

# Downtown Student Housing Incentive

Edmonton

## Program Guide

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## INTRODUCTION

The Downtown Student Housing Incentive (the Program) aims to stimulate student housing development in downtown Edmonton, supporting the City's broader revitalization goals for the area. This program is funded by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) agreement.

Purpose-built student housing contributes to downtown vitality by:

- Increasing vibrancy, safety and economic activity.
- Utilizing existing transit links and infrastructure.
- Stimulating demand for commercial and community amenities by increasing the local population.
- Acting as a catalyst for further redevelopment.
- Fostering a talent by supporting post-secondary institutions.

This guide provides information on how the program works and how to qualify for a grant.

**Funding is limited** and submitting an application does not guarantee funding. Grants are subject to availability and how well projects align with program goals.

## PROGRAM PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

The Program has two main priorities: downtown revitalization and off-campus student housing.

### Student Housing

- Increasing availability of housing that suits student needs.
- Affordability for post-secondary students.

### Downtown Revitalization

- Creating new residential units in the downtown area.
- Reducing underdeveloped land, especially chronically vacant properties.
- Supporting the downtown economy.
- Strengthening the downtown community.
- Leveraging existing infrastructure and amenities.
- Supporting walkability and transit ridership.

Projects will be prioritized based on these objectives by the evaluation committee. Further information will be provided in the application form.

#### **Ideal projects will be:**

- In the Program Priority Area (Schedule "A"), the Warehouse Campus area.
- Designed with students in mind
- Affordable for students
- Infill-ready sites
- New buildings

## ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE OUTCOMES

Driven by City plans and policy, including the Central District Plan, Capital City Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan and Downtown Action Plan, this program represents a unique opportunity for downtown Edmonton. The Downtown Student Housing Incentive is the first of its kind in Canada, leveraging its funding source to address the gap in student housing.

### ConnectEdmonton Strategic Plan

Urban Places Goal: Edmonton neighbourhoods are more vibrant as density increases, where people and businesses thrive and where housing and mobility options are plentiful.

#### Key Indicators:

- Housing Growth Pattern - Number of new residential units in selected areas of the city as a percentage of new residential units city-wide City of Edmonton
- Population Growth Pattern - Edmonton's population growth in selected areas of the city as a percentage of growth city-wide
- Housing Diversity - Edmonton's residential housing diversity index
- Access to Amenities - Percentage of Edmontonians with access to infrastructure and amenities that improve their quality of life.

## PROGRAM PROCESS

The Program follows a structured, time-sensitive process to ensure timely delivery and alignment with Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) requirements. There are two intake rounds to provide flexibility for applicants. All successful projects must reach the building permit stage no later than November 9, 2026.



### 3.1 Application Periods

Applicants must submit their proposals within designated intake periods.

Funding will be allocated in selection rounds by the Selection Committee.

- Round 1 project selection closes September 30, 2025.
- Round 2 project selection closes December 31, 2025.  
*(if necessary, Round 3 project selection closes March 31, 2026.)*

**Funding is limited.** Should all funding be allocated at the conclusion of a selection Round, the program will close and no further project selection rounds will occur.

### 3.2 Program Evaluation Period

Each intake round will be followed by a two-to-three week evaluation period. The Selection Committee will assess applications against the program's criteria. Evaluation criteria will be included in the application package. Decisions made by the Selection Committee are final and cannot be appealed.

### 3.3 Conditional Grant Approval

Following evaluation, selected projects will receive conditional grant approval. This is pending fulfillment of any final documentation or regulatory requirements. Public announcements of successful projects will be made after approval is confirmed. Conditional approval means an applicant may qualify for a grant and will then be required to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with the City.

### 3.4 Project Design and Permitting

Approved projects must have building permits issued by November 9, 2026, to remain eligible for funding. This timing is a requirement of CMHC, and the City of Edmonton cannot provide flexibility. Applicants should demonstrate a clear and realistic development timeline as part of their submission.

### 3.5 Construction

Applicants must provide a projected construction timeline. The City will monitor project progress and may require periodic updates to ensure alignment with program goals. Construction on the project must be complete within four years of commencement or a time agreed upon by the City.

## APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

### 4.1 Who Can Apply

The property owner of any property associated with the development project must be the applicant. A consultant may apply on a property owner's behalf with their permission. If there are multiple owners, all owners will be required to sign the final grant funding agreement.

Applicants will be required to demonstrate:

- Commitment and competence to complete the proposed development
- Expertise and proven ability to undertake the proposed development
- Financial soundness, including:
  - Financial and operational ability to complete and maintain the development
  - Capacity to handle development risks (i.e. cost overruns, delays)
- Managerial competence and capabilities

### 4.2 How to Apply

The following required documentation and questions are to be responded to in the application form and are listed here for reference.

#### Applicant information:

1. Completed Application Form, including Statutory Declaration
2. Searches:
  - Corporate Registry Search on Applicant
  - Personal Property Registry Search on Applicant
  - Bankruptcy Search on Applicant

#### Land Information

3. Land Title: showing current ownership and all encumbrances registered on proposed development lands. Note that the Applicant must have fee simple ownership of the proposed development lands.

- Purchase contract confirming the Applicant's right to fee simple ownership of the proposed development land showing purchase price and closing date, if the land is not currently owned by the Applicant .
- 4. Site Address and Zoning: Confirmation of site address and current Zoning (this information may be obtained from [maps.edmonton.ca](https://maps.edmonton.ca))
  - Current zoning must support proposed housing development
- 5. Permits:
  - Any existing Development Permits or Building Permits issued
- 6. Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment(s), if available.

#### Project Information

- 7. Description of the proposed development, including:
  - description of the student housing component and any market housing or commercial component
  - Description of occupant selection and eligibility criteria
  - Unit breakdown (student vs market)
  - Rental rates: State the proposed rental rates.
  - Duration of commitment to rental rates.
  - Programs and services provided, such as:
    - property management: on-site or scheduled visits (if scheduled visits, indicate frequency of service, e.g. daily, weekly, on-call)
    - on-site / mobile support; full-time or part-time programming
    - service provision (i.e. specific utilities, parking, laundry, meals, medical services, social services), indicating whether the cost of services are included in rent
    - description of ongoing collaboration with post-secondary institutions, if any.
- 8. A declaration and explanation as to why the project would not have proceeded without the grant.
- 9. Project Schedule
- 10. Supporting information, including:
  - Anticipated construction costs with documentation.
  - Various project readiness information
  - Set of pre-design drawings (further requirements in the application guide)
  - Letters of support (if available)



Financial Information

1. Completion of the Student Housing Project Assessment Workbook, included in the Application Package.
2. Applicant's financial statements for the previous three years.
3. Confirmation of equity: Proof of 10% of the total cost of the proposed development must be provided by the Applicant as equity (i.e. land value, banking statement or a letter from a financial institution), except in special cases as determined by the City of Edmonton

The City may request additional information after reviewing the application. All material submitted may be shared internally and externally with relevant government agencies.

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be eligible for a grant, projects must meet the following minimum mandatory criteria:

- ☐ Projects must be located within the boundaries identified as the Centre City node (Schedule “A”).
  - Preference given to projects in the Program Priority Area (Schedule “A”).
  - Projects outside the Program Priority Area may be prioritized by location, including the Downtown Neighbourhood boundary, proximity to transit, or post-secondary institutions.
- ☐ Projects must relate to the development or redevelopment of a property.
  - Preference will be given to projects that develop on chronically underutilized or vacant lots.
- ☐ The Applicant must anticipate spending at least \$10 million on the construction.
- ☐ Each building must include between **10 and 150 student units**.
- ☐ Projects must create at least 50 new housing units overall.
  - Preference will be given to projects where the funding is shown to catalyze additional housing unit growth.
- ☐ Student units must be clearly intended for student housing, demonstrated through unit design and amenities.
- ☐ Student units must be reserved for students for at least 10 years.
  - Preference will be given to projects that maintain affordability for a longer period of time.
- ☐ Student units must meet rental requirements - lower than or equal to average monthly rental rate (AMRR) [as published by the City](#).
  - Preference will be given to projects that are below the AMRR.
- ☐ Projects must demonstrate financial need and certify that the program changed their development decision to proceed with the project, and they would not have otherwise proceeded.

- ☐ The applicant must demonstrate competence and expertise to show they can complete the proposed development, including financial viability.
- ☐ Projects must demonstrate a viable path to obtaining a building permit by November 9, 2026. This is a CMHC requirement and cannot be varied.
- ☐ Development must achieve at least Tier 1 of the 2020 National Energy Code for Buildings (NECB).
  - Preference will be given to projects that exceed Tier 1 of the 2020 NECB
- ☐ Projects must meet all minimum building code accessibility requirements.
  - Preference will be given to projects that meet higher accessibility standards, including, but not limited to, universal design, visitable units, units designed for persons in wheelchairs, and barrier-free bathrooms
- ☐ Construction on the project must be completed within four years of commencement or an agreed-upon time with the City.

Projects will **not** be considered for funding if they meet any of the following criteria:

- ☐ Construction is already underway, or approved permits have been issued (unless applicant attends to apply for a Permit Revision to include additional student housing units).
- ☐ Complex site-specific constraints. Projects must be able to meet the aggressive timeline.

A **student unit** can be either located as a self-contained unit accommodating one student, or a dwelling containing multiple student rooms.

Further information will be required in the application form.

## FUNDING AND GRANT AGREEMENT

Funding is limited, and grant awards are subject to fund availability. Funding is allocated by CMHC to the City of Edmonton and will be distributed directly to successful applicants.

Projects will receive up to **\$30,000.00** per each student housing unit.

Projects that meet all of the program objectives could be eligible to receive the maximum grant amount pending the availability of funds. Further information on program criteria and evaluation can be found in the application form.

Applicants whose projects receive preliminary approval will be required to enter into a grant funding agreement with the City of Edmonton. The City Manager or a delegate may enter into the grant funding agreement if sufficient funding is available. Once this agreement is fully executed, the applicant's priority for funding will be secure. The grant funding agreement will outline how grants are calculated and paid, and any conditions. Grants will be required to be repaid if the agreement is breached, a condition is not met, or inaccurate information was provided. Grants will not be issued if the agreement is not finalized and signed.

Grants will typically be disbursed in four installments based on project milestones, subject to any changes required to meet the CMHC HAF agreement timelines:

- 30% at development permit issuance
- 30% at building permit issuance
- 30% at construction start (foundation)
- 10% at completion

These milestones will be further detailed in the grant funding agreement with successful applicants.

## DETAILED APPLICATION PROCESS OVERVIEW AND PAYMENT SCHEDULE

**Step 1:** Verify that your project meets the eligibility criteria for this program.

**Step 2:** Complete the application form, and attach any required information. Within 3 business days of submission, applicants will receive notification that their application has been received and if any additional information is required.

**Step 3:** At the end of each round, projects will be reviewed and those that best meet the program objectives will be prioritized for funding. At this stage, your project receives conditional approval.

**Step 4:** Regular development approval process for development and building permits. Building permit applications must be received by September 2026, in order to be issued by **November 9, 2026**.

**Step 5:** Start construction.

**Step 6:** Projects should be generally complete within 4 years of commencement, or an agreed-upon time with the City.

## IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

*Assignment of Agreement:* A request to assign the grant funding agreement to a new owner may be made to the City if the property sells or is transferred during construction or while in occupancy. The City may approve or refuse the transfer. If refused, no additional grants will be paid if the property has transferred. If an assignment is not approved the financial contribution from the City will need to be repaid as per signed contractual obligations.

*Audit:* The City may audit all financial and related records associated with the agreement for up to six years after the final grant has been issued. Full cooperation and provision of requested documentation are required. Failure to cooperate will result in cessation of additional payments and potential repayment of prior grants.

*Changes in Design:* Applicants must request approval from the City for any changes in design after the agreement is signed. Significant changes may result in re-evaluation and potential ineligibility.

*Deadlines:* Missing deadlines for documentation submission will result in the program file being closed and funding reallocated.

*Discretionary Grant:* The decision to provide a grant is purely discretionary on the part of the City. The City may refuse to issue a grant for any reason. Grants are always subject to funding approval, and may no longer be issued if funding is unavailable.

*Documentation:* It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all required permits, including Development and Building permits.

*Grant Amounts:* Grant amounts will not be increased due to changes in project scope, cost overruns, or additional housing units.

*Maintenance:* All new buildings supported by the program must be maintained for a period of 10 years. This includes general maintenance, graffiti removal,

and keeping windows and doors clear of clutter, vinyl wraps, and security bars or shutters. Failure to maintain the building may require repayment of up to 50% of the grant.

*No Appeal:* There is no appeal from any decision on whether to provide a grant.

*Repayment:* If the property owner fails to comply with the terms of the grant funding agreement, the City may request reimbursement of the full grant amounts paid. This includes failure to complete the project in a timely manner, spending less on construction than contemplated, or misrepresentations in the application.

*Reservation of Rights:* The City reserves the right to make decisions and award funding to projects in its sole discretion. Decisions are final, the amount of funding commitment by the City may vary in the City's sole discretion.

### **Conditional Grant Approval**

Once the application material has been reviewed, the City may grant conditional approval that an Applicant may qualify for a grant. Once condition approval has been granted, an Applicant will then be required to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with the City.

The organization receiving funding should own the land on which the housing will be built, or be in the process of purchasing land and will need to have obtained the land for the City to enter into an agreement. The City may require a third-party guarantor, and accordingly, a Guarantee Agreement with this third-party guarantor and the City.

Grant Funding Agreements will always be conditional upon an approved building permit being issued by November 9th, 2026.

In deciding whether to approve a grant the following factors may be taken into account:

The eligibility criteria for the grant;

Whether there are any tax arrears associated with the applicant or property;

Whether there are any development compliance issues or safety code issues associated with the project;

Whether the Applicant is involved in any litigation with the City;

Whether the Applicant is involved in any litigation relating to the project including foreclosures or builders liens;

Whether the Applicant or an entity related to the applicant is in bankruptcy or receivership;

Whether any properties owned by the applicant or a related entity are the subject of foreclosures;

Whether the applicant has received some other form of grant or financial assistance from the City or another order of government and there is a dispute about whether the applicant is abiding by the terms of that grant or other financial assistance;

Whether the applicant has received another form of grant or other financial assistance that has the effect of cancelling taxation or providing an incentive to build.

### **Grant is Discretionary**

Whether to provide a grant will be a purely discretionary decision on the part of the City. The City may refuse to issue a grant for any reason. In addition, Grants are always subject to funding approval, and grants may no longer be issued if funding is no longer available or if there is a question of whether there is sufficient funding remaining in the program. There is no appeal from any decision on whether to provide a grant.

### **Grant Funding Agreement**

Prior to receiving a grant, an Applicant shall be required to enter into a grant funding agreement with the City for up to 40 years. The grant funding agreement shall outline how grants shall be calculated and paid, and indicate any conditions on the grant. The grant funding agreement will also provide that grants may be required to be repaid to the City if the agreement is breached, a condition of the grant is not met, or the applicant has provided inaccurate information when applying for the grant. Grants will not be issued if a grant funding agreement has not been finalized and signed. The City Manager or a delegate of the City Manager may enter into the grant funding agreement on behalf of the City as long as there is sufficient funding. The individual representing the Applicant must have signing authority to enter into the agreement, and will be required to sign a statutory declaration.

### **Conditions on the Grant**

A specific condition on all grants is that building permits must be issued by November 9th, 2026, and the project must be complete within 4 years, or such other time as approved by the City in the grant funding agreement.

The grant funding agreement will indicate that all future grants will cease in the following circumstances:

- The Applicant goes bankrupt or enters into receivership;
- The property on which the project is located is the subject of foreclosure proceedings;
- The Applicant is found to have been dishonest in the application process;



- Construction ends on the project before construction is completed. Temporary pauses in construction will be allowable;
- A failure to cooperate with an audit.

The grant funding agreement shall indicate that grants that have been paid out by the City will have to be repaid to the City in the following circumstances:

- Construction on the project has ceased and the project shall not be completed within the timelines outlined with the grant funding agreement.
- Construction on the project has ceased as a result of bankruptcy, foreclosure, receivership, or some other legal proceeding;
- The Applicant is found to have been dishonest in the application process;
- The project is not complete within the time outlined within the grant funding agreement;
- Construction ends on the project before construction is completed. Temporary pauses in construction will be allowable;
- A failure to cooperate with an audit.

A caveat may be placed on the property to ensure security for the City in the event that repayment may be required.

The criteria outlined in this Program to qualify for a grant shall be considered to be ongoing conditions in the grant funding agreement.

### **Grant Audit**

The City may audit all financial and related records associated with this Agreement including expenditures on construction costs and the use of the grant funding. This audit may include a review of all documentation associated with the project.

The Applicant shall fully cooperate with any audit that is conducted by the City and provide whatever documentation is requested by the City to complete the audit.

A failure to co-operate with an audit will mean that no additional grant payments will be made and prior grant payments may be required to be repaid.

Audits may occur for up to six years after the final grant has been issued and documentation must be preserved for that period of time.

### **Failure to Comply with the Terms of the Grant**

If it is determined that the property owner has failed to comply with the terms of a grant funding agreement, the City may request reimbursement of the full grant amounts that have been paid. This may include the failure to complete the project within a timely manner, the failure to spend as much on

construction or build what was initially contemplated, or the failure to follow any other term of the grant.

If a property owner is found to have made any misrepresentations in the application or the grant funding agreement, the full amount of the grants will be immediately repayable to the City.

#### **Amount of the Grant**

Where there are multiple owners, the owners shall designate which of the owners shall receive the grant funding.

#### **Assignment of a Grant Funding Agreement**

In the event that a property sells, or is otherwise transferred to a new owner who is planning on proceeding with the construction, a request to assign the grant funding agreement may be made to the City. The City may approve or refuse the transfer of the grant funding agreement. In the event that a transfer is refused, no additional grants shall be paid on the property if the property has transferred.

## COMPATIBILITY WITH OTHER GRANTS/FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Projects are encouraged to seek out other sources of grant funding. Projects that have previously taken advantage of other City of Edmonton development incentive grant projects (e.g., Brownfield Redevelopment Grants or Infill Infrastructure funding) are eligible for this grant. Likewise, projects taking advantage of this program would be eligible to participate in other City grant programs (within the restrictions of these programs).

## IMPORTANT TO KNOW

The program team is here to support you through the program process; however, there are some key things to understand about the program in order to be successful.

- It is your responsibility to obtain all required permits, including a Development and Building permit.
- It is your responsibility to request approval from the City for any changes in design after the Agreement is signed. Significant changes to the approved design may result in a re-evaluation of the project and it may no longer be eligible for a grant.
- If you miss the deadline to submit documentation, the program file will be closed and the grant funding reallocated.
- Grant amounts will not be increased due to changes in project scope or cost overruns, or should additional housing units be added to the project.

## CONTACT THE PROGRAM

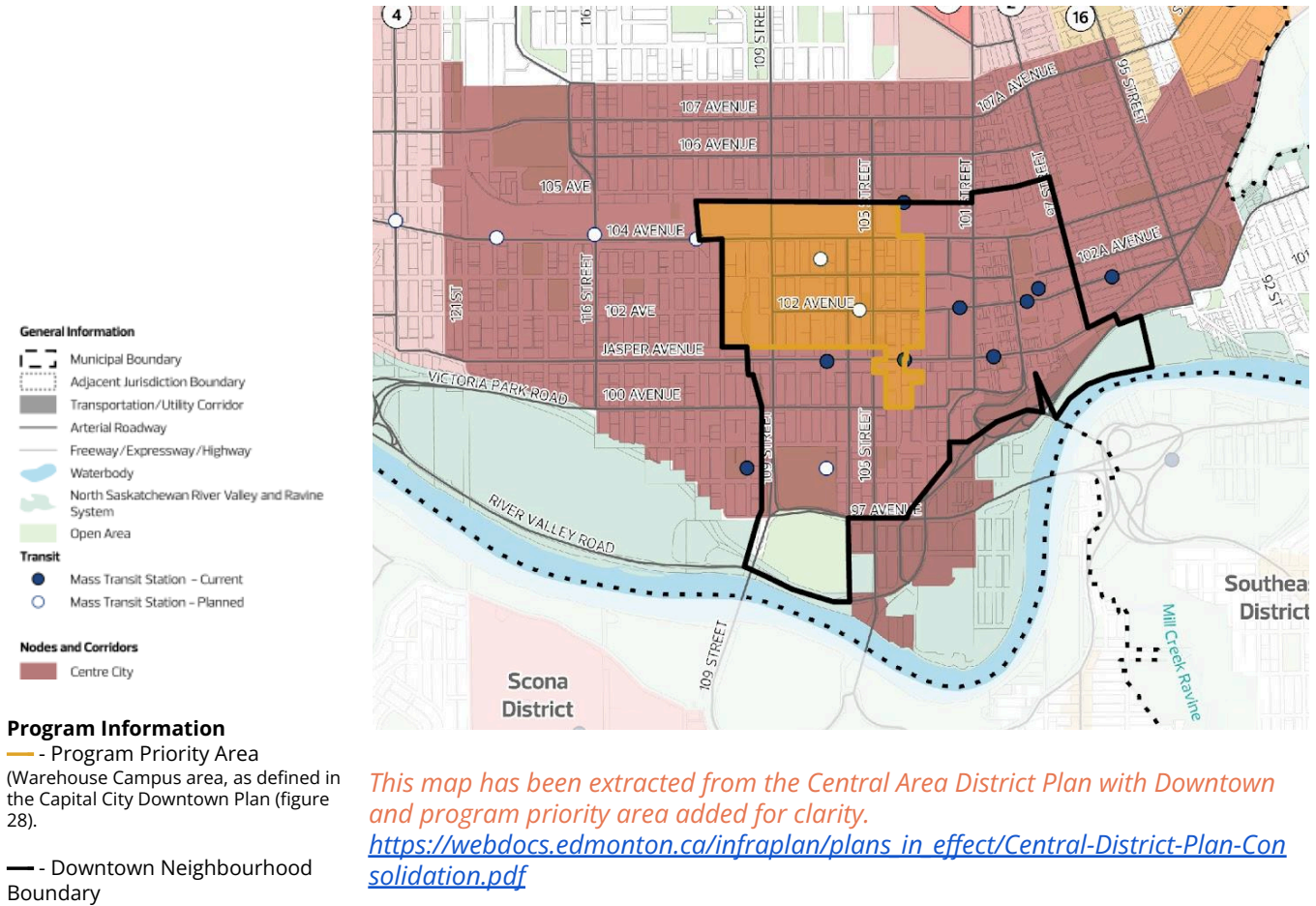
Downtown Student Housing Incentive

Email: [studenthousingincentive@edmonton.ca](mailto:studenthousingincentive@edmonton.ca)

Website: [edmonton.ca/studenthousingincentive](https://edmonton.ca/studenthousingincentive)

## SCHEDULE A: CITY CENTRE NODE AREA

Projects must be located within the centre city node area to apply.



*This map has been extracted from the Central Area District Plan with Downtown and program priority area added for clarity.*

[https://webdocs.edmonton.ca/infraplan/plans\\_in\\_effect/Central-District-Plan-Consolidation.pdf](https://webdocs.edmonton.ca/infraplan/plans_in_effect/Central-District-Plan-Consolidation.pdf)