CAPITAL REGION INTERFAITH HOUSING INITIATIVE

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Report on Affordable Housing Workshop at Hope Lutheran Church (5104 106 Ave, Edmonton)
January 23, 2016 from 1-5pm

Representing the Interfaith Housing Initiative: Rev. Brian Kiely, Rev. Kathleen Schmitke, Daryl Kreuzer (City of Edmonton), and Mike Van Boom
Many thanks to the congregation at Hope Lutheran for helping plan and host this event with coffee, refreshments, tech support, setup and cleanup!

In attendance:

1.	Bonnie Bjornson	Ascension Lutheran Church
2.	Mark Rintoul	Ascension Lutheran Church
3.	John Murlay	Seventh-day Adventist Church
4.	Coralee Lechelf	Forest Terrace Heights CL and Capilano Christian Assembly
5.	Angela Mao	Forest Terrace Heights Community League
6.	Silvia Marchesin	Forest Terrace Heights Community League
7.	Heather Van Boom	Mosaic Centre (Rep)
8.	Lynn Ferguson	City of Edmonton
9.	Emily Spring	Edmonton Goldbar Consulate office
10.	Marlin Schmidt	Edmonton Goldbar MLA
11.	Cst. Cameron Jones	Edmonton Police Services
12.	Thomas de Jong	Holy Spirit
13.	Meredith Bongers	Excel Society
14.	Brian Burrows	Welcome Home
15.	Miles Berry	Catholic Archdiocese
16.	Becky Elkew	Excel Society
17.	Gavin Martinson	Fulton Place Community League/EFCL board
18.	Barbara Groote	Ascension Lutheran
19.	Brenda Fisher	Grace United
20.	Jeannette Wright	City of Edmonton
21.	Jenny Samm	Hope Lutheran
22.	Rev. Jonathan Crane	Anglican (St. Augustine's)
23.	Jorgen Jespersen	Young Life
24.	John Wesley	Edm. Central S.D.A church

Presenters

Daryl Kreuzer	City of Edmonton
Mike Van Boom	as President of McCauley Community League
Cameron Jones	Neighbourhood Empowerment Team

Workshop and Report Objectives

The goal of the January 23 workshop and this summary report is to help communities in five Edmonton-Goldbar neighbourhoods become informed around the need for more affordable and supportive housing, to understand the impacts to the local community and to promote a healthy conversation around how a community might respond to a new development that includes Affordable Housing units in their neighbourhood.

In the course of the afternoon, participants heard presentations, had opportunity to engage with each other in two facilitated conversations, and generated some ideas together on practical responses communities could take towards these housing developments.

Table Displays

In and around the various presentations and conversations, participants had the opportunity to meet with the following organizations at tables. Here is a brief write-up on each:

Welcome Home

The Welcome Home program is an interfaith initiative offered by Catholic Social Services in partnership with Sign of Hope, United Way of the Alberta Capital Region, and various faith communities of Edmonton.

Welcome Home provides the training, support and opportunity for anyone who is willing to enter into a circle of support and friendship for someone coming off the street and into a new community.

Volunteers engage in meaningful daily activities with program participants (e.g. going for coffee, attending a sporting event), providing companionship to reduce the loneliness and social isolation faced by many newly housed individuals. Through the development of stable, honest, and trusting relationships, participants will increase their community involvement, build self-confidence and positive life skills, and increase their success rate in retaining their housing.

For more information, to volunteer, to make a financial contribution, or to host a Welcome Home information session in your community, please call (780) 378-2544 or visit the following link:

http://www.catholicsocialservices.ab.ca/CSSFindServicesbyLocation/default.aspx?id=20812

The Mosaic Centre

Edmonton's Mosaic Centre is a small drop-in resource centre on Fort Road in Edmonton's Northeast. It is a not for profit-charity serving people challenged by poverty, hunger & homelessness since 2009. Working within the community they focus on building relationships with vulnerable individuals & bridging connections to available services. They work one on one with people who are experiencing crisis such as poverty, hunger, homelessness & addictions.

They believe that people are created in the image of God & should be served with dignity and respect. Mosaic Centre offers a safe healthy space where relationships begin at the door and not in a person's past.   www.mosaiccentre.com

Grand Manor, the Excel Society

Grand Manor supports clients with a variety of challenges. This facility has 56 suites and assists clients in rebuilding their lives in the community. Grand Manor is one of a kind in Alberta. The Grand Manor team supports individuals with health care needs with a risk of homelessness. They have had significant success through a harm reduction model which supports seniors who are at risk due to an alcohol addiction.

This building supports clients and ensures personal dignity and self-determination along with quality care services.

Each person living in the Grand Manor has their own barrier free suite that includes a kitchen area as well as a barrier free washroom. This building is also equipped with a main floor dining area where breakfast, lunch and supper are served daily. The third floor includes 22 suites for clients with alcohol dependencies in our Harm Reduction Program. Grand Manor's second floor has 34 suites and is specialized for clients with mental health disorders which include schizophrenia, brain injury, cerebral palsy, bipolar and many others.

The Workshop on Affordable Housing

Welcome: by Rev. Brian Kiely
First Presentation: Daryl Kreuzer, City of Edmonton

Daryl Kreuzer, Senior Planner of Housing Policy with the City's Sustainable Development Department made a presentation to provide some context for the day's workshop on housing and homeless needs from a City perspective - where we've come from and how City Council would like to move forward in meeting these needs. This included information on Council's approval in 2009 of *A Place to Call Home, Edmonton's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness*. Also referenced was the City's *Affordable Housing Information and Awareness Campaign* launched by Mayor Don Iveson in 2015 and the City's recognition of the importance of constructive community conversations about developments designed to meet those needs, well in advance of specific project development proposals that include Affordable Housing units.

The presentation included an overview of the City definition of Affordable Housing, the three main Affordable Housing types (Supportive Housing, Supported Housing, and Independent-living Affordable Housing) in the framework of the "Housing Spectrum", the significant need for Affordable Housing throughout Edmonton as reflected in the growing social housing wait lists in Edmonton and persisting homelessness, and the importance and value of Affordable Housing to both its residents and to the communities in which it is located.

Daryl's presentation also highlighted the recent City Council-approved *Edmonton Affordable Housing Strategy 2016 to 2025*, and its major objective to increase the supply of Affordable Housing units in all areas of the city. Consistent with that objective was a Council Policy also approved in

2015, providing guidelines for the development of 17 vacant school sites, which the school boards had declared surplus to their needs and, which were added to the City's land inventory in 2009. Daryl indicated that consistent with the guidelines of that Policy, each of those sites, all in established, built-up neighbourhoods, are now planned for medium-density residential developments with a mix of Affordable Housing units and Market Housing units. Where feasible, these developments could also include additional ancillary uses such as community meeting space, to help with the integration of these developments into the wider neighbourhoods in which they are planned. Daryl's presentation ended with the showing of a one-minute video on Affordable Housing produced for the City's *Affordable Housing Information & Awareness Campaign.*

See the following website to access the campaign: *http://www.nonmarkethousing.ca/*

Conversation Café
This session focused on two table questions
(facilitated by CRIHI Housing Ambassador Mike Van Boom)

I.   *How do you feel about low-income/affordable housing projects?*

- More than one table group stated feelings of fear and concern, including worries about crime. It was noted by some that these feelings are often based on ignorance. More than one table expressed the need for good information as key to helping resolve fears and concerns. Two different tables expressed that they were comfortable with the idea of having these housing projects close by, while another expressed uncertainty about long-term impacts.

- The group discussed the challenges of diversity. Some stated that diversity is hard, but worthwhile. But not everyone agrees on that, so it is necessary for some to become advocates. Having the support of a welcoming community enables a healthier development. Others acknowledged the need for support services, and that schools and other local institutions could/should play a role in partnering to provide that.

- One table group observed that NIMBY (Not in my backyard) is a by-product of 'What's in it for me?' So if a project wants to gain acceptance, it needs to answer that question!

- Concerns were expressed about the challenge of keeping mixed communities healthy in the long run. Some work on maintenance is required. Changing dynamics in a community make it hard to chart a long-term course.

- One table noted that the 'low-income' descriptor in the question wasn't correct. Labeling doesn't help us!

II.   *What do you think are our responsibilities as neighbours?*

- To help build connections between people, and to create inclusive opportunities that are accessible for anyone.

- There was broad agreement that the community can advocate for services if more are needed. (discussed schools as community hubs, providing youth programming, and finding solutions to transportation issues.)
- Neighbours should participate in a conversation and be informed. It is important to get good information on the table as many neighbours want to help but don't know how. It was also recognized that sometimes we need to be challenged ourselves to change.
- Advocates needed for the positive promotion of important projects
- To consider together issues around long-term maintenance and stewardship of their community's resources. Homeowners need to ask about affordability too.
- The following practical ideas came forward: Create buddy programs (mentoring/befriending), babysitting, create a welcome package, hold block parties (City has a resource for planning). City has $40,000 to promote Neighbourhood Engagement.

Second Presentation: Mike Van Boom, as President of McCauley Community League

Mike reflected on the experience and challenges faced in McCauley. Noted that McCauley has the highest concentration of affordable and supportive housing in the city, at a rate of 64%, or 38% if shelters are not counted. Mike explained that the research says that affordable and supportive housing units tend to have no negative (and even some positive) impact on the local community up until a community reaches 20% concentration; after which some negatives begin to enter the picture. Once communities reach 40% (in the United States) or 50% in Canada, there is a significant negative impact.

Here are some statistics from the city that Mike made available to those interested: Excluding group homes, and based on data from the 2014 City Census on total dwellings per neighbourhood, our calculations for total estimated Affordable Housing units (including "Supportive", "Supported" and "Independent-Living") as a percentage of the total number of dwellings in each of these five neighbourhoods is:

- Forest Heights: 99 Affordable Housing units/2,373 total dwellings = 4.2%;
- Terrace Heights: 24 Affordable Housing units/1,244 total dwellings = 2.0%;
- Gold Bar: 36 Affordable Housing units/1,169 total dwellings = 3.1%;
- Fulton Place: 35 Affordable Housing units/990 total dwellings = 3.5%; and
- Capilano: 0 Affordable Housing units/1,112 total dwellings = 0%.

This 2.8% average Affordable Housing ratio for all five neighbourhoods combined (194 total Affordable Housing units/6,888 total dwellings) is significantly lower than the City-wide neighbourhood average of approximately 6.0%. More specific information available on request.

Mike concluded his presentation highlighting the fact that slum landlords and low-end market rentals with absentee landlords tend to be the real problem properties in McCauley. By contrast, supportive housing complexes such as McCauley Apartments (managed by E4C),

Grand Manor (managed by the Excel Society, including some managed alcohol help), and Ambrose Place (managed by Niginan Ventures, giving housing to some of Edmonton's most hard-to-house citizens) are excellent neighbours whose contribution to the neighbourhood is positive.

Second Presentation: Cst. Cameron Jones, Neighbourhood Empowerment Team (N.E.T.)

In his talk, Cst. Jones shared how homelessness affects all first responders at some level; Police having to find alternative lodging (sometimes taking hours) especially during the winter, EMS/EFD staying with them at hospitals for extended periods if care is needed. Nurses, hospitals, Sheriffs (Jail), and Mall/ETS Peace Officers are all affected. While homelessness was down 27 % in Edmonton (2008-2014) there is a good possibility it will skyrocket with a prolonged downturn in the economy. Youth related homelessness is quite prevalent in Edmonton, with a lack of actual successful services to house and transition youth.

Impact of Low Income/Capital housing: While Crime stats/occurrences do show a rise, it's due to more people in closer surroundings which can be beneficial as more eyes to observed crime and disorder. Poverty does NOT equate crime. A Canadian study of 146 supportive housing sites concluded that "there was no statistically significant evidence that supportive housing led to increased rates of reported violent, property, criminal mischief, disorderly conduct or total crimes." In fact, the future occupants of new affordable housing often already live in the Neighbourhood. (Ontario Human Rights Commission)

STRATEGIES FOR INTEGRATION: Residents of rent-subsidized housing are all over the city, and you wouldn't even know it. People living with Low Incomes receive those subsidies because of necessity to support their family/life. Usually they have no other choice. If you are having a neighbourhood event, reach out and try to include them. They are human. A good percentage of them feel like outcasts of the neighbourhood due to the stigma of "low income/capital housing".

Consensus Workshop
On the question: What are the elements of a healthy neighbourhood response to a new affordable/supportive housing development?
The group distilled four primary answers.
Sustainable Partnerships and Strategies

The themes represented here emphasized the need for a project to have a long-term and sustainable vision. Generating a strategy with local partners was proposed as a way to promote this. A clear set of goals and quantifiable results should be proposed with realistic and attainable timelines. And a way forward generated that came out of a common set of vision and values that were in step with the community. Having a staffed position that helped coordinate this kind of collaboration for the long term was seen as an asset.

To help these partnerships and strategies find their feet in a community, the group recommended that the developer be prepared for the time and money involved in proper conversation and consultation with the community. These conversations should be presented with an eye to the long-term vision of the project and its place in the community. For the community's part, they could envision a set of core values and bring them to the table. From there, the community and developer could find common ground on which to work. It was noted that support from the various orders of government would help sustain a project and its healthy integration into the community. Good stewardship of resources for the project will allow for greater stability in the community.

Integrated Resources (services)

It was assumed that those in need of affordable or supportive housing arrangement would have some need for added resources and services. The idea of a small service or resource hub was broached as one way a community could respond. Alternatively, the group discussed ways that a more integrated support could utilize existing community spaces, amenities and recreational programming. Established services could be integrated into housing locations. The development of resources could also grow in response to the felt needs of the larger community.   As these needs were identified, the community could advocate for the resources and proper funding to enable a healthy response. The community could advocate for increased access to adult education opportunities and work to resolve any public transportation challenges or concerns around the flow of traffic.

As far as how to promote this kind of practical response to a community's needs, the group urged the incorporation of meeting spaces into new structures, and having libraries and schools be part of the supporting network where appropriate. The community could assist in helping new neighbours access green Spaces and Rec areas; making community events free and affordable where possible. The community could advocate for better access to transit, childcare and social services resources.   Local businesses and local food stores were seen as good prospective partners in both community-building and providing better access for local neighbours.   Communities were also encouraged to explore facilitating local healthcare, adult education opportunities and youth care.

Trustworthy communication

As a project is being negotiated in a community, the need for solid information and clear communication was firmly recognized. The community needs access to facts and research on affordable housing and its impacts. The developer needs to be absolutely transparent with their plans every step of the way. The community needs to know what some of the available resources are, including bylaw, police and access to drop-in/resource centres.

The group recommended some practical advice to developers, urging them to assume pushback from the community, to engage early and often, to put things in print and use every

form of media that fits with how the community already engages. The input of other community leaders was also seen as helpful as they could provide additional information and another perspective. Developers were urged to provide timely information, to share feedback as it is received, and to provide regular updates on the direction of the project. They were also encouraged to measure the readiness for change in a community, and to be proactive in creating allies, and engaging an effective network of conversation partners.

Engaged Community

The group had much to say about how a community could respond. They promoted a posture of curiosity, excitement and respect as key to a healthy and engaged conversation with a developer. Neighbourhoods were encouraged to invite a range of community partners to participate, including local business owners, and a range of residents that included people from all stages of life. An inclusive and welcoming attitude to everyone at the table was seen as important, as was courage and patience throughout the project, and curiosity before judgment. The group also recommended a willingness to engage in the process, and a willingness to change.

In order to promote strong community engagement, the group encouraged piggy-backing important conversations on existing community events and gatherings. Spreading the net wide to prospective partners was important with an eye to making sure everyone could participate equally. Community and developer should make every effort to eliminate barriers (physical, financial, emotional or social) that might hinder someone's participation. In the conversation, effort should be made to ensure that everyone's perspective is heard and valued.

The Workshop adjourned at 5:05pm.
This report is submitted as follow up to the event. CRIHI thanks our hosts at Hope Lutheran, and all those who contributed their thoughts and perspectives in our afternoon together. *Appendix with further information available on request.*

To Learn more about Capital Region Housing Initiative
Visit us on our website at interfaithhousinginitiative.wordpress.com
CRIHI's email: IFHI_Edm@yahoo.ca
To contact our housing ambassador, Mike Van Boom
Email: housingambassador@outlook.com
Phone: 780.554.2703

To learn more about Affordable Housing, please visit:
http://www.nonmarkethousing.ca/
or
http://www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca/