

Indigenous Housing

Recommendation

That the February 17, 2021, Citizen Services report CS00189, be received for information.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the November 2, 2020, City Council meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration provide a report to Committee with information on the following:

- The number of affordable and supportive housing units already operated and/or owned by organizations which identify as Indigenous.
- A list of proposed housing projects led by Indigenous organizations.
- Any work underway or planned by the City of Edmonton to support and expand the supply of Indigenous-led affordable and supportive housing units.
- The number of Edmontonians sleeping rough who identify as Indigenous.
- A scan of other jurisdictions in Canada and recommendations on ways to foster growth in Indigenous housing in Edmonton, led by Indigenous organizations.

Executive Summary

Currently, there are 929 housing units in Edmonton owned and/or operated by Indigenous organizations, First Nations, and not-for-profits that provide units specifically for Indigenous peoples. Administration is aware of 132 units of proposed Indigenous-led affordable housing. An analysis of funding opportunities and jurisdictional scan of work underway in other Canadian municipalities demonstrates that there are both financial and systems barriers to developing Indigenous-led affordable housing across the country. Future action to foster Indigenous-led affordable housing development in Edmonton needs to be taken in collaboration with Indigenous affordable housing providers and communities.

Report

There are 76,205 Indigenous peoples living in Edmonton, which is the second largest urban Indigenous population in Canada, after Winnipeg. The housing needs of urban Indigenous people are unique and shaped by Canada's colonial history. Indigenous peoples have been displaced from their lands, their families, home and culture, as a result of the residential school system and Sixties Scoop. The traumatic loss of land, language, culture and families has severely impacted the economic, health and social

well-being of Indigenous people across Canada. Indigenous people need access to more safe and appropriate housing in urban centres; many move to cities in search of education, jobs, healthcare, and safe housing.

The City of Edmonton is committed to reconciliation by building stronger relationships and supporting Indigenous peoples in Edmonton, guided by the Truth and Reconciliation's 94 Calls to Action and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls National Inquiry's Calls for Justice. Administration is bringing more focus to Indigenous housing in alignment with the Indigenous Framework. The work undertaken for this report is the beginning of that effort and there is much more to be done to foster Indigenous-led affordable housing development.

Current and Proposed Housing Units

Administration is aware of 929 Indigenous housing units in Edmonton and another 132 units that are seeking funding and/or land to start development (Attachment 1). Most are a mix of affordable, subsidized and supportive housing, but it is important to distinguish between the many different types of housing for Indigenous peoples. A number of First Nation organizations own and operate housing units in Edmonton that are rented to their members and others, in addition to housing units that they offer on-reserve. Indigenous non-profit organizations operate a range of affordable housing units in Edmonton. Non-Indigenous organizations also deliver housing units for Indigenous households, through partnerships with Indigenous operators or an intake process that prioritizes Indigenous applicants.

City of Edmonton Support for Indigenous Housing Development

The City of Edmonton directly supports the development of affordable housing in Edmonton, including Indigenous housing, through the Affordable Housing Investment Plan (2019-2022). Grant funding is available through the Affordable Housing Investment Program, which targets shovel-ready, new-construction projects and rehabilitation of existing units. Any non-profit or for-profit incorporated body may apply to the program and Administration has held introductory discussions with Indigenous organizations to encourage applications and to learn more about any potentially eligible projects. Administration also supports Indigenous housing proponents by providing letters of support for applications to funding provided by other orders of government and assists housing providers through the zoning and permitting processes.

As a result of an internal research project on increasing Indigenous affordable housing development, Administration created a new position in 2019 to establish and maintain relationships with Indigenous housing providers, assist in building capacity with organizations that wish to deliver housing but have not done so before, and support in navigating funding and project development processes.

Opportunities in Edmonton

Culturally-appropriate supportive and affordable housing that is delivered by Indigenous people is an identified need across the country. Conversations with non-profit Indigenous housing providers, other local governments and funding bodies, highlighted the challenges to develop affordable housing for and by Indigenous people. While capital funds are available from different orders of government, the relative lack of operating dollars available for deep subsidies and supportive housing projects makes it difficult to develop Indigenous-led housing projects in Edmonton. Current funding approaches do not address this need and can discourage the development of housing needed to end homelessness.

Beyond funding, municipalities identified challenges related to zoning, housing design, and tenant regulations. Integration of Indigenous housing into existing communities can be further challenged by systemic discrimination and racism; Indigenous people make up 6 percent of Edmonton's population, yet nearly 65 percent of those experiencing homelessness in Edmonton identify as Indigenous. For the reasons above, Indigenous organizations venturing into affordable housing development start at a further disadvantage than established non-profit housing providers who already face significant challenges to increase the number of affordable housing units in Edmonton.

There were no clear examples of cities leading this work from the jurisdictional scan, which presents an opportunity for Edmonton to become a leading municipal partner in fostering Indigenous-led affordable housing development. Moving forward, Administration will explore approaches to address the barriers outlined above, using information gathered from other cities that are relevant in Edmonton. Future funding or program considerations should be based on thorough engagement with Edmonton's Indigenous housing providers and Indigenous community to ensure that designated resources meet the needs of the sector and result in housing that will best serve Edmonton's urban Indigenous population.

Indigenous Edmontonians Experiencing Homelessness

The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation defines core housing need as when a household's housing falls below at least one of the adequacy, affordability or suitability standards and it spends 30 percent or more of its total gross income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable. There is an overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in core housing need in Edmonton. About 23 percent of Indigenous Edmontonians are in core housing need compared to 10 percent of all Edmontonians. Indigenous Edmontonians with First Nations status are even further overrepresented with 31.5 percent living in core housing need.

There is also a disproportionate number of Indigenous people among individuals experiencing homelessness. In November 2020, there were 1,954 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. Of the 650 people who sleep rough or are unsheltered, 63 percent self-identify as Indigenous. According to

EndPovertyEdmonton, 40 percent of Indigenous residents in Edmonton live in poverty and have a median income of only two-thirds that of non-Indigenous. This is particularly true for individuals that identify as First Nations and Indigenous women.

Jurisdictional Scan

Administration distributed a survey on Indigenous housing to 34 municipalities across Canada. Fourteen municipalities responded to the survey (Attachment 2).

Most respondents identified a commitment to reconciliation in overarching strategies and policy documents. However, actions stemming from these strategies to develop Indigenous housing varied. Some municipalities are in the process of identifying and understanding the Indigenous housing needs in their regions, while others have specific approaches to encourage Indigenous project development through specific funding resources. For example, the City of Winnipeg has dedicated funding for Indigenous housing which resulted in a mix of 267 new and repaired units between 2005 and 2019, while the City of Toronto is working to develop an Indigenous housing strategy with Indigenous partners.

Similar to Edmonton, Calgary has created a specific position tasked with identifying specific ways to spur Indigenous housing development. Other municipalities identified that support for Indigenous affordable housing development is provided by intergovernmental and/or Indigenous relations offices.

Funding Available for Indigenous Housing Development

In 2018, the Government of Alberta launched the Indigenous Housing Capital Program to increase the supply of affordable housing units for Indigenous people through construction and planning dollars. Originally, this program was \$120 million (up to \$72 million over the first five years) and would cover up to 95 percent of the costs for deep subsidy units off-reserve. In 2019, the provincial government conducted a review of the program to ensure it was meeting the needs of the communities it served. The Indigenous Housing Capital Program relaunched in mid-2020 with a budget of \$32 million and updated requirements. The applicant's capital contribution increased from 5 percent of project costs to 10 percent of project costs and funding can now be used for below-market and market units, in addition to deep subsidy, if those units are part of a mixed-income housing model.

There have been 58 project applications submitted to the Indigenous Housing Capital Program since its launch and funding has been approved for two construction projects, including one in Edmonton (23 affordable housing units from Métis Capital Housing Corporation). Across the province, \$10.6 million in planning and construction funds have been committed. There are three Edmonton-based projects submitted to the Indigenous Housing Capital Program since the program's relaunch in 2020; funding decisions for these applications will be made in 2021.

The federal government provides support for affordable housing through the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation using a mix of funding, grants and loans to deliver \$55 billion over ten years as committed through the National Housing Strategy. Indigenous organizations, First Nations, and other Indigenous groups seeking to build off-reserve housing can access seed funding, planning dollars, and low-interest loans. Recently, through the Rapid Housing Initiative, \$1 billion in funding was committed across Canada to expedite the delivery of affordable housing units, especially for those impacted by COVID-19. The project submission deadline was December 31, 2020, and all project submissions must be for units that prioritize vulnerable groups that are in core housing need or experiencing homelessness, including Indigenous peoples.

Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy provides funding to communities for supports that prevent and reduce Indigenous homelessness through the Indigenous Homelessness Stream. As the community entity responsible for managing the Reaching Home Strategy funds, Homeward Trust operates as the Community Advisory Board for this funding in Edmonton through their board (minimum of four Indigenous members) and Indigenous Advisory Council. Indigenous Homelessness Stream funding is allocated to Indigenous-led projects in homelessness prevention areas, Housing First programs, supportive housing projects, intensive case management, and other projects that address Indigenous homelessness. Approximately \$1.5 million in core funding provided annually by the federal government is supplemented with non-Indigenous funding streams and all programs have a target of supporting a minimum of 60 percent Indigenous community members regardless of funding source. Homeward Trust is currently procuring Indigenous operators to manage both of their Indigenous housing sites and is planning to hire an Indigenous operator for one of the new supportive housing sites funded this year through the Rapid Housing Initiative.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Homeward Trust received an additional \$1.145 million from the Government of Canada's Reaching Home program. Of that, \$975,000 was allocated to nearby First Nations, Tribal Councils, and urban Indigenous organizations. Funding has been used to ensure basic needs are fulfilled in addition to housing-related activities on reserve, informed by community needs. An additional \$2.126 million was made available to Homeward Trust in October to sustain and enhance pandemic response efforts in Indigenous communities. It is anticipated there will be more COVID-19-specific funding made available.

Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

Corporate Outcome(s): Edmonton is a safe city			
Outcome(s)	Measure(s)	Result(s)	Target(s)
Increased access to affordable housing	Number of supportive housing units developed	2009-2016: 201 2017 - present: 151	916 additional units by 2024

Increased supply of affordable housing units in all areas of the city	Number of new affordable housing units supported	2018-2020: 1151	2,500 by the end of 2022
Edmontonians have safe and adequate housing	Number of unsheltered individuals	September 2020: 1931	Decrease year over year

Attachments

1. Indigenous Housing in Edmonton
2. Indigenous Housing Survey - Summary of Key Findings

Others Reviewing this Report

- M. Persson, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy City Manager, Financial and Corporate Services
- C. Owen, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- B. Andriachuk, City Solicitor, Office of the City Manager