

Update: Housing Initiative

Initiative Title:	Housing
City Council Lead(s):	Mayor D. Iveson, Councillor B. Henderson and Councillor M. Walters
Department Lead(s):	SD, W. Trocenko/J. Freeman/M. Rachwalski

Recommendation - Renew for 2017-2021 Council Term

Objective:

The objective of this Council Initiative is to ensure the City meets the diverse housing needs of its growing population and provides proactive solutions to address the issues of homelessness and housing affordability in Edmonton.

The Terms of Reference for this initiative identifies the key outcomes listed below.

1. Act as an advocate for housing to other orders of government

A key focus for advocacy in 2016 was providing input into the Government of Alberta and Federal Housing Strategies, and into proposed housing-related amendments to the Municipal Government Act and Alberta Housing Act. The City also informed the development of the Capital Region Board sub-regional planning model for affordable housing. Throughout 2016, Administration served with the City of Calgary and Government of Alberta on the Big Cities and Government of Alberta Collaborative on Affordable Housing, a sub-committee of the Big City Charter discussions.

While both the federal and provincial budgets announced general commitments to funding affordable housing, specific funding allocations are unknown as of May 2017. The City continues to advocate for increased levels of funding for affordable housing from other orders of government.

2. Work with our partners to deliver effective and appropriate public engagement processes around housing issues and developments in Edmonton

In support of the Public Engagement Initiative, Sustainable Development is working collaboratively with the Communications and Engagement Department to ensure that our approach to public engagement for affordable housing aligns with the City's new Public Engagement Policy.

In 2016, the City piloted an enhanced public engagement process for two surplus school sites (in the Keheewin and Ogilvie Ridge neighbourhoods). Learnings from the pilots have provided valuable input into future processes to develop mixed-income housing on surplus school sites.

Administration also supports the Capital Region Interfaith Housing Initiative by funding a Housing Ambassador. The role of the Housing Ambassador involves public engagement with faith and community members in advance of specific developments.

Current status as of April 2017: Effective and appropriate public engagement continues to be a key focus for City housing initiatives. The City is currently working with the Communications and Engagement Department to complete an Affordable Housing Public Engagement Charter to better define best practices for City involvement in public engagement for affordable housing.

3. Continue to support and work towards the goals outlined in Edmonton's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness

In 2016, Administration continued the work of the former Edmonton Homeless Commission. Key activities related to this work included supporting the Homeless on Parkland initiative, participating in Heavy Users of Service, and contributing to the Pregnancy Pathways project. Administration also partnered with Homeward Trust Edmonton to initiate an update to Edmonton's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness.

Current status as of April 2017: Administration continues to work with Homeward Trust Edmonton to update the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness.

4. Continue to provide and promote public education and research around issues related to affordable housing and City housing policy

Public education is an important focus for the Housing and Homelessness section. In 2016, the City of Edmonton retained Calder Bateman Communications to develop an enhanced Affordable Housing Information and Awareness Campaign, which provides information and a toolkit to help Edmontonians learn more about the need for and benefits of affordable housing.

The City's Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board (LTAB) provides education and information to residential tenants and landlords to address tenancy issues. In 2016, the Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board served 33,509 clients and continued to offer its popular Landlord Course to 176 registrants. The Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board completed 46 public education workshops with 1,595

participants. Evaluations of education courses indicated a 98% approval rating. The City also continued to support the Capital Region Interfaith Housing Initiative (CRIHI). The Crime Free Multi-Housing Program led by the Edmonton Police Service, certified its 300th residential rental property in Edmonton.

In 2016, the Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board staff also supported the Residential Compliance Team, Problem Properties Task Force, and partnered with the Bissell Centre in their Community Bridge Program to prevent evictions for the nonpayment of rent.

Current status as of April 2017: Public education, research and policy continue to be key areas of focus for the Housing and Homelessness Section. Administration continues to deliver and provide support for the Information and Awareness campaign, the Landlord Tenant Advisory Board, and the Interfaith Housing Initiative.

5. Create 2,500 directly funded new affordable housing units and 2,500 influenced by 2016

In 2016, Administration continued to implement Cornerstones programs, including: Secondary Suites Grant Program, Housing Opportunities Program for Edmonton, Surplus School Sites, and other Council-approved projects. Other related activities included purchasing units through the Developer Sponsored Affordable Housing (Policy C582) program, planning to meet the affordable housing targets at the Blatchford development, and completing development agreement for the Sakaw Terrace seniors housing development and up to 58 family housing units for Habitat for Humanity.

Surplus school sites - Work continued in support of the development of housing on undeveloped building sites declared surplus to school board needs in 2006 and 2009 and placed in the City's land inventory:

a. 20 First Place housing sites: The First Place Program implementation has been completed on six of 20 sites producing 207 homes, with 62 homes sold to first-time homebuyers in 2016. Five sites (Larkspur, Haddow, Kernohan, Kirkness, Blue Quill) are in construction and sales (with 302 homes), three more sites (Bulyea Heights, Twin Brooks, Belle Rive) are in the design/engagement phase. These sites are expected to create another 200+ homes. Public open houses and design engagement meetings were held for the provision of another 307 homes in Larkspur, Bearspaw and Haddow.

b. 8 Seniors housing sites: Stemming from Council's approval in 2012 to rezone eight sites for seniors housing, groundbreaking occurred for Sakaw in November 2016. Approximately 160 seniors will call this mixed income, multi-level care seniors development, home.

c. 9 remaining sites: Administration has selected two communities (Keheewin and Ogilvie Ridge) to pilot the public engagement process for the development of surplus school sites. Repurposing City-owned building sites and buildings no longer required by school boards is one way to provide Edmontonians with more housing choices.

Administration is continuing to implement the recommendations of the report of the Social Housing Regeneration Advisory Group approved by Council. This includes working closely with Capital Region Housing (CRH) on a Revitalization Strategy for nearly 150 City sites managed by Capital Region Housing, and ongoing support for a revitalization program with Capital Region Housing in Londonderry and Youngstown-Britannia.

Home for Life criteria has been fully developed, a dedicated website online, and is now incorporated into Hollick Kenyon pilot project 2017-2018. A feasibility study is also underway for LGBTQ2S Seniors Housing.

Current status as of April 2017: Funding programs are being transitioned to a revised set of grant programs, under the umbrella of the Affordable Housing Investment Plan.

6. Continue to support housing inspection programs

In 2016, Administration developed a new model to resource a City-wide Problem Properties Task Force. The City also continues to provide Safe Housing inspections to retain housing stock.

7. Develop a City-Wide Affordable Housing Framework

While a Regional Housing Strategy should encourage all Capital Region member municipalities to strive for a range of housing choices in all areas, a framework is being proposed to guide the planning and development of proposed City-led projects, and when evaluating housing proposals from community agencies and the private sector.

Broadly stated, the City of Edmonton will strive to achieve diverse, inclusive and complete communities with a range of housing choices including non-market affordable housing. The goal is to increase the supply of non-market affordable housing in all areas of Edmonton.

It terms of how much affordable housing is needed, based on the number of total housing units in the city and the number of households in financial need, staff estimate that 10 percent of all housing in Edmonton should be affordable. This aspirational guideline will guide the City's prioritization of City-funded affordable housing developments. To this end, the City will demonstrate leadership in provision of inclusive housing opportunities whenever feasible by supporting provision of 10 percent affordable housing in large City-sponsored developments such as Blatchford.

Future Steps:

2017 and 2018 projects related to the Housing Initiative include:

- Implementing the new Affordable Housing Investment Plan. This Plan defines a revised set of affordable housing grant programs and will guide program delivery for five years (2017-2021). Delivery of these programs began on January 1, 2017.
- Continuing to work in collaboration with Homeward Trust Edmonton to complete an update to Edmonton's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness.
- Pursuing regeneration opportunities for the city's social housing portfolio beginning with the Londonderry social housing project. Public engagement for this project occurred throughout 2016 and will continue in 2017.
- Continuing public engagement related to Surplus School Sites.
- Supporting the Capital Region Board in completing the next phases of the sub-regional housing planning work including supporting the implementation of the "Our Affordable Future" report and recommendations, developing a "Sub-Regional Housing Planning Model" to guide the development of a 10-year rolling Regional Housing Plan based on housing plans for each Capital Region Board Housing sub-region, including Edmonton.
- Establish an evaluation framework to assess individual affordable housing development proposals based on the City-Wide Affordable Housing Framework and guiding principles identified above. This would include criteria to guide decision-making regarding areas of the city with either more or less than 10 percent affordable housing.

Evaluation

This is a key initiative and some progress has been achieved to date. However, much additional work is required to address the affordable housing and homelessness challenges facing many Edmontonians, and the City is well positioned to play a pivotal role in moving forward a bold agenda.

Given the ongoing need for this program area, and the multiple partnership opportunities emerging with other orders of government and the non-profit and private sectors, ongoing leadership is needed within the City at both the political and administrative levels.

It is strongly recommended that Housing continue as a discrete Council initiative.