

PROJECT SUMMARY

Prioritizing and incentivizing the development of Indigenous-led affordable housing
in Edmonton

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Executive Summary

The City of Edmonton has a long history of supporting affordable housing. Through its current programs, the City is involved with: construction of permanent supportive housing; grant funding and land for affordable housing; policy and planning; and, homelessness prevention initiatives. As a result of the work undertaken between November 2, 2020 and April 30, 2021, [t]he City of Edmonton is looking to increase the supply of Indigenous-led Affordable Housing in Edmonton and is working with Indigenous partners to co-create an Indigenous Affordable Housing Strategy.

The following report provides a summary of the research and engagement project that took place between September 2021 and May 2022 focused on the development of an Indigenous affordable housing strategy in Edmonton. The report provides background information on how the project came to be as well as an outline of the proposed approach to the project. It also provides an overview of relevant literature that is focused on seven reports that contain over 90 recommendations over the last ten years. The report includes a summary of input received through various dialogues sessions held between January and March 2022. The report ends with a number of recommended strategies that were informed by the literature and input received during the dialogue sessions.

Overall, what has been provided is foundational guiding values and principles as well as a number of different strategies that the City could use to create a program to facilitate the development of Indigenous-led affordable housing. While the City will need to determine which recommended strategies will be part of its overall strategy, prioritizing or incentivizing the development of Indigenous-led affordable housing while not inclusive must:

- provide proponents with adequate resources to develop and maintain the projects
- ensure capacity building to enable Indigenous-led groups to develop and manage housing projects
- facilitate the development of a new inclusive and adequately resourced Indigenous community-based organization focused on housing in Edmonton to increase collaboration and coordination
- enable proponents to easily navigate the municipal approval processes
- provide choice in term of both housing form and tenure
- address racism
- identify specific Indigenous housing needs

The report and recommendations are a starting point for continued and ongoing dialogue, both with and among, the Indigenous organizations working in the housing sector in Edmonton. To the extent possible the recommendations provide direction without being too prescriptive based on review of existing work and the input collected during this process.

Project Background

On November 2, 2020, Edmonton City Council passed a motion that directed Administration to undertake research on the number of affordable housing units owned or operated by Indigenous organizations, including upcoming or potential project, providing information on the need for Indigenous affordable housing, as well as a review of what other cities are doing to increase the supply of Indigenous affordable housing. Below is the wording of the motion.

That Administration provide a report to Committee with information on the following:

- The number of affordable and supportive housing units already operated and/or owned by organizations which identify as Indigenous.
- A list of proposed housing projects led by Indigenous organizations.
- Any work underway or planned by the City of Edmonton to support and expand the supply of Indigenous-led affordable and supportive housing units.
- The number of Edmontonians sleeping rough who identify as Indigenous.
- A scan of other jurisdictions in Canada and recommendations on ways to foster growth in Indigenous housing in Edmonton, led by Indigenous organizations (COE, 2021, p. 1).

Administration presented their initial findings to the Community and Public Services Committee on February 17, 2021¹. Overall, “[a]n analysis of funding opportunities and jurisdictional scan of work underway in other Canadian municipalities demonstrates that there are both financial and systems barriers to developing Indigenous-led affordable housing across the country. Future action to foster Indigenous-led affordable housing development in Edmonton needs to be taken in collaboration with Indigenous affordable housing providers and communities” (COE, 2021, p. 1). The legacy left by colonization, the residential school system, and persistent systemic barriers all contribute to the challenges that Indigenous peoples face.

At a high level, the initial research found that there are approximately 929 Indigenous housing units in Edmonton and another 132 units that are seeking funding and/or land to start development² (see appendix A). Most are Indigenous owned and operated but some are non-Indigenous housing organizations who also serve Indigenous populations. Administration also found that Indigenous peoples overrepresented those with core housing needs and were disproportionate among those experiencing homelessness.

¹ <https://pub-edmonton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=80783>

² <https://pub-edmonton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=80784>

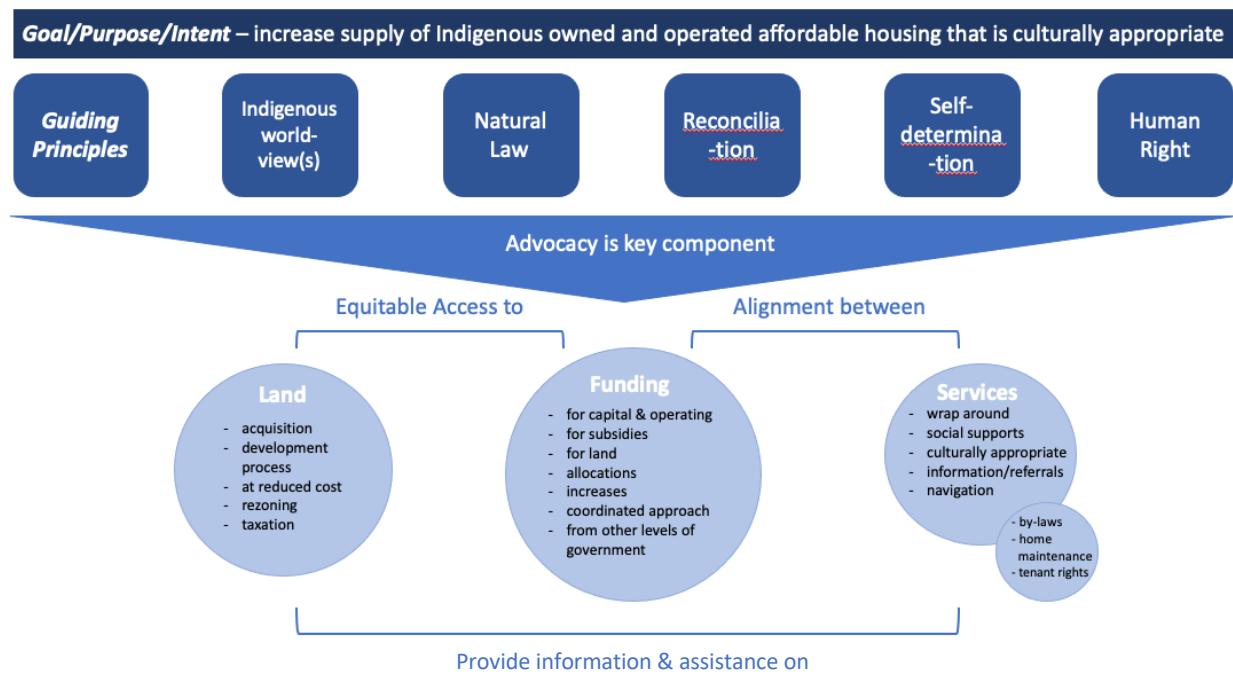
While there are regional differences in the level of core housing need, Indigenous households are more likely than non-Indigenous households to be in core housing need in all provinces and territories (HUMA, p. 21)

In response to the report from administration, on February 17, 2021, the members of the Community and Public Services Committee of City Council passed a motion that “directed Administration to prepare an Indigenous Affordable Housing Strategy” and report back to Council “with the completed strategy”. The scope of the project is based on the text of the following motion:

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 or incentivize the development of Indigenous-led affordable housing projects in Edmonton.

Pre-Engagement Interviews

The Affordable Housing and Homelessness team completed informal pre-engagement with ten Indigenous Housing providers who own and/or operate units in the City of Edmonton. The results of the interview questions regarding the purpose, outcomes and elements of a strategy have been summarized in figure 1 below (2021). The input received highlighted the goal of increasing the supply Indigenous owned and operated (Indigenous-led) affordable housing that is culturally appropriate. The participants also identified the importance of guiding principles such as: Indigenous worldviews; natural law; reconciliation; self-determinations and housing as a human right. With an emphasis on advocacy, the overall themes included: land, funding, services, information and assistance. With an emphasis on equitable access to both land and funding; alignment between funding and services/supports; and, providing information and assistance to both housing providers and residents. As a result of the pre-engagement interviews the Indigenous Affordable Housing Committee was formed to guide the project.

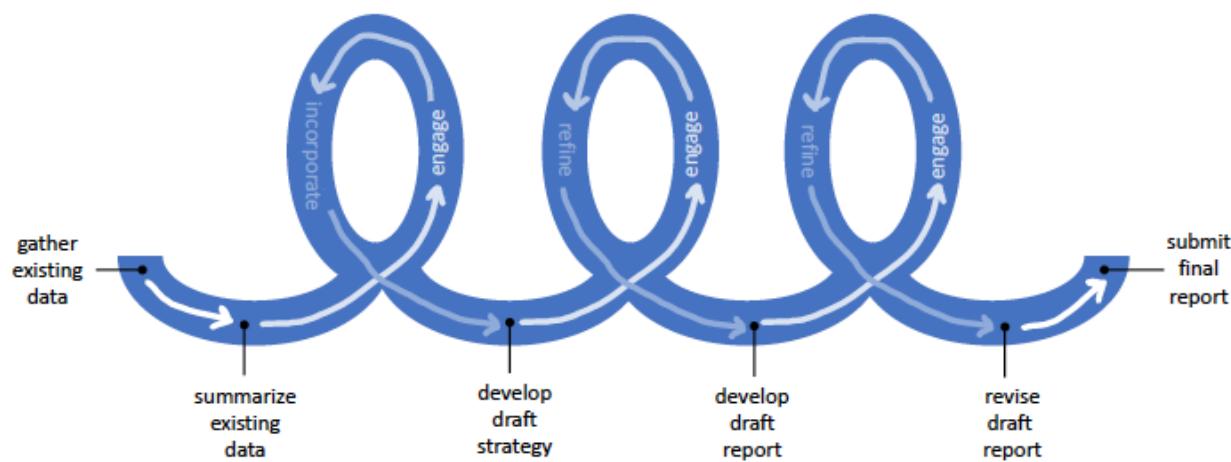
Figure 1

Project Goal & Purpose

The goal of the project is the development of a municipal Indigenous Affordable Housing Strategy that would be submitted to the City of Edmonton for consideration. The overall aim of the strategy is to increase supply of Indigenous owned and operated (Indigenous-led) affordable housing that is culturally appropriate in Edmonton.

Project Approach

The Consultants proposed taking a community-based approach to engagement and the development of a strategy that promotes co-creation with the urban Indigenous population in Edmonton. In which, the Project Team plays a coordinating and facilitating role in collaboration with the diverse urban Indigenous population. The approach is beyond the public engagement process that solicits inputs and results in a “what we heard document” in that the individuals and communities affected are engaged in the actual creation of the policies and programs. The approach stems from the "Social Movement Perspective" that defines participation as the mobilization of people to eliminate unjust hierarchies of knowledge, power, and economic distribution. This perspective identifies the goal of participation as an empowering process for people to handle challenges and influence the direction of their own lives. Sustainable policy and programs are a result of engaging individuals and the community directly affected in their co-creation. Co-creation involves engaging individuals and the community in identifying the issues and involving them in the actual creation of the policies and programs.

Figure 2

The Consultants developed a series of dialogue sessions to be held at various stages during the course of the project in order to create opportunities for urban Indigenous entities (“stakeholders”) to influence and contribute to the development of the various project deliverables. Initially, the Consultants proposed at least three rounds of dialogue following the development of various project deliverables such as the summary of background materials, draft strategy and draft report. These feedback loops (figure 2) aimed to provide an opportunity to ensure input has been accurately reflected in the documentation and to identify any gaps or additions that may be necessary.

Using the summary of the background materials and input from the initial dialogue sessions the Consultants developed a draft Indigenous Affordable Housing Strategy. The draft strategy was used as the basis for the second round of dialogues sessions with the various entities (“stakeholders”) and the input was incorporated into a revised strategy. Next the Consultants developed a draft report that summarized the background materials, dialogue sessions and revised strategy. In addition, the report will include options and/or recommendations for moving forward with the implementation of an Indigenous Affordable Housing strategy in Edmonton. The draft report was intended to be used as the basis for the last round of dialogues sessions and any input would have been incorporated into the final report. Unfortunately, due to the shortened time frame for the work due to administrative delays and the inability to get an extension for the project, the Consultants were unable to include a third round of dialogue sessions as part of the process. As a result, the engagement process consisted of initial dialogue sessions and individual interviews to gather input and a second round of dialogue sessions to review the draft strategy.

“Stakeholders”

The Consultants identified a total of 59 organizations (“stakeholders”) who were classified into 5 groups:

- Existing Committee members
- Indigenous-led housing organizations not active on the committee, but work in related areas or represent specific housing needs
- Indigenous-led organizations adjacent to the housing sector whose clients likely face challenges to affordable housing
- Non-Indigenous housing providers and support services
- Advocacy groups focused on housing and socio-economic issues

A list of entities (“stakeholders”) can be found in appendix B. While every attempt was made to reach as many organizations on the list as possible, in some instances we were not able to make contact using available information.

A high-level summary of the following definition of Indigenous-led was used during the first round of dialogue sessions to provide context to the term. This definition was inspired by the work of The Circle of Philanthropy Aboriginal Peoples in Canada³ and was expanded to include additional aspects of what Indigenous-led means.

Indigenous-led refers to the degree to which Indigenous peoples are involved in the leadership, operation and delivery of programs and services to Indigenous peoples. As well as the degree to which Indigenous culture and worldviews are incorporated into their work. For Indigenous-led organizations, Indigenous culture and language is a core value of the organization both in how they organize themselves and how they operate. In terms of governance there is Indigenous leadership at all levels of the organization. The purpose and intention of the organization is to specifically address the needs and priorities of Indigenous peoples. The organization largely employs Indigenous peoples to deliver programs and services. Indigenous-led organizations tend to serve a high percentage of Indigenous peoples. As such, they are one of a number of avenues used to reach various segments of the urban Indigenous population in order to reflect the Indigenous voices of the people they serve (Sokoluk, 2021, p. 11)

³ See The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal people in Canada, *Measuring the Circle: Emerging Trends in Philanthropy for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Communities in Canada: A Focus on Manitoba* (2017). pp. 21-22, 29, 48-49.

Themes from the Literature

Research focusing on Indigenous peoples' experiences of homelessness and housing insecurity must be rooted in an understanding that these experiences are complex, multifaceted and influenced by an array of historical, political, socioeconomic and intersectional factors (NWAC, 2019, p. 11)

There is extensive literature on Indigenous housing in an urban context and there are many previous engagements where housing was mentioned. Given the limited timeframe of the project a thorough review and summary of existing literature was not within the scope of work. As a result, the review and summary was focused on seven key reports that make specific recommendations regarding Indigenous housing that were undertaken between 2012-2021. These seven reports include over 90 recommendations that fell into 13 categories/themes and 6 groupings. It would be useful future research for a thorough literature review of this topic and/or annotated bibliography covering the last ten years including academic literature, grey literature and engagement reports.

At a high level, the 13 themes from the recommendations were combined into the following groupings:

- Indigenous-led and collaboration
 - Funding
 - National URN Indigenous Housing Strategy and National Indigenous Housing Centre
 - Services and supports
 - Housing types, construction and repairs
 - Data, research, policy, communication and public education.
-

Indigenous-led solutions support self-determination and recognize that Indigenous peoples and local Indigenous organizations are best placed to identify local housing needs, respond to housing priorities of their communities, and identify effective solutions (HUMA, p. 44).

The majority of the reports reviewed emphasized the need to be Indigenous-led (Belanger et al., 2012; Belanger et al., 2019; Brandon & Peters, 2014; HUMA, 2021; IHCWG, 2018; Manyguns, 2017). In the HUMA report a witness stated that truly “Indigenous led, solutions must be designed, governed, managed, administered, operated, and delivered by Indigenous peoples. Research, evaluation, and data collection should also be done by Indigenous peoples to ensure that it meets the needs and priorities of Indigenous peoples and communities” (2021, p. 44). In addition, the various recommendations are to be undertaken in cooperation with

relevant Indigenous entities and “stakeholders”, not unilaterally without active and meaningful Indigenous participation. Although collaboration includes the involvement of various levels of government. In addition, Belanger et al. (2019) noted the importance of ensuring “the urban Indigenous community’s diversity is represented at the decision-making level” (p. 24).

...Article 21 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that Indigenous people have the right to the improvement of their social and economic conditions including housing (HUMA, 2021, p. 7)

At least five of the seven reports noted the need for increased funding and access to funding (Belanger et al., 2012; Belanger et al., 2019; Brandon & Peters, 2014; HUMA, 2021) for urban, rural and northern Indigenous housing. The HUMA (2021) report highlighted that barriers to adequate, long-term, and sustainable funding “including a patchwork of programming, the distinctions-based approach, proposal-based funding and funding delivery mechanisms” (p. 67).

Many of the reports focused on the urban, rural and northern (URN) Indigenous populations that fall outside of distinction-based funding targeted towards Metis, Inuit and First Nations that have been the focus of the National Indigenous Housing Strategy to date. In particular, the Indigenous Housing Caucus Working Group (IHCWG) called on the federal government to eliminate the gap in core housing need through a “[f]outh Indigenous Housing Strategy alongside the three distinction-based housing strategies” that “would include specific programs and investments for Indigenous households...in urban, rural and northern parts of Canada” (2018, p. 5). Many of the reports supported the development of a national strategy (Belanger et al., 2012; Belanger et al., 2019; HUMA, 2021; Manguns, 2017) similar to that proposed by IHCWG. There was also support for the creation of a National Indigenous Housing Centre (Belanger et al., 2012; Belanger et al., 2019; HUMA, 2021; IHCWG, 2018).

The Committee heard that the distinctions-based approach excludes a significant portion of the Indigenous population including those living in urban, rural and northern communities who may not have a connection to First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities (HUMA, p. 70)

Brandon and Peters (2014), highlight the following challenges to finding housing in urban areas: “...ongoing legacy of colonialism, poverty, discrimination, the shortage of affordable housing, and lack of skills and experiences” (p. 22). Many of the reports and recommendations pointed to the inclusion of access to a range of culturally relevant supports and services (Brandon & Peters, 2014; HUMA, 2021; NWAC, 2019; Manyguns, 2017) including urban transitions (Belanger et al., 2019; Brandon & Peters, 2014) for Indigenous housing in an urban, rural and northern context. Some of the types of supports and services listed included: counseling,

navigation, cultural, employment, education, training, tenant supports, transition resources, provide for linkages and collaboration.

...literature on Aboriginal Housing initiatives in Canada primarily emphasized the importance in their finding showing the overall benefit of giving the Aboriginal community more control, allowing their interpretation of cultural adaptations to share programs to meet community needs was highly successful (Manyguns, 2017, p. 13)

Similarly, some of the reports and recommendations highlighted the inclusion of various types of housing that respond to a range of circumstances and demographic considerations (Belanger et al., 2019; Brandon & Peters, 2014; NWAC, 2019; Manyguns, 2017) across the housing spectrum. Such as temporary/short term housing, single occupancy, older adults, seniors, leaving domestic violence, addiction programming and supports, multi-generational, post-incarceration, and homeownership. A couple of the reports highlighted recommendations focused on both construction and repairs (NWAC, 2019; Manyguns, 2017) including such topics as training programs, enforcement of building codes, high cost of materials, climate appropriate buildings, and home maintenance.

Access to safe, affordable housing is essential to the health and well-being of Canadians. Moreover, adequate housing is a fundamental human right that was recently recognized by the federal government and Parliament in the National Housing Strategy Act (HUMA, 2021, p. 7)

According to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the seven elements of adequate housing are: security of tenure, availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location; and, cultural adequacy (2009).

Many of the reports spoke to the need for comprehensive national data on urban, rural and northern Indigenous housing and homelessness (Belanger et al., 2012; HUMA, 2021; IHCWG, 2018; NWAC, 2019; Manyguns, 2017).

The lack of accurate and standardized data is a barrier towards the development and sustainability of community housing for Indigenous peoples. The Committee heard that data sovereignty including data collection by and for Indigenous peoples is a component of Indigenous-led housing solutions (HUMA, p. 46)

Belanger et al. (2012) proposed recommendations included a number of potential future research regarding URN Indigenous housing, homelessness and homeownership (p. 19-20).

While some of the other reports recommend specific policy responses (Belanger et al., 2012; Belanger et al., 2019; HUMA, 2021; IHCWG, 2018; Manyguns, 2017) such as a National Indigenous Housing Centre, National URN Indigenous Housing Strategy, housing ombudsperson and review of existing policies regarding identification, visitors, and provincial rental assistance. Belanger et al. (2012) concluded that "...national policies are needed to aid urban Aboriginal renters and homeowners specifically, which would help ameliorate elevated urban Aboriginal homelessness" (p. 17). Furthermore, a number of reports recommend specific communication and public education efforts (Belanger et al., 2012; Belanger et al., 2019; Manyguns, 2017) on topics such as awareness training for landlords, tenant rights and responsibilities, NIMBYism and anti-racism.

While Indigenous peoples experience housing affordability challenges, Indigenous peoples may also experience racism and discrimination in the private rental market (HUMA, p. 25)

Dialogue Sessions

The Consultants developed a series of dialogue sessions to be held at various stages during the course of the project in order to create opportunities 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.

There were initial dialogue sessions and one on one interviews held between January and March 2022, through this process the Consultants heard from 26 participants during the first round of dialogue sessions (see table in appendix C). More specifically, in January 2022 there were four dialogue sessions held with: the Committee; Indigenous-led organizations adjacent to the housing sector whose clients likely face challenges to affordable housing; non-Indigenous housing and/or support service providers and advocacy groups focused on housing and socio-economic issues. In addition, there were six one-on-one interviews held with Indigenous-led organizations not active on the IAH Committee but who work in related areas or representing specific housing needs.

The participants were asked to address five questions which were informed by the themes from existing literature of the Indigenous housing sector over many years. This approach was intentional to the dialogue process in order to avoid repeating past engagement processes and move the process forward. The five questions were:

- What are the guiding principles that should inform Indigenous-led affordable housing?
- How can the city help facilitate Indigenous-led affordable housing projects?

- What would it take to increase the number of Indigenous-led affordable housing projects in Edmonton?
- What data/research is needed to facilitate Indigenous-led affordable housing projects in Edmonton?
- What tools and/or resources can assist in the development of Indigenous-led affordable housing?

In addition, a google form was sent to participants with a list of “supports and services” and “housing types” that have been identified in previous reports. Participants were provided the opportunity to validate if these are still relevant as well as the opportunity to provide additional information that might be missing.

Then at the end of March 2022, participants were offered three options to participate in the second round of dialogues. The aim of the second round of engagement was to gather input and feedback on the draft guiding values/principles and potential strategies. A total of 31 individuals registered for these sessions and 16 attended (see table in Appendix C).

Summary of Themes from First Round of Dialogue Sessions

Most of the input during the first round of dialogue sessions was in line with what was found in the review of the seven reports and their recommendations; differences tended to provide nuance to existing information. The input from the first round was used to develop a set of values and principles and inform the development of the strategies.

Participants identified guiding values and principles. A number of these focused around the idea that any strategy should reflect Indigenous ways of living including building community, a sense of belonging, and the importance of cultural understanding. Others related to building on the guiding principles of honesty, strength, sharing, and kindness. Ensuring that the strategy was Indigenous lead and grounded in Indigenous knowledge, participatory approaches, and systems thinking was identified as important. Other principles and values included the theme of housing as a right as well as the right to choose and self-determination. Flowing from the idea of choice and self-determination was the idea of ensuring a variety of housing that would be inclusive of all stages of the housing spectrum/continuum, including supportive housing and home ownership.

Discussion around the City’s role included the idea of creating a dedicated funding stream for the development of Indigenous housing, the provision of land and buildings, the reduction of fees, charges, and taxes, as well as the provision of ongoing operating assistance. The discussion also focused on the need to provide support for Indigenous-led housing providers to navigate the city's funding and approval processes and find information to support tenants, and

to streamline the process for housing providers and decrease red tape. The role of the city as facilitator and broker was also raised, for example the City could bring together housing providers, other members of the development industry and individuals with lived experience to create new models of housing to meet the needs of the community. It was suggested that perhaps the City might create job positions to facilitate the approval process as well as the creation of relational partnerships.

Other ideas included the development of partnerships with surrounding Indigenous communities and the City. In addition, as the provision of adequate housing is the responsibility of all orders of government, there is a need for all orders of government to work together more collaboratively. As well there need to be more consistency among levels of government. Currently it is up to the housing proponent to put together funding and resources from the various orders of government who may have different program requirements. Participants indicated that there is a need for different types of housing for singles, families, elders, and seniors that include amenities and culturally appropriate services (including wrap-around) that are specific to resident needs. In addition, there needs to be a supportive base that Indigenous families can turn to if having problems/issues. The idea of creating a Yes in my Backyard campaign (YIMBY) to address NIMBY was raised.

Thoughts regarding data included the need for adequate data about Indigenous households living in the City that can support specific housing solutions. Such data could include how many have their own housing, how many need affordable housing, how many own their own homes, how many people are living rough right now, and how many people move here because of lack of housing on-reserve and whether or not they have adequate housing. Since Indigenous people have been surveyed (and researched) to death, there needs to be a way of accessing existing data and previous studies. Indigenous communities have a wealth of information about their experiences and needs and they should be directly involved in the design of a data collection process. The issue of data sovereignty was also raised by participants including ethical considerations, past experiences with surveys/studies/research.

Participants identified a number of tools and resources that would be helpful in the development of affordable housing. These included making information available about what funding and land the City has available and how to access these resources, as well as who is available to provide assistance to proponent groups. Other tools included information for both tenants and homeowners on basic home maintenance and information to tenants about their rights and responsibilities. Another was the creation of a group or organization of Indigenous housing providers, to provide mutual support, build capacity and a sense of community within the sector, and to lobby on housing matters. Participants also identified the need to develop

tools to address barriers to utilities services such as credit checks and the requirement of a deposit.

Summary of Themes from Second Round of Dialogue Sessions

The participants supported the values and principles and strategies that were presented. A number of additional strategies were suggested, these included the creation of an affordable stream in the City for licensing as well as in the permitting process; getting the City to support the national move towards creating a Urban Rural and Northern (URN) stream; having the City lobby for better Residential Tenancies legislation; ensuring that programs incorporate adequate capital reserve funding for ongoing replacement and maintenance costs; ensuring that programs are designed to ensure access without having to raise equity; and ensuring that the public education address racism, discrimination, and stereotyping in the housing sector. The following recommended strategies include revisions based on the second round of dialogue session focused on review of the draft strategies.

Recommendations

The overall objective of the recommended strategies is to increase the supply of Indigenous-led and culturally appropriate affordable housing in Edmonton.

Guiding Values & Principles

The following twelve guiding values and principles provide a philosophical foundation for the recommended strategies. Further refinement of these principles should fall to those who continue with this work.

- Indigenous-led
- Self-determination
- Community-based
- Reflect Indigenous cultures & worldviews
- Inclusive
- Housing is a right
- Safety
- Supportive
- Collaborative
- Innovative
- Accountability & transparency
- Choice, flexibility & variety

Recommended Strategies

The recommended strategies include strategies that fall within the purview of the City regarding policies, processes and intergovernmental cooperation and those that require ongoing dialogue and necessary partnerships and/or resources to facilitate such as funding; collaboration and coordination; public education and communication; relational partnerships; and ethical, reliable and accurate data. The examples are used to provide context but are not

intended to limit the interpretation of the recommended strategies. The recommended strategies require ongoing dialogue and refinement in collaboration between the City and those Indigenous organizations involved in the housing sector. The complexity of the urban landscape requires the balancing of multiple and diverse Indigenous interests. By recognizing the various existing Indigenous governance bodies and political processes and other channels/mechanisms that are unique to an urban setting in order to reach those whose interests are not represented by existing entities and processes.

That the City of Edmonton undertake the following:

City Policies & Processes

1. Ensure access to programs for the exemption of property tax for Indigenous non-profit housing providers. Property taxes are potentially the largest component of the monthly operating costs. For example, the taxes on property that is assessed at \$300,000 would be approximately \$230 per month an exemption could provide a savings of \$2760 annually.
2. Improve awareness, transparency and access to available city owned land and properties. One way of achieving this might be to designate sites specifically for Indigenous providers, one example is the Edmonton Community Development Company where the City transferred \$10M of land to this entity.
3. Improve linkages between all relevant city departments that impact the development and delivery of community-based housing. One example, this could include collaboration between the housing and planning departments to expedite project approvals.
4. Create an affordable housing stream in the development permitting/licencing process. An example, is the City of Calgary's Customer Coordinator for Affordable Housing that is a single point of contact for all non-market housing applications and planning inquiries. The Customer Coordinator can help a proponent determine the City resources that may be available to them and arrange an expedited timeline to efficiently move the non-market housing application through the approvals process.
5. Maintain the Indigenous Housing Liaison position created in 2019 to establish and maintain relationships with Indigenous housing providers, assist in building capacity and support in navigating funding and project development processes.
6. Create a rebate program for permit fees and utility hookup costs. Such a program could rebate the cost of development and building permit fees as well as the cost of the utility hookups. The City of Edmonton had a successful rebate program in the past which had a positive impact on reducing the overall capital cost of a development, hence enhancing affordability.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

7. The City advocates for improving access to existing funding and creating additional funding from other levels of government, including working with Indigenous governments, Indigenous housing providers or other Indigenous-led organizations to advocate for more housing resources for Indigenous-led developments from other orders of government.
8. The City advocate for collaboration and coordination in the housing sector among other levels of government and other funding bodies.
9. The City advocate for access to or the creation of rent subsidy programs targeting Indigenous tenants. Such subsidies could be either direct to tenant or to a specific development that would then provide the rent subsidies to residents who required such assistance.
10. The City express support for move towards creating a national URN funding stream and centre.
11. The City advocate for better Residential Tenancies legislation that addresses security of home (for tenants security of home means a place where they feel secure and know that they will not lose their home as a result of economic eviction, renoviction, their cultural practices, lack of maintenance, change of building ownership).
12. The City lobby the Province for a program that would enable Indigenous homeowners and tenants with lower incomes to maintain and adapt their homes.
13. The City work with the Province to ensure that the Municipal Government Act and Regulations include provisions for the exemption of Indigenous affordable housing from both municipal property tax and the education tax collected by the municipality on behalf of the Province.

That the City of Edmonton undertake in partnership or provide adequate resources for the development of the following:

Funding/Financing

14. Create a dedicated funding stream for Indigenous affordable housing that has continuous intake and includes funding for three components: initial development (pre-development); capital; and, operational. The funding program would also:
 - a. Ensure Indigenous involvement in the design of funding programs including development of guidelines and approval process. This should include on going dialogue with Indigenous housing providers as the guidelines and approval processes are being developed prior to any program being rolled out.
 - b. ensure the incorporation of adequate capital reserve funding for ongoing replacement and maintenance costs
 - c. allow for culturally appropriate supports in Indigenous affordable housing projects

- d. Build into funding programs recognition of the limited capital for Indigenous non-profit housing providers. Historically funding programs did not necessarily require the proponent to put up any equity. The current City of Edmonton Affordable Housing Investment Plan requires a proponent provide 10% of the total development cost as unencumbered equity. Participants indicated that the equity requirement was a condition that they could not meet.
 - e. Ensure resources are available to develop housing along the entire housing continuum and takes a variety of physical forms/housing types which align with the need of Indigenous communities.
 - f. Ensure housing development includes a range of onsite services, programs or resources which reflect Indigenous cultures and values and meet the needs of Indigenous residents/tenants
 - g. Ensure accountability and transparency is built into programs and processes
15. Explore potential innovative financing arrangements (e.g. social bonds, social enterprise). Such exploration could include looking at innovative arrangements, what it would take to implement these arrangements and who might be responsible for such implementation.

Collaboration & Coordination

- 16. Facilitate the development of a new, inclusive and adequately resourced Indigenous-led and community-based association/body/organization that can represent the interests of Indigenous-led housing in Edmonton and provide supports in the areas of funding, policy, research and advocacy with the aim of increasing collaboration and coordination.
 - a. To play a role in capacity building among Indigenous housing providers
 - b. Encourage collaboration among Indigenous housing providers
 - c. include positions to support the work of such an organization
 - d. Engage with other Indigenous organizations
 - e. To create relevant communication and public awareness tools
 - f. To facilitate solutions to Indigenous housing needs, which could include dealing with racism within the rental market, identifying information and supports for households moving from First Nations communities to the City, as well as looking at how to create Indigenous led non-market housing and individual homeownership options for Indigenous households.
 - g. provide opportunities for mentorship in the creation of Indigenous housing
- 17. Ensure the inclusion of the diversity of Indigenous cultures and identities. It is important to understand the importance of cultural understandings and the different ways that First Nations, Metis and Inuit see/understand housing. An effective collaborative process must include the diversity of Indigenous identities among the broader Indigenous community including those not represented by existing Indigenous governance bodies.

18. Collaborate with existing housing researchers and organizations to undertake further research in the area of Indigenous housing in Edmonton, for example:

- a. Systemic discrimination and access to rental properties
- b. Research on the whether construction cost pricing is increased for Indigenous projects

Public Awareness & Communication

19. Create communication tools on:

- a. the city's affordable housing development and approval process
- b. Existing resources/funding, available land & properties (ex. surplus schools) & how to access them
- c. Process for applying for funding
- d. relevant Indigenous specific housing data
- e. create a listing of existing data and previous studies (with links)
- f. public education on racism/discrimination/stereotyping in the housing sector including rental (landlords including non-profit landlords) and development (NIMBYism)
- g. resources for residents to enable them to secure and retain their housing

Relational Partnerships

20. Enable the development of working relationships with various sector actors such as government, industry and other developers/housing providers

21. Creating opportunities for networking among the housing sector. This would involve the development of opportunities for the various actors who currently do not interact to interact with each other on an informal and networking basis. It is this type of relational partnerships that can result in collaboration between parties. One of the participants commented that builder who wanted to work with Indigenous communities did not know where to make initial contacts to build relationships.

Ethical, Reliable & Accurate Data

22. Undertake a housing needs assessment and ensure Indigenous specific data is available to ensure access to reliable and accurate data that helps to identify specific housing needs

- a. As part of the city's current housing needs assessment process ensure it identifies specific Indigenous housing needs. Any future needs assessment should update and identify Indigenous housing needs.
- b. Any assessment should include both qualitative and quantitative data

23. The collection and use of Indigenous data should align with ethical guidelines found in OCAP®, Tri-Council Policy Statement and RCAP.

Targets

The City of Edmonton could set either a proportional or an absolute numbers target with regard to its goal for the development of Indigenous-led affordable housing over the next 5 years. While there is knowledge with regard to the proportion of Indigenous individuals and families who have no homes within the population. There is a lack of information that identifies the general need for affordable housing for those Indigenous individuals and families who have some type of home. If 20% of the City's previously identified target of developing 2500 new units over the last 4 years had been allocated to Indigenous-led housing providers that would have produced at least 500 units or 125 approximately units per year.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Indigenous Housing in Edmonton

Tables taken from Attachment 1 of the February 17, 2021 Community and Public Services Committee Report CS00189

Edmonton Indigenous Housing Inventory 2020**		
Name of Organization	Project Name (if applicable) and Type of Housing	# of units
Metis Capital Housing	Scattered Site - Affordable Housing Renaissance Tower - Affordable Housing	185 units 90 units
Metis Urban Housing	Scattered Site - Affordable Housing Scattered Site - Seniors Affordable Housing Nihgi - Seniors Supportive Housing	98 units 32 units 40 units
Native Counselling Services of AB	Cunningham Place - Youth Transitional Housing	28 units
Ben Calf Robe Society	Willier's House - Supportive Housing	8 units
Niginan Housing Ventures	Ambrose Place - Supportive Housing	42 units
Niginan Housing Ventures & Right at Home Housing Society	Belvedere - Supportive Housing	42 units
University of Alberta	Belcourt Brosseau House -Student Housing Marge's House - Student Housing East Campus Village - Student Housing The Hub - Student Housing	6 units 6 units 4 units 14 units
Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society	Orenda House - Affordable housing Iskwew House - Transitional Housing for Indigenous teenage mothers Kokomish House - Transitional Housing for Indigenous Youth	9 units (beds) 4 units (beds) 6 units (beds)
Capital Region Housing Corporation	Affordable Housing for Indigenous Households	21 units
Spirit of our Youth - WJS Canada Subsidiary	Supportive Transitional Housing for Youth In Care	30 units (beds)
Amisk (under receivership) / Umisk Housing (managed by Homeward Trust)	Affordable Housing	96 units
Homeward Trust	Morning Fire Protector - Supportive Housing for Indigenous Households	14 units
Homeward Trust	College Plaza - Affordable Housing for Indigenous Households	23 units
Samson Cree Nation	Affordable Housing	74 units
Enoch Cree Nation	Affordable Housing	20 units
O'Chiese First Nation	Mixed Market and Affordable	37 units
Total Number of Units		929 units

***This list is not exhaustive of housing options for Indigenous peoples in Edmonton but is inclusive of different types of Indigenous-owned and/or Indigenous-specific housing units. Data was collected from First Nations organizations that own housing in Edmonton, Indigenous organizations, and affordable housing organizations that provide housing for Indigenous individuals and households.*

Edmonton Indigenous Housing Inventory 2020**		
Name of Organization	Project Name (if applicable) and Type of Housing	# of units
Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta	24 Nations Lodge - Transitional Supportive Housing	32 units
Niginan Housing Ventures	Repurposed Hotel - Supportive Housing	53 units
Metis Capital Housing Corp.	Affordable Housing for Families	23 Units
Paul First Nation	Affordable Home Ownership	24 units
Total Number of Units		132 units

***Included in this list are projects Administration is aware of that require land, funding, or other support in order to start the development process. This list does not include project ideas that have been discussed with Administration that still require significant development work, proformas, business cases, drawings, and other necessary planning documents. Only Indigenous-led projects are included in the proposed project list*

Appendix B – List of “stakeholders”

Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations	Red Road Healing Society
Enoch Cree Nation	Rupertsland Institute
Metis Capital Housing Metis Urban Housing	Tradewinds to Success
Niginan Housing Ventures	Saddle Lake Cree Nation
O’Chiese First Nation	Bigstone Health Commission
Paul First Nation	Onion Lake Cree Nation
Samson Cree Nation (SML)	North Peace Tribal Council
Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta	Papaschase First Nation
Yellowhead Tribal Council	Alberta Health Services
Tribal Chief Ventures	Civida (Capital Region Housing)
Sacred Spirit Housing	Greater Edmonton Foundation
Bent Arrow	Habitat for Humanity Edmonton
IAAW	HomeEd
Native Counseling of Alberta	Homeward Trust
Ben Calf Robe Society	Right at Home Housing Society
Edmonton Aboriginal Seniors Centre	Sundance Housing Cooperative
Aboriginal Veterans Society	Boyle McCauley Health Services
CANDO	Boyle Street Community Services
Missing Link Home Services Ltd.	E4C
Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association	First Nations House (UofA, student housing)
Bear Clan Patrol	SAGE
Canadian Native Friendship Centre	Spirit Of Our Youth (WJS Canada Subsidiary)
Creating Hope Society	Women Building Futures
Edmonton Native Healing Society	Edmonton John Howard Society
Inuit Edmontonmiut Working Group	Elizabeth Fry Society
Metis Child & Family Services	Affordable Housing Lab
Metis Settlements Strategic Training Initiatives	Edmonton Coalition on Housing & Homelessness
Nechi	Edmonton Social Planning Council
Oteenow	End Poverty Edmonton
Poundmakers	

Appendix C – Number of Participants

First Round of Dialogue Sessions (approximate)

Session	Invitations	Registered	Attended
January 12	9	5	3
January 17	23	16	6
January 19		8	3
January 20	22	14	8
Interviews	13	8	6
TOTAL	67	51	26

Second Round Dialogue Sessions (approximate)

Session	Invitations	Registered	Attended
March 29	87	13	6
March 30		12	8
March 31		6	2
TOTAL		31	16

Appendix D – Input from first round of dialogue sessions

1. What are the guiding principles that should inform Indigenous-led affordable housing?⁴

- Culturally appropriate and supportive, supports healing the impact of colonialism
- Right to housing, housing is a basic human right
 - And right to determine how affordable housing looks
- Reflect indigenous ways of living and values
 - Build community
 - Natural areas
 - Land based setting
 - Representation
 - Sense of belonging
- Importance of cultural understanding
 - Different ways that First Nations, Metis and Inuit see/understand housing
- Indigenous led affordable housing program should be grounded in indigenous knowledge, participatory approaches and systems thinking. And-align with our values
- Natural law – four guiding principles of honesty, strength, sharing and kindness
- Center Indigenous culture and values
- Respect for Indigenous perspective, experience, knowledge, culture and values
- Communication and engagement between on-reserve and urban communities
- Supportive housing that leads to homeownership
- Not just housing also provides a range of supports and access to programs/services, as needed
- Indigenous staff
- Reconsider affordable housing (what this means or where it applies)
- Be innovative ex) response to climate change
- Strategy should respond to current stage/challenges
 - Affordable, adequate, all locations
- Respectful and non-judgmental
- Address how systemic racism/discrimination prevents access to housing
- Ensure access to safe locations for housing, that provide safety and safe space to live
 - Affordable housing tends to be in undesirable neighbourhoods
 - Both physically and culturally safe
- Hire Indigenous professionals ex) to work with families
- account for social & cultural adjustment
- Led by Indigenous people
- Community
- Commitment & follow through
- Inclusion
 - include broad range of Indigenous voices to provide input and feedback
 - all aspects of the housing spectrum/continuum
- education and engagement.

⁴ The input gathered has been summarized for clarity and length.

- flexibility in model or approach to ensure a variety of options of the kind of housing types within indigenous led housing including home ownership
- One value that is important is coming from a place of humility.
- TRC calls to action- that deals with educating those who work in government/civil service,
- shifting the definition from affordable housing to adequate housing, UN defines seven components
- recognize the rights of Indigenous people (including treaty and Aboriginal rights & duty to consult)
- business transparency, business with indigenous peoples has always been one sided, someone's always made that decision for us.
- policies need to change to reflect our needs.
- there needs to be choice, individual choice regardless of your culture.

2. How can the city help facilitate Indigenous-led affordable housing projects?

- Need to hire more Indigenous staff for these project
- Provide support for housing providers to access city resources and navigate the city's funding and approval processes and find information to support tenants
 - Streamline/simplify process for Indigenous-led housing providers, decrease red tape
 - Processes are complex, need access to technical and legal expertise
 - Very long and cumbersome, limited to capital funding
 - Don't account for upfront cost just to apply, without knowing if application will be successful
 - Build capacity ex) Pre-construction discussion
 - Access to subsidy programs
 - Currently long waits lists, process is cumbersome
 - Fund program with (Indigenous) landlords to access subsidies
 - Create alternative funding
- Housing providers need capital and operational dollars
- Maintain strong communication with city during project development
- City needs to better understand Indigenous worldviews and realities
 - Living on-reserve or on a settlement is much different from living in an urban centre
 - Some basic skills and knowledge are taken for granted (i.e. home maintenance)
- Inclusive of community
- Full transparency, share what leaders/advocates are doing and not focused on political agendas
- Educate on NIMBYism
- Review mature overlay bylaw
- Can the city advocate for funding?
- Convene partnerships between developers and housing providers
- Give desirable land to Indigenous housing providers
- Support Indigenous-led housing providers
 - Focused on housing first, homelessness and hard to house
 - Also need to focus on low income/working Indigenous families
- Existing housing providers take on other housing streams to avoid increased competition from increasing the number of housing providers

- Encourage collaboration among housing providers
- Access to operational funding for Indigenous housing providers
 - decrease/exemption of property tax for non-profit organization i.e.) not making a profit
 - Address operational costs specifically for affordable housing
- spread housing in different parts of the city (*location is important*)
 - make sure Indigenous housing is not ghettoized
 - give them room, space, variety and reasonable location
- don't have to limit Indigenous-led housing to Indigenous people
 - opportunities for bridging cultural differences and building stronger community
 - that are Indigenous run with Indigenous values and ethics
- access to city's lands, empty lots leased or sold for \$1
- not just homeless but the hidden homeless who are couch surfing or staying with family
- different types of housing are needed
 - places for families that have in-law suite
 - apartments for single people
 - broad mixture to cover everybody
- types of supports / amenities
 - Apartment buildings with a daycare centre eliminates a barrier
 - community outreach office located in the building
 - little rec center with like a workout room
 - mini little library, access to internet, phone, computer, fax machine
- invest in dedicated onsite resources that will help to build community in building/*complex*
 - work with the residents to break down barriers between people
 - create opportunities to share strengths, skills, and resources
 - use culture, events and conversation
 - where everyone feels both safe and comfortable.
 - investing in individuals that have the skills within the building
 - invest in building community, not just in the bricks
 - cook together, eat together, have collective kitchen
- engage other major housing providers that already operate in the city
- the city of Edmonton indigenous framework and the four roles that they've identified
- the City can enable flexible land use and zoning that allows for culturally appropriate aspects of Indigenous housing
- the city should be willing to engage in a difficult process of unlearning, and relearning and re-centering different power dynamics
- ensure that it is not done in a tokenizing way,
- recognize long standing claims to: space and land; alternative methodologies and approaches; and, a willingness to be creative and do things that are uncomfortable
- recognize the good work of existing Indigenous housing providers
- capacity building/learning opportunities for Indigenous-led organizations getting into the sector
- give land back, rather than giving a land grant,
- protect our homelands, such as medicines along the riverbank
- respecting our land sovereignty and treaty rights.
- to bring together individuals with lived experience and indigenous organizations in the housing sector to create the model and to guide the deliverables

- to hive it off to an indigenous controlled group.
- 3. ***What would it take to increase the number of Indigenous-led affordable housing projects in Edmonton?***
 - Partnerships
 - With surrounding Indigenous communities outside the city
 - take a lot of coordination, talking to the right people
 - Require ongoing contact and communication with the City
 - Maybe create a position to support this work
 - City needs to better communicate and share information about:
 - Existing resources
 - Available land and existing properties (surplus schools)
 - Funding
 - Provide opportunities for community to select their own aids, plumbers, electricians, etc.
 - Way to create employment within the community
 - Making Indigenous people aware of the process to apply for funding
 - Responsibility of all layers of government
 - Need more accountability
 - Need to work together
 - Provide funding or increased funding to existing Indigenous housing providers
 - Have X number of dollars set aside for affordable Indigenous-led housing
 - Making sure those that apply are going to address the needs of Indigenous people
 - Consistency among levels of government
 - Increase collaboration among different levels of government
 - developing relationships and partnerships with Indigenous communities outside of the city to collaborate more effectively
 - and work more closely with First Nations and Metis communities outside the city
 - and work more closely government to government between the city and Indigenous governments
 - with settlements and reserve so that transitions to the city is done in a more collaborative, cooperative and effective way
 - Each First Nation has a housing arm
 - Community support for Indigenous-led projects
 - Increasing call for wrap around services to affordable housing
 - Access to resources & supports, to address barriers for families
 - Culturally appropriate supports
 - Ensure Indigenous-led is Indigenous-led
 - Address laws that are restrictive, Anti-colonial policies/law
 - Provide long-term and sustainable funding, takes more than 3-5 yrs to see results
 - delays in payment even after approved (can take years to receive funds)
 - timeliness of implementing
 - Not distinction based
 - ask existing Indigenous housing providers what they need to increase their capacity
 - identify key players, maybe role models in the community

- not just a federal responsibility, 80% of my FN members live off reserve
- needs to be a supportive base that Indigenous families can turn to if having problems/issues
 - ex) rent, landlord, daycare, transportation
- transportation issues
- independent housing situations, single residence
- How can the city do a better job or help access those resources?
- different types of housing availability
 - single, families, elders, seniors
 - include amenities that are specific to resident needs
 - tiny homes ex) tiny home village for veterans
 - granny flats
- Yes in my backyard campaign (YIMBY)
 - For example, homeowners building tiny homes in their yards
- create special purpose bond to raise money for affordable housing
- being open to Indigenous teachings
- increase safety and tackle the crisis of violence against native women, children and the elderly
- support for addiction treatment, mental health services, and trauma recovery
- we need an Indigenous organization that looks after our own, give a hand up to our vulnerable populations, which includes our elderly, we have firsthand experience, put support systems in place to help cope with mental health issues, chronic health conditions, histories of trauma and other struggles, develop our own philosophy for a housing program that focuses on the individual, before we provide housing
- give Indigenous led groups the power and resources to create what they would like to have with freedom and accountability to determine for themselves without government restraints
- involvement of people with lived experience who are indigenous and require affordable housing and resources are important to inform the process

4. *What data/research is needed to facilitate Indigenous-led affordable housing projects in Edmonton?*

- In order to identify the level of need to support a project you need data, adequate data can support specific solutions
- Do we know:
 - How many have their own housing? How many need affordable housing?
 - How many own their own homes?
 - How many people are living rough right now?
 - How many people move here because of lack of housing on-reserve?
 - Do First Nation communities know where their members are living in the city? And whether or not they have adequate housing?
 - Employment numbers? Access to services?
- the majority (70-80%) of Indigenous people do not live on reserve
- Engage with on-reserve communities to gather relevant data?
 - Engage with community groups within the city as well
- Do our own survey, to determine who's here and where they come from
- People have been surveyed (and researched) to death
 - Existing data and previous studies, where can these be found?

- Different levels of government collaborate to share data
 - Results are not always shared back to communities
 - Outcomes take too long or never realized
 - Hesitant to provide information when surveyed repetitively
- Where are you getting data from? Ask organizations:
 - What is their inventory?
 - Do they provide housing or just take applications?
 - Do they have a strategy or report?
 - How are they meeting the need? What is their mandate?
 - How are they meeting the need of affordable housing for Indigenous people?
- Need information to know how you're going to meet the need
- Maybe the city needs to invest resources into a feasibility study on Indigenous people living in urban centres so they can best meet the need
- Cutting down on homelessness
 - Do we know why they are experiencing homelessness?
- Feasibility study can identify other needs
- Issues of data sovereignty
 - Don't want to give out their data
 - used against them
 - Not benefiting from providing information
 - Developing the data and letting First Nations know they can keep their data
 - Data supports the work and it is what government requires
- Population base, need accurate numbers to plan housing
- Use children in care data to determine need to address socio-economic issues
- What is affordable/adequate housing? How do we define this?
 - 30% is not affordable, gather data about what is affordable
- Growing Indigenous population and lack of senior housing
- Incomes and affordability, be clear about definition of income and affordability
 - Use living wage calculator (ESPC) to calculate for different family types
- Researching what types of housing are available, to help see gaps
 - How much supportive housing? How much housing first? Any other housing types
- Document personal experiences
 - What has changed for them since they have been housed with supports in place
 - Experiences of those exiting precarious housing situations
- Communities have a wealth of information about their experiences and needs
- Reach out to housing departments to get feedback from First Nations
 - Maybe they can do a survey on-reserve and in order to hear their voices
- qualitative experience of residing in an Indigenous led space and grounded housing option and how impactful that has been in people's lives
- qualitative research, with people with lived experience and treat them as the experts
- ensure that Indigenous people meaningfully participate in designing how this policy is created, implemented, monitored, ~~not so it's just tethered to something~~
- identify comprehensive strategies for how this is going to happen, procedures for affected communities to identify systemic issues, co-create effective responses, and ensure effective monitoring and accountability. centering rights holders is also key

5. What tools and/or resources can assist in the development of Indigenous-led affordable housing?

- How do we access funding?
- What is the city's application process?
 - Needs to be clean and streamlined
 - What land does the city have available?
 - What streams of funding are available? What partnerships?
- Lack clarity on where to find information unless you know someone working at the city
 - City provide clarity about resources and processes
 - Help find the right people who can provide assistance
 - Make information available
- complicated processes require expertise, technical and legal resources such as those provided by a realtor and lawyer
- Support ongoing learning and knowledge sharing
- Tenant resources
 - basic home maintenance
 - tenant's rights and responsibilities
 - understanding whether it's a mortgage or not, or is it a lease?
 - What are your responsibilities and what are City's responsibilities?
 - access to an information and supports
 - where to get help, who to call when you have these issues, if you don't know anything about that, it's overwhelming because moving to the city is a big transition
- tenant education system
- Use living wage calculator ex) non-nuclear families
- treaty right to housing, have responsibility in historical context
- issues around Indigenous identification, i.e.) status blind?
- Create Lobby group or board of housing providers in order to leverage and provide political advocacy to hold government accountable and create allyship
- Tools to address barriers to utilities such as credit checks and requirement of deposit
- gaining support from the community in which the units would be placed
- social enterprise partnerships with indigenous community or indigenous organizations
- financial resources to bring indigenous people to the table so that we can get affordable housing off the ground
- Consider/address health concerns such a diabetes, mental health, substance use, social determinates of health, Indigenous health data collection and improving health outcomes
- mentorship opportunities for indigenous organizations who would be interested if they had supports to help them figure out how to effectively and efficiently develop a housing project