

Timeline of Affordable Housing Public Engagement Activities

This attachment summarizes the history of City public engagement activities focused on gathering input and feedback related to locational priorities for affordable housing.

Stakeholder input was primarily provided through three initiatives: focus group sessions related to the non-market housing investment pause, neighbourhood meetings for Realizing Housing Potential, and an online survey for the Affordable Housing Strategy.

Background

In 2009, some community members began to raise concerns over high ratios of low-cost housing (both market and non-market) in their neighbourhoods. Specific concerns were expressed within the inner city over the condition of existing market housing, the presence of derelict buildings and vacant lots, ratios of non-market housing, and the location and operation of emergency shelters.

In 2012, in response to these concerns, City Council approved the non-market housing investment pause in five neighbourhoods: Alberta Avenue, Central McDougall, Eastwood, McCauley, and Queen Mary Park. During the term of the pause, the City agreed not to fund any affordable housing projects in these five neighbourhoods. As of 2018, the pause remains in effect.

Timeline

Stakeholder engagement has been an important component of the non-market housing investment pause project. Since 2009, stakeholders and residents have attended group meetings, neighbourhood workshops, and open houses to discuss issues in the five “pause” neighbourhoods. There remain very diverse perspectives among stakeholders. This attachment provides an overview of the engagement activities completed.

2010

April 2010: Administration identified 13 high stressed neighbourhoods and proposed a city-wide “flexible cap protocol”. The 13 High Threshold (distressed) Neighbourhoods had a total poverty of 40 percent or more or 26 percent or more of family poverty. Administration presented three policy options, each of which could be implemented on a city-wide or a neighbourhood-specific basis. Administration recommended an incentive-based flexible cap of the three options. The flexible cap limited additional funding commitments for non-market housing in the 13 High Threshold Neighbourhoods unless actively supported by an inclusive stakeholder body or unless the proposed funding commitments were included in the list of exemptions (eg. council approved initiatives, housing first,

secondary suites, rent supplements). It also suggested a target of 10 percent incidence of non-market housing in the 266 Low Threshold Neighbourhoods. Administration organized focus groups with key neighbourhood representatives, including community members. Engagement conversations regarding a “cap” elicited a range of opinions, from very strong support to concerns that it would hinder efforts to address root causes, including homelessness and the need to improve access to affordable housing.

2011

Summer 2011: Administration consulted with six neighbourhoods (Alberta Avenue, Boyle Street, Central McDougall, Eastwood, McCauley, and Queen Mary Park) to identify neighbourhood-specific direction for future public investment in non-market housing.

2012

Early 2012: Administration organized focus group sessions with the same six neighbourhoods to identify neighbourhood-specific direction for City housing and revitalization initiatives, including the non-market housing funding pause.

October 2012: A non-market housing investment pause for five neighbourhoods was approved by City Council.

2014

September 2014: The City hosted a series of housing meetings in each of the five neighbourhoods, under the Realizing Housing Potential initiative. These meetings explored housing needs and opportunities within each of the neighbourhoods. The meetings were followed by the opportunity for stakeholders to submit input through an online workbook.

Throughout 2014, Administration also conducted 32 focus groups and small-group meetings with community leagues, housing agencies, community revitalization committees and other resident groups, as well as eight neighbourhood meetings. More than 400 residents and stakeholders participated in these engagement activities.

2015

In early 2015, Administration completed engagement activities that supported the development of the City of Edmonton Affordable Housing Strategy. Through several focus group sessions, key stakeholders from the housing sector provided feedback regarding geographic priorities for housing. In addition, members of the public provided feedback through an online survey. Stakeholder responses were generally supportive of a city-wide approach to locating affordable housing; however, several stakeholders suggested that all new projects should be located in the central area. Other stakeholders suggested that decisions should be made

based on direct input from low-income households and current affordable housing tenants.

May and June 2015: Community leagues from the five “pause” neighbourhoods and members of the Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness were invited to participate in focus groups.

2016

Early January 2016: Administration completed additional engagement activities, including online surveys and in-person meetings, to seek input on potential exemptions to the funding pause. The findings from these activities were consistent with previous results: there were a variety of perspectives on exemptions.

2017

In spring 2017, Administration met with representatives from the major housing organizations in Edmonton, including Capital Region Housing, homeEd, Greater Edmonton Foundation, Homeward Trust, and Habitat for Humanity. The conversation focuses on the concept of establishing a city-wide affordable housing target. Amongst these stakeholders, there was general support for establishing the target.