

INDIGENOUS-LED HOUSING LETTER OF INTENT WITH TREATY 8 FIRST NATIONS OF ALBERTA

Recommendation

That the Mayor, on behalf of City Council, sign the Housing Letter of Intent with Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta, as set out in Attachment 1 of the April 8, 2025, Community Services report CS02960, to support efforts to increase Indigenous-led housing in Edmonton.

Requested Action	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 Housing Needs Assessment 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CS00433, Indigenous Affordable Housing Strategy, June 27, 2022. OCM2003, Indigenous-Led housing - Letter of Intent with Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations, August 22, 2023. 		

Executive Summary

- There is an urgent need in Edmonton for culturally appropriate, affordable and supportive housing for Indigenous Peoples.

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- 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.
- The City has an opportunity to work with Indigenous organizations and intergovernmental partners to speak together with a united voice on a long-term basis to substantially improve access to quality affordable housing.
- The proposed Letter of Intent formalizes shared objectives with the Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta around the advocacy for Indigenous-led affordable housing with other orders of government.

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 Peoples¹. Currently, almost 31 per cent of Indigenous Peoples in Alberta live in the Edmonton Census Metropolitan Area (87,605).² 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 barriers faced disproportionately by Indigenous Peoples, including a lack of suitable and affordable housing.

Treaty 8 Territory is located north of Edmonton and spans British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories. While there are no immediate statistics of Treaty 8 members living in Edmonton, there are a significant number of members living in Edmonton who receive services from the Treaty 8 Urban Office, which is primarily focused on children and family services. The main office for Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta (Treaty 8) is also located in Edmonton.

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 2023 City of Edmonton Housing Needs Assessment, nearly one-third (4,825 of the 18,040) Indigenous renter households in Edmonton are in core housing need.³ This number is projected to increase to more than 5,900 households by 2031 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.

¹ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220921/mc-a004-eng.htm>

² "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

³ Housing Needs Assessment (2021 Census Data)

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

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Administration recommends formalizing a shared and long-lasting commitment to work together with Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta to advance Indigenous-led affordable housing through the attached Letter of Intent (Attachment 1). Publicly committing to a long-term path forward based on shared principles and a commitment to collaboration is part of the City's commitment to reconciliation. Letters of Intent represent an ongoing commitment to work, to speak and advocate together on the need to support Indigenous-led affordable housing.

Relationship with Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta



Source: Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta

Treaty 8 Territory is located north of Edmonton and spans British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories. The Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta organization was incorporated in 1997 and has existed to advocate for and advance the interests of the leadership, members and communities of Treaty 8. It is dedicated to ensuring the terms, spirit and intent of Treaty 8 are honoured and respected and its membership currently consists of 23 of the 24 Alberta-based First Nations in Treaty 8. Administration is collaborating with Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta through the proposed Letter of Intent to formalize shared objectives around advocacy for Indigenous-led affordable housing with other orders of government.

The City of Edmonton has provided financial support through Affordable Housing Investment Program grants to Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta and individual Treaty 8 First Nations on housing projects, including a Family Reunification Centre and First Nations Lodge Development in the Belvedere neighbourhood. Building on this momentum, Treaty 8 recognized that strategic partnership and advocacy with the City of Edmonton were essential to build upon these successful initiatives.

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Letter of Intent with Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta

Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta and the City of Edmonton acknowledge the disproportionate representation of Indigenous Peoples facing homelessness, housing insecurity and those impacted by the drug overdose crisis within the Edmonton region. To address this, Administration and representatives of Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta co-developed this Letter of Intent.

The Letter of Intent outlines commitments between the City of Edmonton and the Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta, 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.

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 Administration to live out the Indigenous Framework roles of 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 Edmonton⁴.

Budget/Financial Implications

This initiative will not require additional funding. Administration will utilize existing operating budgets and staff resources to build upon any future initiatives or projects that may result from these collaborations. Further, the City will work with Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta to identify opportunities to partner on advocacy to other orders of government for resources for Indigenous-Led Housing in Edmonton.

Legal Implications

The commitments in the proposed Letter of Intent do not legally bind either Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta or the City of Edmonton. The parties may enter into subsequent agreements in the future to further formalize their relationship to address the intentions outlined in the Letter of Intent.

Community Insight

Prior to this Letter of Intent or the Letter of Intent with the Confederacy of Treaty 6, which was signed by the Mayor in May 2024, and as part of the Indigenous Affordable Housing Strategy⁵ approved at the July 27, 2022 Community and Public Services Committee meeting (CS00433), Administration worked closely with two project consultants (New Moose Consulting and

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https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/initiatives_innovation/community-engagement-indigenous-framework

⁵ "Indigenous Housing Programs" [edmonton.ca/programs_services/housing/indigenous-housing-programs](https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/housing/indigenous-housing-programs)

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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 interested parties 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.

Community partners and rightsholders identified 13 themes from the recommendations, including seven relevant to intergovernmental cooperation. One recommendation included advocacy work for funding and greater collaboration from other orders of government, which can be done alongside Indigenous rightsholders.

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 February 2025, there were more than 5,038 people on Homeward Trust's By Name List, of whom approximately 2,000 are either currently staying in a shelter or sleeping outdoors; the remaining 3,000 are provisionally accommodated).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
- 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.

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/#/

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

Environment and Climate Review

This report was reviewed for environment and climate risks. Based on the review completed no significant interactions with the City's environmental and climate goals were identified within the scope of this report.

However, maintaining relationships to Indigenous governments is important in facilitating climate-related partnerships. Relationship building and maintenance may occur through projects not directly related to climate.

Attachments

1. Draft Letter of Intent with Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta