

City of Edmonton Actions to Address the Housing and Houselessness Emergency

Edmonton, like many cities across Canada, is experiencing a significant shortage of affordable housing and rising market housing costs. As identified in the Affordable Housing Needs Assessment,¹ nearly one in eight Edmonton households (46,155) are in Core Housing Need, meaning they pay more than 30 per cent of their before-tax household income on housing costs, live in crowded or unsafe housing and cannot afford any other suitable housing. Core Housing Need disproportionately affects equity-deserving families and households with disabilities or physical health needs.

Affordable Housing Strategy Implementation

Although it has been less than one year since the Affordable Housing Strategy² was approved, there are a number of actions well underway or already completed. For example:

Affordable Housing Investment Plan (2023-2026 Updated): This budget cycle, the City of Edmonton has committed funding and/or land contribution to support 2,879 units, surpassing the original target of 2,700 units that was set in 2022. In late 2024, a new unit target of 4,652 was developed as part of the updated investment plan consisting of 1,977 renewal units, 320 Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units, 149 deep subsidy Indigenous-led units, 171 transitional units and 2,035 affordable units at up to 80 per cent of market rates.

Through the Fall 2024 intake of the Affordable Housing Investment Program (AHIP), City Council approved \$19.2 million in funding to support three affordable housing, three supportive housing and one transitional housing development resulting in 275 new units and 22 rehabilitated units. Of the \$19.2 million in grant awards, \$900,000 from the Housing Accelerator Fund specifically supported 24 affordable housing units. The types of affordable housing units in the overall program have been updated based on new information from each organization. The next AHIP intake is now accepting applications until April 25, 2025.

Indigenous Housing: In Fall 2024, the City's Indigenous-led Affordable Housing Investment Grant Streams provided \$8.3 million in funding to support one transitional housing and two affordable housing developments that will result in the contribution of 93 new units that will provide safe, affordable and sustainable housing for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness, Indigenous low-income families and women and children fleeing domestic violence. This is an addition to \$2.29 million of funding approved in March 2024 for Métis Capital Housing Corporation to develop 36 units dedicated to Indigenous Seniors. Since the implementation of AHIP in 2020, the

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<https://www.edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/CoE-HousingNeedsAssessment2023.pdf?cb=1706745433>

² <https://www.edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/assets/PDF/AffordableHousingStrategy2023-26.pdf>

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City has committed to 322 Indigenous-led affordable housing units (384 units including market housing units).

Administration continues to prioritize Indigenous-led housing, including advocating for all orders of government to support Indigenous-led housing developments in Edmonton. The City hired a dedicated Indigenous Housing Liaison position who works closely with Indigenous organizations, First Nations, and Otipemisiwak Métis Government, to increase the supply of affordable housing and create connections/relationships where appropriate.

Supportive Housing Development: In response to the City's Affordable Housing Strategy 2023-2026 permanent supportive housing target of 1,400 to 1,700 units within the next five years, Administration recommended funding for both Canora and Garneau projects that were not successfully funded through the federal Rapid Housing Initiative program. \$33.4 million of City funding for the project was approved and construction on both projects has commenced. Canora will have 63 supportive housing units including nine barrier-free units while Garneau will have 34 supportive housing units, including five barrier-free units. In early 2025, Administration submitted a revised funding application for Canora and Garneau through the new affordable housing fund program from Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation. If successful, additional funding will be used to fund future housing projects.

The City-led supportive housing project located in the Holyrood neighbourhood received an occupancy permit in December 2024, ahead of schedule. The building includes 63 studio units with 12 barrier-free units which will be owned by Homeward Trust and operated by The George Spady Society. Homeward Trust is in the process of furnishing the building and preparing for a phased move-in of residents to ensure the program's success.

Affordable Housing Tax Exemption: Beginning in 2025, *Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act* (Bill 20) amended the *Municipal Government Act* to authorize the province to exempt affordable housing properties from both municipal and provincial taxes. As a result, City Administration worked closely with Alberta Seniors, Community and Social Services on the list of properties that are eligible for the tax exemption as per the definition of the Ministerial Order No. 2024-011³. Starting in 2025, close to 600 eligible properties listed will now be tax exempt from both municipal and provincial property taxes with further properties potentially added annually based on the regular review process of the list.

Renewal of Existing Affordable Housing Stock: In 2024, Civida initiated renewal work on the City owned/Civida operated social housing portfolio that was originally built in 1970/1980. The City has committed \$10.5 million along with \$12.8 million of funding from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) towards the renewal of 882 social housing units rented at rent-geared-to income. HomeEd also commenced construction towards the renewal of 1,073 near market rental units to which the City

³ <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/scss-2024-011>

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contributed \$3.5 million along with \$6.75 million from CMHC in late 2024. A total of 1,955 units will be renewed by early 2026.

In addition, City Administration assisted both Right At Home Society and GEF Seniors Housing in successfully securing funding towards their own renewal project from CMHC by advocating and facilitating conversations between the organizations and CMHC.

Land below market value: The City of Edmonton supported two affordable housing projects through the sale of City land below market value (contribution of \$3.8 million) helping to support E4C and Jasper Place Wellness Centre (JPWC) in the development of 43 new affordable housing units:

- E4C - a multi-use development that will include an estimated 19 single-occupancy transitional housing units, 51 to 53 shelter beds, office and service spaces for staff, Financial Management Hub and a future pre-employment focused social enterprise in the Quarters adjacent to Kinistinaw Park.
- JPWC - two healing house model buildings that will support 24 total new units. JPWC is seeking additional funding from other orders of government to offer these spaces as supportive housing.

Surplus School Sites: Using City-owned surplus school sites for housing is one of the most important tools available for addressing the shortage of affordable housing, maintaining Edmonton's market housing affordability, and ensuring equitable distribution of affordable units across Edmonton. As part of the Council-approved Housing Accelerator Action Plan, the City is pursuing the immediate development of 11 surplus school sites for affordable housing. This work is guided by Council Policy C583B Developing Surplus School Sites⁴, which was amended on February 25, 2025, to facilitate the development of the sites. These sites are expected to help deliver up to 1,800 new housing units in established neighbourhoods with a target of 50 per cent of the units to be non-market affordable housing.

In 2024, the City prepared 11 surplus school sites for affordable housing development by securing all necessary approvals for rezonings, subdivision and municipal reserve removal. Throughout this process, communities were kept informed through a number of touchpoints (above and beyond regulatory requirements) since these sites were declared surplus. That includes edmonton.ca content, on-site signage, mailed notices, a digital mailing list, direct stakeholder outreach and discussions with the community leagues. The sites were listed for sale or lease⁵ in November 2024 and bids closed on February 14, 2025.

⁴ <https://www.edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/C583A.pdf?cb=1726503478>

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https://www.edmonton.ca/business_economy/land_sales/surplus-school-sites-listings?utm_source=virtualaddress&utm_campaign=surplusschoolsiteslistings

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On February 4, 2025, City Council approved Administration's recommendation for sale or lease agreements for the 11 surplus school sites at below-market value and affordable housing agreements with grant contributions. This will allow negotiations and contract signing on the developments to immediately follow the selection of successful proposals, giving affordable housing developers the confidence and ability to achieve building permits by the HAF deadline of November 2026.

In addition to advancing new surplus school sites, Administration has been working with Civida and Treaty 6 (Keheewin) and Home Ed (Ogilvie Ridge) on advancing their developments on former surplus school sites. In August 2024 (CS02425), Council approved \$8.0 million of capital grant funding for the re-configured Keheewin project that will offer additional Rent Geared To Income Units under a new partnership with Treaty 6. Home Ed has submitted their development permit application on Ogilvie Ridge under the monitoring of the Client Liaison Unit of Urban Planning and Economy.

Petrolia Redevelopment: The former 70 unit Civida development on City land at 4028 - 115 Street NW in the Royal Gardens neighbourhood was demolished in 2024. Prior to demolition Civida successfully moved all tenants from the building into other properties. Administration and Civida are currently working on the agreement of an extended lease on the site that will enable Civida to get financing for a new denser affordable housing development on the same site. Council approval will be required for an extended below-market lease and any proposed rezoning.

Affordable Housing Permit Processing: Development permit applications for non-market affordable housing are now prioritized for review and, when eligible, receive enhanced permitting services through Edmonton's Client Liaison Unit. For building permit applications there is a dedicated safety codes officer for affordable housing projects.

Affordable Housing Capacity Building: The Affordable Housing Development Guidebook⁶, launched in Fall 2024, is a practical resource designed to help developers navigate the complexities of affordable housing in Edmonton. It provides foundational knowledge on regulatory processes, funding mechanisms, and development strategies, equipping both new and experienced developers with the tools to move projects forward efficiently.

Building on the knowledge of the Affordable Housing Guidebook, the Housing Action Team has launched the latest resource: The Affordable Housing Sustainability Guidebook⁷. The focus of this guidebook is to help multifamily affordable housing developers integrate sustainable design from the outset of their projects. By prioritizing energy efficiency and resilient design early, developers can reduce construction costs, avoid expensive late-stage changes, and lower long-term operating expenses—keeping housing truly affordable.

⁶ <https://www.edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/Affordable-Housing-Guidebook.pdf?cb=1739215545>

⁷ <https://www.edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/Affordable-Housing-Sustainability-Guidebook.pdf?cb=1739215545>

This guidebook offers additional strategies to incorporate durable materials, efficient systems, and cost-saving sustainability measures during early project planning. All City tools and incentives for affordable housing development, including information on available land, grant programs, the enhanced permitting process for affordable housing developments, and a directory for connecting housing developers with non-market housing providers and social service organizations, can now be found at edmonton.ca/AffordableHousingDevelopers.

Regional Housing Needs Assessment: The City of Edmonton led the development of a regional housing needs assessment on behalf of the 13 municipalities which comprise the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Board (EMRB). The regional housing needs assessment incorporates quantitative and qualitative data and informs a deeper understanding of current and projected housing needs within the region. The report will be finalized by April 2025.

Supplemental Housing Needs Assessment: Administration supplemented the Edmonton Housing Needs Assessment with a further breakdown of Edmontonians earning less than \$45,000 annually including sources of income and affordable housing available to them (Supplemental Housing Needs Assessment memo sent October 9, 2024).

Reassessment of Lived Experience Research: Administration revisited past research which had identified 27 possibilities for transformative actions within the housing sector. Through conducting several pop-up engagements with individuals with lived and living experience of housing needs in various locations, the 27 ideas were further vetted and two clear paths for action were identified. Administration will be moving forward with the following two paths for action as initial steps: a) The *Connect Neighbours and Create Community prototype* aims to advance building community with newly housed individuals and their neighbours. b) The *Peer Support in Landlord-Tenant Conflict* service adjustment will employ people with lived and living experience of homelessness to contribute to and help facilitate Tenant Empowerment Courses.

Policy Reviews: Administration initiated reviews of the following City policies:

- Policy C601, the City of Edmonton's Affordable Housing Investment Guidelines⁸. The Policy provides direction on the City's investment in affordable housing. External engagement included 89 total participants. The policy review will present its findings and recommendations at the May 12, 2025, Community and Public Services Committee.
- Policy C620, Supporting Vulnerable People During Extreme Weather Conditions⁹. The Policy formalizes the City of Edmonton's response to extreme weather conditions. The policy review will include both a review of the Policy and the procedure, with an update by memo to be provided in June 2025 and findings and recommendations presented to Committee in early 2026.

⁸ <https://www.edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/assets/PoliciesDirectives/C601.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/assets/PoliciesDirectives/C620.pdf>

Homelessness and Housing Services Plan: In July 2024, City Council approved the City's first Homelessness and Housing Services Plan, which documents actions the City is taking to address homelessness with consideration of the roles and responsibilities of other orders of government and allied systems of care. Although the City is only six months into plan implementation, a number of actions are well underway or have already been completed. For example:

- Continued support was provided to emergency shelter providers and the Government of Alberta through land searches, accelerated permits, and a below-market lease to advance the shared priority to increase the total number of shelter beds and diversity of shelter options available to Edmontonians.
- Approval of the updated City of Edmonton's Emergency Shelter Best Practices Guide¹⁰. Since 2021, this work has contributed to increasing the accessibility, diversity, and overall capacity of emergency shelters in Edmonton to address local needs.
- Procurement of a Housing Relocation team as part of the homelessness prevention portfolio. From March to December 2024, 23 households inclusive of 44 adults and 37 children were diverted from homelessness and rehoused from problem properties. An additional emergency housing effort took place at a Safe Housing site, rehousing 13 households (16 adults). A total of 36 households have been diverted from homelessness as a result of these efforts.
- 385 individuals successfully completed Tenant Empowerment courses¹¹ in 2024 across 49 sessions delivered in the community - 58 of which completed Certificate Sessions which are now recognized as a rental reference by the Alberta Residential Landlord Association. Courses for 2025 are now underway.
- In 2024, there were 67 days of extreme weather activation¹², including 42 days of extreme cold, eight days of poor air quality and 17 days of extreme heat. Between November 1, 2024 and December 20, 2024 City investment and coordination resulted in 592 transports to shelter and 432 overnight shelter stays provided via enhanced measures that contribute to keeping individuals experiencing homelessness safe. So far in 2025 there have been 32 days of extreme cold activation.

Affordable Housing Dashboard: The Affordable Housing in Edmonton dashboard¹³ was recently updated to include data for the progress of the City's Affordable Housing Strategy. The new section outlines the City's progress to date in

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https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/initiatives_innovation/emergency-shelter-best-practices-guide&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1741023076483352&usg=AOvVaw0SzpRS_LhkCXUatR0cH2_2

¹¹ https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/housing/tenant-support

¹² https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/emergency_preparedness/extreme-weather

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https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/city.of.edmonton/viz/AffordableHousing_17053222481910/AffordableHousinginEdmonton

achieving the goals and key actions identified in the Affordable Housing Strategy. To date, 17 out of 50 actions are complete, with 27 in progress.

Housing Affordability

The City is committed to maintaining a competitive and responsive service to support development within Edmonton. This is done by utilizing a wide variety of approaches such as undertaking policy and regulatory reform, leveraging and building new technologies, and simplifying processes to accommodate demand. Combined with leveraging various human resource strategies, these efforts help increase the housing supply and reduce costs to provide housing. A list of actions taken in the last year to help increase housing supply and affordability is provided below.

Housing Accelerator Fund: The City of Edmonton signed its HAF contract on November 9, 2023, and the contract was officially announced by the Prime Minister on February 21, 2024. During the first year of implementation (November 2023-November 2024) the City is ahead on its housing supply target and sub-targets (with the exception of Affordable Housing) and is on target to meet all contractually obligated initiatives to the satisfaction of CMHC. The City annual attestation to CMHC was delivered on time in December 2024, and the second of four payments from CMHC of \$43.79 million was deposited with the City in January 2025.

Adding capacity: A variety of resource tools such as utilizing overtime, contracted inspectors, and supporting both temporary and permanent staffing levels are being utilized to facilitate increased work volumes. Ongoing reviews of service levels and forecasted construction activity help inform which strategies are best to employ to support development in Edmonton.

Zoning Bylaw Renewal: Edmonton's new Zoning Bylaw 20001¹⁴ came into effect on January 1, 2024. The new bylaw permits a greater variety of housing types throughout Edmonton, including apartments, row houses, secondary suites and backyard houses, and more homes per lot.

District Planning: Creates more opportunities for development in the redeveloping areas of the city (roughly inside the Anthony Henday) and directs larger developments to urban centres and main streets, known as nodes and corridors¹⁵ making developing in these areas easier¹⁶. Replacing the previous patchwork system of plans with district plans also created a more efficient development review process by reducing the number of conflicting plans and policies the City needs to review to evaluate

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https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/bylaws/zoning-bylaw?utm_source=virtualaddress&utm_campaign=zoningbylaw

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<https://gis.edmonton.ca/portal/apps/experiencebuilder/experience/?appalias=DistrictPlanning&id=8e6f820ee6a646f3838f66118e30ab0e>

¹⁶ https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/urban_planning_and_design/plans-in-effect

development proposals. 3,700 pages of planning documents have been replaced with 16 plans totalling fewer than 500 pages.

Priority Growth Area Rezoning: The City has selected five key node (urban centre) and corridor (main street) areas where targeted, City-initiated rezonings are being pursued to leverage existing transit investment and encourage more housing and business development¹⁷. The proposed rezonings are targeted to go to City Council for a decision in May 2025.

Infill Infrastructure Fund: In late August, Urban Planning and Economy (UPE), with support from the Housing Action Team, launched the \$39 million Infill Infrastructure Fund - a key part of our efforts to incentivize development in Priority Growth Areas and other nodes and corridors near mass transit¹⁸. The fund is intended to remove a potential barrier to infill development related to the cost of upgrading infrastructure. The Fund reduces the cost of constructing homes, making more multi-unit, transit-oriented, 'missing middle,' and non-market affordable housing available to Edmontonians. Since the launch of this program in August 2024, the eligibility criteria for the Infill Infrastructure Fund has been updated based on feedback and analysis of its performance.

Key updates include:

- Expanding location eligibility criteria for non-market housing projects. The location criteria for non-market housing projects have been expanded to include the entire redeveloping area (roughly within the Anthony Henday).
- Lowering the minimum estimated offsite infrastructure cost needed to qualify for funding for non-market housing projects. The minimum estimated off site infrastructure cost needed to qualify for funding has been lowered from \$100,000 to \$25,000 for these projects.
- Making market housing projects bordering a Priority Growth Area eligible if certain criteria are met.

As of February 2025, the program has provided \$6.9 million in funding for six projects totalling 1,624 new housing units.

Gradual Reduction of the Multi-Unit Tax Subclass: Prior to 2024, the City charged a multi-residential tax rate for buildings with four or more units that was 15 per cent higher than the regular residential rate¹⁹. A gradual reduction in this multi-residential rate will make it equal to the regular residential rate by 2028 and will remove a

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https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/city_vision_and_strategic_plan/priority-growth-area-rezoning?utm_source=virtualaddress&utm_campaign=prioritygrowtharearezoning

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https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/housing/infill-infrastructure-fund?utm_source=virtualaddress&utm_campaign=infillfund

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https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/housing/housing-accelerator-fund?utm_source=virtualaddress&utm_campaign=housingacceleratorfund#accordion-97619

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significant disincentive for multi-unit housing development that disproportionately affected rental housing downtown.

Sanitary Sewer Trunk Charge (SSTC): This development fee is typically collected at the development permit stage to help cover the cost of sanitary sewer trunk lines²⁰. In 2024, multi-unit housing developers paid \$1,259 per unit. The City, in discussion with affordable housing providers, used HAF funds to provide a rebate for sanitary sewer trunk costs for the duration of the HAF contract. Additionally, SSTC fees have been paused for all developments while pending the outcome of the Sanitary Servicing Strategy Fund Transformation²¹.

Auto Review for Housing Development Permits: Edmonton is the first Canadian city to automate approvals for single and semi-detached housing development permits in developing areas, which allows a builder to apply for a development permit and put a shovel in the ground on the same day²².

Secondary Suite Firewalls: A new policy based on a City-developed Building Code Alternative Solution that addresses fire separation requirements for secondary suites in rowhouses will make it easier to build this type of housing and save thousands of dollars in design, construction materials and construction costs, while maintaining public safety.

Waste Management for Infill Developments: Waste Services now allows the sharing of green carts for certain infill developments²³. This removes a barrier at the development permit stage by ensuring the collection method is based on the lot location, size and number of units.

Blatchford: Encouraging four to six story multi-unit housing development in Blatchford through rebates for District Energy Sharing System infrastructure and equipment²⁴. Four contracts with builders, which will equate to approximately 350 apartment/condo units, have already been finalized with more expected in the coming months.

Point Access Block: With funding support from the federal government, the City is exploring innovative approaches to increasing housing supply and diversity. Through a partnership with architectural firms, and considering fire safety considerations, the City has developed and published a guideline to assist developers in understanding the Alternative Solution expectations for residential buildings with only one staircase. Based on typical floor plate layouts these buildings could allow for larger, family-sized

²⁰ https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/utilities/sanitary-sewer-trunk-charge-sstc

²¹ https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/utilities/sanitary-servicing-strategy-fund-transformation

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<https://myemail.constantcontact.com/News-Release---Ready--set--build--Edmonton-first-Canadian-municipality-to-introduce-automated-development-permits--enabling-same.html?soid=1127191170163&aid=sc5-WH-X5Qw>

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https://www.edmonton.ca/business_economy/industry-resources-development?utm_source=virtualaddress&utm_campaign=industrycommunication

²⁴ <https://blatchfordedmonton.ca/>

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units and/or additional units on smaller or underutilized lots while ensuring tenant and fire emergency services safety.

Streamlining inspections: Edmonton refined and promoted the use of Verification of Compliance (VOC) processes for minor infractions to eliminate the need for repeat inspection. Engineer-verified compliance for residential plumbing groundwork was also introduced, which transfers responsibility for inspections to the responsible professional.

Policy and Practice Leadership: Edmonton has been identified as a leader in housing related policy and in practices to support affordable housing. Through 2024, the City of Edmonton was engaged to share their learnings, collaborate with or provide advice on policy with numerous organizations, including but not limited to:

- *Housing and Infrastructure Canada* - Strategic Foresight Session
- *CMHC* - Housing Design Catalogue Development, Permanent Transit Fund Program Development, Federal Lands Initiative
- *Government of Alberta* - Lodge Program Review, Affordable Housing Tax Exemption Regulations, Community Revitalization Affordable Housing Regulations
- *Other municipalities* - Edmonton Metro Region, Enoch First Nation, Calgary, Red Deer, Airdrie, Saskatoon, Regina, Winnipeg, London ON, Toronto
- *Conference Presentations and Panels* - Treaty Six Housing Symposium, CMHC National Housing Conference, Canadian Institute of Planners National Conference, Calgary Housing Symposium, Canadian Urban Institute: State of Canada's Cities Summit, Western Canada Apartment Investment Conference, Canadian Home Builders' Association, Emissions-Neutral Building Information Exchange (ENBIX), Edmonton Community Foundation Board Strategy Day, Alberta Seniors & Community Housing Association (ASCHA) Convention