inclusion in the Community Plan.
- Offer congregate living with onsite, staffed supports, and easy access to a team of health, education and counseling resources. A house and supports specifically designed for youth experiencing sexual exploitation would have a great positive impact on vulnerable youth.

- The Inner City Youth Housing Project was repeatedly cited as a good example of supportive housing for youth.

5.6 Families with children

My first few years as a single parent were a roller coaster. I was a wreck from all the turmoil before and during the split-up of our family. I was terrified that my kids would be ruined because now they only had one parent and I was a mess. They too were trying to cope with all the turmoil and change they experienced. Having to move made the turmoil worse.

Consultation Participant

Low income families with children – especially those who seek rental housing – can be seriously challenged in finding adequate, suitable, affordable housing with enough room for their family.

Similar issues affect all low income families with children, but consultation participants identified lone parent families as the most vulnerable sub-section of families with children. Lone parent families are more likely to have low income, and have the added pressure of only one adult to deal with the stressors.

In 2006, 46,085 families in the Edmonton region were headed by a lone parent (16% of families in the region).²⁴ Four out of five (80%) of lone parent families are headed by a female. In 2006, the median after-tax income of female lone parent families was \$36,388 (just over \$3,000 per month). One in four lone parent families in the region is in core housing need.²⁵

Lack of financial resources has far reaching implications, including whether children can be repatriated with their parents.

“I need a place to live, funding for school and food so that I can get my kids back.”

Consultation Participant

Key issues

Sections of this report related to “People with Low Income” and “Heal the Woman, Heal the Family...” apply to many family households with children.

Four issues of special concern to families with children are

- rental housing,
- overcrowding,
- housing stability and
- access to affordable quality child care.

²⁴ Statistics Canada (2006), *Community Profiles*

²⁵ Ibid.

Rental housing. Lower income families with children living at home may rely more on rental market housing than higher income families do. An increase in lone parent families or other families with children moving into the Edmonton region can be expected to place additional pressure on the rental market and increase the demand for affordable home ownership.

Overcrowding can be an issue for larger families. That is especially the case in many households of Aboriginal people or newcomers to Canada.

“A 3 bedroom townhouse is far more desirable for families than a 3 bedroom apartment. Outside spaces are important for families with children. Townhouse types of developments are more family friendly. For example: if kids are being kids and jumping and playing on the second floor of a townhouse, only the parents of the child hear the noise. However, noise carries and in an apartment the noise would likely result in a conflict.”

Consultation Participant

Housing stability is important for families with children in order to allow children to develop stable school and community relationships. Adults who move can stay in touch with friends in their former location. Children often cannot maintain contact with friends in their old location.

Access to affordable quality child care is an important need for many families with children. This includes care for pre-school children, care for children before and after school, back-up child care for occasions when children are ill, and care for children whose parents work shifts and need child care during evenings, nights, weekends and holidays.

5.7 Women experiencing sexual exploitation and violence

“Sexual exploitation and drugs go together. Drugs and gangs go together. Many women who would like to get out are afraid because they know that if they try to leave, someone will come after them. They know people, they have friends, who disappeared when they tried to make a break and start a new life.”

Consultation Participant

Many of the elements of “Heal the Women, Heal the Family” section of this document also relate to women trying to leave a life of sexual exploitation, violence and addictions. Being judged and marginalized by the community because of being sexually exploited is especially intense for this population.

Participants suggest that the Community Plan should contain variety and choice for women leaving sexual exploitation and violence. It was also suggested that the paradigm of ‘time limits’ be examined and reconsidered.

Key issues

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; altered brain chemistry

Participants of consultations identified that many women experiencing sexual exploitation and violence have a form of post traumatic stress disorder similar to those who have lived in a war zone. The impact of the abuse and violence has forever altered their brain chemistry. These participants say many women leaving sexual exploitation may never be able to live independently. They suggest that the Community Plan consider permanent supportive housing for this population, and that the Plan examine some of the more creative models for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD). Some of the PDD models might be adapted to best meet the needs of women leaving sexual exploitation and violence.

Managing transitions

Immediacy of interim housing during times of personal transition was seen as an essential component of a Community Plan. When people experiencing sexual exploitation make the decision to leave ‘the life’ behind, seek addictions treatment, and/or work to have their children returned to them, they are especially vulnerable.

They may face physical danger from those they left behind. They may face the same hazards of relapse experienced by many who have addictions. They may have immediate medical needs. They most likely have had their self-esteem and self-worth pummeled. They may have forgotten how to live “an ordinary life” – if indeed they have ever experienced that. They need safe, secure, sustainable housing with a high degree of support.

Next steps


Consultation participants want the plan to address a ‘next step’ strategy. In the consultation groups, the transition out of Housing First was often mentioned as a cause for anxiety. The larger issue is, “What happens next? What happens after first-stage supportive housing?”

Once immediate safety and crisis issues have been handled, women who have experienced sexual exploitation and violence need long-term support. As they strive to heal and rebuild their lives, they need transition support such as counselling, medical care, addictions treatment, life skills, financial help and perhaps help with education, career planning and employment.

Some kinds of support may be needed for the rest of their lives.

Couples, families and community

Many women who have been sexually exploited have never experienced a healthy primary relationship, and may not have experienced friendship. They need to be connected to others who understand and accept them, and who can help with the transition to health.



There was a strong desire that the plan would provide for treating and housing couples, supporting them along a continuum from a toxic to a healthy relationship. Women who have children have often been separated from the children and may need to work out a plan that will allow them to reconnect or reunite with their children. These women would like to be able to live as a couple or family, and have access to the type of supports available to Housing First clients.

Communal housing where children are included was seen as important. If a woman must leave for treatment or for some other reason, her children can remain in a familiar and supportive environment until she returns.

Consultation participants also suggested that providing treatment and support to the families of those who were experiencing sexual exploitation would result in more resilient families.

Individuals leaving domestic violence

“People fleeing violence have special support needs that we can’t meet, other than to provide a safe place. Often, they have gone into a shelter and when it is time to move on, they still need supports. When support is arranged before they leave the shelter it works well. When they do not have pre arranged support services in place, it may be too late by the time they move into our facilities.”

Consultation Participant

While no special consultation group was held for individuals leaving domestic violence and the agencies that assist them, their needs were discussed in several consultation groups.

The needs of individuals leaving domestic violence are not identical to women who have experienced sexual exploitation and violence, but there are similarities.

- The mental, physical and emotional impact of living in an abusive home is like living in a war zone.
- They know the feeling of being judged and marginalized within and outside of the family.
- Their self-esteem and self-worth have been eroded.
- Their abusive partner may try to track them down and harm them, and may use threats, promises or intimidation tactics to stop them from leaving the abusive situation.
- If there are children, the children will also have experienced the impact of witnessing or being subject to abuse, or the disruption of being removed from their families. The children may have emotional and behavioural challenges as a result of what they have experienced.

For a small minority of women leaving domestic violence, the longer-term “pathway” envisioned by those who are or work with sexually exploited women is available.

- Their first stop may be a women’s emergency shelter (currently the maximum stay in a women’s emergency shelter is 21 days) or a brief stay with friends or family or in a hotel.

- For a small number of women in the Edmonton Region, “second stage” housing is available through organizations such as WINGS. These are congregate facilities where women and children leaving violence each live in their own apartment. The facility has extra security measures. It also provides counseling, links to community resources and other support services. Women and children report they take strength from one another, knowing others have been through the same experiences and been able to heal and flourish.

Only a small proportion of women in violent relationships use women’s emergency shelters, and an even smaller proportion have access to Second Stage Housing. The number of available spaces is considerably smaller than the number of people who could benefit. Still, this framework does provide a model of moving from interim to transition to permanent housing, supported at every step of the way.

5.8 People with physical disabilities

“All of us can benefit from universal design!”

Consultation Participant

Many individuals with physical disabilities are able to live independently or with family members who provide them with any needed care. However, some require special housing and supports. In most cases, people with physical disabilities do not want institutional living. Residences built to accommodate physical or mobility limitations, with needed support for daily living and to manage chronic conditions, are a preferred and less costly option.

Persons with physical disabilities strongly recommended that Universal Design and Adaptability be a pre-requisite in all construction of new housing options. They suggested that the committee ask themselves “When using public money building public resources, why should they just be for the ambulatory?” These participants feel strongly that the philosophies in *Home for Life* should be a fundamental principle in any Community Plan of Housing and Supports.

Key issues

Universal design: accessibility for all

Currently people with permanent or temporary disabilities don’t know where to look for housing. There are limited opportunities. Participants urged the Committee to think beyond traditional applications of housing for people with disabilities, and to apply what they have learned about universal design so that it could benefit a wide range of populations. They offered several examples of individuals who experienced a housing crisis and either had to move or leave their employment because their home was no longer meeting their needs.

Universal and adaptable design would accommodate those experiencing a temporary injury, a new diagnosis, a family with a child with a disability, an older person with a broken hip, a young couple

caring for an aging parent, a 60 or 70 year old caring for 90+ parents, older adults with special needs children, or grandparents with scooters looking after children. Universal Design ensures ‘visitability’ in a home by creating a space that aging grandparents, friends or family suffering a mobility-limiting injury can continue to visit and be part of family life.

Implementation

Architects and builders present during the consultations indicated that **barrier free, adaptable, universal design is very attractive and no more costly than regular buildings that have much less flexibility for tenants**. They suggest that Homeward Trust demonstrate leadership by requiring or providing incentives so that everything Homeward Trust builds or supports is universal or adaptable design. They further recommend that committees responsible for approving projects include an architect who understands and can facilitate this requirement.

5.9 Persons with complex mental and emotional behaviours

“I came out of 4 weeks of addictions treatment, ready to start a new life and I had nowhere to go, no place to stay. A police officer spent hours on the phone trying to help me.”

Client Consultation Participant

“Doctors, from an ethical point of view, are reluctant to discharge people to the streets, with no housing to go to. There are over 50 beds that have had people in them for over two years just because they have nowhere else to go.”

Health Services Consultation Participant


The incidence of mental health and addictions issues is particularly high among those who are homeless. More than half of those without a home struggle with addictions, and 59% have a mental illness.²⁶

However, addictions and/or mental health issues can also be prevalent within other population segments. The housing and support needs of persons with mental illness, addictions, developmental disabilities, brain injury, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder or related disabilities vary a great deal and can change as circumstances or conditions change.

The community widely supports continuing to implement the province’s and City of Edmonton’s ten year plans to end homelessness, applying the Housing First philosophy. However, about 15% of Housing First clients find that independent living – even supported independent living – is not appropriate. These individuals’ complex needs could better be addressed in a supportive or secure living environment.

In addition to some current Housing First clients, others in the community would also benefit from being able to live in a home with supports. These include some individuals with developmental

²⁶ City of Edmonton (2010), *A Place to Call Home: Edmonton’s 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness*.



disabilities, serious and persistent mental illness, addictions, brain injury or others who are in homes not suited to their condition.

Some are in homes that lack the security and support appropriate for people whose condition may include volatile or violent aggressive behaviour. Others are constrained in a more limiting facility than is required for their condition. (For example, some individuals with developmental disabilities currently “live” at Alberta Hospital, in the absence of appropriate supportive housing in the community.)

Key issues

A spectrum of options

Depending on an individual’s circumstances and condition, housing and support needs within this subpopulation could include all the types of services described in the Housing and Supports Framework. These include, for example:

- **Safe “crash beds” for intoxicated individuals.** “Crash bed” facilities are safe and staffed places outside of hospitals where impaired individuals can stay until they are stabilized.
- **Independent housing with supports.** An example is the type of housing and support provided through the Housing First program. Support can vary from case worker regular visits to assist with life skills and daily living tasks and accompany residents to appointments, to multidisciplinary teams available to assist those with more complex needs.
- **Permanent supportive housing** with on-site supports, ranging from daily living supports to on-site professional supports. This type of housing can be appropriate for those with serious and persistent mental illness, persons with brain injury, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders or other cognitive impairments, and persons with multiple types of disorders.
- **Harm reduction housing** (interim or permanent) for those who have complex behaviours and are substance users. Many of these people have exhausted all of their options and cycle through expensive emergency services and inappropriate housing.

It is important to be clear on the intention of particular services. For example, harm reduction approaches must be considered separately from valuable services that promote leaving addiction such as detoxification prior to treatment, or rehabilitation to prepare for life without addictions.

Mismatch of needs, expectations, mandates and services

Of all the sub-populations discussed during consultations, this one may have generated the most frustration with the mismatch of available services to people's needs. Discussions also revealed diversity of opinion about "what's really happening" for clients who use, or could benefit from, existing services.

In one consultation group, service providers would describe great progress achieved by people who were part of a particular program. In another consultation group, participants would describe how limited or ineffective the same program or agency appeared to them.

Housing instability ("If I go into treatment, I lose my home.")

Consultation participants reported situations such as these:

- A safe place for people with complex cognitive needs is not available to them during the day. By 8 a.m., people who stay in many group homes must leave for the rest of the day. If they are not involved in day programming or some meaningful vocation, they may have nowhere to go.
- People with addictions, mental illness, brain injury, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders or concurrent disorders often have intense episodes of high need interspersed with times when they are stabilized. Several consultation participants described situations in which they lost their home while taking part in some form of residential treatment. In the transition from detoxification, acute care or treatment back into the community, one of the stressors was the need to find new housing.


Finances

Finances affect housing for people with complex behaviours in at least two different ways.

- On a personal level, many people in this sub-population have minimal income and may be dependent on a government source for some or all of their income. The comments in the section about "People on Low Income" are relevant to this situation.
- At an agency level, services may be driven more by funding criteria than by the actual needs of persons. During consultations, participants told many stories in which potential helpers could see what ought to be done but no agency felt they had the mandate or resources to do what was needed. While many caring people provide various kinds of support, caring for "the big picture" of an individual's life was nobody's job.

Expertise and character of operators

Many participants had things to say about the qualities, expertise and training that ought to be required of operators who run services and programs for people with complex behaviours. Participants believe operators should first of all be compassionate, non-judgmental and respectful. If



they have those characteristics, they should be trained and skilled in dealing with aggressive volatile behaviour, and able to create an environment that is conducive to clients' sense of safety, stability and belonging.

Good examples exist

Consultation participants mentioned strengths of some programs that exist in the Edmonton Region. For example, the Manor House for men was mentioned often, along with the comment that a similar facility for women is needed. Some of the existing housing and care models for adults with developmental disabilities could be adapted for people with complex behaviours.

5.10 Persons leaving incarceration

"We are not going to arrest our way to a safer city. We need to look at the bigger picture and that includes housing."

Consultation Participant

Participants working with those leaving incarceration or the criminal justice system believe that a strategy to re-enter society in a planned and structured manner would greatly reduce recidivism and repeat offenders. Lack of this strategy creates safety issues. Participants stress that planned reintegration and circles of support are essential for this population.

Key issues

Clients released from prison with no support

Clients are released from jail with no money, nowhere to go, and nowhere to live. They are often released late on a Friday when the agencies serving this population are closed for the weekend.

"The bus [of released prisoners] drove in from Fort Saskatchewan and dropped us off at Clareview LRT station at 11:00 p.m. on a Friday night. I was lucky. My sister was able to pick me up. If I hadn't had her, I know that I would have ended up downtown with no money and no place to go. By morning I would have been with some guy, drunk or stoned or both, and been pulled back into my old life. Thank God for my sister."

Consultation Participant

Participants strongly recommend a strategy that allows the community and the individual to plan for their release in advance of their release date ('In-Reach'). Participants suggest that a constant person work with people prior to release to guide them through the transition. This constant person, plus a core group of key people, would continue to support the individual once he or she is released. If people are released without transition planning, consultation participants suggest additional Outreach.

Housing options

When released from prison, individuals need time to relearn (or perhaps learn for the first time) life skills, social skills and taking responsibility for ordinary activities that were regimented while they were incarcerated. For example, while incarcerated, they had no decisions regarding meal times or menus, the structure or activities of their day, or the people with whom they spent time. It takes time to get used to using this freedom in a constructive way.

Participants support the idea of **Community-Based Residential Facilities or CBRFs (half-way houses)** that reinforce the structure that individuals experienced in prison. Group homes in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are not the same as halfway houses, and do not serve these clients well.

Too few halfway models are available to meet the current demand. At present, no provincial funding is available for such facilities.

Participants suggest that the cost of continuous repeat incarceration is significantly more than the cost of preventing a return to jail by providing a strongly supported halfway house model.

Continued need for support

To follow after the CBRFs, consultation participants suggest a Housing First type approach.²⁷ They acknowledge there would be a steep learning curve and they would need to coordinate referrals, group services, and collaboration. They value the learning from Housing First and want to adapt the philosophy to assist persons released from incarceration.

For many who have been incarcerated, addictions, mental health and/or life skills issues preceded their incarceration and those issues have not disappeared. It is anticipated that, after the first year of permanent support, clients will continue to require long term support.

6.0 Conclusion

Edmonton region is not the same community it was when the last Community Plan on Housing was developed. “*A Place to Call Home*” broke trail for other innovative approaches for community safety; for First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Aboriginal leadership; for high-risk and at-risk youth, and the list goes on. New philosophies such as Housing First have permeated our psyches and created a paradigm shift.

Though the term “paradigm shift” has been overused, the concept is still useful. A paradigm shift is a dramatic change from one way of thinking to another. It’s a revolution, a transformation, a metamorphosis. This metamorphosis has united our community philosophically. Systems take longer to change than philosophies. Our community is in the midst of changing systems to be more reflective of our new philosophy. This is an arduous task.

²⁷ Housing First is both a philosophy and a program. The Government of Alberta does not count someone who is incarcerated as being homeless. Thus he or she does not meet the “chronic homeless” definition which has been put in place for the Housing First program. The Housing First philosophy describes an approach that aims first to help persons or families quickly access permanent affordable homes, and then follow wrap-around supports if appropriate. This philosophy is what consultation participants recommend.

A leading expert in change and transition, William Bridges, suggests the zone between the old paradigm and the new is one of chaos, exhilaration, creativity, conflict and confusion. He believes that, “Chaos is the primal state of pure energy for every new beginning.” Embracing the chaos as growth, recognizing when it is healthy chaos and not dysfunction, and strategically mapping out actions required to move through to the new preferred state will be the duty of those charged with implementing the Community Plan for Housing and Supports.

As we heard repeatedly, the plan must be about more than just providing ‘the built form.’ It is about systemic change to support the new paradigm. Designing and implementing a change-and-transition approach will go a long way to ensuring the chaos is creative rather than dysfunctional.

“If you think the issue is just about the built form, or is just about housing, you are dead wrong. We need to balance the social, economic and environmental needs of people in addition to housing.”

Consultation Participant

Once the plan is done, we cannot just take our individual pieces and run with them. We need to unite and ‘work the plan’ together. The current structures of working together need to be examined, and new approaches, theories and technologies adopted. People want to be involved. We all need to be bold about who is involved, how we and others are involved and how – as individuals, as organizations and as sectors – we can learn from one another and open the doors of our minds and hearts to opportunities we didn’t even know were possible.

The consultations told us that a systemic approach is required. Despite their diverse perspectives, mandates and cultures, participants had a high level of agreement on priorities: affordable housing, interim and transition housing, and supported and supportive housing for vulnerable people. There was also agreement that to fulfill these priority needs, we need to take a system-wide approach.

The Community Plan for Housing and Supports has the unique privilege of redefining Edmonton region, and setting the stage for our next transformational shift. It has the potential to drive us and lead us through this shift to new and healthy paradigms we have not yet experienced – for housing and for being a community.

7.0 Appendix: List of Groups Consulted

With few exceptions, the consulting team visited participants at their sites. Some consultations took place within the context of meetings that participants had already scheduled.

Date	Group or event
Dec 7 2010	Communications Think Tank
Dec 7 2010	Frontline Workers Client Survey Orientation
Dec 8 2010	Social Media Think Tank

Dec 14 2010	Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness
Dec 15 2010	Newcomers
Jan 18 2011	Inner City Executive Directors
Jan 18 2011	Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness
Jan 19 2011	Newcomers
Jan 20 2011	Research Priorities
Jan 24 2011	Housing First Executive Directors
Jan 25 2011	Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues
Jan 27 2011	Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues
Feb 1 2011	Catholic Archdiocese and Interfaith Housing
Feb 1 2011	Homeless on Parklands Committee, City of Edmonton
Feb 3 2011	Realtors Association
Feb 7 2011	Prostitution Awareness and Action Foundation of Edmonton (PAAFE)
Feb 7 2011	150 Client Surveys
Feb 8 2011	Alberta Health Services – Managers and Leaders
Feb 8 2011	Capital Region Housing Corporation
Feb 9 2011	Housing First Team Leads
Feb 10 2011	Alberta Health Services – Front Line Staff
Feb 10 2011	Edmonton Chamber of Commerce
Feb 11 2011	Alberta Health Services – Clients
Feb 15 2011	Corporate Interdepartmental Housing Team
Feb 15 2011	Catholic Archdiocese and Interfaith Housing
Feb 16 2011	Agencies working with parolees and incarcerated people
Feb 16 2011	Landlords
Feb 17 2011	Financial Plus Collaborative
Feb 17 2011	Youth
Feb 22 2011	Seniors
Feb 24 2011	Homeward Trust Edmonton Review Committee
Feb 24 2011	Executive interview
Feb 25 2011	Home for Life Committee
Mar 3 2011	Alberta Health Services – Support Living
Mar 8 2011	Financial Plus Collaborative
Mar 17 2011	Health for Two South Side meeting
Mar 21 2011	Homeless Commission
Mar 22 2011	Aboriginal Communities
Mar 23 2011	Cross Ministry Meeting
Mar 24 2011	Developers, Builders, Community Plan members
Mar 31 2011	Housing Management bodies
Throughout	Elected and other government officials

Appendix C

Appendix C: Methodology for Estimating Current and Future Housing Supply and Demand

Categorizing Housing Types

The first step in estimating current and future housing supply and demand was to work with the Community Plan Committee to develop a new Housing and Support framework to reflect the changed environment with the adoption of the housing first approach under Edmonton's ten year plan to end homelessness. The new framework distinguishes between non-market housing (i.e., housing constructed and/or operating with some financial subsidization) and market housing (i.e., housing constructed and/or operated with no financial subsidization).

Within the non-market housing category, there was further categorization by expected length of tenure (non-permanent accommodation or permanent housing), and type of housing and associated supports. Non-permanent accommodation includes shelter spaces and short-term accommodation with appropriate supports for individuals and families in transition. Permanent housing includes permanent *supportive* housing (i.e., congregate living units with on-site staff); *supported* housing (i.e., independent housing units where residents receive supports from service providers who come to their homes and/or from service providers they are linked to externally); and, affordable housing (i.e., independent housing units constructed and/or operated with some financial subsidization where residents access any needed supports independently through mainstream service providers).

The framework identifies two categories of market housing: market affordable housing (i.e., housing developed or acquired as a result of some type of incentive other than capital or operating financial subsidization) and pure market housing (i.e., housing developed and acquired with no incentives or financial subsidization).

Estimating Current Non-Market Housing Supply and Demand

Estimates of *current* supply and demand for each type of housing in the Housing and Support framework were derived by:


- Analyzing available information about current non-market housing supply. This included:
 - The City of Edmonton Housing Branch non-market inventory list; and,
 - Information provided by Alberta Health Services pertaining to the supply of permanent supportive housing in the community.
- Having discussions with representatives of key organizations in the community involved in developing and/or operating different types of non-market housing. Information was obtained about changes in the supply of each type of non-market housing since the last Community Plan was prepared and current unmet demand (i.e., waiting lists, turnaways, etc.).

- Using the rental population of 26,120 in core housing need in the City of Edmonton (from Capital Region Growth Plan Addendum, Dec. 2009) as a proxy for the total non-market housing demand and allocating the demand across the different non-market housing categories roughly in proportion to the current supply in each category. The resulting demand estimates were reviewed to confirm that they were reasonably aligned with the demand estimates provided by the housing organizations.
- Estimating the current unmet demand for each category of housing by calculating the difference between the estimated demand (unmet) and current supply.

Estimating Future Non-Market Housing Supply and Demand

Estimates of *future* supply and demand for each type of housing in the Housing and Supports framework were derived by:

- Reviewing information related to the likely availability of funding for the development of additional non-market housing units. The following assumptions were made about the availability of funding:
 - The City of Edmonton will complete its current Cornerstones program;
 - Housing and Urban Affairs (HUA) will complete funding Edmonton's portion of the planned 11,000 affordable housing units to be supported across the province by 2012;
 - HUA's funding commitment of \$232 million through to 2015 will result in Edmonton receiving funding on a relative population basis as in the past, and allocations between homeless and affordable housing projects will also be similar to what they have been in the past;
 - Funding under the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) Affordable Housing Framework (2011-2014);
 - Funding from the federal government under the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) will continue until March 31, 2014;
 - Implementation of Edmonton's ten year plan to end homelessness will continue;
 - Funding for two rent supplement programs will not be extended past December 31, 2011:
 - o The City of Edmonton (Cornerstones) Fixed-Rate, Fixed-Term Rent Supplement Pilot Project (417 units) administered since October 30, 2006 by the Capital Region Housing Corporation; and
 - o The City of Edmonton Cornerstones Direct to Household Rent Supplement Project (400 units), also administered since December 11, 2008 by the Capital Region Housing Corporation.

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- Gathering information about the current plans of key housing providers to develop additional units within the timeframe of the Community Plan (i.e., to 2015).
 - Assuming that the supply of additional housing units will be distributed across the different non-market housing categories in the Housing and Support framework in approximate proportion to recent allocations. Furthermore, it has been assumed that any additional supply in housing units beyond what is planned by major funders and the largest housing providers will be limited. Therefore, the future supply estimates are likely somewhat conservative.
 - Adjusting the forecasted future demand for non-market housing as stated in the Capital Region Housing Plan to align with the timeframe for the Community Plan (i.e., to 2015) and allocating the forecasted future demand across non-market housing categories in approximate proportion to current demand. The future demand estimates reflect that the greatest demand will be for affordable housing, recognizing that a large proportion of those moving to the community over the period of the plan will be younger people moving here for work and who may face affordable housing challenges. The expected increase in demand for permanent supportive and supported housing as a result of population aging has also been taken into consideration.
 - Estimating the future unmet demand for each category of housing by adding the estimates of *current* unmet demand and *future* demand, and then subtracting the future estimates regarding developed new supply.

The following page presents a summary table of current and projected estimates regarding the supply, demand and gap for non-market housing in the City of Edmonton.

It is important to note that very few of the new units forecasted to come forward as additional supply during the life of the Community Plan have been confirmed. The majority of planned additional units represent future conceptual plans by housing organizations or are based on broad government commitments and funding trends. In many ways, expected contributions to reduce gaps identified in the analyses are dependent on political will, the availability of public revenue, and support from the wider public.

Non-Market Housing - Supply / Demand / Gap - Current / Projected Estimates⁴

	(A)	(B)	(C)	(A+C)	(D)	(B+D)	(B+D-C)
Housing Category	Supply 2011	Unmet Demand (Current Gap) 2011 ¹	Additional Supply 2011-15 ²	Total Supply 2015	Additional Demand 2011-15 ³	Total Demand 2015	Future Gap 2015
Shelters							
Description							
Spaces	950	-	(470)	480	-	480	-
Subtotal	950	-	(470)	480	-	480	-
Short-term Accommodation							
Description							
Spaces	1,100	1,300	280	1,380	280	1,580	1,300
Subtotal	1,100	1,300	280	1,380	280	1,580	1,300
Permanent Supportive Housing							
Description							
Residential & Lodge Living (SL1 + SL2)	3,100	1,800	850	3,950	400	2,200	1,350
Supportive Living (SL3 + SL4)	2,100	300	600	2,700	100	400	(200)
Subtotal	5,200	2,100	1,450	6,650	500	2,600	1,150
Supported Housing							
Description							
Housing First	1,100	1,800	1,750	2,850	380	2,180	430
Seniors Self-Contained / Other	1,500	1,200	150	1,650	520	1,720	1,570
Subtotal	2,600	3,000	1,900	4,500	900	3,900	2,000
Affordable Housing							
Description							
Affordable Rental	10,970	15,320	2,140	13,110	3,000	18,320	16,180
Rent Supplements	5,200	1,400	(820)	4,380	300	1,700	2,520
Cooperative	1,150	2,000	-	1,150	380	2,380	2,380
Ownership	100	1,000	270	370	140	1,140	870
Subtotal	17,420	19,720	1,590	19,010	3,820	23,540	21,950
Total Non Market Units	27,270	26,120	4,750	32,020	5,500	32,100	26,400

¹ Current Unmet Demand total estimate of 26,120 is based on the number of rental households in core housing need in the City of Edmonton.

² Additional Supply (2011-15) total estimate of 4,750 is based on known plans of housing funders and providers.

³ Additional Demand (2011-15) total estimate of 5,500 is based on Capital Region Board growth projections of non-market housing demand accruing to the City of Edmonton adjusted to the plan timeframe.

⁴ The majority of planned additional supply is not confirmed, as discussed in the note preceding this table.

Appendix D: HPS Community Plan Summary

The Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) funds are targeted to local priorities identified by the community, based on a community planning process. There are 61 communities across Canada that are HPS designated that go through the same process. Here are the issues, priorities, and objectives that the Community Advisory Board (CAB) for Edmonton has identified for 2011-2014.

Issue #1: Edmonton's homeless population is disproportionately represented by Aboriginal people, and their housing and support needs are not adequately addressed by current systems. There has been increased capacity in the community to undertake Aboriginal specific housing projects; however the need continues to be great. In particular, a need for bigger units for larger households has been identified as an issue for the Aboriginal community.

Priority: Increase housing and culturally appropriate support services for Edmonton's increasing Aboriginal population.

Objectives:

- a. Additional housing units for Aboriginal people will be built, in particular for large aboriginal families.
- b. More partnerships with existing Aboriginal serving agencies will be formed.
- c. The percentage of Aboriginal people represented in the homeless population will decrease by 2014.

Issue #2: Edmonton has had a Winter Emergency Response Plan for several years now and has made much progress towards a coordinated effort. This coordination must continue in order to keep Edmonton's homeless population safe and warm during the winter months. Additionally, Edmonton has an extensive river valley where many people camp during the winter, as well as the summer months. The need for a year round, coordinated, seasonal response exists in order to provide alternatives to sleeping rough.

Priority: Coordinate a year round seasonal response to address winter emergency situations, as well as the number of people camping in the river valley.

Objectives:

- a. Provide warm, safe places to stay when the shelters are closed so fewer people are exposed to the weather.
- b. Provide alternatives to sleeping rough in the summer and winter times. This will include housing.
- c. Create better coordination between organizations that traditionally respond to seasonal issues.

Issue #3: Through its ten year plan, Edmonton has made a commitment to permanent housing options to end homelessness. Funding for this housing is limited, and more creative options are being pursued in order for individuals to spend the least amount of time in non-permanent housing options. Investment in transitional housing may not be the best use of those resources, and could be better utilized for short term interim housing for other programmes as well as address the need for more permanent supportive housing (i.e., housing with on-site supports) for persons with disabilities (e.g. developmental disabilities) or who are found to be unsuited for independent living under the Housing First model.

Priority: Create more interim, and permanent supportive housing units for those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

Objectives:

- a. Build more permanent supportive housing units.
- b. Increase the number of interim housing units for those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness who are waiting for an apartment through housing first, or for a treatment bed.

Issue #4: There is notable resistance to non-market housing in many neighbourhoods. This has resulted in significant controversy and debate among communities about the concentration of non-market housing, and poverty. There is also a discussion about the locations of future developments. This will pose a challenge for building in those sites.

Priority: Create and implement awareness and education programs for all categories of non-market housing for individuals who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

Objectives:

- a. Address NIMBY issues in the community through information sharing and increased public awareness/communication on the issue of homelessness, and non-market housing.
- b. Mobilizing those who are involved in preventing and reducing homelessness to participate in events and public forums to more effectively address the needs and/or better serve those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

Issue #5: Edmonton has made significant progress on data collection through the implementation of Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) through Housing First, and other initiatives. However, there still remain numerous systems for data collection making reporting collectively as a community a challenge.

Priority: Work with the homeless and at risk of homelessness serving agencies to explore challenges and opportunities to better track clients, services and outcomes and share information across platforms.

Objective: Identify and describe barriers, challenges, and opportunities for data sharing among service providers to/for building service efficiencies and facilitate community planning.

Issue #6: Housing First funded agencies receive specific training that has significantly built their capacity to serve homeless clients in their housing needs. To date, the training has been limited to those agencies. Through implementation we have realized that there would be a benefit to rolling that knowledge out to other agencies to build a community of practice along the same line as Housing First.

Priority: Ensure that training, conferences, workshops, and other professional development opportunities are available for all agencies in the sector, thereby improving outcomes for those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

Objective: To build the capacity of service providers to meet the current and future demands placed on the community to address housing and support service needs of those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness through training and professional development opportunities.

Issue #7: The reality of dispersed housing through scattered sites has introduced the need for dispersed services throughout the city. It is important to ensure that services are available where needed, including those neighbourhoods where clients are living in scattered sites.

Priority: Ensure services are available for those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness where needed including neighbourhoods where housing first clients are housed.

Objective: To provide wrap around services to clients who are recently housed, or at-risk of homelessness, so they remain housed.

Issue #8: While data collection in Edmonton has improved, there is still the need to conduct research by analyzing that information, and ensuring that it is used to build best practices. Research will increase our ability to determine the best intervention, and prevention strategies for our homeless, and at risk of homelessness populations, thus strengthening prevention and early diversion supports. This should also include developing, and maintaining a rigorous research community.

Priority: Conduct research and data analysis to determine the best practices for intervention and prevention responses for our homeless, and at risk of homelessness populations.

Objective: Accurate and reliable data analysis of trends in homeless population and needs through research projects, homeless counts, and through other data collection methods.

Issue #9: It is important for Edmonton to support and implement initiatives that prevent homelessness, and remove barriers to housing. This includes such things as better access to identification.

Priority: Support and implement initiatives that prevent homelessness and/or remove barriers to access housing.

- Objective:**
- a. Create, implement and support initiatives that remove barriers to housing. Examples of this could include the use of skill enrichment for bridging to employment, adopting asset building models, and financial literacy.
 - b. Ensure that there are programmes available for various subpopulations who require unique interventions, including youth, seniors, and newcomers.

Issue #10: Currently we have housing stock that is aging, and in need of repair. It is important to develop a balanced approach for building new units, as well as purchasing and repairing existing stock in order to meet overall needs.

Priority: Develop a balanced approach for both building new units, as well as buying existing stock in order to meet overall needs for those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

- Objectives:**
- a. Extend the life of existing units.
 - b. Ensure that new units continue to be built.

Appendix E

Appendix E: Summary of Plans to End Homelessness

	A Plan for Alberta (Government of Alberta's Plan to End Homelessness)	A Place to Call Home (City of Edmonton's Plan to End Homelessness)
Information	<p>Strategy #1: Develop standards for data collection about homelessness, including the use of common definitions, methods and counting</p> <p>Strategy #2: Establish a provincial electronic information management system and provide funding for its deployment</p> <p>Strategy #14: Develop approaches for homeless-serving agencies to share client information</p>	<p>Goal 5: Establish a governance structure and an implementation process for the Plan that builds on the strengths of the community; develops capacity; promotes collaboration, innovation and cost-effectiveness; and measures progress</p> <p>Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a common Homeless Information and Management System
Research and Evaluation	<p>Strategy #3: Establish a research arm to inform policy development and share best practices</p> <p>Strategy #4: Measure outcomes and track progress on a regular, ongoing basis</p>	<p>Goal 5: Establish a governance structure and an implementation process for the Plan that builds on the strengths of the community; develops capacity; promotes collaboration, innovation and cost-effectiveness; and measures progress</p> <p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set aggressive targets and measure progress, evaluate success and invest in continuous improvement • Foster a culture of collaboration and ongoing learning among housing and homeless serving agencies in order to achieve a successful Housing First program

Summary of Plans to End Homelessness (cont.)

	A Plan for Alberta (Government of Alberta's Plan to End Homelessness)	A Place to Call Home (City of Edmonton's Plan to End Homelessness)
Prevention	<p>Strategy #5: Continue employing emergency assistance programs in order to prevent homelessness</p> <p>Strategy #9: Develop approaches to prevent provincial systems from discharging clients into homelessness</p> <p>Strategy #16: Examine ways of reducing poverty to help prevent homelessness</p>	<p>Goal 4: Prevent people from becoming homeless</p> <p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a Housing Link that will link those in crisis with safe and suitable housing 24/7 • Encourage the province to enhance the Homeless and Eviction Prevention Fund¹ • Ensure that no one is discharged from an institution without a place to live • Work with landlords, property managers, people housed and their support workers to develop an Early Warning System to assist in identifying high-risk eviction situations • Monitor clients and inform service providers of unmet needs that undermine housing stability (e.g. mental health, addictions) • Increase employment skills of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
Alberta Government Programs and Services	<p>Strategy #6: Reformulate Alberta government assistance programs to ensure they achieve the coordinated objective of providing Albertans with housing stability</p> <p>Strategy #7: Make it easier for clients to connect with Alberta government programs and services</p>	<p>Goal 4: Prevent people from becoming homeless</p> <p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the province to enhance the Homeless and Eviction Prevention Fund • Work with the province to ensure people who are homeless are able to receive provincial income supports • Increase employment skills of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
Homeless-Serving Agencies	<p>Strategy #8: Review and revise funding and administrative arrangements with homeless-serving agencies</p>	<p>Goal 5: Establish a governance structure and an implementation process for the Plan that builds on the strengths of the community; develops capacity; promotes collaboration, innovation and cost-effectiveness; and measures progress</p> <p>Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster a culture of collaboration and ongoing learning among housing and homeless serving agencies in order to achieve a successful Housing First program

¹ The Homeless and Eviction Prevention Fund was established to help Albertans pay for damage deposits and bridge rent shortfalls. This fund was discontinued in 2009. The short-term rent shortfall component of the Homeless and Eviction Prevention Fund was transferred into Housing and Urban Affairs' Direct to Tenant Rent Supplement Program, under which assistance may be received for up to 12 months. Households requiring emergency eviction or damage deposit assistance may apply for support through Alberta Works, income supports or the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped program.

Summary of Plans to End Homelessness (cont.)

	A Plan for Alberta (Government of Alberta's Plan to End Homelessness)	A Place to Call Home (City of Edmonton's Plan to End Homelessness)
Community Plans to End Homelessness	Strategy #10: Support community plans to end homelessness	<p>Goal 5: Establish a governance structure and an implementation process for the Plan that builds on the strengths of the community; develops capacity; promotes collaboration, innovation and cost-effectiveness; and measures progress</p> <p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charge City Council with responsibility for leading the effort to eliminate chronic homelessness in Edmonton • Establish a Homeless Commission to champion the implementation of the Plan
Permanent Housing with Supports	Strategy #11: Increase the availability of permanent housing with supports	<p>Goal 1: Provide permanent housing options for all people living on the street and in public places</p> <p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Housing First Action Centre to coordinate the delivery of a Housing First Program • Develop shared core assessment and engagement protocols • Develop a Pathways to Housing type program for homeless individuals with the most challenging and complex needs • Develop Aboriginal capacity to support Housing First • Work with the Aboriginal community and service agencies to ensure services provided to Aboriginal people are relevant, respectful and effective • Pre-arrest diversion, building on existing programs combining outreach workers and specialized police units

Summary of Plans to End Homelessness (cont.)

	A Plan for Alberta (Government of Alberta's Plan to End Homelessness)	A Place to Call Home (City of Edmonton's Plan to End Homelessness)
Permanent Housing with Supports (continued)		<p>Goal 2: Ensure an adequate supply of permanent, affordable housing with appropriate supports for people who are homeless</p> <p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing First Action Centre negotiate with private landlords for the provision of units throughout the city. Use of rent supplements where required to ensure units are affordable • Develop services to help people establish their homes – moving services, furniture bank, training and assistance in household management • Mobilize community members to support inclusion of people who were previously homeless • Facilitate the development of new housing units: 1,650 modestly sized permanent, independent housing units; 750 permanent supportive housing units for individuals with addictions and mental illness; and 250 units of interim housing for families, youth, and individuals transitioning from health institutions
Housing Options	Strategy #12: Work with other levels of government to create additional housing options	<p>Goal 2: Ensure an adequate supply of permanent, affordable housing with appropriate supports for people who are homeless</p> <p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing First Action Centre negotiates with private landlords for the provision of units throughout the city. • Facilitate the development of new housing units: 1,650 modestly sized permanent, independent housing units; 750 permanent supportive housing units for individuals with addictions and mental illness; and 250 units of interim housing for families, youth, and individuals transitioning from health institutions
Emergency Shelters	Strategy #13: Shift expectations and develop outcome measures for emergency shelters in Alberta	<p>Goal 3: Ensure emergency accommodation is available when needed, but transition people quickly into permanent housing</p> <p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transform the homeless-serving system to focus on housing stability. Securing permanent housing will be the primary objective of all homeless programs and services • Develop and implement a Rapid Exit Program at all emergency shelters, transitional housing and drop-in centres • Establish targets for length of stay at shelters

Summary of Plans to End Homelessness (cont.)

	A Plan for Alberta (Government of Alberta's Plan to End Homelessness)	A Place to Call Home (City of Edmonton's Plan to End Homelessness)
Personal Identification	Strategy #15: Simplify personal identification requirements for accessing programs and services	
Legislative and Regulatory Issues	Strategy #17: Identify legislative and regulatory changes to advance the objectives and elements of the Plan for Alberta	

Appendix F

Appendix F: Summary of Capital Region Board Housing Plan

Function	Objective	Actions
Leadership	All orders of government and industry working together to enable sustainable communities.	1. The Capital Region Board will provide leadership to encourage a collaborative and cooperative approach with all stakeholders to achieve the housing plan mandate and implementation strategy.
Integrated Planning	To ensure an equitable distribution of housing across the region.	2. The Capital Region Board, in collaboration with the province, will develop and implement a Sub-Regional Planning Framework to support the development of a rolling ten-year Capital Region Housing Plan, which will include evaluations of different funding and allocation models. 3. The Capital Region Board will develop a policy that requires municipalities to identify surplus land in their jurisdictions and determine whether surplus land is suitable for Non-Market Housing.
Sustainable Long-Term Funding	To enable the appropriate planning and development of additional Non-Market Housing Units based on approved annual targets by sub-region over the next ten years.	4. The Capital Region Board, in collaboration with the provincial government, will explore alternative models for the allocation of provincial capital and operating funding towards the provision of Non-Market Housing in the Capital Region.
Education, Research and Capacity Building	Investment in education, research and capacity building for the efficient and effective implementation of Non-Market and Market Affordable Housing in communities. Includes education of the public and support for municipalities to create sustainable communities.	5. The Capital Region Board will develop and implement a long-term sustainable education program to challenge misconceptions and to promote the individual, community, and wider societal benefits of Non-Market and Market Affordable Housing as being integral to the future growth and prosperity of the Capital Region. 6. The Capital Region will collaborate with the Canadian Home Builders Association - Edmonton Region, the Urban Development Institute - Edmonton Chapter, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and others to develop ways of showcasing Market Affordable Housing models and demonstration projects. This will include two kinds of projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Regional demonstration projects and pilot for affordable housing design; •Pilot programs to implement and evaluate innovative concepts and ideas. 7. Capital Region Board will support the implementation of a minimum of two demonstration projects a year in the Region.

Summary of Capital Region Board Housing Plan (cont)

Function	Objective	Actions
Legislation/ Regulation	Flexibility to enable a greater supply, diversity, choice and affordability of housing types across the Region.	<p>MUNICIPAL REGULATION</p> <p>8. The Capital Region Board in collaboration with municipalities will work with industry to identify opportunities to reduce costs for the provision of housing. Examples include development approval processes (apply lean processes) to minimize time and cost, services and development standards.</p> <p>9. The Capital Region Board will explore the development of policies that encourage large industry employers in the Region to contribute to the supply of Market Affordable Housing.</p> <p>10. The Capital Region Board will encourage all municipalities to review their local mill rate for rental housing and ensure it is the same, or lower, than owner-occupied housing.</p> <p>PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION</p> <p>11. The Capital Region Board will advocate for changes to provincial legislation in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Changes to the MGA that would give municipalities explicit authority to adopt inclusionary zoning for both Market Affordable Housing and Non-Market Housing, including the authority to accept cash contributions in lieu of housing units. •Changes to the Alberta Building Code that have the potential to create cost reductions and not impact safety standards. •Changes to Alberta Municipal Financing Corporation to permit social housing management bodies to borrow directly. <p>12. The Capital Region Board in collaboration with the provincial government will explore changes to the provincial income tax system to stimulate sustainable, long-term private investment in the construction of Market Affordable Rental Housing.</p> <p>13. The Capital Region Board will ask the provincial government to adopt a policy that (1) identifies all provincial surplus land in the Capital Region to determine whether it is suitable for Non-Market Housing, and (2) transfers it to the municipality for a nominal fee to help create Non-Market Housing.</p>

Summary of Capital Region Board Housing Plan (cont)

Function	Objective	Actions
Legislation/ Regulation (continued)		<p>FEDERAL LEGISLATION</p> <p>14. The Capital Region Board, in collaboration with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) and Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC), and others, will advocate to the federal government to reform the federal income tax system to stimulate the construction of rental housing. This could include, but is not limited to, the following options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower or rebate in full the GST on new rental housing; • Increase the Capital Cost Allowance (CCA) to 5 percent for new rental housing; • Increase the amount of soft costs that can be deducted in the first year for new rental properties; • Allow capital gains rollover for small scale investors of rental housing; • Allow capital cost allowance losses to be deducted against other income; • Change the Income Tax Act to encourage the gifting of land and buildings to a public foundation for affordable housing.¹ <p>15. The Capital Region Board will advocate for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to undertake a review of the CMHC mortgage insurance program to remove disincentives for building rental and ownership housing (e.g., more favorable appraisals and premiums on higher ratio financing, etc.), especially in smaller, rural growth communities.</p> <p>16. The Capital Region Board will ask the federal government to adopt a policy that (1) identifies all federal surplus land in the Capital Region to determine whether it is suitable for Non-Market Housing, and (2) transfers it to the Capital Region Board for a nominal fee to help create Non-Market Housing.</p>

¹ AUMA, 2008 Special Assignment for Affordable Housing, Analysis and Recommendations. June 2008.

Summary of Capital Region Board Housing Plan (cont)

Function	Objective	Actions
Leverage Innovation, Technology and Creative Design	Create sustainable communities based on efficient building practices and built form to meet changing demographic needs.	<p>17. The Capital Region municipalities, in collaboration with commercial and not-for-profit housing providers and commercial land developers, examine opportunities for new community design standards for implementation across the Capital Region to promote Market Affordable Housing development.</p> <p>18. Municipalities in the Capital Region will promote alternate (1) forms of construction such as prefabrication, (2) types of building materials that improve affordability, and (3) forms of affordability such as secondary and garage suites.</p> <p>Capital Region municipalities will encourage adopting favorable bylaws (i.e., allowing secondary suites as a permitted use) and providing incentives to facilitate the provision of alternate forms of affordable housing.</p> <p>19. The Capital Region Board, in collaboration with industry, will examine innovative concepts that improve affordability, such as grow homes and design flexibility, and will share best practices throughout the Region.</p>

Stakeholder Actions

Federal Government	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a National Housing Strategy and Sustainable Funding Program in partnership with the provincial and territorial governments. 2. Increase program funding to more (or new) programs to address Non-Market Housing needs, including supports to address the housing needs of Aboriginal persons (including those living off-reserve and in urban communities), immigrants, and youth. 3. Create incentives to stimulate private investment in the construction of Market Affordable rental housing (e.g. underwriting policies that support the construction of Market Affordable Housing and Non-Market Housing, income tax policies, programs and legislation, including for municipal infrastructure). 4. Create a Federal Department of Housing with a dedicated Minister that incorporates the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and other related functions to demonstrate that housing is a federal priority. 5. Undertake research and development to identify best practices and innovative ways to achieve more efficient design and construction in all forms of housing. 6. Provide funding for the development of programs and policies that support development of workforce skills and immigration.
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Summary of Capital Region Board Housing Plan (cont)

Stakeholder Actions (cont)	
Provincial Government	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and implement a ten-year Provincial Housing Plan to address Non-Market Housing needs. 2. Provide sustainable long-term funding for Non-Market Housing programs, which includes capital and operating dollars. 3. Implement new programs to upgrade municipal infrastructure to support affordable housing initiatives. 4. Locate all housing programs, portfolio administration, and funding in one ministry to improve effectiveness. 5. Provide sustainable long-term funding and leadership for the research and development of innovative technologies, including stimulation of education, training, and recruitment (immigration, as needed) of construction and building trades. 6. Fund and develop programs and policies that support a skilled workforce through skill development and immigration. 7. Establish an annual process to review all income support programs (including income-tested housing programs) to ensure that program benefits reflect current local market prices for basic living expenses. 8. Develop financial models that will encourage the construction of affordable housing. 9. Continue with the Rent Supplement Program until a significant portion of the backlog is addressed.
Municipal Government	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and implement flexible land use policies that enable a wide range of housing affordability and choice. 2. Develop and implement smart growth housing policies, programs, and plans in support of sustainable communities. 3. Provide leadership for integrated planning (land use, transit, support services, etc.) that creates and sustains inclusive and healthy communities. 4. Facilitate partnerships with commercial and not-for-profit housing providers and other housing stakeholders to address the continuum of housing needs within each municipality. 5. Facilitate education and awareness of the public to promote understanding and acceptance (and addressing misconceptions) of Non-Market Housing. 6. Facilitate the development of undeveloped municipal property and acquire land for development of Non-Market Housing.

Summary of Capital Region Board Housing Plan (cont)

Stakeholder Actions (cont)	
Capital Region Board	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advocate on behalf of the Capital Region to the provincial government to address policy, program, legislation, and funding issues and concerns. 2. Support and facilitate the implementation of the Regional Housing Plan (i.e., education and marketing, innovative design, regulatory flexibility to address Non-Market Housing requirements, monitoring progress and commitment to achieving housing targets, etc.). 3. Provide leadership in the identification of housing policy that supports growth plan goals and objectives. 4. Work with the federal and provincial governments to allow public and private not-for-profit housing organizations in the Region to use existing equity positions in government-funded subsidized housing in the financing of additional units.
Building Industry	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide leadership in the sharing of best practices and development of innovative approaches to residential land development (engineering and design) and construction and design techniques to address housing needs. 2. Participate in the development of government policies, plans, and regulations to affect a broader range of housing to ensure affordability, choice and diversity of housing across the Capital Region (i.e., zoning bylaws, federal and provincial legislation governing housing, building and fire code regulations, etc.). 3. Provide leadership in the education and marketing of housing products to the public including support and appropriate responses to new residential developments through the public approval (consultation) process. 14. Ensure that cost reductions realized through government initiatives are fairly reflected in reduced product pricing.



Appendix G: Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy Highlights

(Source document: <http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/Creating-Connections-2011-Highlights.pdf>)

What is the Alberta Addiction and Mental Health Strategy?

Alberta Health and Wellness and Alberta Health Services have developed *Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy* (the Strategy) to guide actions to improve the health and mental well-being of Albertans in all areas of the province. We will implement the Strategy from 2011 to 2016, and it will position individuals and families at the centre of high-quality, effective and integrated services and supports. Here are 5 highlights from the Strategy:

1.0 Build healthy and resilient communities

Healthy and resilient families and communities are the building blocks to health and well-being. Community includes schools, work, cultural and faith groups, and the places where people live and play.

Our commitment: We will focus more on health promotion to prevent illness from developing in the first place. For those needing help, we will improve access to quality addiction and mental health services within the primary health care environment (a person's first contact with the health care system).

2.0 Foster the development of healthy children, youth and families

Fostering the development of healthy children, youth and families can help support good mental health. To give our children the best possible start in life we need to act early.

Our commitment: We will promote maternal, early childhood and family health, including delivery of early intervention programs and screening for mental health issues. We will provide more support and information to those who care for children and youth with addiction and mental health needs.



3.0 Enhance community-based services, capacity and supports

Community-based services support those with addiction, mental health problems and mental illness to live and thrive in the community.

Our commitment: We will enhance community based-services and supports. Outreach teams, made up of a variety of health care professionals, will work together to support people where they live and address their addiction and mental health needs. Albertans living in rural and remote communities will have improved access to addiction and mental health services and all Albertans will have access to a range of housing options and community supports.

4.0 Address complex needs

People with complex needs require many services from more than one service provider. It is important that professionals such as doctors, nurses, social workers, addiction counselors and mental health therapists and communities work together to meet their needs.

Our commitment: We will make sure appropriate services are available to support those with complex needs, regardless of what the complexity relates to, what the issue is, or the number of services required.

5.0 Enhance assurance

Quality and safety are the fundamental building blocks of Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy.

Our commitment: The public will have access to safe, effective and responsive services, programs and practices.

Appendix H

Appendix H: Linkages between Community Plan, Ten Year Plans to End Homelessness, Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy, and Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) Edmonton Priorities

Housing Supply

The Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports 2011-2015	A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness	A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in ten years	Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy	Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Plan Priorities
1) Increase opportunities for home-ownership and equity building for low-income families.				
Explore the merits of using cooperative housing models to promote more affordable home ownership options.				
Implement policies and programs to encourage the development of housing opportunities for first time home buyers, building off the strengths of the City of Edmonton's First Place program.				
Explore partnership opportunities that encourage the development of affordable home ownership properties.				
2) Increase the supply of market and non-market rental units that are suitable, adequate, accessible, and affordable.				
Encourage the construction of new rental housing through collaboration amongst the private and non-profit sectors.	Goal #2 Strategy: Facilitate the development of 1,650 modestly sized units			
Explore regulatory and procedural changes that can promote the building of new market rental units.				
Identify opportunities to create additional units within existing non-market affordable housing properties.				
3) Restore and adapt the existing stock of non-market housing to make facilities and units suitable, adequate, and accessible.				
Complete an inventory of non-market housing in need of repair or adaptation.				
Identify resources from public and private sources that could be used for renovating or adapting non-market housing units.				

Housing Supply (cont)

The Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports 2011-2015	A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness	A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in ten years	Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy	Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Plan Priorities
Work with non-profit housing providers to ensure that they have sufficient reserves for maintenance, repair, and renovation of new and existing units.				
4) Acquire and commit land for future non-market housing developments.				
Create and maintain an inventory of brownfields, government-owned, and other underutilized available land in the region.				
Employ land banking strategies to facilitate creation of new units and long-term planning of affordable housing development.				
Work with private, public, and non-profit stakeholders to create a framework for utilizing surplus and underutilized land for affordable housing.				
5) Develop short-term and flexible approaches to increase the affordability of housing for people in need.				
Promote the continuation and growth of rental assistance programs that help to fill the need for affordable housing.				
Examine approaches that help ensure housing stability for people in need during rental market volatility.				
Conduct regular forecasting to anticipate market changes that could trigger proactive approaches to prevent housing instability.				
6) Develop a balanced approach for both building new units, as well as buying existing stock, in order to meet the overall needs of those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.	Goal # 1: Provide permanent housing options for all people living on the street and in public places.			Develop a balanced approach for both building new units, as well as buying existing stock, in order to meet the overall needs of those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

Housing Supply (cont)

The Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports 2011-2015	A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness	A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in ten years	Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy	Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Plan Priorities
Enhance relationships with major private and non-profit landlords and housing providers to access more existing units.	Goal 2 Strategy: The Housing First Action Centre negotiates with private landlords for provision of units throughout the city. No more than 20% of the units in any one building to be set aside for the program.			
Develop compensatory strategies that encourage no net loss of affordable housing stock during periods of market volatility.				
Assess the viability of using existing underutilized market or non-market structures for housing.				
7) Engage neighborhoods and communities in achieving positive outcomes for housing and service delivery across the region.	Goal 2 Strategy: Mobilize community members to support successful inclusion of people who were homeless			
Create and implement public awareness and neighbor education programs for all categories of non-market housing for individuals who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.				Create and implement awareness and education programs for all categories of non-market housing for individuals who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

Housing Supply (cont)

The Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports 2011-2015	A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness	A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in ten years	Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy	Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Plan Priorities
Develop a framework for community consultation with involvement from neighbourhood and community members.				
Work with communities to identify opportunities for collaborative planning and project development.				
8) Mobilize underutilized non-market housing units to address system gaps.				
Explore best practices for maximizing system capacity.		Strategy #12: Work with other levels of government to create additional housing options.		
Establish a system to track and re-purpose underutilized non-market units.				
Engage management bodies and other non-market housing providers to collaborate to address emerging needs and increase system efficiency.				

Short Term and Permanent Supportive Housing

The Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports 2011-2015	A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness	A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in ten years	Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy	Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Plan Priorities
1) Create more interim and permanent supportive housing units for those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.	Goal # 2: Ensure an adequate supply of permanent, affordable housing with appropriate supports for people who are homeless.			Create more interim and permanent supportive housing units for those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.
Prioritize new permanent supportive housing projects that incorporate a harm reduction philosophy.				

Short Term and Permanent Supportive Housing (cont)

The Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports 2011-2015	A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness	A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in ten years	Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy	Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Plan Priorities
Secure interim housing spaces for those waiting to enter treatment, support programs, and permanent housing, as well as those who are new to the community.				
Provide more permanent supportive housing for people with complex behaviors, people with physical disabilities, and seniors.	Goal #2 Strategy: Facilitate the development of 1000 units of permanent supportive housing	Strategy #11: Increase the availability of permanent housing with supports.		
2) Address the needs of vulnerable populations who do not have access to transitional, interim, or permanent supportive housing.	Goal # 3: Ensure emergency accommodation is available when needed, but transition people quickly into permanent housing.			
Create supportive units that accommodate the cultural needs of immigrants and refugees.				
Secure short-term supportive accommodation for individuals discharged from treatment, hospitals, and corrections facilities.				
Secure more transitional housing for youth, and people leaving sexual exploitation and violence.				
3) Increase housing and culturally appropriate support services for Edmonton's increasing Aboriginal population.			First Nations, Metis, and Inuit (FNMI) The strategic directions, priorities and initiatives are informed and based on an understanding of the histories, languages, cultures, and specific circumstances of FNMI people.	Increase housing and culturally appropriate support services for Edmonton's increasing Aboriginal population.

Short Term and Permanent Supportive Housing (cont)

The Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports 2011-2015	A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness	A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in ten years	Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy	Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Plan Priorities
Provide appropriate cultural supports to Aboriginal people in transitional, interim, or permanent housing.	Goal 1 Strategy: Ensure services to Aboriginal people are relevant, respectful and effective			
Support the work of Aboriginal community-led initiatives to take leadership and operational roles in the development, coordination, and delivery of housing and support services for Aboriginal people.	Goal 1 Strategy: Develop Aboriginal capacity in support of Housing First			
Build awareness of Aboriginal Peoples' history and culture among housing and service providers.				
4) Collaborate with government bodies to ensure that regulatory measures do not prevent the creation of further permanent supportive housing.		Strategy #17: Identify legislative and regulatory changes to advance the objectives and elements of the Plan for Alberta.		
Work with municipalities to determine optimal sites for building new permanent supportive housing.				
Clarify zoning bylaw and use-class definitions to facilitate the development of permanent supportive housing and short-term accommodation.				

Support Services

The Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports 2011-2015	A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness	A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in ten years	Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy	Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Plan Priorities
1) Increase accessibility of information, resources, and access points for housing and support services.				
Ensure services are available for those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness where needed, including neighborhoods where Housing First clients are housed.				Ensure services are available for those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness where needed, including neighbourhoods where housing first clients are housed.
Develop a Housing Link that encompasses a network of access points and drop in centres throughout the region to connect people to housing and support services 24 hours a day, seven days a week.	Goal 4 Strategy: Create a Housing Link, to connect people in crisis to housing 24/7			
Engage community-based social service and health providers to offer information and linkages to housing and support services.				
2) Develop a coordinated approach to appropriately match people to the range of housing and support services available in the region.	Goal 1 Strategy: Develop a shared core assessment and engagement protocol			
Develop and disseminate information resources that can assist vulnerable people in accessing programs for housing and support services.				
Work with community-based and public providers to develop a coordinated intake system to facilitate access to Housing First and other housing programs.	Goal 1, Strategy: Develop a Housing First Action Centre to coordinate delivery of programs.			

Support Services (cont)

The Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports 2011-2015	A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness	A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in ten years	Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy	Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Plan Priorities
Use evidence from delivery of Housing First and identified best practices to enable enhancements and new approaches as necessary to meet Ten Year Plan targets.		Strategy #10: Support community plans to end homelessness.		
3) Improve access to treatment, continuing care, and and managed transition from institutional care.				
Support cross-ministerial efforts to enhance discharge and continuity planning for people leaving hospitals, corrections facilities, child protection, and institutional care.	Goal 4 Strategy: Ensure no one is discharged from an institution without a place to live	Strategy #9: Develop approaches to prevent provincial systems from discharging clients into homelessness.	3.3 Partner with other ministries, stakeholders and service providers to facilitate ready access to a range of housing options and community supports that are matched appropriately to the continuum of needs of individuals impacted by addiction, mental health problems and mental illness. 5.1 Continue to develop robust and appropriate oversight policies, supporting structures and mechanisms to foster quality and client/patient safety.	

Support Services (cont)

The Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports 2011-2015	A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness	A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in ten years	Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy	Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Plan Priorities
<p>Enhance the availability of in-reach programs for corrections facilities, hospitals, and addictions treatment facilities to help people bridge to community-based housing and support services.</p>				
<p>Support efforts to facilitate timely access to addictions treatment, mental health care, continuing care, and supportive living accommodations.</p>			<p>2.1 Provide all children, youth and their families, including those "at risk" and "in care," with access to the full continuum of services with strong links to community treatment and community supports.</p> <p>3.1 Improve the quality of life for clients/patients and families by enhancing the capacity of community-based addiction and mental health services and by improving the effectiveness of specialized and inpatient care.</p> <p>4.1 Ensure that people with complex service needs have access to a full range of appropriate addiction and mental health services and supports.</p>	

Support Services (cont)

The Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports 2011-2015	A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness	A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in ten years	Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy	Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Plan Priorities
4) Increase housing and culturally appropriate support services for Edmonton's increasing Aboriginal population.			First Nations, Metis, and Inuit (FNMI) The strategic directions, priorities and initiatives are informed and based on an understanding of the histories, languages, cultures, and specific circumstances of FNMI people.	Increase housing and culturally appropriate support services for Edmonton's increasing Aboriginal population.
Support the work of Aboriginal community-led initiatives to take leadership and operational roles in the development, coordination, and delivery of housing and support services for Aboriginal people.	Goal 1 Strategy: Develop Aboriginal capacity in support of Housing First			
Build awareness of Aboriginal Peoples' history and culture among housing and service providers.	Goal 1 Strategy: Ensure services to Aboriginal people are relevant, respectful and effective			
Facilitate collaborative planning among agencies providing housing and services to Aboriginal people.				

Prevention and Early Intervention

The Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports 2011-2015	A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness	A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in ten years	Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy	Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Plan Priorities
1) Develop early intervention services to prevent homelessness or harm resulting from crises or emergency situations.	Goal #4: Prevent people from becoming homeless.			
Provide short-term rental assistance and rapid re-housing services to at-risk or newly homeless people who have lived independently in the past and have no major barriers or risk factors.		Strategy #5: Continue employment emergency assistance programs in order to prevent homelessness.		
Support the development of an early warning system to assist in identifying high risk eviction situations in collaboration with landlords, property managers, service providers, and vulnerable people.	Goal 4 Strategy: Develop an Early Warning system to help identify high risk eviction situations			
Provide a coordinated, year-round response to address emergency situations in the winter, and people camping in the river valley at all times during the year.				Coordinate a year round seasonal response to address winter emergency situations, as well as the number of people camping in the river valley.
2) Enhance and coordinate outreach programs to connect people to housing and support services.				
Develop and implement a coordinated outreach system that connects teams reaching people sleeping rough or panhandling with Housing First and other housing and support programs as appropriate.				
Increase the efficiency of outreach services through coordination and partnership among existing teams.				
Address gaps in outreach services to ensure contact with vulnerable populations who are sleeping rough or panhandling.				

Prevention and Early Intervention (cont)

The Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports 2011-2015	A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness	A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in ten years	Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy	Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Plan Priorities
3) Support and implement initiatives that prevent homelessness and/or remove barriers to accessing housing.		Strategy #16: Examine ways of reducing poverty to help prevent homelessness. Strategy #15: Simplify personal identification requirements for accessing programs and services.		Support and implement initiatives that prevent homelessness and/or remove barriers to access housing.
Support cross-ministerial initiatives and engage provincial ministries to ease access to government programs and services.				
Provide programs that help people develop skills, knowledge, relationships, and resources to reduce their risk of becoming or staying homeless.				
Facilitate access to mainstream programs including income support, disability benefits, primary health care, counseling, and family services.	Goal 4 Strategy: Ensure people who are homeless are able to receive provincial income supports	Strategy #7: Make it easier for clients to connect with Alberta government programs and services. Strategy #6: Reformulate Alberta government assistance programs to ensure they achieve the coordinated objective of providing Albertans with housing stability.	1.2 Improve the capacity of and access to quality addiction and mental health services within the primary health care environment.	

Prevention and Early Intervention (cont)

The Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports 2011-2015	A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness	A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in ten years	Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy	Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Plan Priorities
Provide programs and service linkages to help people in areas that can contribute to their resiliency and independence, such as developing their employability, social support networks, and cultural connections.	Goal 4 Strategy: Expand training programs to build employment skills. Monitor clients for issues that affect housing stability		1.1 Create environments where Albertans live, learn, work and play that build protective factors for mental well-being, resilience and health, and reduce risk factors that contribute to addiction, mental health problems and mental illness.	
4) Enhance rapid exit and re-housing programs to improve timeliness of access to housing and support services.	Goal 3 Strategy: Develop and implement a Rapid Exit Program			
Enhance and expand existing rapid exit and diversion programs that connect people to housing and support services.				
Implement programs that prevent people currently on housing waiting lists from experiencing prolonged core housing need or becoming homeless.				
Continue to develop relationships with private landlords to work collaboratively to quickly mobilize available market units.				

Capacity Building and Evidence-Based Practice

The Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports 2011-2015	A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness	A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in ten years	Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy	Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Plan Priorities
1) Increase the capacity of the non-profit sector to develop and/or maintain non-market housing units and deliver a range of support services for people.	Goal # 5: Establish a governance structure and an implementation process for the Plan that builds on the strengths of the community; develops capacity; promotes collaboration, innovation and cost-effectiveness; and measures progress.			
Address gaps and reduce duplication sector-wide to ensure effective use of resources.				
Enhance and diversify revenue streams by creating a balance between private and public funding sources.				
Build capacity for staff recruitment, retention, and succession planning within the non-profit sector.				
Increase the knowledge of front-line staff to meet peoples' unique needs.				
2) Increase systems-level planning and information exchange that includes government, the non-profit sector, and private sector.				
Coordinate a regular forum for public, non-profit, and private sector groups to share knowledge and explore opportunities to address systemic barriers.				
Map intersections among government, private, and non-profit sectors responsibilities and activities to encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing.				

Capacity Building and Evidence-Based Practice (cont)

The Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports 2011-2015	A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness	A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in ten years	Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy	Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Plan Priorities
Facilitate regular data sharing and planning updates across relevant ministries, jurisdictions, and sector stakeholders.		Strategy # 14: Develop approaches for homeless-serving agencies to share client information.		
3) Conduct research and data analysis to determine the best practices for intervention and prevention responses for people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.	Goal 5 Strategy: Measure progress and set aggressive targets	Strategy #4: Measure outcomes and track progress on a regular, ongoing basis.		Conduct research and data analysis to determine the best practices for intervention, and prevention responses for our homeless, and at risk of homelessness populations.
Work with agencies serving people who are homeless and at-risk of homelessness to explore challenges and opportunities to better track clients, services and outcomes and share information across platforms.	Goal 5 Strategy: Develop a Homeless Information and Management System	Strategy #2: Establish a common electronic information management system and provide funding for its deployment.		Work with the homeless and at risk of homelessness serving agencies to explore challenges and opportunities to better track clients, services and outcomes and share information across platforms.
Develop a data analysis framework for utilization of data for program improvement and publication of research literature.		Strategy #1: Develop standards for data collection about homelessness, including the use of common definitions, methods and counting.		
Promote sector-wide participation in collecting and utilizing data.				

Capacity Building and Evidence-Based Practice (cont)

The Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports 2011-2015	A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness	A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in ten years	Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy	Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Plan Priorities
Engage academic researchers to build research capacity in the community.		Strategy #3: Establish a research arm to inform policy development and share best practices.		
4) Promote knowledge sharing and evidence-based decision-making across the housing sector.				
Explore mechanisms for disseminating research findings to public, private, and non-profit stakeholders.				
Promote participation of public and non-profit stakeholders in utilizing data for decision making and information sharing purposes regarding systemic barriers.				
Ensure that training, conferences, workshops, and other professional development opportunities are available for all agencies in the sector, to improve outcomes for those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.	Goal 5 Strategy: Foster culture of collaboration amongst agencies			Ensure that training, conferences, workshops, and other professional development opportunities are available for all agencies in the sector, thereby improving outcomes for those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

Not Included in Community Plan

A Place to Call Home	A Plan for Alberta
Goal 1 Strategy: Develop a Pathways to Housing type program for those with the most challenging and complex needs (Status: Implemented)	
Goal 2 Strategy: Develop services to help people establish their homes: moving services, furniture bank, appliances and household accessories. (Status: Implemented)	
Goal 3 Strategy: Establish targets for length of stay at shelters (Status: Yet to be implemented)	Strategy #13: Shift expectations and develop outcome measures for emergency shelters in Alberta.
Goal 3 Strategy: Transform homeless serving system to focus on housing stability: the primary objective is securing permanent housing (Housing first philosophy was adopted)	
Goal 4 Strategy: Enhance Homeless & Eviction Prevention Fund (Program ended)	
Goal 5 Strategy: Charge City Council with responsibility for leading the effort (Not in scope)	
Goal 5 Strategy: Establish a Homeless Commission (Status: Implemented)	
	Strategy #8: Review and revise funding and administrative arrangements with homeless-serving agencies.

Appendix I



Appendix I: Capital Region Integrated Growth Management Plan (December 2007) - Municipal Profiles Appendix

TOWN OF BEAUMONT

Beaumont has provided partial funding for assisted living. The Town has elected to restrict construction of low-cost housing.

The Town does not have sufficient funding and support infrastructure to adequately address the issue. Beaumont has commenced discussions with Leduc Foundation to pool MSI funding.

TOWN OF GIBBONS

There are several developers wanting to develop in Gibbons. However, Gibbons needs to ensure they have the infrastructure in place for future development.

The Town's municipal development plan calls for the municipality to attempt to increase the variety of housing types within the community (e.g. single-family, medium, and high density).

TOWN OF LEGAL

Housing is a big issue in the community as a result of high house prices. The Town doesn't own land for residential development; land development is left up to developers.

On the issue of affordability, Legal has a neighbourhood revitalization plan in place which, if residents bulldoze old homes and build new ones, they receive a three-year break on their municipal taxes. This program, while helping beautify the town, has also served to increase home values.

TOWN OF MORINVILLE

The affordability of housing is a major issue. Average price for a single family home with an unfinished basement is approximately \$450,000. Prices are continuing to increase.

The Town does not own or develop the land for residential purposes. The Town is working with developers to create housing.

TOWN OF REDWATER

The cost of housing has increased rapidly. Evidence of cost pressure is in the recent experience of an apartment rental rate increase and subsequent evictions. The Town is experiencing strong demand from developers for planned housing developments.



CITY OF ST. ALBERT

The city is in need of affordable housing units and has developed two reports in recent years regarding the issue: the St. Albert Affordable Housing Strategy (2005), and the St. Albert Community Housing Plan (2006).

Vacancy rates for rental accommodations have been at approximately 1% or less for a decade. This has led to difficulties in attracting workers, particularly low-income workers like those in the service sector (e.g. restaurants, retail stores), to live in St. Albert. The City does not want to see workers in St. Albert's service sector having to live in the City of Edmonton because of a lack of affordable housing in St. Albert. The City of St. Albert recently passed a bylaw permitting secondary suites. St. Albert currently has its own "tent city" in the form of an RV park which is currently being used by some as a place for permanent residence. There are also examples of homelessness in St. Albert.

TOWN OF BRUDERHEIM

Currently housing demand exceeds supply. There is a lack of rental property available. The Town is pursuing a partnership with a developer to develop affordable housing units.

CITY OF FORT SASKATCHEWAN

All types of housing are now expensive in Fort Saskatchewan. The City experienced the highest relative house price increase in the Province in 2006. This issue particularly affects single parent, fixed income and minimum wage earning households, as well as young families trying to enter the ownership market. There is a significant waiting list at the sole senior lodge in the City.

LAMONT COUNTY

Housing availability and cost (including land) has become a severe issue in the area. There are waiting lists for lodges with self-contained apartments for seniors. Developer interests put pressure on land use planning, driving the need for considerations of bylaw changes and annexations.

STRATHCONA COUNTY

All types of housing are now expensive in Strathcona County. The issue particularly affects single parent, fixed income and minimum wage earning households, as well as young families trying to enter the ownership market. There are significant waiting lists at two senior lodges.

CITY OF LEDUC

Seniors and disabled housing are particular concerns for the City. Population forecasts show a steady increase in the number of seniors living in Leduc. Demands for seniors housing within the community are expected to grow considerably over the next two decades.

While the City has recently completed a new low income housing apartment complex with barrier-free access, the Leduc Foundation reports that many requests for occupancy in the facility have been declined as applicants did not meet residency criteria. There is concern that there aren't housing options for the working poor.

There are no vacancies in the community's affordable housing or seniors (supportive and apartment) housing complexes. Wait lists are increasing.

The average cost of new homes in the community has risen significantly.

While the City is working to resolve these issues, it does not have the financial resources required to effectively deal with the issue.

VILLAGE OF THORSBY

The Municipality does not have the required resources and expertise to adequately address the need for affordable housing.

VILLAGE OF WARBURG

More affordable housing options are needed in the community. The Village is developing a new infrastructure plan, which will ensure land is available for less costly housing options (modular homes).

CITY OF SPRUCE GROVE

Affordable housing is becoming more difficult to find. Current prices impose a major financial burden for some residents. The issue has become more acute over the past few years and has contributed to some people living in campers, vans and tents. A task force has been established to study the issue.

TOWN OF STONY PLAIN

Housing prices have escalated rapidly over the past two years making the community almost out of reach for those with modest incomes. Basement suites are one option as are public housing projects. The latter require a lot of money to make a difference and municipalities typically don't have the fiscal capacity.



VILLAGE OF WABAMUN

The community has sufficient housing developments to meet anticipated demand in the near future. However, housing affordability is important. There are concerns related to the demand for social programming that may increase when low-income (subsidized) housing becomes available in the community. The Municipality presently does not have the capacity to offer FCSS services on a full-time basis but other options are being explored.

CITY OF EDMONTON

The City of Edmonton is actively involved in issues related to housing and homelessness. The City emphasizes that there needs to be clearly defined roles and relationships for all orders of government, industry and community groups. The City has established a goal of creating 2,500 new affordable housing units. It has also introduced a First Time Homeowners program that will result in the construction of 400 new homes. It is reviewing options to promote the development of secondary suites.

City officials emphasize that housing plays a critical role in the provision of social services and infrastructure. Edmonton EMS estimates that 10% of its call volume is generated by homeless people or people in transitional housing. The development of new housing in the City is a critical issue for the Edmonton Fire Service.

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