

Affordable Housing Public Information Campaign Proposal

Communications and Engagement



The objective of this proposal is to outline a strategic approach for an approximately five year marketing and communications initiative for the City of Edmonton's Affordable Housing work. This proposal considers key factors in the development of a marketing strategy including research, a phased strategic approach, project risks, and resourcing requirements.

PROJECT GOAL

It is generally understood that diversity of housing choices, including the availability of affordable housing, is a core feature of healthy, resilient, and complete communities. In addition to affordable housing being a key element of social justice in society, research has shown affordable housing to be a highly effective pathway out of poverty and a major contributor to ending homelessness. A compelling and consistent narrative is needed to engage communities and decision makers around the importance of affordable housing in planning complete, resilient, and diverse communities in the context of broader healthy community planning.

Attitudinal shifts take time; a long-range approach to a consistently messaged conversation about Edmonton's shared values and aspirations is needed. The majority of Edmontonians believe that every person has the right to a safe and secure home, but persistent myths and assumptions about the impacts of affordable housing prevent them from supporting projects in their own neighbourhoods.

The goal for this strategy is to shift negative attitudes and behaviours related to affordable housing by bridging existing values with the facts and particularly the benefits of affordable housing. This marketing strategy will:

- Increase understanding of the City's priority on affordable housing and the benefits of affordable housing to communities and the future of our city
- Decrease negative perceptions (correct misperceptions) and increase neutral and positive perceptions of affordable housing
- Provide a framework and consistent messaging for communications that can be used by all community stakeholders
- Increase demonstrations of support for affordable housing and amplify the voices of those who are supportive

STRATEGIC APPROACH

The conversation about affordable housing needs to be about what we want for our city and communities – not just about a building project in a particular neighbourhood. This issue isn't about *housing* for poor people; it's about *homes* for everyone in our community. We have to tell a new story and be willing to allow the narrative about our collective aspirations for the community to become more intimate.

The strategy will include a targeted campaign to build awareness of the City's priority on affordable housing and begin to dispel the myths. Neighbourhood-focused initiatives that support and enhance collaborative engagement will reinforce the awareness and build support at the community level.

Research & Local Insight

The marketing strategy will rely on citizen research and insights gathered from community organizations and experts on affordable housing. The research will identify the unique concerns of Edmontonians, the barriers to acceptance and the specific benefits that could be used to further understanding of the City's priority on affordable housing and shift attitudes around affordable housing across the city. Research will include a survey of the attitudinal and demographic characteristics of both proponents and opponents of affordable housing. Existing research and learning will be leveraged from the City's related initiatives including the Cornerstone program and Evolving Infill. Local community experts will be interviewed to draw from their expertise and experience. The research will support the development of key messages for various audiences to be used across the marketing, advocacy and engagement processes.

Coordination & Collaboration

The marketing strategy will support the development of the public engagement toolkit with research, key messages, and advice on methods of connecting with various audiences, including residents, community groups, housing providers, and other key stakeholders. Marketing will also support the development and implementation of public engagement plans as they are implemented for various projects.

By building partnerships and relationships with key stakeholders, Marketing will engage them in amplifying the positive messaging related to affordable housing, bringing additional scale to the City's marketing initiatives. These key relationships will ensure that partners and stakeholders throughout the affordable housing industry are speaking with one voice.

Key stakeholders include (but are not limited to):

- Homeward Trust
- Capital Region Housing Corporation
- Capital Region Interfaith Housing Initiative
- Metis Capital Housing Corporation
- HomeEd
- Greater Edmonton Foundation
- Right at Home Housing Society
- Habitat for Humanity
- Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness
- Alberta Seniors Communities & Housing Association
- End Poverty Edmonton
- Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues

Community Activation

This approach will focus on supporting neighbourhoods as they prepare for new affordable housing developments in their area. Through coalition building with key community influencers and local residents, this approach will assist Administration and housing providers to address Edmontonians' specific concerns about affordable housing unique to their neighbourhood and raise awareness of the benefits that will arise from increased affordable housing in these communities.

Ultimately, these community activation strategies will help to build a coalition of supporters at the community level and motivate them to demonstrate their support, building momentum around acceptance of affordable housing developments - similar to the support demonstrated for the [North Glenora Townhomes](#) project.

PROPOSED PROJECT PHASES

Phase 1 - Research

- Conduct research to identify perceived barriers and benefits to affordable housing
- Develop understanding and knowledge related to market segments, demographics, psychographics, and community influencers
- Develop benchmarks to track effectiveness of 4-year initiative

Phase 2 - Education/Awareness & Stakeholder Engagement

- Based on research, establish message platform, defined target markets, and marketing channels for education and awareness initiatives
- Engage key stakeholders and influencers in development and use of messaging and toolkit
- Grow and scale marketing efforts through relationship building

Phase 3 - Neighbourhood-Focused Education & Community Activation

- Execute marketing related to myths and benefits customized to individual neighbourhoods
- Create opportunities for communities and citizens to demonstrate their readiness and acceptance of affordable housing

Phase 4 - Measurement & Evaluation

- Conduct evaluation of Phase 2 & 3 activities
- Ensure ongoing evaluation and improvement
- Measure effectiveness against Phase 1 benchmarks

RISK MANAGEMENT

The table below outlines the key risks that have been identified related to the implementation of this marketing strategy, including recommendations for how these risks can be best mitigated.

Potential Risk	Mitigation
Budget and resourcing – insufficient funds to action all required activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximizing centralized marketing & communications resources and cross-promotional opportunities Prioritization of key activities for maximum impact Collaboration with community groups and stakeholders and leveraging research and expertise
Lack of buy-in and support of key stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment with Council initiatives and priorities Clear communication of strategic plan to stakeholders Co-create and distribute engagement toolkit to key stakeholders Clear delineation of roles and responsibilities Tracking, monitoring and reporting of results over time to demonstrate the impact of marketing, communications and engagement activities
Negative Media Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactive media engagement Establish clear communication channels between Council and other key stakeholders and marketing partners Use influencers and community partners to engage media with positive news stories

RESOURCES REQUIRED

Budget

Best practices suggest that a long-term, sustained approach is required for this initiative, as short-term or low-profile campaigns are not effective in shifting public perceptions. The proposed approach would be implemented over the course of approximately five years through four overlapping phases and would require a budget of \$1,860,000 excluding City staff time. \$380,000 of this budget can be funded through existing funding, and an additional \$1,480,000 will be requested through the 2019-2022 Operating Budget.

Project Phases	Budget Required
Phase 1: Research Q3 2018	\$80,000
Phase 2: Education/awareness Q4 2018 - Q4 2022	\$1.7 million (~\$425,000/yr for 4 yrs)
Phase 3: Community activation Q1 2019 - Q4 2022	
Phase 4: Evaluation Q3 2019 - 2022	\$80,000 (~ \$20,000/yr for 4 years)
Total	\$1.86 million