

INDIGENOUS-LED HOUSING - LETTER OF INTENT WITH CONFEDERACY OF TREATY SIX FIRST NATIONS

Recommendation

That the Mayor, on behalf of City Council, sign the Letter of Intent with the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations, as set out in Attachment 1 of the August 22, 2023, Office of the City Manager report OCM02003, to support efforts to increase Indigenous-led housing in Edmonton.

Requested Action	Council decision required		
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals		
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	Healthy City		
City Plan Values	BELONG. LIVE. THRIVE.		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	Inclusive and compassionate	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	Community safety and well-being
Corporate Business Plan	Serving Edmontonians		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous-led Affordable Housing Strategy Housing Needs Assessment 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CS00433, , Indigenous Affordable Housing Strategy, Community and Public Services Committee, June 27, 2022 		

Executive Summary

- There is an urgent need in Edmonton for culturally appropriate, affordable and supportive housing for Indigenous Peoples.
- The City can leverage funding from other orders of government by collaborating with Indigenous-led organizations on housing initiatives, which may include joint advocacy as well as submissions for new and existing funding opportunities.

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- The City has an opportunity to work with Indigenous organizations and intergovernmental partners to speak together with a unified voice.
- The proposed Letter of Intent formalizes shared objectives with the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations around the advocacy for Indigenous-led affordable housing with other orders of government.
- The Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations was established in 1993 to serve as the united political voice for those First Nations of Treaty 6 who are involved. There are 16 Treaty 6 First Nations in Alberta, and 16 are Confederacy member Nations.
- In 2012, the City and the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations entered into a Memorandum of Cooperation and Dialogue, which was further renewed at a signing ceremony in September 2021.

REPORT

Located within Treaty 6 territory, Edmonton is home to Canada's second largest urban Indigenous population and has long been a gathering place for trade, commerce, ceremonies and social connections among Indigenous Peoples. Currently, almost 31 per cent of Indigenous Peoples in Alberta live in the Edmonton Census Metropolitan Area.¹ The Indigenous population in Edmonton is expected to continue to grow as more Indigenous Peoples move to urban centres for education, health care and employment opportunities. While many Indigenous Peoples grow and thrive in Edmonton, there are also many barriers faced disproportionately by Indigenous Peoples, including a lack of suitable and affordable housing.

There is an urgent need in Edmonton for culturally appropriate, affordable and supportive housing for Indigenous Peoples who are living in unaffordable housing, at risk of losing their homes or experiencing homelessness. As outlined in the 2022 City of Edmonton Housing Needs Assessment, 5,505 of the 24,865 Indigenous households in Edmonton are in core housing need.² This number is projected to increase to more than 6,700 households by 2026 based on current trends.

The City can impact the success of Indigenous-led affordable housing in Edmonton through formal advocacy efforts, alongside Indigenous-led affordable housing providers, to other orders of government. The City has an opportunity to work with many Indigenous organizations and intergovernmental partners to speak with a unified voice.

City Administration recommends formalizing a shared commitment to work together with the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations (the Confederacy) to advance Indigenous-led affordable housing through the attached Letter of Intent (Attachment 1). Committing publicly to a path forward based on shared principles and a commitment to collaboration is part of the City's

¹ "Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population".

www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=alberta&DGUIDlist=2021S0503835,2021A000248&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1,4&HEADERlist=0

² Housing Needs Assessment (2016 Census Data)

edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/assets/PDF/Housing-Needs-Assessment-August-2022.pdf

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commitment to reconciliation. Letters of Intent represent a commitment to work, to speak and advocate together on the need to support Indigenous-led affordable housing.

Relationship with the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations

The Confederacy was established in 1993 to serve as a united political voice for First Nations of Treaty No. 6 in Alberta. It is dedicated to ensuring that the terms, spirit and intent of Treaty 6 are honoured and respected, and its membership currently consists of 16 Alberta based First Nations.

On July 4, 2012, City Council passed a motion that the Mayor, on behalf of City Council, sign a Memorandum of Cooperation and Dialogue with the Confederacy of Treaty No. 6 First Nations. That month, the first Memorandum of Cooperation and Dialogue was signed, which was renewed at a signing ceremony in September 2021³. The Memorandum outlines shared principles, common values and a commitment to ongoing dialogues and cooperative effort around shared issues and interests that affect the long-term well-being of all people who call Edmonton home.

In the spirit of the Memorandum, City Administration is collaborating with the Confederacy through the proposed Letter of Intent to formalize shared objectives around the advocacy for Indigenous-led affordable housing with other orders of government.

Letter of Intent with Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations

The Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations and the City of Edmonton acknowledge the disproportionate representation of Indigenous Peoples among those experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity in the Edmonton region as well as those impacted by the drug-poisoning crisis. As such, this Letter of Intent was co-developed by Administration and representatives of the Confederacy.

The Letter of Intent outlines commitments between the City of Edmonton and the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations, such as continuing a positive working relationship to address immediate and long-term housing needs, as well as supportive services for Indigenous Peoples in the Edmonton region. The City of Edmonton is committed to working towards greater Indigenous-led housing, which includes the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations being directly involved in decision-making and activities related to housing for its members in an urban setting. Furthermore, the Letter of Intent provides a unified approach to bring together all levels of government, including provincial and federal, to work together to meet the need for culturally appropriate, affordable and supportive housing for Indigenous People who choose to live in Edmonton.

Living the Indigenous Framework

As a result of the systemic barriers and discrimination facing Indigenous People when attempting to access safe, adequate and affordable housing, the proposed Letter of Intent and the advocacy it formalizes will enable City Administration to live out the Indigenous Framework roles of

³ Memorandum of Cooperation and Dialogue
edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/documents/MomoCooperationDialogueTreaty6COE.pdf

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Listener, Connector, Partner, and Advocate. This will also advance the City's work toward the second commitment in the Indigenous Framework, which calls on the City to work with a range of partners to eliminate the systemic racism and discrimination that Indigenous Peoples face in Edmonton.

Legal Implications

The commitments in this letter do not legally bind either the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations or the City of Edmonton, and the parties may enter into subsequent agreements in the future to further formalize their relationship to address homelessness, as well as housing and other services.

Community Insight

Prior to this Letter of Intent and as part of the Indigenous Affordable Housing Strategy⁴ approved at the July 27, 2022 Community and Public Services Committee meeting (CS00433), Administration worked closely with two project consultants (New Moose Consulting and Communitas Group Ltd.) and an Advisory Committee, in addition to leading a robust engagement process. As a result of this work, an independent report identified 23 recommendations to help the City prioritize and incentivize the development of Indigenous-led affordable housing. Furthermore, 59 organizations and groups were identified as stakeholders and invited to engage, with 42 participating in the process. These included Indigenous-led organizations that work alongside the housing sector, as well as non-Indigenous housing providers and advocacy groups. Stakeholders identified 13 themes from the recommendations, including seven pertaining to intergovernmental cooperation.⁵ One recommendation included advocacy work for funding and greater collaboration from other orders of government.

GBA+

There is a critical need for supportive and affordable housing to support marginalized and vulnerable individuals, as indicated by the City of Edmonton's Housing Need Assessment and Homeward Trust's By Name List (a real-time record of all known people currently experiencing homelessness in Edmonton).

As of June 2023, there are more than 3,100 people on Homeward Trust's By Name List, of whom approximately 1,300 are either currently staying in a shelter or sleeping outdoors; the remainder are provisionally accommodated (couch-surfing, short-term housing, etc.).⁶

- Nearly 60 per cent of the people on the By Name List are Indigenous, while Indigenous Peoples represent approximately six per cent of Edmonton's population.⁷

⁴ "Indigenous Housing Programs" edmonton.ca/programs_services/housing/indigenous-housing-programs

⁵ "Prioritizing and incentivizing the development of Indigenous-led affordable housing in Edmonton". pub-edmonton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=158480

⁶ "Data, Analytics & Reporting". homewardtrust.ca/data-analytics-reporting/. Homeward Trust.

⁷ "Data, Analytics & Reporting". homewardtrust.ca/data-analytics-reporting/regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/edmonton/percent-aboriginal-population/#/

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- Approximately 22 per cent (5,505 households) of Indigenous Peoples in Edmonton are living in Core Housing Need and nearly 59 per cent (14,665) of Edmonton's Indigenous population are renters. Of Indigenous renters, 33 per cent are in Core Housing Need and 23 per cent are spending more than half of their income on rent and utilities; moreover, 16 per cent are living in overcrowded conditions.⁸
- Interviews conducted with Indigenous Peoples and organizations through the development of the City of Edmonton's Housing Need Assessment indicated that Indigenous Peoples are more likely to face issues of discrimination and racism, which significantly impacts their ability to access housing. Many of the participants interviewed had witnessed acts of discrimination while helping Indigenous clients find housing.

Attachment

1. Indigenous-Led Housing - Letter of Intent with Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations

⁸ "Edmonton Affordable Housing Needs Assessment"
edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/assets/PDF/Housing-Needs-Assessment-August-2022.pdf