

Our goal is for every Edmontonian to have safe, acceptable and affordable housing within a supportive community.

~ Focus group participant

What We Heard

Actions and Strategies for our City Government to Address Housing and Homeless in Edmonton

City of Edmonton Affordable Housing Strategy



Submitted June 22, 2015

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1 | Purpose of This Document

The City of Edmonton is creating a new Affordable Housing Strategy, a document that will guide the City's involvement in the affordable housing sector over the next 5 years. The project is being completed between January and Fall 2015. More information about the project can be found at <http://www.edmonton.ca/affordablehousing>.

Stakeholder engagement is an important component of the Affordable Housing Strategy project. Engagement activities took place in April and May 2015, including focus groups, a large multi-stakeholder workshop, and an online survey. The engagement process was intended to gather input on three questions:

1. In the next 5-10 years, what goals should our city government pursue to guide its involvement in housing and homelessness?
2. How can our city government accomplish these goals? What actions are required?
3. How can our city government best support our external partners in housing and homelessness?

This report documents what was heard by POPULUS Community Planning Inc. throughout the engagement. The purpose of recording this information is twofold/ First, this report allows the public and stakeholders to hear what they collectively "said" to the City of Edmonton. Second, this is vital information for the City of Edmonton to use as it prepares the Affordable Housing Strategy. At this point, City Administration is in the research phase of the project and this information will complement, confirm and expand on the research undertaken to date in preparation for writing the Affordable Housing Strategy. Further, this report will help identify and prioritize actions and strategic priorities in the context of other community efforts. Wherever possible, the following are articulated: goals, roles and strategies.

Note - Some Definitions

The following definitions will be helpful for readers of this report:

- **Affordable housing**¹ 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. This is a form of non-market housing.

¹ As defined in the Capital Region Board Housing Plan



- **Subsidized housing**² (also known as social or community 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 median renter income for their household size. This is considered non-market housing.
- **Supportive housing**³ 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.

Listening took place in three ways: focus group meetings with a variety of stakeholders, a community workshop, and an online survey. The purpose of each of these activities was to hear what matters about housing and homelessness in Edmonton.

² As defined in the Capital Region Board Housing Plan

³ As defined in the Homeward Trust Community Plan



2 | Where and How We Listened

Focus Groups

The purpose of the focus groups was to listen to a variety of people involved in housing and homelessness in Edmonton. Beth Sanders of POPULUS Community Planning Inc. hosted each meeting with the support of Cody Spencer, City of Edmonton planner for housing and homelessness whose role is to write the Affordable Housing Strategy. Six focus group meetings took place, with the following organizations represented at each meeting:

April 14, 2015	Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness YMCA of Northern Alberta Edmonton Food Bank Boyle McCauley Health Canadian Mental Health Association Communitas Edmonton Public Library Edmonton Social Planning Council Operation Friendship Seniors Society Edmonton Mennonite Center for Newcomers Boys and Girls Clubs Big Brothers and Big Sisters Edmonton and Area House Next Door Alberta Health Anglican Church of Canada – Edmonton Diocese Alberta Real Estate Foundation	19 attendees
April 21, 2015	Capital Region Housing HomeEd	4 attendees



April 23, 2015	Interfaith Initiative on Housing Capital Region Interfaith Housing Steering Committee No Room in the Inn Steering Committee Anglican Church of Canada – Edmonton Diocese	10 attendees
April 23, 2015	Government of Alberta, Ministry of Seniors	5 attendees
April 27, 2015	Community Plan Committee Homeward Trust Edmonton Drug Court Wichitowin CMHC Service Canada George Spady Society Government of Alberta Human Services Neighbourhood Centre	10 attendees
May 14, 2015	Community Leagues Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues Forest/Terrace Heights Community League	3 attendees

The following questions served as a guide for each conversation:

1. What are the key issues that your organization or your clients are experiencing relating to housing and homelessness?
2. How can our city government support your work in this area?
3. What is our city government doing that it should keep doing, or do more of?
4. What should our city government stop doing?
5. What actions should our city government take?



The findings of the focus groups are found on page 7 of this report.

Community Workshop

A public community workshop took place on May 13, 2015. 41 people attended, the majority of which did not participate in the focus groups and represented a cross-section of perspectives needed to look at housing and homeless in Edmonton (see Figure 1). After a brief introduction of the Affordable Housing Strategy project, participants entered into conversation with each other, in small groups using the World Café process, to meet each other and explore the following questions:

1. What issues are we facing as a community relating to housing and homelessness?
2. What is working well in the city?
3. What does our city government need to do more of?

After exploring these questions, participants were “warmed up” for the big question: **What actions does the City of Edmonton need to take to address affordable housing needs of Edmontonians?** Using Open Space Technology, participants named actions and worked in small groups to develop each action in as much detail as possible. The actions are found on page 18 of this report.

Online Survey

166 people participated in the online survey that was open to the public from May 5 to 21, 2015. 65% of the respondents were between the ages of 25 and 44. 55% of the respondents own their home, while 37% of respondents rent their home. 73% of respondents are not employed by an organization that works with individuals who experience housing challenges; 27% are in such employment. The findings of the online survey are on page 25 of this report.



3 | What We Heard

What We Heard - Focus Groups

The raw notes from each conversation were compiled and organized thematically to reveal the following messages for our city government. A note to the reader: these messages have not been evaluated or ranked, and some may be in conflict with each other.

Focus group participants discerned 5 purposes for the Affordable Housing Strategy:

Purposes of the Strategy

- 1. Role clarity.** The strategy will enable the City of Edmonton to clearly indicate the role it takes (compared to other levels of government, not-for-profits, the development community, for example). It was noted that while too much duplication of services and programs with other organizations is a bad thing, a little overlap is tolerable; it is better than a big gap from avoiding duplication. Establishment of a clear plan, once shared with other organizations and levels of government will help with role clarity.
- 2. Name what's working now.** A variety of efforts now underway in Edmonton are working well. Example: private rentals in older apartment buildings and houses in neighbourhoods throughout the city, Habitat for Humanity, seniors' co-housing, Edmonton Inner City Housing Society (EICHS), non-equity co-ops and the work to integrate Housing First folks after housing. The City is involved – and this is a good thing.
- 3. Name the context for the strategy.** Alberta and Edmonton experience rapid change in the form of boom/bust cycles, high rental rates, tight rental supply and tight budgets.
- 4. More than a political cycle.** While Edmonton has a mayor and Council that want to tackle housing and homelessness, the project needs to be more than a political cycle and last from this Council to the next, and the next.
- 5. Regenerate, redevelop and revitalize the city.** The status quo has a huge negative impact on the city and there is an opportunity now to renew the city. The Strategy can set the stage for healthy conversations we need to have about how we can all move forward together: as partners and as a healthy mix of organizations. There is also

*What is needed: a roof and human compassion
~ Focus group participant*



an opportunity to prepare socio-economic analysis (Toronto example) with partners to make the economic case to look after housing for Edmontonians.

The Challenges

Focus group participants recognized that the system of organizations that provides affordable housing to Edmontonians is complex, with people moving in and out at many points, and hard to navigate. Housing and homelessness are related to poverty reduction work, as well as other economic factors, such as economy, employment, migration, newcomers, disabilities, mental health, addictions, etc. Further, our population is aging and the needs of older Edmontonians are changing. There are families of various sizes and cultures. There is a need to be in relationships with First Nation and Metis communities to better serve their community members that reside in Edmonton. One housing program will not be the solution for all needs, which means that the varied programs across the city need to work together to meet the needs of Edmontonians. This is vital, because housing is the number one determinant of health for our citizens.

There is a sense that inequality is increasing in Edmonton. The food bank serves 15,000 people per month and the number is rising; it has increased by 2000 people since 2013, likely people giving up food to keep housing. There are public, not-for-profit and business organizations that want to improve the housing conditions for Edmontonians that struggle with housing. Many people are living a paycheck or two away from losing their housing. It seems as though we want homelessness to be invisible.

Below are the challenges named in the focus group meetings.

Today's model is not working well

A variety of challenges were named in the focus groups about the models we are using to address homelessness and affordable housing in Edmonton:

- 1. Financial sustainability.** The expiry of cost-share agreement between Federal and Provincial governments



affects the whole community. Further, it is costly to build and renovate housing units and there is insufficient capital funding to support this work. Organizations that provide physical housing are not financially sustainable both in capital and operating terms: the rents they need to offer are insufficient; housing allowances are inadequate; deep subsidies of units is not sustainable; we are at the mercy of oil prices; rental rates are too high for supports provided. A mixed model, of public and private units, might make sense but there is no policy framework for this. Capital reserves are needed for when the roof leaks.

- 2. People are missed.** People with pets, a criminal record, who smoke, have large families, or mental health and additions are missed in our housing model. Many people are not connected with housing organizations and the quality of places in which they live is poor. The invisibility of squalor is a danger. The toughness of finding decent housing is everyday life for many people.
- 3. Market conditions.** It is a tight rental market, and perhaps we are too reliant on the market to deliver housing. We need creative financing to address housing needs.
- 4. Social housing.** There is a lack of financial sustainability in social housing programs. Most are deficit funded, and that funding ends in 20 years. What was a safety net is severely deteriorating. There is hundreds of millions of dollars in deferred maintenance, which poses a health and safety risk. The obstacles: not possible to generate revenue, rent structure legislation, minimum rent hasn't changed, only three owners (Federal, Provincial, city governments), can't mortgage and redevelop.
- 5. The organizations that serve are struggling.** Management bodies that provide social housing struggle. Due to lack of units, people end up on hold, then homeless and it is hard for service providers to follow up and make sure people are looked after. There are increased numbers of homeless and no additional staff to keep track of where they are and what they need.
- 6. People vs. infrastructure** – Our focus is on the buildings, not the people we are serving.
- 7. Affordable housing construction is expensive.** It costs more to build affordable housing than market housing.



Various housing needs

It was noted that the needs for housing are increasing, but the capacity to address those needs is decreasing. A variety of housing needs are not being met in Edmonton:

- 1. Temporary housing.** Temporary emergency housing is needed, as well as housing to facilitate the move from staying at a shelter to long-term housing.
- 2. Seniors and older adults.** Older adults have complex needs that need to be addressed. Support is needed to enable older adults to stay at home and in their neighbourhoods when possible: health care, maintenance, nearby transit options. In affordable housing and supportive housing, couples are separated when one needs higher medical care. Operation Friendship Seniors Society, for example, does not have enough units to meet demand. Many older adults need home care, but long-term care is needed. Many seniors who are smokers, or have mental health challenges are being evicted.
- 3. Criminalized women.** Wrap-around support is needed for women exiting institutions. Success is hard when housing is missing, and when 'bridges are burned' it can be hard to find housing.
- 4. Mental health.** There is a big stigma around mental health. Both units and education are needed. Many people with mental health challenges are evicted.
- 5. Youth.** Insufficient prevention work is taking place for youth who are at risk of homelessness, or are already homeless. They are the next generation of homeless and become entrenched quickly.
- 6. Places to sleep.** In May 2015, City of Edmonton is disallowing sleeping in public spaces – where can people sleep if they don't have a home?
- 7. Large families.** There are insufficient units to house large families. It is hard to house a family of 6. Units that are suitable for even small families are hard to find (3 bedrooms).
- 8. We are turning people away.** Housing needs are significant in Edmonton, according to CMHC numbers. While wait lists may not be an accurate measure of need, it many organizations are turning people away.
- 9. Newcomers.** Edmonton is a hub for newcomers. Even people with jobs are struggling. Newcomers find it hard to



say “I don’t have housing.”

- 10. Aboriginal and Metis.** There is a lack of relationship with Treaty 6, 7 and 8 people coming to Edmonton. Urban Aboriginal families with jobs are going to the food bank, struggling.
- 11. Social housing. Education and support is needed for tenants.** They were established to be a hand up, but are now a place people are not able to grow from. Politically, this is on no one’s radar. We are underutilizing our current assets. Almost all locations could be densified.
- 12. Quality of housing stock.** Our aim should be to have livable and safe conditions for people to live. There are cases where there is mould in units and landlords do nothing.
- 13. Lack of housing stock.** There are no new housing projects in the city.
- 14. Recovery housing.** All clients on recall order from drug court need recovery housing. This is available for a limited, and insufficient, time so their recovery is hampered.
- 15. Supports are needed.** There is a false distinction between affordable housing and supportive housing. A more intensive environment is needed than Housing First, to increase supports. People need support to keep their housing.
- 16. Housing First.** Once out of Housing First, affordability is a huge challenge.
- 17. Lifecycle needs.** From young single person, to life with a family and potentially as a single parent, then as an older adult, housing challenges may become chronic.
- 18. Housing units are fixed, not flexible.** More flexible housing is needed, like CMHC’s flex home. Challenge is to figure out how to do this. Who do people go to to move a wall?

A disorganized patchwork of service providers

The organizations that serve Edmontonians are disjointed. There is a disorganized patchwork of housing units and supplements available for people, and that patchwork is not able to see that it is not serving everyone that needs to be served. The most needy folks are excluded. It is not clear where to get help. The biggest providers of affordable housing have criteria that are disconnected from needs (mental illness, addictions, disabilities).



Changing expectations of how we live in the city

On several fronts, expectations are changing:

1. **Aging in place.** Many older adults are looking for supports to age in their homes.
2. **Stay in neighbourhood.** When people move from one setting to another, there are limitations within neighbourhoods because of the lack of diverse housing options.
3. **Where to “put” affordable housing.** There are big unanswered questions: How much is too much affordable housing in a neighbourhood? Should it be spread across the city? How do we decide how many “lower income” people to put in a neighbourhood?

Roles are unclear

The roles of the players in housing and homelessness are not clear. For example, the roles of the following entities is unclear: city government, Capital Region Board, Government of Alberta, Government of Canada, Social Housing Regeneration Advisory Group.

61 Ideas for City Government Action

The purpose of the City of Edmonton’s Affordable Housing Strategy is to identify the actions that city government can take relating to housing and homelessness. Philosophically, these ideas are about preparing, rather than reacting to hot-button issues.

The following 61 ideas for action surfaced in the focus groups:

Ensure affordable housing is throughout the city

1. **Be a leader.** Affordable housing is needed across the city, in all neighbourhoods.
2. **Name the right conditions** for affordable housing in suburban neighbourhoods.



3. **Use vacant school sites** and empty buildings throughout the city for market and non-market housing.
4. **Put affordable housing in affordable locations**, close to transportation and services, schools, employment, etc.

The city we build is a community

5. **Increase public transportation** services to housing, across the city. This means people can live without cars, which is more affordable. It also means that people, if need be, can be outside old influences and unhealthy social networks.
6. **Increased sense of community** will decrease isolation and increase belonging. Helpful activities include: the Abundant Communities Initiative; support to community leagues; and community policing.
7. **Ensure there are parks and places to gather**; they are essential.
8. **Complete communities** allow citizens to easily access the services they need either without a car, or via inexpensive transportation.
9. **Engage the public**. Ask this question: “If not there, then where?”
10. **Engage city administration**. Internal education is needed to ensure city government is actively pursuing ways to address homelessness and affordable housing. Turn “The Ways” into living documents.
11. **A new philosophy** that is more than a roof overhead, but about community. Create community where people live. This means integrating housing, community and supports.
12. **Plan to support people with arena and Galleria**, recognizing that the location of supports could change with redevelopment.

Take a new approach

13. **Be in relationship with First Nations and Metis settlements**, including regular recognition of Treaty 6 land. Partner with them.
14. **City government as an agent of flexibility**. We can't predict anything, so we need to be flexible. City government



can model and advocate for flexibility.

15. **Notice the good things.** There are many good things happening in Edmonton and those success stories need to be shared: faith and interfaith initiatives, and intercultural initiatives
16. **Collaborate across sectors.** City government, community leagues, faith community, organizations and agencies, government and the business community can all work together.
17. **Work closely with development community.** City government can facilitate needed development in the city by working more closely with not-for-profit and for-profit developers and builders.
18. **Work closely with neighbourhoods.** Non-equity housing co-ops could be established, or neighbourhood development corporation.
19. **Partner and collaborate.** Figure out what is in the collective interest and make it happen. More engagement to make the goals realizable.
20. **Draw on and share previous consultations.** Lots of information other entities can use to serve Edmontonians better, such as the consultation in the development of The Ways documents. Engage anew if necessary.
21. **Facilitate the collaboration** of city government, the business community, service organizations and citizens.
22. **Strategize for 10, 20 and 30 years.** Foresight in excess of 5 years is needed. City government can coordinate this work with all other parties; it is the one body that can see how all the pieces fit together.
23. **Use the strength of our ethnic communities.** Many organizations are on hand to help newcomers as they arrive in Edmonton.
24. **Citizens as community.** We need to figure out how to BE a community that looks after each other.
25. **Housing programs that follow the people, not property.** This will increase stability for people.
26. **Learn from other cities.** Particularly in cities where there is a lot of publicly owned affordable housing, what do they do that we should know about?

Simplify the rules

27. **Reduce red tape.** It takes a long time to get a permit to do the right thing.



28. **Name and remove the barriers to development.** Barriers include: complex rules; inconsistent interpretation of rules; risk-averse culture, especially avoidance of small risks; appeal process bias against development; development is too hard.
29. **Remove the racism and discrimination** in zoning bylaw.
30. **One license per corporation**, rather than one license for each affordable housing site.
31. **Use bylaws to affect affordability** of new development, such as inclusionary zoning; require affordable housing in new development; allow tiny houses; housing above strip malls; eliminate adult-only buildings.
32. **Use surplus density bonuses** to allow developers to increase density if they provide affordable housing units.

Housing and supports for seniors

33. **Create a centralized information hub** for seniors that lets people in the community know who needs help and who is offering help.
34. **Create intergenerational seniors housing** where the senior is allowed to have others, of younger ages (child, grandchild for example) live with them. Supports built in.
35. **Create a property maintenance program**, including snow clearing, grass cutting.

Revisit the financial model

36. **Build the socio-economic case for a mixed-market model.** Outcomes: reduce stigmatization, eliminate operating subsidies; create sustainable financial model; address real needs in community; public education, increase value of housing with additional amenities (i.e. daycare).
37. **Plan for financial stability for the housing sector.** A continuing program, not done in 10 years, is needed.
38. **Continue Cornerstones program**, or equivalent. Could also include the development of duplexes (add a second floor to a bungalow).
39. **Stop taxing affordable housing** as if it were market housing.
40. **Use a small municipal levy on market housing**, as a way to provide financial support to NGOs.



- 41. Leverage pension funds** to support capital requirements for housing, perhaps with province, as a way to invest in housing. Must ensure pension funds are not harmed.
- 42. Provide financial support to small-scale initiatives.** The work of citizens who add units on their small properties can be supported, particularly if sustainable.
- 43. Talk about financial planning in the community.** Be proactive about teaching financial literacy in our city, including debt management and saving for future.
- 44. Leverage the assets we have,** even if not participating with capital dollars, our city government can actively partner and participate.

Get out in front of the need for affordable housing construction

- 45. Prepare communities for new development** through early broad communication and education work, and early engagement when a project is coming. Build relationships with communities.
- 46. Generate “Yes In My Back Yard”.** Educate citizens on the tangible needs throughout our city. Model how as a community it is good and responsible to look after fellow citizens. The following needs to be made clear: housing needs, people living in poverty, myths, racism and discrimination. Turn NIMBY into YIMBY.
- 47. Put boundaries around engagement.** The City of Edmonton could say this: “citizens do not have the right to say WHO” will live near them. This is discrimination.

Communicate and educate on housing, services

- 48. Clearly identify the housing provided,** both by the City of Edmonton and others.
- 49. Coordinate the work of management bodies** – Support is needed for smaller organizations. This could help with eviction prevention, for example.

Participate in housing market

- 50. Be in the marketplace,** as a development partner, with private and not-for-profit developers, as well as to



encourage the participation of private developers in the construction of affordable housing units.

- 51. Use City-owned land.** Convert old city-owned office buildings into housing; build mixed affordable housing on city-owned land; give single residential lots to Habitat for Humanity, for at least a duplex; give land away to not-for-profits; 850 additional units could be created on top 5 city-owned social housing sites, under current zoning.
- 52. Buy land for residential purposes,** near transit-oriented development (TOD) sites.
- 53. Buy units** through the Cornerstones Inclusionary Affordable Housing Program. HomeEd can manage these units.
- 54. Financial support** for: co-housing; housing co-ops in attractive neighbourhoods; home renovations with sweat equity to decrease cost and increase sense of ownership and stability.
- 55. Support community development corporations,** by neighbourhoods for neighbourhoods that address local needs (housing for seniors of all incomes, ensure some affordable units). Partnerships could take place on TOD sites.
- 56. Act through HomeEd and Capital Region Housing.** There is no need to invent a new organization.
- 57. Build buildings.**

Advocate

- 58. Use the ear of the media.** The City of Edmonton is well positioned to advocate for housing units. Do not be neutral.
- 59. Tell senior governments what Edmonton needs.** Housing and homelessness are in our city government's face. Municipal Government Act changes are needed. Alberta has underfunded housing. Improved coordination of services is needed. Advocacy is also needed to the Capital Region Board.
- 60. Affordable housing should be city responsibility,** but do not let Government of Alberta off the hook for social housing. As owner of assets, city government has a significant role.
- 61. Help Government of Alberta** see regional differences across the province.

*If the city has agreed to a plan, it should advocate.
~ Focus group participant*



What We Heard - Community Workshop

After an opportunity to meet each other and explore the challenges and opportunities relating to housing and homeless in Edmonton, participants named their ideas for city government action. After naming the action, each idea was fleshed out using the following template:

- 1. Purpose** What will the action address? Why this action?
- 2. Opportunity / obstacles** What are the obstacles blocking this action? What opportunities do you see to go around them?
- 3. Results** What will be achieved by taking this action? What are the results that need to be achieved?
- 4. Role for City of Edmonton** What specifically is the role for our city government to play in this action?
- 5. Partners** Who does the City of Edmonton need to partner with to make this action happen?
- 6. Resources** What resources will be needed to take this action? Money, funds, people...
- 7. Doable?** On a scale of 1-10, is this doable in 5-10 years (1 – no, 10 – yes)

Below are those actions, transcribed with minor edits for grammar.

11 More Ideas For City Government Action (Fleshed Out)

Workshop Action 1 – Relax secondary, garden and garage suite regulations

1. Purpose – Build a better city, better neighbourhoods that are affordable and have more housing choice.
2. Opportunity / obstacles – A more streamlined approach to receive a permit is needed to encourage this type of development.
3. Results – Mix of housing types, increase mix of incomes.
4. Role for City of Edmonton – Leadership, take the initiative.
5. Partners – City, Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, Canadian Home Builders Association
6. Resources – Zoning bylaw amendments do not need capital dollars, only city staff time.

What actions does our city government need to take to address the homelessness and housing needs of Edmontonians?

~ The overarching question for the workshop



7. Doable? – 10, if not a 12. This could be done in less than 5 years.

Further comments on this action:

- Service capacity is not an issue and shouldn't be an issue. Utilities are built over capacity.
- Parking is not an issue because residents do not have the right to claim the public right-of-way
- Language needs to change. "Secondary" is a loaded definition that doesn't reflect the actual purpose.
- Neighbourhood economics: current density in old neighbourhoods does not economically work. More density encourages retail!
- Population decrease: will be addressed
- Zoning regulations should not restrict design and innovation
- The discussion shouldn't be about restricting these uses with zoning regulations, but shaping the discussion to ensure these suites are safe and up to code and affordable, regardless of number of suites per site.

Workshop Action 2 – Provide a living wage for all city staff and contractors

1. Purpose – Set example for businesses, non-profits and other orders of government. Will also ensure housing stability. This is a broad definition of contractor.
2. Opportunity / obstacles – City staff mostly get paid well already.
3. Results – Reduce poverty, and increase budget, standards for all contracted by City of Edmonton. This will build social infrastructure. The biggest NGO advocates for affordable housing often need housing security themselves, i.e., no pensions.
4. Role for City of Edmonton – Research and policy development. Approximately \$15/hour in Calgary. Approximately \$21/hour in Vancouver.
5. Partners – Task Force to End Poverty; lobby Province to implement.
6. Resources – (no information provided)
7. Doable? - 1



Further comments on this action:

- Possibly more cost effective to pay low wages instead of building more “affordable housing”
- Advocate for living wage and income support and support payments
- City funded non-profits, day care workers, part time staff all face income insecurity.
- While volunteerism is good for “community development”, service providers should not depend on volunteers to do heavy lifting with poverty reduction work.

Workshop Action 3 – Advocate to other orders of government

1. Purpose – Potential with Alberta government around the Big City Charter
2. Opportunity / obstacles – There is endless discussion: “Whose responsibility is it? Buck passing. The new provincial government is an opportunity. New partnerships can be developed to work around the “lack” of timing, right people, etc. Housing should be front and center, like the Jack Layton leadership example. Obstacles: Federation of Canadian Municipalities “solve the housing crunch” and the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association initiative.
3. Results – Obtain more money, and make better use of money to reach our goals.
4. Role for City of Edmonton – take the lead. Opportunities at Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Big City Mayors meetings, caucus meetings, or other management bodies. This is not just capital (buildings) but also services, supports and other areas of social policy (income support, etc.). City of Edmonton can influence legislation (i.e., MGA amendments). The City of Edmonton can create better partnerships.
5. Partners – Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, City of Calgary, key business leaders, school boards, NGO sector.
6. Resources – knowledgeable people to lead, and good data/information. The current City of Edmonton Council is favourable.
7. Doable? – 9. This is not costly and there is a positive City Council.



Workshop Action 4 – Designate some surplus school sites for affordable housing, including permanent supportive housing

1. Purpose – 50% of affordable units could include permanent supportive housing in the mixed income surplus school site designations.
2. Opportunity / obstacles – Existing Council policy supports income mix in all neighbourhoods. Need to follow these through to implement. More public awareness in the communities with surplus schools sites of community needs regarding affordable housing. City is haunted by lack of public engagement with original First Place designation. City council needs to show leadership because it will never get consensus of all neighborhoods. An additional 15-20 sites beyond existing 37 sites will become available in future years. More public awareness needs to be done to get people onside.
3. Results – (no information provided)
4. Role for City of Edmonton – (no information provided)
5. Partners – (no information provided)
6. Resources – (no information provided)
7. Doable? – Set a target of surplus school sites to be used for non-seniors affordable housing (6)

Workshop Action 5 – Develop partnerships to seek “market” need for a social enterprise housing.

1. Purpose – Create an inclusive community that is accessible and affordable. Reduce costs for housing while serving a social purpose. Prevent homelessness. Equity needed.
2. Opportunity / obstacles
3. Results – Clients / tenants gain new skills. Promotes social responsibility, health and wellness, and inclusionary housing.
4. Role for City of Edmonton – Social enterprise fund; land availability; business licensing; identify service gaps
5. Partners Results – (no information provided)
6. Resources Results – (no information provided)



7. Doable? Results – (no information provided)

Workshop Action 6 – Partner with non-market housing developers of demonstrated competencies

1. Purpose – Address emergency housing deficiencies (hotel rooms, absolute homelessness, facing default).
2. Opportunity / obstacles – (no information provided)
3. Results – (no information provided)
4. Role for City of Edmonton – Guarantor of occupancy levels. Land provider.
5. Partners – (no information provided)
6. Resources – (no information provided)
7. Doable? – (no information provided)

Workshop Action 7 – Support neighbourhood based community development corporations

1. Purpose – Address affordable housing to create a strong neighbourhood.
2. Opportunity / obstacles – Requires expertise, and money. Private partners have for profit and non-profit goals.
3. Results – Neighbourhood acceptance of project; more diverse community; neighbourhood control.
4. Role for City of Edmonton – Legal framework to enable this initiative; support research and development of Edmonton model.
5. Partners – Private financiers, housing builders and architects; community leagues and community development corporations; foundations, banks.
6. Resources – Money, expertise, research
7. Doable? – 4.

Workshop Action 8 – Provide arms-length neutral facilitators for neighbourhood and housing proponents

1. Purpose – Improve communication and find common ground and resolve contentious issues related to the proposed housing project.



Workshop Action 9 – Tiny houses, pods, portable container housing

1. Purpose – Change zoning to allow for tiny homes in vacant areas: surplus schools sites, Charles Camsell site, former remand building, residential properties (affordable financing and entrepreneurial opportunity). Example: Habitat 67 was container units.
2. Opportunity / obstacles – Former remand can serve as dorm for students coming into Edmonton for education or training, as a short term or transitional place. Could also be used for graduating from housing program, additions, and emergency shelters. Downsizing is more common and appearance can be designed by architectures. ATCO office trailers can be used for families. Single dorms from construction sites can also be used. Obstacles: perception that its ugly, unfinished, not taking core sub-housing standard, but people are re-examining how much space you need; not in my back yard; for portables, sewage arrangements, contractors to clean, building codes to accept metal containers.
3. Results – A quick solution for homeless. Container housing solves family housing; multigenerations can be “stacked” as a support system.
4. Role for City of Edmonton – (no information provided)
5. Partners – ATCO, private developers, etc.
6. Resources – Land, utilities (City water, sewage, power)
7. Doable? – No strings attached; cost effective; easy to install; easily adaptable to meet renter need (single, couple, family); constructed in short time; zoning can be changed; micro-units can reduce stigma and increase acceptance into community; indistinguishable from next door.

Workshop Action 10 – Change zoning to require all new developments, subdivisions, to have mixed housing

1. Purpose – Establish a percentage of all new development to be mixed and / or social housing. Various types of housing in any one area, all levels of income in each area. New developments lack services, especially for low income. We are trapped in the nuclear family home; inclusive zoning and mixed housing will increase the density. Infrastructure is not sustainable with out density.



2. Opportunity / obstacles – A walkable city. The City needs / will need to compel these changes because some people won't want it. City will have to make them change, or convince them to. 4.5 homes/acre is not enough. A big challenge will be changing our old areas, not new development. Opportunity is to increase density because of major push back. The challenge is in getting people to understand the true cost of low density. This leads to the secondary suite conversation.
3. Results – (no information provided)
4. Role for City of Edmonton – (no information provided)
5. Partners – (no information provided)
6. Resources – (no information provided)
7. Doable? – (no information provided)

Workshop Action 11 – Champion diverse healthy communities

1. Purpose – Address the problem of NIMBY (not in my back yard), poor or absent public engagement (timing)
2. Opportunity / obstacles – First opportunity is to act with pilots; use of surplus school sites; need good information and processes; need social contract with communities. This may involve more authority to communities. Second opportunity is to profile positive results when available, small steps that are not too “extreme”; show practical benefits not just vague generalities.
3. Results – More population density.
4. Role for City of Edmonton – Take more common positions on diverse communities.
5. Partners – Work with recognized community leaders.
6. Resources – (No information provided)
7. Doable? – (No information provided)



What We Heard - Online Survey

The text below provides both statistics on the 166 survey respondents' responses, and thematically organizes the information received through the open-ended questions. A note to the reader: these messages have not been evaluated or ranked, and some may be in conflict with each other.

Concerns About Housing and Homelessness

The online survey asked respondents which issues were of concern to them. 59% said that the availability of rental units was of high importance. 73% said the cost of rental units, whether a home or apartment, was of high importance. The physical condition of rental apartments was of high importance for 52%. Most respondents, 49% indicated the number of bedrooms available in rental apartments was of moderate concern. The cost of owning a house or apartment was a concern of high importance for 49% of respondents. Long waiting periods for affordable housing units was a concern of high importance for 62% of respondents.

Online survey respondents were given an opportunity to name other housing issues. 57% of respondents provided comments; here is what they had to say.

- 1. Rental rates are high, not affordable.** There is a need for: rent controls; rent based on income; regulation of private owners of rental properties to ensure quality aligns with cost; adequate rent supplements.
- 2. Supply of affordable housing is inadequate.** Concerns include: it is difficult to find housing; 10% below market rate is not affordable; inadequate supply downtown; inadequate supply across the city; lack of affordable units near downtown and LRT lines; long wait lists; there is no such thing as "affordable"; lack of pet-friendly housing for seniors; lack of shelter for homeless seniors; lack of rentals in general;
- 3. There are various needs to serve.** A huge variety of needs are in the community that no one program can resolve: the chronically homeless; supportive housing (see below); low-income seniors; housing for singles and families;

Stable and affordable housing is a critical foundation for breaking cycles of poverty, homelessness, and sometimes addiction. I support the Housing First initiatives for helping people and families get on their feet. This pays off in the long run for the entire community. But the housing needs to be GOOD housing. Rundown rooming houses, or dangerous neighborhoods are not helpful. Mix affordable housing with stable healthy neighborhoods. Also, add supports to give people who need it the skills to know how to care for their homes, be considerate of their neighbours, and participate in their communities.

~ Online survey respondent



4. **Supportive housing needs vary.** People need support along with their housing for many reasons: physical disabilities; mental health; people in transition, not yet ready to be on their own; chronic health challenges; high needs populations, such as homeless; people with eviction or crime records; people who struggle with managing tenancy; people with disabilities. More supportive housing will take the strain off the supply of affordable housing. Both temporary and permanent housing with supports is needed.
5. **Eligibility requirements are difficult to meet.** There are a variety of challenges for people: process to apply is difficult and if not accepted, people end up back on the streets and back to triggers that keep them ineligible (addictions, sex work); criminal record; pets; addictions; mental health; adult-only buildings eliminate families; some people don't fit into categories (i.e., a 62 year old too young for most affordable senior housing); Canadian citizenship.
6. **Inadequate funding.** Federal funding cuts to subsidized housing; cuts to Capital Region Housing Corporation
7. **The Crime-Free Multi-Housing Program has a negative side.** There are people marginalized into substandard housing because they do not qualify under the
8. **Some people struggle with being good tenants.** And they deserve to be housed. People with criminal records are marginalized into substandard housing because they do not qualify for the Edmonton Police Services Crime-Free Multi-Housing program, or have been evicted from large renters. Support is needed to help people with: bad credit; criminal record; damage deposits; credit checks, or reference checks; get utility hook-ups; get on waiting lists.
9. **Infill development is challenging.** The following challenges were named: buildings that do not fit with the character of the neighbourhood, or heritage architecture; impact on current residents; difficult to build in established central neighbourhoods for the average Edmontonian; no one wants infill housing; relaxed zoning to allow more duplexes is a joke; higher density in older neighbourhoods; infill is working; build it to same or better standard than overall community, so it doesn't bring down property values; basement suites bring additional parking on the streets; do not do infill; no subsidized infill in established communities that people built and worked hard to establish.
10. **Gentrification in central neighbourhoods** is taking place with no regard for the struggling and homeless. We

Rental prices are outrageous!!!! 1300 to rent a 2 bed apartment is so much, especially in poor neighbourhoods. People who can't afford a down payment on a house get completely screwed in rent. Mortgages on the apartments can be as low as 1000. Renting a 100k apartment for 1300 a month is robbery.

~ Online survey respondent

There is a lack of rentals in general. I believe affordable housing is at a crisis point. Homeless shelters have become affordable housing and while individuals who receive income support reside in shelters they are not entitled to income (Alberta Works will cut them off). This makes it incredible difficult to save enough money for rent that is more than \$323 and makes having a damage deposit and impossibility. Even if they do not eat or buy toilet paper they cannot afford housing. The wait lists are very discouraging (3-5 years if you are eligible). MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLEASE!

~ Online survey respondent

Keep in mind that families with more children need different things. We shouldn't feel forced to live in certain areas because we are now low income. I dread living in complexes where children run outside all hours and parents aren't watching them. I'd rather live in home I chose or area I feel comfortable. I want a home to feel like home. Not fare to be segregated to certain area or no pets or your eldest can't live with you. Need a home. To be a family.

~ Online survey respondent



should develop with care, respect and dignity.

- 11. Segregation, racism and discrimination are taking place.** Concerns raised: people are not able to choose where in the city to live, rather specific areas; downtown is ghettoized; many landlords refuse to rent to people who have been homeless or discriminate based on race, social status or income source, sobriety; owners of derelict rooming houses take advantage of vulnerable residents and provide no support; people should have options that make them feel safe and part of a positive community;
- 12. Quality of building stock.** Concerns raised: derelict rental houses; poor quality housing not being looked into; landlords and property managers who do the bare minimum or less if they can get away with it; properties not taken care of; bedbugs issues needs to be addressed in more organized way; absentee landlords are a challenge; illegal basement suites; safe and secure properties; lack of maintenance; lack of adherence to safety standards (fire alarms, doors that lock, unsafe windows, handrails, steps, etc.); need to upgrade and renovate current subsidized housing to increase its longevity;
- 13. Safety is essential,** in both the building and the surrounding neighbourhood.
- 14. More than 'housing' needs to be addressed.** The city is making great strides with Housing First programs but getting into some programs is difficult due to lack of units for individuals. More transitional housing is needed and a focus on supportive housing to help individuals gain the skills they need to be independent and afford market rates.
- 15. Role clarity.** It isn't clear if this is work for civic level.
- 16. Taxes and fees make it hard to buy a home.** 8% property tax increases for each year for last decade. Whose salary goes up 8% a year?
- 17. Day shelters are needed in the city.** People have nowhere to sleep. Better night shelters are also needed, where people could actually sleep.
- 18. Bad city planning.** Requirements for homes that do not fit with sound neighbourhood planning. Restrictions on what property owners can do with their own land (there should be fewer restrictions). Improper road planning in residential areas ("traffic calming" is a disaster).
- 19. Safety.** People are looking not just for a bed, but also safely. A door they can lock with a bathroom and kitchenette

I am happy about infill. I live in Beverly. I just want the new builds to reflect the historical architecture. I am all for new builds having basement suites. I'm often having to move because my rent budget is 500 a month making it necessary to have a roommate. I have mental health health issues as well. So I lose roommates a lot. I would love to live in a community building with a small suite. A building with common rooms like a library or game room. I don't need a ton of space, its just me. But I need social opportunities and community. Please build a community style building between nait and northland's..and put me on the list. PS. I'm on aish.

~ Online survey respondent

Availability of housing for one-person households to buy - I live in a crappy condo but would like to buy a real house, however with a single income, even my pretty reasonable professional salary, that will never happen in Edmonton unless there are more small, new, infill-type houses coming onto the market.

~ Online survey respondent

Concern - The quality of people one lives around. Nobody wants sketchy neighborhoods

~ Online survey respondent

Constant rent increases. Landlords who never repair broken windows, clothes washers and dryers. Management companies that collaborate to set very high rental pricing. Building owners that rent to drug dealers and refuse to do anything along with City Police. Roads with heavy traffic through residential neighborhoods with 32 decibel levels and excessive speeding.

~ Online survey respondent



that is all their own. Even if 250 sq. ft., something they can call their own is important.

Philosophy on City Government Action

There are a number of threads in the survey responses:

It makes sense to take action

1. It is cheaper to house people than have them on the streets.
2. The whole city is safer, better place when everyone has the option to choose safe, affordable housing.
3. Affordable housing means a liveable city for everyone.
4. Affordable housing is a stepping-stone that allows low-income renters the ability to get ahead, rather than constantly feeling defeated.
5. Tax dollars are well spent giving people a hand up

Access to affordable housing is a right

6. All Edmontonians have a right to affordable housing and the option to choose where they live. Access to affordable, safe and clean housing is essential.
7. The language “low income” has stigma and judgement associated with it. What about “morally acceptable housing”?

Some not supportive of a city government Affordable Housing Strategy, or parts of it

1. Focus on immediate outcomes, not a study. We know there is not enough affordable housing. No more waste of money on studies.
2. Just take action. We know what is needed; we just need to focus on immediate outcomes (use vacant school sites; public engagement to understand that we all need affordable housing, not just those living in poverty, and to build empathy and decrease resistance).



3. This is not work for city government. City government has no business doing any form of grant or subsidizing any form of housing. It is the Province's job and there are many private initiatives confronting this problem. City government makes problem worse by manipulating the supply of land and inflating prices. Further, this is mainly a Federal and Provincial issue.
4. No tax dollars on housing. Concerns about where tax dollars are spent: my tax dollars from my home should not be used for someone else to rent/own a home, or to increase the value of someone else's home; stop increasing taxes instead of using tax dollars on housing programs because lower taxes will encourage housing and rental; let free market work its magic; no tax dollars to subsidize someone's rent; spend tax dollars on roads and city services only; how are subsidized citizens paying us back; stop padding developer pockets; stop giving money away to individuals who through poor choices we have to subsidize without any recovery of our funds; need a way to recover funds; its not the responsibility of home owners to subsidize others into owning; no one helps me fix up my home, if you can't afford your home you need to sell and move along.

56 Ideas for City Government Action

The online survey asked specific questions about the actions our city government should take to address the affordable housing needs of Edmontonians. Provision of financial grants and incentives to increase the supply of affordable housing units was of high importance for 62% of respondents. Provision of financial grants and incentives to maintain the supply of existing affordable units was of high importance for 52% of Edmontonians. Only 14% of respondents said that each these actions were of low priority. 50% of respondents said that provision of financial grants and incentives to maintain the supply of existing rental units for low-income households; this was of low priority for 13% of respondents. Provision of rent supplements (financial subsidies) to allow people to afford market rental rates was of high importance to 42% of respondents, low importance for 17%. This action had a higher proportion of moderate importance, at 37%.

Two other areas of action received high support from respondents: 62% found it of high importance for city government to advocate to other orders of government for addition funding for affordable housing. Only 10% said this was of low importance. Further, 51% of respondents said it was of high importance for city government to research and prepare plans



to address affordable housing needs (34% moderate, 14% low).

Online survey respondents were given an opportunity to name other city government actions. 37% of respondents provided comments; here is what they had to say.

Welcome affordable housing throughout the city

- 1. Affordable housing should be everywhere**, throughout the city: in new neighbourhoods, like Griesbach, have now housing but no truly affordable housing options; anywhere there is a transit node is a great place for a range of housing types, styles and price points; access to groceries and health services; mixed in with market housing; in all buildings.
- 2. Put affordable housing in convenient locations**, near transit and services. Easy access to schools and amenities is essential.
- 3. Locate more homeless outreach offices** in neighbourhoods so Edmontonians don't push people who are struggling out of the neighbourhood; help people struggling, and help people welcome those who are struggling
- 4. Build diverse, walkable neighbourhoods** with low cost and high price housing; well maintained and clean modern neighbourhoods benefit wealthy and poor alike; incorporate homeless into the community; easy access to essential services for all households;
- 5. Work with communities** about acceptance and need of affordable housing and social integration.
- 6. Face NIMBY.** The strategy needs to be flexible but insistent. The city as a whole needs to contribute to this solution for our neighbours. We have to face NIMBY head-on in the same way we face bullying in schools - as something that is not acceptable.

Edmontonians need to be part of the solution by welcoming affordable housing to their neighbourhood.

~ Online survey respondent

Provide a range of housing options to serve various needs

- 7. Recognize that low-income Edmontonians are not a homogenous group.**
- 8. Make everything available:** sufficient market rental apartments; subsidies for market rentals; designated Affordable Housing, Permanent Supportive Housing (of various kinds); temporary housing for people between



one apartment and the next; housing with harm reduction approach; and even adequate boarding houses, transitional housing, group living, for those who are most likely to succeed in such settings.

- 9. Provide a seniors-specific Housing First program.**
- 10. Provide housing for variety of household size:** singles, large and small families.
- 11. Consider consecutive residency in the city,** where Edmontonians that have been waiting the longest get priority over newcomers unless they are refugee settlers (when funding is supplemented by other governments).
- 12. Assess people on a one-on-one basis.** A lot of folks are somewhere between homeless and tenancy. There are a lot of folks receiving funds from Barriers to Full Employment, AISH, AB Works who might be receiving somewhere between \$750 - \$1300 to live off for the month. Assess folks on a one-on-one basis. See who is prioritized (understandably!) at existing orgs like CRHC, Operation Friendship, Home Ed, and see who is falling through the cracks.

Ways to add units

- 13. Build infill,** in the form of secondary suites, empowering Edmontonians to take action in their communities.
- 14. Build smaller quality accommodation in convenient locations.** Compact housing for singles (homeless and seniors). Give them a small, cozy place to call their own, rather than money. Garden suites and tiny homes. Build clusters of tiny 300 square foot, bachelor suite apartments so singles have vacate larger, more expensive apartments for families. Modular construction.
- 15. Build up,** increasing the density of our city.
- 16. Build community focused buildings,** with small apartments and communal spaces like courtyards, libraries and game rooms.
- 17. Build clean emergency shelters** for people and pets.
- 18. Use old buildings:** old Remand Center, former [Camsell] hospital for low cost housing or a homeless shelter.
- 19. Use vacant school sites** for affordable housing. Speak out strongly against NIMBYism, get rid of five neighbourhoods moratorium and say social housing is not the reason for community stress.



- 20. **Do not use vacant schools sites.** Leave them as green space.
- 21. **Develop municipal airport** quicker.
- 22. **Inclusionary zoning.** Require a percentage of condominium units to be affordable housing, like Vancouver. 20% of units should be affordable housing.
- 23. **Do not use inclusionary zoning.**

Landlord and tenant relationships

- 24. **Provide timely, effective and balanced dispute resolution** for landlords and tenants. Both parties need to know their rights.
- 25. **Advise tenants and landlords on rights.**

Relationship with the public

- 26. **Advocate** the need for affordable housing.
- 27. **Listen to citizens:** marginalized, people in the neighbourhoods, keep asking what people need.

Address ability to pay for housing

- 28. **Rent control.** Rules where rent only raised by a certain percentage every year when resigning leases. No profit at the expense of people in need. Make those renting out the units part of the solution
- 29. **Financial supports for renters.** Ensure sufficient rental allowance, particularly for families. When child tax is used for rent, it is not used for food and clothing for the children.
- 30. **Incentives for landlords,** to keep rent affordable. Give developers more incentive to create affordable homes; give them perks for helping those that are struggling.
- 31. **Limit rent:** rent caps for fixed income people; rent no more than 75% of value of the property being rented.



Advocate to other levels of government

- 32. **Living minimum wage** that allows people to afford housing.
- 33. **Minimum annual income**, increased money given to people on AISH or Alberta Works.
- 34. **Normalize mortgage financing**. If policy was still 20% down, house prices would be lower.
- 35. **Stop keeping people in poverty**, by allowing people in shelters to be eligible for core shelter and needs allowances. Challenge the policies of Income Supports/Human Services.
- 36. **Free housing**. A fresh new provincial government is open to new ideas. Research and evidence says this is the best way to end homelessness and reduce cost on system in the long run (Medicine Hat, Utah).
- 37. **Access to funds**. Social Service agencies should be involved in accessing philanthropic and federal/provincial funds for capital projects as is being done in Calgary.

The city we build matters

- 38. **Reduce indirect subsidies to new suburban development** and implement smart road tolling and have new developments pay the full cost of service installation
- 39. **Diverse transportation options** are essential to quality of life. What good is an affordable home if resident cannot easily get to work, purchase food?
- 40. **Think ahead and forecast what the neighbourhood will become**, as it gets older. Infrastructure for viable neighbourhoods is necessary: schools, libraries, fitness centers, rinks, museums, parks, etc.
- 41. **Neighbourhoods are now overcrowded**, lack of street parking, problems with slum landlords,

Standards, quality of development

- 42. **Decrease zoning restrictions**.
- 43. **Ensure standards** for new and existing affordable housing are met; keep landlords accountable.
- 44. **Improve condo regulations**.



New arena

- 45. Consider the impact** of new arena development on housing costs. Find ways to reduce large jumps in costs in northern downtown, an area traditionally offering more affordable units.
- 46. Concrete plan needed** to reduce negative impacts of gentrification
- 47. Create the conditions for affordable and beautiful homes and apartments** turned into condos for sale will attract people to move/live in the area and also clean up the area a bit. Homeowners have a vested interest to care, which can build community. Low income shouldn't have to mean living in an area that's not safe and happy to live in.

Supports

- 48. Help tenants stay in current place.** Incentives and grants to landlords to help a tenant stay in current place when not affordable. Help tenants learn how to care for their units, know their rights and be considerate of their neighbours.
- 49. Supports needed for people various needs:** visible and invisible disabilities and unable to work; mental illness; addiction; abuse.
- 50. People are needed to monitor** if the supports people need are in place.
- 51. Require new developments to have greater support.**
- 52. Think holistically:** additions, homelessness by choice, mental illness, hoarding. Many strategies and supports are needed for people to keep their homes, and to prevent homelessness
- 53. Rent to own.** Come up with a rent to own plan for low-income renters, perhaps in the community style buildings. Work hard and save money, and maybe one day be a good landlord.

Taxation and accountability

- 54. Implement land value tax.**
- 55. Audit funds and activities.** How can we ensure that grants and tax breaks are properly allocated? How can we



make sure the most in need are being helped? Rules need to be upheld.

56. Investigate and dissolve Capital City Housing, now an empire and bureaucratic nightmare. Those trying to survive on low income are wide-ranging and all inclusive. An individual or family often wants to live where they have friends and know the area. CRHC denies anything other than what they have decreed.

About Funding Cornerstones

Our city government offers a program called Cornerstones that provides grants and incentives for affordable housing. As of April 2015, the current programs include: secondary suite grants of up to \$20,000 to help homeowners upgrade or build a secondary suite in their home. The Housing Opportunities Program for Edmonton (HOPE) provides up to \$20,000 to low-income homeowners to upgrade their single-detached houses. Our city government also has a program called inclusionary housing, a program where 5% of units in select developments are purchased at 85% of market price, and subsequently rented as affordable housing to qualifying households. In addition, our city government has a program to fund the development of new construction of affordable housing. The online survey asked respondents about which of these programs are most important to continue, choosing from “not important”, “somewhat important” or “important”.

The development of new affordable housing projects had the highest support; rated as important by 67% of respondents, with an additional 19% saying it was somewhat important. Inclusionary of secondary suites housing had the second highest rating as important at 64%, with an additional 23% rating this as somewhat important. These two activities also had the fewest respondents indicating these activities were not important, at 12% and 11% respectively.

Cornerstones and HOPE were rated as less important, with respondents finding Cornerstones to be important for 35% of respondents, at 43% found it to be somewhat important. 40% found HOPE to be important; 37% found it to be somewhat important. 21% found Cornerstones to be not important; and 20% found HOPE to be not important.



22 Ideas on What to Fund Through Grants and Incentives

The following are actions named in the survey responses that relate specifically to grants and incentives that could be offered by our city government:

A lot of people would LOVE to live in a real house secondary suite instead of an apartment.

~ Online survey respondent

What to continue

1. **Pathways** to housing program is awesome. Keep funding them Homeward Trust and Housing First programs.
2. **Fund secondary suites.**

Some new things to try

3. **Holistic approaches**, like helping people find jobs or get on AISH so they can maintain paying rent.
4. **Financial support to individuals** to make them able to pay market rent (subsidies or rental rebates).
5. **Incentives to private landlords** to rent to low-income individuals, those on AISH and Alberta Works.
6. **Provide more intentional supportive housing options** for those who cannot maintain housing independently, including tenants with mental health issues but can live fairly independently.
7. **Support renters' transition to home ownership**, rather than subsidize slum landlords.
8. **Financial support for non-equity co-op housing** projects (purchase of land, co-op consultants), an on-going affordable housing option that is self-managed and builds community. Particularly suited for seniors who do not need to 'invest' in land.
9. **Grow food locally**, in backyards, on roofs and in community gardens. City can buy excess food at lowered cost to give to food banks or open, subsidized markets to offer cheaper, fresh produce to families in need.
10. **Put solar panels on homeowners roofs**; extra power that goes back into the grid can lower electricity costs to those struggling with electricity payments.
11. **Incentives for lower utility costs** for low-income households.
12. **Offer a home lottery**, like Halifax, to increase diversity and build inclusive communities. Also makes home ownership a viable option for low-income households.



- 13. Put money toward low income home owners of townhouses and apartment condos**, not just single detached homes. HOPE should be available for duplexes and / or condos.
- 14. Encourage the building of Permanent Supportive Housing units** (with the hope that the Province will help provide the supports needed by residents).
- 15. Free or cheaper access to transit.**
- 16. Renovation grants, or upgrade assistance** that reflect sustainable approaches (i.e., wiring upgrades) and support the needs of people with accessibility changes (renovations for wheelchair/walker accessibility).

Support for seniors

- 17. Grants** for low income senior citizens
- 18. Increase units** for senior citizens

Where to put the money

- 19. Capital Region Housing Corporation is desperately underfunded.**
- 20. Give money to not for profits** like Inner City Housing to build and manage affordable housing, instead of businesses. Charities are open and transparent, and by law the money raised goes back to the charity to build their mandate.
- 21. The same grants on larger scale.**
- 22. Let private industry do this and get out of their way.**

About the Strategy

The Affordable Housing Strategy should: be based on research and evidence; look at successful programs in others cities, such as Ottawa and Medicine Hat; look beyond the Alberta definition of affordable housing priorities; eliminate land speculation and favour non-equity projects; provide ongoing provision of affordable housing; focus on subsidizing the individuals who need affordable housing, rather than subsidizing the development industry.

Check out the demographics that put folks further down on the wait lists for housing corps like CRHC. - Seniors - Men and women without children / dependents In the work I do, I've seen a lot of seniors (60+) have a lot of difficulty finding homes. Special grants for folks on a case by case basis would be really helpful. Operation Friendship does great work too but I fear there are not enough (not even close to enough) affordable housing units in the province. Something that I think can happen is folks end up in the hospitals (due to suicide attempts related to the stress of not being able to find places, or for a plethora of other reasons) What they are really looking for is a safe place to sleep (not a shelter where everyone is in one room, not a friend's couch). Many of the folks we work with have stayed on friend's couches for months and have often paid rent but received no receipt for it and when the friend asks them to leave mid-month (even if they've paid the rent) there's no proof so they lose that money. The median amount someone on AB Works could afford, I would guess, would be about \$400 per month. The rest needs to be subsidized. Many folks want to pay rent and many want to work but they cannot afford \$900+ for a 1BR or Bachelor. I would suggest subsidized housing with mixed apartment sizes focusing on bachelors for single folks or couples all the way up to 3BR for folks with children.

~ Online survey respondent

