

INDIGENOUS AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY

RECOMMENDATION

That the June 27, 2022, Community Services report CS00433, be received for information.

Report Purpose

Information Only

Committee is being provided an update and information on the work completed to date to prioritize and incentivize the development of Indigenous-led affordable housing projects in Edmonton.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the February 17, 2021, Community and Public Services Committee meeting, the following motion passed:

That Administration prepare an Indigenous Affordable Housing Strategy in the interests of reconciliation and City Plan goals for a rebuildable, inclusive, and compassionate city. This strategy should include using engagement with Indigenous partners to identify existing gaps, inform program design, and develop targets, and return to Committee with recommendations for programs that aim to prioritize and/or incentivize the development of Indigenous-led affordable housing projects in Edmonton.

Executive Summary

- Administration worked closely with two project consultants (New Moose Consulting and Communitas Group Ltd), an Advisory Committee, and led a robust engagement process, to produce an independent report that identifies 23 recommendations to help the City prioritize and incentivize the development of Indigenous-led affordable housing.
- Administration is supportive of all 23 recommendations and has provided an initial high level analysis for each that includes the current state of related work, planned actions and proposed timelines for implementation and to account for any limitations the City may have to implement in terms of authority or resources.

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- Administration will begin implementation immediately for any planned actions that can be undertaken within existing capacity and resource limits. Any funding requests associated with Administration's response to the proposed strategy recommendations may be submitted through future operating budget processes for Council's consideration.

REPORT

Background

While Indigenous people make up five per cent of the overall population in Edmonton, they represent 62 per cent of the population experiencing homelessness. Indigenous people are also overrepresented among those in core housing need. The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation defines core housing need as households living in dwellings considered unsuitable, inadequate or unaffordable, with the median rent for alternative suitable and adequate housing in the community requiring more than 30 per cent of a household's gross income.

Results from the 2016 Edmonton Housing Needs Assessment indicate that there were 24,865 households who identified as Indigenous in Edmonton. Indigenous people were more likely to be renters than any of the other priority groups (14,655 households) in the Housing Needs Assessment. Approximately 57 per cent of Indigenous renter households (8,330 households) living in Edmonton are in core housing need. These figures underscore the need to understand the current state of housing for Indigenous residents in Edmonton.

Administration's scan of Indigenous housing found that there were approximately 929 Indigenous housing units in Edmonton, with organizations seeking funding or land to develop another 132 units. Of these, most were Indigenous owned and operated but there were also some non-Indigenous housing organizations which serve Indigenous populations through partnerships with Indigenous operators or through an intake process that prioritizes Indigenous applicants. Administration's analysis of funding opportunities and work underway in other Canadian municipalities highlighted financial and system barriers for the development of Indigenous-led affordable housing across the country. Challenges included a lack of ongoing operating funding/subsidies, zoning, housing design, tenant regulations and deep systemic racism and discrimination, which can have the effect of preventing the integration of Indigenous housing into existing communities. As a result of these challenges, Indigenous organizations venturing into affordable housing development start at a greater disadvantage than established non-profit housing providers who may not be experiencing these systemic barriers. Administration's research concluded that future action to foster Indigenous-led affordable housing development in Edmonton should be taken in collaboration with Indigenous affordable housing providers and communities.

In recent years, several announcements have been made by other orders of government to fund Indigenous housing, cultural supports, and related issues. Federal Budget 2018 announced:

- \$1.5 billion for distinction-based Indigenous housing strategies that would be delivered by Indigenous Services Canada,

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- \$600 million over three years to support co-development of a First Nations Housing Strategy along with First Nations,
- \$400 million over 10 years to support an Inuit-led housing plan in the Inuit regions of Nunavik, Nunatsiavut, and Inuvialui, and
- \$500 million over 10 years to support the Metis Nation's housing strategy.

In fall 2021, the federal government through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation announced \$724.1 million to expand supports for Indigenous women, children and two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and plus (2SLGBTQQA+) people escaping gender-based violence, as well as for transitional homes (in addition to emergency shelters) across Canada. As part of this, Indigenous Services Canada will invest \$304.1 million over five years and \$96.6 million annually to support the operational costs of new shelters and transitional homes and will expand funding for culturally-relevant violence prevention activities.

Federal Budget 2021 announced a \$1.5 billion expansion of the Rapid Housing Initiative that would be used to build 6,000 affordable homes starting in 2022-23 (Phase 1 announced \$1 billion in 2020 for Rapid Housing Initiative funding; nearly 40 per cent of the approved Phase 1 Rapid Housing Initiative projects are for Indigenous projects).

Federal Budget 2022 committed to \$4.3 billion over seven years to improve and expand Indigenous housing in Canada, which includes \$2.4 billion over five years to support First Nations housing on reserve, \$565 million over five years to support housing in Self-Governing and Modern Treaty Holder First Nations communities, \$845 million over seven years to support housing in Inuit communities and \$190 million over seven years for housing in Metis communities. Budget 2022 also announced \$300 million over five years to co-develop and launch an Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy.

Through their 2022 Budget, the Government of Alberta has committed to engaging with rural stakeholders and Indigenous peoples to inform a new rural economic development plan. In addition, the provincial government has committed a total of \$40.7 million over three years to their Indigenous Housing Capital Program that is focused on increasing the supply of affordable housing units for Indigenous peoples in need through construction (including additions/extensions), purchase and repurpose.

Strategy Development

In response to City Council's direction, in February 2021 Administration initiated pre-engagement work through one-on-one interviews with Indigenous housing providers and other community members. Several key findings emerged including support for the following items:

- Formation of a committee to guide the development of a strategy, composed of Indigenous housing providers in Edmonton.
- Committee member involvement in the selection of a consultant to support the project.
- An action-oriented strategy.

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An Advisory Committee was established, with membership focused on Indigenous owned and operated organizations that deliver housing and support services in Edmonton, including representatives from:

- Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations
- Enoch Cree Nation
- Metis Capital/Urban Housing
- Niginan Housing Ventures
- O'Chiese First Nation
- Paul First Nation
- Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta
- Yellowhead Tribal Council

The Advisory Committee was involved throughout the project, including the selection of the two consultants, New Moose Consulting and Communitas Group Ltd., and with the development of the strategy recommendations.

The subsequent work with the consultants and the Advisory Committee was grounded in the City's commitment to reconciliation, building stronger relationships with and supporting Indigenous people in Edmonton. Intentional efforts were made to ensure that this work was aligned with the City's Indigenous Framework, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls National Inquiry Calls for Justice and would further support the City's Community Safety and Well Being Strategy.

Project Summary Report

The Project Summary Report (Attachment 1) captures the work that was done to produce strategy recommendations and contains a number of key elements:

- Background information on the evolution of the project
- Outline of the project approach
- Overview of relevant literature
- Summary of input received through the engagement sessions
- Recommended strategies

Towards the latter phases, the project consultants took increasing responsibility for executing the engagement exercises and drafting recommendations that meaningfully integrated the input they received to ensure that the resulting recommendations and summary report respected the feedback of the Indigenous voices that participated in the engagement process. The Advisory Committee was also given opportunities throughout the project to weigh in and provide feedback directly to the project team to influence and guide the work and deliverables.

This community-based, or ground-up approach to engagement and the development of strategy recommendations used a series of dialogue sessions at various stages of the project to provide multiple opportunities to contribute to and influence the project and see how feedback was being used. The resulting Project Summary Report has been crafted as independently as possible by the consultants, with direct input from the Advisory Committee and all the participants of the

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project's engagement process, allowing Administration to consider and respond to the proposed strategy recommendations.

Strategy Recommendations

The Project Summary Report identified 23 recommendations across seven different categories. Upon review and consideration of all of the proposed recommendations, Administration is supportive of all 23 recommendations and has provided an initial high level analysis for each of them that includes the current state of related work, planned actions, and proposed timelines for implementation (Attachment 2). In some cases, Administration has proposed alternative actions to the recommendation to meet the intent of the recommendation more effectively or appropriately, and to account for any limitations the City may have to implement in terms of authority or resources.

At a high-level, the recommendations are grouped into the following categories:

- City Policies and Processes - recommendations for supporting Indigenous non-profit housing providers through activities such as: property tax exemptions, a rebate program for permit fees and utility hookup costs, the creation of an affordable housing stream in the development permitting/licencing process and allocation of a dedicated Indigenous housing liaison position within Administration.
- Intergovernmental Cooperation - recommendations for advocating for funding and greater collaboration from other levels of government, the creation of rent subsidy programs for Indigenous tenants, changes to Residential Tenancies legislation and the development of an Indigenous homeowners program to enable low-income Indigenous homeowners to maintain and adapt their homes.
- Funding/Financing - recommendations for collaborating or providing adequate resources for the development of:
 - A dedicated funding stream for Indigenous affordable housing
 - Potential innovative financing arrangements (eg. social bonds)
- Collaboration & Coordination - recommendations for facilitating the development of a new inclusive and adequately resourced Indigenous-led organization focused on housing in Edmonton, providing mentorship opportunities, partnering to undertake further research in the area of Indigenous housing in Edmonton and ensuring the inclusion of the diversity of Indigenous cultures and identities.
- Public Education & Communication - recommendations for the creation of better communication tools to increase understanding of housing processes, supports and public education on racism/discrimination/stereotyping in the housing sector.
- Relational Partnerships - recommendations for enabling the development of working relationships and creating opportunities for networking between the various sector actors.

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- Ethical, Reliable & Accurate Data - recommendations for undertaking a housing needs assessment and ensuring Indigenous specific data is available and is collected ethically.

Next Steps

Administration recognizes the significance of the proposed recommendations as key opportunities for the City to demonstrate its commitments under the Indigenous Framework, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice, and to take tangible actions to support the City's long-term goal of reconciliation with Indigenous people. As such, Administration will begin implementation immediately for any planned actions that can be undertaken within existing capacity and resources.

For any actions that may require additional resources, submissions will be brought forward through future operating budget processes for Council's consideration. In addition, given the time it will take to implement some of the proposed recommendations, Administration will provide an annual update on the implementation progress of the proposed recommendations, via a memorandum starting in Q4 of 2022. The annual updates will include performance measurement and evaluation reporting for all of Administration's work on the proposed strategy recommendations.

Budget/Financial Implications

All proposed additions to the 2023-2026 budget are being prioritized based on tax levy impacts and limited resources. Any funding requests associated with Administration's response to the proposed strategy recommendations in this report may be submitted through the 2023-2026 operating budget process for Council's consideration. Administration will also seek to leverage funding from other orders of government, such as the Government of Alberta's Indigenous Housing Capital Program and the Rapid Housing Initiative and Indigenous Shelter and Transitional Housing Initiative through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

Pre-engagement activities were undertaken in early 2021 to gather feedback that would inform the approach for this work. As a result, the Advisory Committee was formed to provide insight and help guide the project from start to finish, including the procurement of consultants to lead the engagement process and produce the Project Summary Report.

The first phase of engagement was completed between January and March 2022, through a series of dialogue sessions, one on one interviews, and follow up surveys with Indigenous housing providers in Edmonton. These sessions provided an opportunity for stakeholders to influence and contribute to the development of the various project deliverables as well as to identify existing gaps and to inform program design.

The second phase of engagement took place between March and May 2022. Participants were invited to provide input and feedback on the draft guiding values/principles and potential strategies through dialogue sessions and individual interviews.

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In total, 59 organizations and groups were identified as stakeholders and invited to engage on this project, with 42 participating in the process.

GBA+

The number of Edmontonians experiencing homelessness has almost doubled since the beginning of the pandemic. Homeward Trust's By Name List serves as a real-time record of all known people currently experiencing homelessness across Edmonton. As of May 2022, there are more than 2,800 people on this list. Of those 2,800+ people, over 1,150 are either currently staying in a shelter or sleeping outdoors, with the remainder provisionally accommodated (couch-surfing, short-term housing, etc.) Despite making up only five per cent of Edmonton's overall population, over 60 per cent of these individuals are Indigenous. Despite making up only five per cent of Edmonton's overall population, over 60 per cent of these individuals are Indigenous and approximately 45 per cent identify as female.

In addition to the ongoing barriers people experiencing homelessness face in accessing public services like transportation, basic hygiene, regular and appropriate health care, food, and shelter, the identities of those individuals also intersect with other equity-seeking groups, who may face additional structural barriers to their housing security and well-being. For example, experience of racialized and 2SLGBTQ+ community members experiencing homelessness is uniquely challenging in that they face additional discrimination and lack of appropriate support when trying to access existing shelter, housing and social service systems.

Administration's subsequent implementation actions to support the strategy recommendations will help provide Indigenous people and other equity-seeking groups with the opportunity to live in a safe, comfortable home that they can afford and is culturally appropriate, reflecting Indigenous cultures and worldviews. The strategy's recommendations will support the development of Indigenous-led affordable housing in Edmonton, which will enable Indigenous people living in Edmonton to find pathways out of poverty and homelessness and help build the long-term capacity and social infrastructure needed for meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous people.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Project Summary - Prioritizing and Incentivizing the Development of Indigenous-led Affordable Housing in Edmonton
2. Recommendation Analysis