

# What We Heard Report Supportive Housing Engagement

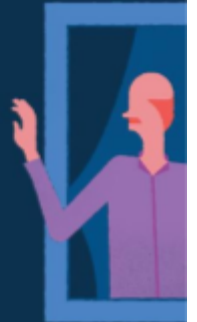
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King Edward Park

November 2020

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Edmonton



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
Prioritization of Supportive Housing by City of Edmonton City Council	3
<b>Engagement Process</b>	<b>5</b>
A Note on COVID-19 Adaptations	6
General Approach	6
City of Edmonton Engagement Spectrum	8
Principles of Engagement	8
Communication Methods	9
What The Engagement Asked	10
Engagement Metrics	12
<b>Engagement Input Summary</b>	<b>13</b>
Section 1 - General Reflections	13
Section 2 - Community Summary	15
Part I: Overall Reactions and Input from the Community	18
Part II: Good Neighbour Plan Priorities	20
Part III: Building Design Considerations	22
<b>Next Steps</b>	<b>24</b>
Proposed Zoning Changes	24
Development of a Good Neighbour Plan & Building Design	24
Providing the Report to the Public	25
<b>Appendix A</b>	
Resident Stories - What is it like to live in supportive housing?	26
Harris	26
Darren	27
Leslie	27
Steven	28



## Introduction

Since 2009, more than 11,000 homeless individuals have been successfully housed because of the efforts of dozens of community partners, coordination and resources provided by Homeward Trust, and committed funding agreements from the City of Edmonton, the Government of Alberta, and the Government of Canada. Despite this remarkable progress, today Edmonton continues to see nearly 2,000 people experiencing homelessness, including approximately 600 people sleeping outside on any given night.

In response, Edmonton's City Council has prioritized the development of supportive housing as a cost effective, human-rights focused way to deliver housing to individuals experiencing homelessness. The supportive housing model addresses homelessness by focusing primarily on housing — a person experiencing homelessness is moved off the streets and into a safe, appropriate housing option. Residents receive wraparound services (such as medical services and life skills) embedded in the housing, which limits the extent to which they need to go off-site to receive essential support services.

## Prioritization of Supportive Housing by City of Edmonton City Council

While Edmonton's original *10-year plan to End Homelessness* (created in 2009) forecasted a need for 1,000 supportive housing units, funding only allowed 200 supportive housing units to be built. The persistent gap has limited Edmonton's ability to effectively reduce chronic homelessness.

Edmonton's *Updated Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* (released in 2017) identifies the need for 900 supportive housing units by 2024. The City of Edmonton has established an *Updated Affordable Housing Investment Plan* to develop **600 of those supportive housing units by 2022**, and an **additional 300 units by 2024**. The development of supportive housing is key to achieving the goals established in *A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Updated Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*.

## Purpose of the Report

To build approximately 150 units of supportive housing, the City of Edmonton proposed four new sites for supportive housing in partnership with Homeward Trust. The sites are located in the communities of Inglewood, Terrace Heights, Wellington/McArthur Industrial and King Edward Park.

On June 29th, 2020 City Council approved the land sale of sites in Inglewood, King Edward Park, Terrace Heights and Wellington/McArthur Industrial to Homeward Trust. As a condition of the land sale, public engagement with all four communities was required, as well as rezonings for three of the sites.

**The following report summarizes the engagement process for the proposed King Edward Park supportive housing site.** The report was prepared by Y Station, with support from the City of Edmonton's Affordable Housing and Homelessness Section.

The report describes how participants connected into the engagement, the questions community members had and summarizes the major themes and considerations arising from their input.

This report also provides two other long-term purposes.

First, this report provides **advice to the service provider** that will operate this proposed development. Participants provided clear feedback, what their concerns were, what it means to them that this would be part of their community and how (and sometimes even if) they believed supportive housing could be a part of their community. They also described what is important to them in a Good Neighbour Plan for the development. Participants deliberately and diligently provided this input — what is synthesized here gives the service provider a starting point and a frame of reference to build a rich relationship with their neighbours.

Second, the input summarized here provides **advice for the City of Edmonton** on the things they should consider as other neighbourhoods are assessed and engaged for supportive housing in the future. Generally speaking, the importance of affordable housing and the need to provide housing for those experiencing homelessness is understood by Edmontonians, even those who oppose supportive housing in their community. The findings of this report should provide additional nuance in regard to supportive housing engagement and development over the course of the next set of engagements.



## Engagement Process

On June 29th, 2020 City Council approved the land sale of a site at 8120 93 Street to Homeward Trust for the purpose of developing supportive housing. As a condition of the land sale, public engagement was required, as well as a rezoning.

This report summarizes the public engagement process for King Edward Park between mid-June to late September 2020 that focused on three specific areas:

- General feedback from the community;
- What the neighbourhood values in a potential Good Neighbour Plan;
- Advice and considerations from each community around the design and physical form of the potential development.

A separate engagement process was held by the Planning Coordination section of the City of Edmonton specifically for proposed changes to the zoning on the proposed site (those findings are in a separate report for [King Edward Park](#)).

## Methodology

The methodology for this engagement was designed to be as comprehensive and thorough as possible. As a general rule this was a process of multiples — the neighbourhood was provided with multiple opportunities to engage, on multiple questions, in multiple ways, and at multiple stages.

This process was also committed to capturing the nuance of community input, understanding that how a participant might feel about supportive housing would be complicated and often contain caveats.

### *A Note on COVID-19 Adaptations*

*This process was originally designed and prepared to launch as early as the third week of March 2020. When public health guidelines were put into place, large portions of the engagement approach needed to be revised.*

*The adapted process was based on the same principles described below, and ultimately met many of the same aims and managed to engage many of the same people. In fact, it is the analysis of the project team that by adapting to the “new normal” imposed by COVID 19, this process likely received more input than it may have under more conventional circumstances.*

*While the engagement was adapted to be largely digital in nature, changes were made to allow for certain participants to provide input through other means, such as connecting directly to the project team through 311. In that specific instance, several interviews were conducted with participants, most of them senior citizens.*

### **General Approach**

The approach to planning the engagement was focused on creating effective and constructive dialogue between the City and the community. The engagement took a human-rights informed approach, one which protected the dignity and safety of individuals currently living in supportive housing and those who may come to live in the proposed site.

The overall design was also developed to allow participants to provide their initial gut reaction to the responses to the proposals first, then review information about supportive housing built around those responses, and then provide another round of feedback. Reviewing the content of the Phase 2 and Phase 3 responses, the Phase 3 responses tended to be more focused on implementation and detail around the potential development.

The engagement was structured to follow a three-phase plan:

- **Phase 1 (Mid-Late June 2020):** Small one-on-one conversations with the Community League and community members with neighbourhood knowledge to provide feedback on our planned engagement approach and begin information-sharing about the development.
- **Phase 2 (June 29 - August 26, 2020):** A series of community roundtables as well as an online survey. The roundtables and survey were advertised through social media, a mailing list, on the supportive housing website, through the Community League, as well as a mailed flyer to homes and businesses within a 200m radius of the proposed developments, which is more than three times the requirement for development permit notifications. A central hub of information on supportive housing, including early FAQs and information about how to be involved in engagement activities, was set up and advertised.

The original design intended to hold these roundtables in the homes of community members or in local destinations to give community members the opportunity to come together to discuss and ask questions in a more comfortable environment. This plan was obviously pre-empted by the COVID-19 pandemic, so the roundtables were held over Google Meets. Participants had the options to either participate through Google Meets or phone in to the roundtables. All roundtables had a moderator, a member of the City's planning team and a member of the Homeward Trust executive team in order to answer questions from participants and record any concerns to be addressed at a later date.

Following Phase 2, a one-page summary of feedback was developed, capturing the major themes heard in all input. The summary was posted publicly and shared with participants.

- **Phase 3 (August 26th - September 24th, 2020):** This phase was originally envisioned as two larger-scale public, in-person events. As this was determined to be unsafe and inadvisable in the current health conditions, the third phase was converted to be hosted on Engaged Edmonton, which allowed participants to access surveys, ask specific questions, and connect into the separate zoning change engagement process. The Engaged Edmonton platform was advertised through the Engaged Edmonton page, community stakeholders, social media ads, as well as through multiple reminders through the participant email list.

Phase three also included two comprehensive livestream information sessions featuring representatives from Homeward Trust, the Edmonton Police Service, and a supportive housing service provider. The panelists answered questions from viewers that were submitted in advance, as well as questions that were received through the supportive housing email during the livestream. Each livestream lasted approximately two hours, covering more than 65 separate questions, all of which were linked and time code for easy access and sorting from participants that did not attend the live session. The live sessions were recorded and posted on the City of Edmonton's Youtube channel and the [supportive housing website](#).

The livestream sessions provided information to support a survey through Engaged Edmonton which asked respondents to share their opinions on the development generally, as well as features of the design and the proposed Good Neighbour Plan. This phase also included a large update to the City of Edmonton supportive housing resource websites based on information that participants had specifically requested in Phase II. This included additional FAQs and anonymized stories from people living in supportive housing.

## City of Edmonton Engagement Spectrum



The community was asked to participate in the engagement process in an **advisory** capacity - inviting participants to share feedback and perspectives considered for policies, programs, projects, or services.

## Principles of Engagement

The principles of this engagement were set in early in the process.

The project team talked to community resources, reviewed similar engagements, reports on supportive housing in Edmonton and other communities and talked to team members at Homeward Trust. As well, the project team visited several supportive housing facilities throughout Edmonton and met with current residents, heard their stories and learned about what supportive housing has meant for their lives. Those interviews and all research provided vital insights that informed our communications approach. The anonymized stories of four of the residents are included in [Appendix A](#).

Those interviews, balanced with the anticipated needs of community members in the engagement phase, led our team to approach this engagement with the following principles in mind:

- Community members should have the opportunity to participate in an inclusive, accessible, timely and meaningful dialogue, sharing their perspectives and having their questions answered.
- Community members should be given the opportunity to express their perspectives - whether that is opposition, support or some other position - through multiple communication modes.
- Community members should be given the opportunity to consider the development as more than physical infrastructure, to understand, to the extent possible, the impact the programming of supportive housing will have for future residents.



These principles manifested throughout our process, including our communications messaging, the communication methods utilized, and the nature of the questions asked in our engagement sessions.

## Communication Methods

The project team employed the following techniques to contact community members and collect input throughout this project:

### PHASE 1

- Targeted emails
- Targeted phone calls/meetings

### PHASE 2

- Mailed flyer to homes and businesses within a 200m radius of the site (this is more than three times the required development permit notice radius)
- Geo-targeted social media advertising
- Advertising through community league social media
- Information sharing with Community Leagues and other community associations
- Additional letters sent to homes directly adjacent to the development site
- Online mailing list sign-up
- [Supportivehousing@edmonton.ca](mailto:Supportivehousing@edmonton.ca) email responses
- Direct telephone interviews when requested

### PHASE 3

- On-site signage
- Community video
- Mailed letter to homes and businesses within a 200m radius of the site (three times the required development permit notice radius)
- Advertising through Community League social media and newsletters
- Targeted social media advertising
- Online mailing list sign up
- [Supportivehousing@edmonton.ca](mailto:Supportivehousing@edmonton.ca) email responses and Engaged Edmonton responses

## What The Engagement Asked

Each engagement phase had its own questions and purposes as part of the overall engagement plan. However, the overall goal of the entire engagement design was to understand general feedback on supportive housing within the community; listen to specific input around what participants expected in a Good Neighbour Plan; and ideas around potential building design for development.

### PHASE 1: STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

- What are your thoughts about the proposal generally?
- What are your thoughts about the site selection?
- How do you think your community will react to this proposal?
- Who specifically in the community do you think we should talk to about this proposal (including those who are opposed that we should speak with)?
- Are there any formal or informal groups in the community that we might not be aware of that you feel we should connect with?

### PHASE 2: ROUNDTABLES

Roundtables tended to follow a loose format defined largely by participants' answers to the first question (How do you feel about this proposal generally?). Following that, the roundtables would use the following questions as prompts for input:

- In order to create and maintain a positive and productive relationship between the residents and staff of the supportive housing and the community, what needs to be in a Good Neighbour Plan?
- What are your initial thoughts on the building and the design?
- Do you have anything else you'd like to add?

### PHASE 2: SURVEY

- What is your postal code?
- New supportive housing developments are being proposed in four different communities: Inglewood, King Edward Park, Terrace Heights and Wellington. Which of those communities do you currently reside or operate a business within?
- Do you feel you understand what supportive housing is?
- How can this development be successfully integrated into your community?
- Are there any potential impacts that concern you about this development?
- What additional information would you like the City to provide to you around this specific development or supportive housing in general?
- Do you have any concerns or questions that you would like the City to answer about the proposed development?

- Do you have any additional questions or comments that you'd like to share?
- Demographic questions (age range, gender, relationship to community)

### PHASE 3: ENGAGED EDMONTON SURVEY

- Sorting Questions:
  - Which supportive housing development do you want to comment on?
  - How would you describe your relationship to this neighbourhood?
- Ranking Community Themes:
  - Based on the summary of Phase 2 for your community please rank the following themes from most important to not important.
  - Tell us more about your selections. Is there anything important that we need to know about your selections or your perspective on one of the themes?
  - Is there anything you believe needs to be added to the list of themes? Tell us why they are important to you.
- Input for a Potential Good Neighbour Plan:
  - Please review the following elements of a Good Neighbour Plan, and think about them in the context of your community. How important it is to include the following elements in the Good Neighbour Plan for your community?
  - Tell us more about your selections above [Good Neighbour Plan elements]. Is there anything important that we need to know about your selections?
  - Are there any elements of the Good Neighbour Plan that you do not have confidence in? If not, please explain.
  - Is there anything else you would want the operator of the potential supportive housing site to know about your community?
- Building Design Considerations:
  - From your perspective as a community member, what should the designer/architect keep in mind when finalizing the look and feel of the building?
- Final Question:
  - Is there anything else you would like to add?
- Demographic Questions

## Engagement Metrics

- Meetings with the **King Edward Park Community League**, local **organizations** and members of the **faith community**.
- **4 roundtable sessions**, with **23 registered participants total**. Sessions ran for roughly an hour and a half based on the number of questions and participants.
- **356 responses** across two surveys.
- **898 responses to open-ended questions** written by King Edward Park participants and reviewed by the project team.
- **910 passive views on the livestream Q&A sessions** across all communities with proposed supportive housing developments (watching after the stream ended). Assuming roughly equal viewership from each of the four communities, that would mean roughly 240 individuals in each community watched the livestream.
- **At least 227 separate participants** (derived from submitted postal code data).

*Note: This is the minimum number of identifiable individuals who participated. It does not account for multiple entries at multi-family dwellings at a single postal code. While responses from the same postal code, either an individual or multi-unit dwelling, were not counted towards the total number of participants provided here, all responses, regardless of postal code, were read and included in the information regarding feedback received.*



## Engagement Input Summary

After collecting the input of participants over the course of two surveys, roundtable focus groups, interviews, information sessions, many emails and a review of social media comments, a summary of themes for the engagement are presented here.

### SECTION 1 - General Reflections

In addition to the specific community input that was gathered, there are a number of general reflections from the engagement process that are worth noting. The purpose of these reflections is to contextualize feedback and support future supportive housing engagement processes.

#### INFORMATION AROUND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Ongoing information about supportive housing is important. While a significant amount of the communication effort in these engagements went into defining supportive housing and answering questions posed by the community, there is still a need to persistently communicate what supportive housing is and is not, and what its intended impacts are. There is significant discussion in the public sphere around issues of housing and homelessness, and the spectrum of solutions can sometimes be unclear for residents and citizens who are not deeply embedded in these issues. Supportive housing is also defined differently in different cities, which adds to the confusion when trying to understand how it has worked in other jurisdictions.

Most participants, through no fault of their own, do not have access to a practical frame of reference for a properly run supportive housing development. It will be incumbent on the City of Edmonton to ensure that practical and evidence-based information about supportive housing be collected and synthesized as future developments are proposed across the City of Edmonton in future years.

### **ATTENTION TO ADDRESSING PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME AND SAFETY**

Generally, the most prevalent concern about the proposed developments expressed by community members was an impact on crime and safety. In some cases, this stemmed from longstanding concerns about safety and crime in their community, which they feared would worsen as a result of the building. In other cases, concerns related to fear of the unknown or were derived from prolonged previous experience with an unrelated privately-owned problem property.

In response to these concerns, the City of Edmonton stated that it does not have evidence to suggest that supportive housing increases crime and, in fact, supportive housing has proven to reduce residents' interactions with police. The City has also studied the impact of non-market housing on the safety of five core neighbourhoods and found there was no correlation between crime and non-market housing.

### **ENGAGEMENT CONCERNS**

One concern that arose from some community members was around the timeline of approvals and engagement on these supportive housing projects. In order to provide the most comprehensive information to the community as possible, including information about operational standards, it was the City's intent to have the developer directly participate in the engagement process. The City planned for Homeward Trust's involvement in public engagement to commence once Council approved the sale of the project land to Homeward Trust. This approval confirmed Homeward Trust's position as the proponent/developer.

However, for many participants in the community, the approval of the land sale prior to the development being presented to the community for engagement and feedback gave the impression that decisions were already made. While this engagement process worked to emphasize that City Council required public engagement as a condition of the land sale and has decision making authority when it comes to the rezoning of the lot, some community members continue to feel that the process as it stands does not create the engagement and community involvement opportunities they expect.

### **NEIGHBOURHOOD EQUITY**

A piece of feedback that emerged in the public engagement was regarding a sense of inequity between communities in terms of the placement of non-market housing across the City. There was an expressed sense from a number of participants that there were some communities in Edmonton that would not be considered for this type of development.

Our team made an effort to share information about the ratio of non-market housing in the community, and to describe Council's intention to create more supportive housing units in communities throughout the city. For future supportive housing developments, City Council and Administration may want to consider how best to communicate with communities around the intention to build supportive housing throughout the city.

## SECTION 2 - Community Summary

This section is a What We Heard summary with three parts:

### PART I: Overall Reactions and Input from the Community

The general themes and reflections arising from all the consolidated input, in order of priority, as dictated by the community.

### PART II: Good Neighbour Plan Priorities

The Good Neighbour Plan builds and sustains a neighbourly relationship with the supportive housing site in a community. It is a public, written document, accessible to members of the community. The Good Neighbour Plan outlines the shared responsibility between Homeward Trust, the contracted community service agencies that will run the sites, and the community to have positive neighborhood relationships.

Respondents to the Engaged Edmonton survey were given information about the purpose and contents of a Good Neighbour Plan, and were subsequently asked to evaluate the importance of different elements of the Good Neighbour Plan. These insights helped the project team, and Homeward Trust as the developer, better understand the concerns and feedback of the community as it relates to creating a collaborative relationship with the housing provider.

Respondents were also asked to provide rankings and comments about the elements of a Good Neighbour Plan they felt they would not have confidence in, and to provide comments on what they would like the operator to know about the community prior to the development of housing at the site.

### *Good Neighbour Plan Components*

Respondents were provided with the following background information about the Good Neighbour Plans for context:

A Good Neighbour Plan is built on the following elements:

- **Program Description** - This will describe how support will be provided to the residents of this supportive housing site as well as information about the service operator.

- **Stakeholders & Engagement Channels** - This will be the supportive housing site's documented plan for proactive communication and relationship building within the community. A basic, but not exhaustive list, of stakeholders in a community will include:
  - Community league(s)
  - Business associations and/or collaborative community groups
  - Edmonton Police Service and emergency services
  - Neighbours and community residents
  - Key partner agencies or services that will regularly visit the site
- **Reporting** - The specific way and frequency that the site will report to the community on the progress of the Good Neighbour Plan.
- **Community Commitments** - These are the specific commitments that the site operator and the community make to be good neighbours.
  - **Residents** know what is in a Good Neighbour Plan and understand what it means to be a good neighbour.
  - The **supportive housing service operator's** commitment to being a good neighbour includes:
    - Providing support to residents to be part of the community.
    - Providing simple and direct access to resident grievance processes.
  - **Community members, businesses, and local organizations' commitment** to being a good neighbour involves:
    - Recognizing that the supportive housing site is a permanent home to its residents, and that they have the same rights to housing, safety, security and participation in community life as all other residents.
- **Property Management Standards** - A Good Neighbour Plan sets out standards for the cleanliness and aesthetics of the site and to ensure safety and security at the supportive housing site, as well as a process to ensure these standards are maintained.
- **Issue Resolution and Grievance Processes** - An established and clear process by which the community and the supportive housing site can work together to resolve urgent and non-urgent concerns, and escalate to formal grievances if required.



### **PART III: Building Design Considerations**

In the Engaged Edmonton survey and the roundtable meetings, participants had the opportunity to review the massing models and early artistic renderings to provide their feedback on the building design, with the caveat that these images are artistic renderings only, were not considered final and might be altered before construction.

We asked respondents:

*“From your perspective as a community member, what should the designer/architect keep in mind when finalizing the look and feel of the building?”*

The development team indicated early in the engagement planning process that they were interested in hearing feedback from the community on design. A well-designed building will help the community and the future residents feel at home and comfortable with the new space.



## Community Summary

### PART I: Overall Reactions and Input from the Community

Engagement participants in King Edward Park, through surveys, roundtables, emails and phone calls, were generally more supportive than not about this proposed development, although there were also some community members that did not feel the development should move forward. Among many participants, there was a common theme of concerns they would like the City of Edmonton and Homeward Trust to address on an on-going basis while the building is operational, including potential safety issues.

The most prominent general themes summarized from all the engagement within King Edward Park, in order of priority, were:

**Ensuring Stable Funding Over Time** - Participants expressed concern and asked questions about the operating funding for the site, and what plans were in place to ensure that funding was maintained over time. There is a general sense that while the City has made a commitment to supportive housing, the ability for the site to live up to its potential as an effective housing solution for those with complex needs is dependent on a long-term operational funding commitment. Some participants even seemed to tie their support for the development to an understanding that it would be funded for the long term.

**Attention to Crime and Safety** - Considerations around crime and safety yielded many comments around the potential development in King Edward Park, whether for or against. Participants felt there were a number of existing crime and safety issues within King Edward Park, particularly around the Mill Creek Ravine and other social disorder associated with Whyte Avenue, and voiced a perception that supportive housing would add to that issue, both directly and indirectly.

A smaller number of participants, particularly in the later survey, argued against that specific perception and felt supportive housing would help to lessen social disorder. In the middle ground, many residents were supportive of the development, but wanted more information about how Homeward Trust and the site operator would manage the site safely, and how the City of Edmonton and police would mitigate any issues. A number of discussions during live sessions and answers in the survey specifically referenced the Good Neighbour Plans as a potential area to explore to find assurances in this area.

**Opportunities for Community Collaboration** - Respondents to the survey and in the roundtable sessions are very interested in opportunities for connection between the residents and staff of the building and the wider community. Many participants felt that a good connection with the Community League and a proactive relationship both from the service provider and community organizations would play an important role in the success of the potential development. Establishing a relationship with the development and any willing residents would help unify the community and bridge a gap of understanding. Some of the specific suggestions included a shared community garden, involvement in Community League activities, or mutual volunteer opportunities.

**Relationship to Similar Organizations** - There were some concerns expressed about how this development would interact with the neighbouring Youth Empowerment and Support Services (YESS), and whether it might have a negative effect on the vulnerable youth who access YESS. During the engagements, some participants felt that the supportive housing residents may not interact favourably with the youth at YESS, or may create issues for the organization. In the course of the engagements, YESS was interviewed directly and expressed support for the supportive housing development, and their team also participated in a round table session.

**Traffic and Parking** - Some respondents were concerned about possible increases to local traffic or street parking, and wanted to see that addressed by the City of Edmonton or Homeward Trust. While some residents felt too much of the potential development was dedicated to parking, others felt that given the City of Edmonton's parking restriction relaxation, that vehicles from staff, visitors and residents may end up parking on already crowded streets within King Edward Park.

**Impact on Property Values** - As a community where the proposed development is directly adjacent to single-family dwellings, many participants wanted more clarity around how their property values may be affected. The City provided data that when supportive housing is well designed and well run, negative impacts on property values generally do not occur according to available research. *Note: This theme was added after reviewing the feedback in the second survey.*

## **PART II: Good Neighbour Plan Priorities**

King Edward Park is a growing community nestled on the eastern side of the Mill Creek Ravine, just adjacent to Whyte Avenue and the Quartier Francophone. King Edward Park has grown in population over the past four years as the neighbourhood has densified.

King Edward Park's Good Neighbour Plan priorities, in order of importance, are:

1. Property Management Standards
2. Community Commitments
3. Feedback Loops and Grievance Processes
4. Program Description
5. Reporting
6. Stakeholders and Engagement Channels

### *Property Management Standards*

King Edward Park respondents to the Engaged Edmonton survey on the Good Neighbour Plan indicated Property Management Standards were their highest priority for the Good Neighbour Plan, with 70% selecting Property Management Standards as very important, and a further 22% selected somewhat important.

### *Community Commitments*

The second highest area of priority for King Edward Park respondents was the concept of Community Commitments, which 65% of respondents indicated was very important, and 24% as somewhat important.

### *Feedback Loops and Grievance Processes*

The third area of priority for King Edward Park respondents within the Good Neighbour Plan was the inclusion of Feedback Loops and a Grievance Process, with 56% indicating this was very important, and 25% indicating it was somewhat important.

The other three themes offered in the Engaged Edmonton survey on the Good Neighbour Plan were also selected as generally of high priority to King Edward Park respondents, with Program Description leading, followed by Reporting and Stakeholders and Engagement Channels.

When asked to contextualize their selections for features of the Good Neighbour Plan, several respondents emphasized that consistent communication from the site service provider to the community would help the Good Neighbour Plan to succeed.

"I would like to know if the operator will keep in touch with neighbours and how they plan to engage with them. Specifically, will there be something like a newsletter, website or possibly an event as time passes, beyond the report."

— King Edward Park respondent

When asked what elements of the Good Neighbour Plan they do not have confidence in, a group of respondents shared concerns about the longevity of funding availability for the development, citing concerns that without long term funding, the building would devolve away from the intended purpose and programming.

"The on-going ability to find funding. The ability to keep the surrounding businesses and houses from feeling a negative impact."

— King Edward Park respondent

### ISSUES FOR THE OPERATOR TO CONSIDER

Within the question of what the site operator should know about the community, a commonly mentioned theme was that the site operator should work to cultivate a respectful relationship with the surrounding community, and that concerns raised by the community should be taken seriously.

"I think this is a diverse and welcoming community, and we are comfortable interacting with all types of people. Because of this, I would like the operator to be aware that this neighbourhood is more tolerant than others, and that when concerns are raised they are considered seriously."

— King Edward Park respondent

Another commonly mentioned theme was around crime and safety. These comments broke out into three different categories: generalized concern, safety for children, and safety of the nearby Mill Creek ravine. Respondents in this category sometimes expressed opposition to the development moving forward on the grounds of a perceived potential for increases to crime in the area, while others were more supportive of the development but wanted the operator to be aware of pre-existing concerns about safety in the community.

"The operator of the supportive housing must be able to control the behavior or movement of the residents in the supporting housing. The safety and well being of the residents in King Edward Park must have the utmost highest priority."

— King Edward Park respondent

“We have a lot of young kids very near the site, and there are a lot of kids playing on bikes in the alleys and yards and sidewalks. We hope the residents will be a part of the community by being respectful of bed time with respect to noise, and making sure the alleys and park are clean and safe.”

— King Edward Park respondent

Other repeated comments in this section expressed generalized opposition to the development and expressed concerns about the proximity of Youth Empowerment and Support Services to the site. Others offered expressions of community support for the development.

### **PART III: Building Design Considerations**

Once again, discussion of the institutional look and feel of the building was the prevailing theme in discussions of the proposed building design. Aside from that topic, there were a number of other themes that arose frequently among participants.



Note: This is an artistic rendering. The design is not final and may be altered prior to construction.

Many respondents in King Edward Park **liked the design of the building**. Several offered suggestions for potential improvements along with their general approbation of the design.

“It’s bright and engaging.”

— King Edward Park respondent

“It’s a nice looking building. My only question is, maybe residents would like bigger windows?”

— King Edward Park respondent

Many community members expressed an interest in seeing a **community garden** incorporated into the supportive housing design in some way, or the creation of some **protected green spaces** in the design.

*"I hope there will be space for a community garden there like there was before, how wonderful for residents to be able to grow their own vegetables."*

— King Edward Park respondent

*"Green space that is safe and accessible for residents."*

— King Edward Park respondent

Several participants also expressed concerns about the height of the building, and felt the design would be improved by removing one or more storey from the proposed design.

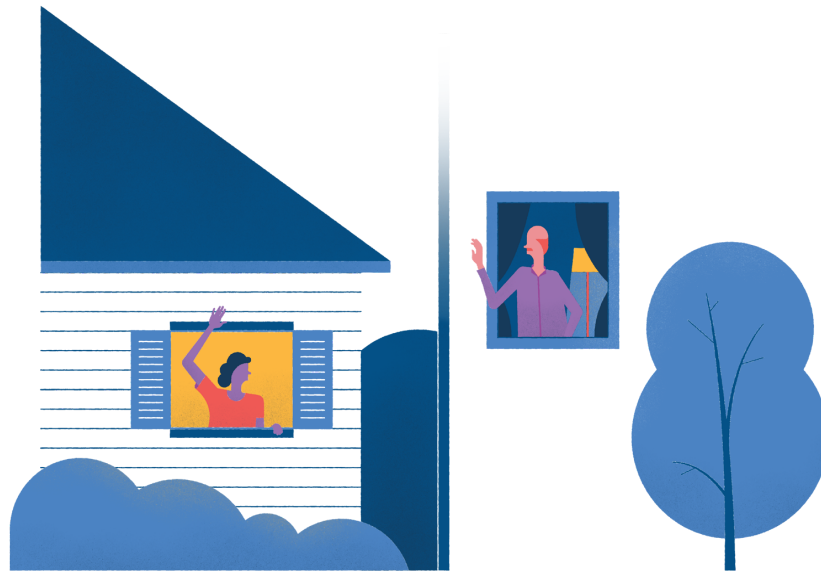
*"Building is too tall. Should blend in with residential housing height."*

— King Edward Park respondent

Other design considerations that emerged in the Engaged Edmonton feedback from King Edward Park community members included:

- Add more windows;
- Opposition to the construction of supportive housing on this site;
- Ensure the building is designed with ease of maintenance in mind;
- Minimize impacts on nearby residents;
- Feeling that the proposed size is appropriate;
- Ensure the building is kept clean and there are adequate garbage facilities;
- Avoid wood frame construction;
- Use sustainable building practices;
- Add a sidewalk along 93 Street;
- Use high quality materials;
- Add a rooftop patio;
- Add balconies;
- Avoid impeding views or access to the ravine;
- Create fencing or a natural barrier around the site;
- Add more outdoor seating for supportive housing residents;
- Orient the entrance towards Whyte Avenue;
- Move the parking to the front of the building;
- Ensure the building design follows Crime Prevention through Environmental design standards;
- Create a greater setback from the shared use path;
- Make the building family friendly;
- Allow future residents of the supportive housing to have a say in the design;
- Add more parking;
- Add bike storage;
- Design should discourage non-residents from congregating on-site;
- and
- Incorporate a commercial space into the design.





## Next Steps

With the engagement process complete in all four neighbourhoods, this report now serves as advice and input to City Council, City Administration, Homeward Trust and the service providers of any potential resulting development.

## Proposed Zoning Changes

This report has been provided to the City of Edmonton's Affordable Housing and Homelessness section and to Homeward Trust as a record of this engagement. Separate reports have been developed by the City's Planning Coordination team for consideration as rezoning on the three of the four sites (Inglewood already meets the zoning requirements) goes forward to City Council on December 8, 2020.

## Development of a Good Neighbour Plan & Building Design

Following any potential rezoning decisions, this report will act as an important input into the development of the Good Neighbour Plan for the community, as well as strong advice for the architect and design teams when developing the proposed building itself. This report will also act as active advice for any service providers serving the potential four developments, helping to guide their proactive communication and outreach with the community, as well as understanding the most important issues within the community— something that will be essential for building the foundation of a great relationship.



### **Providing the Report to the Public**

As well, the vital contributions of the public need to be recognized in this report. Community members and Edmontonians across the city as a whole provided thoughtful, passionate and very direct feedback in high volumes on these proposed developments, and on the broader topic of supportive housing. This report reflects a set of communities that care deeply about the evolution of their neighbourhood as well as their neighbours. As a public document, this report will be made available to all Edmontonians, the four communities the engagement took place in, will be directly distributed to participants who requested updates, as well as to the relevant Community Leagues.

On behalf of the supportive housing project team, thank you for participating and thank you for reading.

## Appendix A

### Resident Stories

#### *What is it like to live in supportive housing?*

Throughout our engagements, many people wanted to know more about the experiences of people who have lived in supportive housing. We have collected some stories from a group of people living in four different supportive housing developments. Names have been changed to protect people's privacy, but no other details have been changed.

#### *Harris*

Harris grew up in New Brunswick, but moved to Alberta to work in a machine shop around 30 years ago. In 2001, he lost his job, and with few connections and resources, he found himself homeless shortly thereafter. He spent almost 7 years living in encampments in the river valley and struggling with addiction.

In 2014, Pathways to Housing program staff met Harris and helped him access a place in supportive housing. He has experienced significant health challenges in recent years and has lost much of his mobility, but the supports and access to medical care available in supportive housing keep him comfortable.

It took awhile for Harris to adjust to living in housing. After so many years sleeping outside and being constantly on alert, he struggled to feel secure in his apartment, and for the first year he always kept his things in a backpack by the door, afraid he'd be forced to leave. But in the five years he's lived in supportive housing, he's become adjusted, and likes the security of knowing he'll have a safe place to sleep at night.

Harris describes himself as a private person, but he enjoys the camaraderie of supportive housing, and having a place where he can put his things and enjoy some privacy. Because of his disability, he doesn't go out much, but he likes to drink coffee from his favourite mug and watch black and white movies with other residents during the day, particularly Westerns. He's also developed an interest in gardening and is looking after many plants in his apartment.

In terms of services, Harris gets help with accessing disability-friendly transportation when he needs to travel, grocery shopping, managing his AISH cheques, and taking his medication. He is still in recovery from drug use, but he is able to access weekly group therapy sessions to talk about addictions and recovery, and he makes use of the treatment programs that are available through the housing and medical staff.

When asked what he wishes people outside of supportive housing knew about this type of facility, Harris said he would want people to understand that residents are just trying to get help, and that the dignity and safety they get from being housed is really important. For the future, he plans to continue living in supportive housing and getting treatment for his health issues and addiction.

### *Darren*

Darren is 24 years old. He lives with Fetal-Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), but he didn't get an FASD diagnosis until he was an adult. In the past, he had a hard time maintaining independent housing or living with family. He became connected with supportive housing through his social worker. While he has never been homeless, his worker felt he would benefit from the structure, support and community of supportive housing. His rent in supportive housing is paid through his AISH payments.

Darren has been living in supportive housing for three years. For most of that time, he's lived with his roommate Eric, who has become a good friend, and together they have a cat. On a regular day, Darren likes to visit the gym and the nearby library, and volunteers with a local community youth organization, where he is working with the staff to develop an anti-bullying program. He has previously worked part-time in retail positions when seasonal work was available; now he is working on building his resume with the help of the supportive housing staff.

Darren said that moving into supportive housing has been "liberating" for him. He has people to help him manage his emotions and day to day tasks when he needs support. He has found a small community of people who understand his experience with FASD. Darren said that in his life, he's found that "there are times in life when yourself isn't enough, and sometimes it's as simple as having someone there to help." That help has allowed him to maintain housing and develop independence.

For the future, Darren is hoping to get his anti-bullying program off the ground. He would like to enroll in school to finish his GED through Norquest and eventually hopes to become a social worker so he can give back the support he has received. While he doesn't see himself moving out of supportive housing soon, he is hopeful that eventually he will feel secure and prepared enough to manage living on his own when he is ready.

### *Leslie*

Leslie left home in northern Saskatchewan when he was 13 years old — more than 50 years ago now. He had 50 cents in his pocket when he left, but he also took with him a knowledge of Cree and a strong respect for Indigenous ceremony. He struggled with addiction over the next several decades, travelling across Canada and falling in and out of sobriety.

Around four years ago, he was diagnosed with cancer and received treatment in Red Deer. He lost the ability to walk, and was not expected to live, but he worked every day to walk again and reconnect with Indigenous ceremony. In the midst of his cancer recovery, he was invited by an Indigenous elder to come live in a supportive housing facility in Edmonton that is centered around Indigenous culture and traditions.

For Leslie, the biggest impact of supportive housing has been that it has given him hope. He told us that “a little bit of hope can break a cycle”, and that the feeling of safety and stability he’s found in housing has been critical to his health recovery. The staff and residents participate in ceremony together, and that process has helped Leslie to gain a stronger sense of hope and self-worth, to ground himself in the community, and to take on a leadership role within the housing facility. Today, he has regained his mobility and is cancer-free.

As he ages, and after experiencing significant health challenges, one of the things that Leslie thinks about in his supportive housing is death with dignity. In supportive housing, he’s seen other residents pass away, from old age or from illness, but they’ve been surrounded by staff and friends who help them pass comfortably and with dignity, and in some cases have helped them to reconnect with family before passing. Leslie said that this kind of dignity and respect isn’t available for people who pass away while living on the streets.

Today, Leslie is an active part of his community. He goes to garage sales and community events, and sells his painting, rattles and drums at craft sales in the area. He wants to continue staying in supportive housing and building the connections he has made with staff, other residents, and with his family.

### *Steven*

Years ago, Steven was working in Halifax for the federal government. He had a family and a job, but he was also living with undiagnosed and untreated schizophrenia and depression. When he started to struggle, he lost his job, and things progressively fell apart. For years afterwards, Steven was homeless and worked as a general labourer on construction sites across Canada, including in Edmonton.

Steven said it was particularly difficult to be homeless in Edmonton. He got into trouble with police for loitering in transit shelters to stay warm, and once got gangrene from untreated frostbite. Throughout all of this, Steven’s schizophrenia went undiagnosed, making it difficult for him to access the services he would need to get on his feet.

Eventually, the police who picked Steven up for loitering asked for a psychiatric evaluation, at which point he received a diagnosis and was placed in a medical facility, where he received treatment for a year and a half.

Steven was then referred to a supportive housing facility focused on individuals living with schizophrenia. Steven described supportive housing as “a stable, predictable environment,” which has been important for his mental wellbeing over the past four years. The community provides him with a good balance between socialization and privacy — he can go to his apartment when he feels overwhelmed or spend time with other residents in the common areas when he wants the company.

Steven likes the concerts and events that the staff sometimes host in the building for residents and the surrounding community, but other than that he doesn’t like to go out very much. He told us he doesn’t like to draw attention to himself. Sometimes he likes to go for walks or even occasionally make interesting purchases at Value Village.

For the future, Steven is hoping to stay in supportive housing. The help he receives in supportive housing, like medication management, assistance in managing his finances, and social support is important to him, and to maintaining a good quality of life.

When asked what he would like people outside of supportive housing to know about his experience, Steven said that while he knows his life story and day-to-day life might not be the same as a typical person, he feels safe and comfortable after many years of struggle, and is happy where he is.