PathwaysHOME

Spruce Grove’s 5 Year Strategy to Reduce Poverty & Homelessness
Tuesday, January 22, 2019

Attention to:

Janine Peter  
Director of FCSS & Social Planning  
City of Spruce Grove

Submitted by:

Urban Matters CCC  
304 - 1353 Ellis Street  
Kelowna, BC  
V1Y1Z9

&

Turner Strategies  
alina@turnerstrategies.org  
403.827.8722

Project Contact:

Erin Welk  
- Social & Economic Inclusion-  
ewelk@urbanmatters.ca  
250-215-5193
Table of Contents

Introducing *PathwaysHOME* ................................................................. 1.

Spruce Grove Context .................................................................................. 1

The PathwaysHOME Strategy Process ........................................................... 4

  Guiding Principles ..................................................................................... 4

  Defining Homelessness ............................................................................... 5

  Engagement Process .................................................................................. 5

  Best Practices .......................................................................................... 6

PathwaysHOME Theme Areas ............................................................................ 7

  Collaboration ............................................................................................. 7

  Reconciliation ........................................................................................... 9

  Housing and Supports ............................................................................. 11

  Community Inclusion and Capacity ......................................................... 13

  Healthy Living ......................................................................................... 15

Implementation Costing Analysis .................................................................... 17

Measuring Progress ....................................................................................... 27

Appendices

  Appendix A - Canadian Homelessness Definition

  Appendix B - Engagement Summary

  Appendix C - Summary of Best Practices

  Appendix D - Actions for Implementation
Introducing *PathwaysHOME*

Like many communities in Alberta, the City of Spruce Grove is increasingly grappling with far-reaching and systemic social challenges such as poverty, community instability, and homelessness. While these challenges are dynamic and complex, PathwaysHOME sets out a collaborative approach to these challenges which builds on the Tri-Region's existing assets, capacity, and collective impact.

As a fast-growing community just 11 kilometers west of Edmonton, the City is experiencing both the benefits and challenges of rapid growth - new ideas and capacity, alongside people seeking help for complex and multilayered social and economic challenges. As the number of residents accessing local and regional social services is increasing, PathwaysHOME offers an opportunity to align community partners to a common set of strategies. Doing so builds the community’s collaboration muscles, allowing for increasingly impactful partnerships and teamwork as the community inevitably continues to change.

In June 2018, the PathwaysHOME team led by Family and Community Social Services (FCSS), and the City of Spruce Grove (the City), set out to design an engaging process for a 5 Year Strategy to Reduce Poverty and Homelessness that:

» provided a forum for engagement with community on issues surrounding poverty and homelessness;
» identified a group of core collaborators committed to addressing the issue;
» identified skillsets required to serve the initiative;
» developed a common agenda and actions alongside a formal definition of homelessness;
» developed an agreed upon set of performance indicators to measure impact collectively;
» solidified a community plan of action outlining and coordinating goals and activities.

The following Strategy provides an overview of the current context, methodology used to develop the strategy, and outlines a set of key themes, actions and action steps for addressing poverty and homelessness in Spruce Grove collaboratively. The strategy includes an estimate of costs to deliver key parts of the strategy, along with performance indicators to help measure success.

**Spruce Grove Context**

**POPULATION & DEMOGRAPHICS**

The population of Spruce Grove has been increasing steadily over the past twenty years. At 34,066 people in 2016, it is almost two and a half times the population in 1996. The largest age group is the 30-34-year-old cohort, and this segment of the population is also the fastest growing over the past ten years.

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC DATA**

The median total income for all families in private households in Spruce Grove is $118,505. Couples with children have a median income of $140,623, while lone parents have a median income of $67,584. The median income of individuals not in families is $50,321.

Spruce Grove has a 68.2% employment rate and a 7.8% unemployment rate. The employment rate is slightly higher than that of Edmonton CMA (65.8%) and the unemployment rate is slightly lower (8.5%). In general, Spruce Grove, the Edmonton CMA, and Alberta as a province have a high employment rate compared to the rest of Canada, which sits at 66%. 
HOUSING DATA & TRENDS

Housing Stock

Over the last ten years, Spruce Grove has seen a decrease in its ownership of housing (82% to 77%) and an increase in its rentership (18% to 23%). This trend differs from Edmonton CMA, Alberta and the rest of Canada as, for the most part rentership and ownership levels have stayed within a percentage or two over the same ten-year period. A number of factors may have contributed to this change. Firstly, in areas that are rapidly urbanizing, there is a trend for households, especially young couples and families to begin in the rental market. Secondly, it may be that the instability of the oil and gas sector in Alberta has contributed to job insecurity and hence unwillingness, or inability to purchase a home.

Housing Cost

The average market sales price of a home over the last seven years (from 2012 to 2018) has been between $367,000 and $397,000. Currently in 2018, the average sales price of a home is $370,096.1

Housing Need Indicators

Statistics Canada and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) consider housing affordable if a household spends 30 percent or less of its gross income on shelter costs.2 For housing to be acceptable, it must not only be affordable, but also adequate (in good repair) and suitable (have enough bedrooms for the household size, according to National Occupancy Standards).

According to the 2016 Census for Spruce Grove, 45.8% of all renting households (1325 out of 2895 households) in Spruce Grove experience some form of adequacy, suitability or affordability issue. Not surprisingly, nearly two-thirds of lone-parent renters experience housing affordability issues, and non-family households (individuals) experience greater adequacy and affordability issues than any other household type.

According to Canadian Rental Market Index data, of households with incomes of $40,000 or less (the lowest income quartile), 58% (or 415 households) are spending 50% or more of their income on rent and utilities.

Table 1: Renting Households Experiencing Issues of Adequacy, Suitability or Affordability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Renting Households Experiencing Issues</th>
<th>Adequacy</th>
<th>Suitability</th>
<th>Affordability</th>
<th>Adequacy, Suitability or Affordability</th>
<th>Total Renters</th>
<th>Proportion of This Household Type (Rents and is Experiencing Housing Issues)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Families</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>1,760</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples with Children</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples without Children</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone-Parent Families</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Family Households</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>1,125</td>
<td>49.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Households</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>1,055</td>
<td>1,325</td>
<td>2,895</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Based on data from a local realtor.
2 Statistics Canada defines shelter costs as “the average monthly total of all shelter expenses paid by households that own or rent their dwelling. Shelter costs for owner households include, where applicable, mortgage payments, property taxes and condominium fees, along with the costs of electricity, heat, water and other municipal services. For renter households, shelter costs include, where applicable, the rent and the costs of electricity, heat, water and other municipal services.”
POVERTY, MENTAL HEALTH, & ADDICTION DATA & TRENDS

Income Statistics

Relative to the Edmonton CMA and Alberta, poverty as measured by the Low-income cut off (LICO) is lower in Spruce Grove. This reflects the overall affluence of the community. However, 1,205 of Spruce Grove residents are considered below LICO (3.6% of all residents), while 425 children (under the age of 18) are below LICO (4.8% of all children in the City). Only 1.5% of seniors (50 individuals) are below LICO, while 3.4% of adults aged 18-64 (or 730 individuals) are below LICO. LICO rates are comparable in surrounding Parkland County. While proportionally this is lower than the province (7.0% of Albertans are below LICO), it still means that more than 1,200 people in Spruce Grove are experiencing poverty and may need service and housing support.

Spruce Grove FCSS User Data

FCSS Case Managers provide comprehensive services to individuals and families with complex needs by helping them access services and subsidies that support their housing, health or lifestyle needs. Case Managers work collaboratively with their clients to develop a sustainable service plan, advocate for services and benefits, and empower clients to have increased knowledge, skills and supports in order to build resiliency, increase housing stability, and enhance their quality of life. Examples of this work include: exploring suitable housing options, advocating to property managers, forms assistance, and linking clients with other resources including health professionals, counselling, employment agencies or the food bank.

As of mid-way through 2018 (through two quarters of reporting), Spruce Grove FCSS reported 316 open case files. Of those, 158 self-identified as being residents of Spruce Grove. This is up significantly from 2017 reports, which revealed that FCSS had 228 open case files that year, of which 89 identified as being residents of Spruce Grove. Most individuals seeking help have come to FCSS looking for either housing or financial support.

Food Bank User Data

In the first two quarters of 2018, the Parkland Food Bank has recorded serving 1,396 households. Given that in 2017 the organization served 1570 householders, and in 2016, served 1574 households there is a very good chance that the usage rates will be higher than the previous years.

Single people (37%) and single parent families (27%) access the service most often. When the households who access the foodbank have recorded their primary income source, the greatest proportion of people cited as being on income assistance (24%) or earning employment income (22%). 14% use disability-related benefits, 13% claimed they had no income, and 9% use old-age pensions. Out of the people recorded as accessing the Foodbank, 16% self-identified as First Nations.

211 Parkland County Regional Services

211 Regional Service for Parkland County is a 24-hour information and referral line operated by the Canadian Mental Health Association that helps people connect to social, health and government-related services.

There were 284 calls made to this service in 2017, and there have been 141 calls made to the service in 2018 so far. The calls from these first two quarters in 2018 have been mostly around individual/family life and mental health/substance use services (21-23%, and 19% respectively).

The top referrals made from a regional context for all of Parkland County in the first two quarters of 2018 are to counselling services and Alberta Works (i.e. income and employment supports).
The PathwaysHOME Strategy Process

The PathwaysHOME Strategy development process occurred over 7 months and consisted of 4 phases:

- **Phase 1**: Project Initiation
  - 1.1 Project Initiation Meeting
  - 1.2 Prepare Communications and Engagement Plan
  - 1.3 Document Review

- **Phase 2**: Understanding the Context
  - 2.1 Workshop #1
  - 2.2 One-on-One Interviews with Key Stakeholders
  - 2.3 Workshop #2

- **Phase 3**: Developing the Strategy
  - 3.1 Best Practices Research
  - 3.2 Workshop #3
  - 3.3 Sustainability Planning

- **Phase 4**: Finalizing the Plan
  - 4.1 Workshop #4
  - 4.2 Finalize Strategy
  - 4.3 Final Presentation

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

PathwaysHOME was developed to ensure that FCSS, the City, key stakeholders and collaborators had an opportunity to collaborate and inform the goals, strategies and plan of action to reduce poverty and homelessness in Spruce Grove. Deeply entrenched and complex social and health challenges such as those emerging in Spruce Grove require collaboration and social innovation achieved when individual organizations and sectors work to bring their expert knowledge and experience to a common agenda.

Therefore, the underlying approach to guide PathwaysHOME was as follows:

- The engagement of those with lived/living experience as ‘first voices as first priority’;
- Introduce and develop buy in for collective impact.

Individuals with lived/living experience were a priority during the engagement activities, and a variety of engagement activities were proposed to recognize First Voices during the development of PathwaysHOME. The work serves as a springboard to empower their ongoing involvement as PathwaysHOME is implemented.

Collective Impact

Collective impact is the commitment of a group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem, using a structured form of collaboration. Five elements of collective impact include:

- Common Agenda
- Shared Measurement
- Mutually Reinforcing Activities
- Continuous Communication
- Backbone Organization
DEFINING HOMELESSNESS

Spruce Grove is adopting the Canadian Definition of Homelessness as defined by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness.

Homelessness describes the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, unhealthy, unsafe, stressful and distressing.

Homelessness describes a range of housing and shelter circumstances, with people being without any shelter at one end, and being insecurely housed at the other. That is, homelessness encompasses a range of physical living situations, organized in a typology that includes:

» **Unsheltered**, or absolutely homeless and living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation;

» **Emergency Sheltered**, including those staying in overnight shelters for people who are homeless, as well as shelters for those impacted by family violence;

» **Provisionally Accommodated**, referring to those whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure; and

» **At Risk of Homelessness**, referring to people who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards.

It should be noted that for many people homelessness is not a static state but rather a fluid experience, where one's shelter circumstances and options may shift and change quite dramatically and with frequency.

In the spirit of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, the definition of homelessness recognizes the overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples (including First Nations, Inuit, and Metis) amongst Canadian homeless populations resulting from colonization and cultural genocide. The Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada highlights the necessity of considering the historical, experiential, and cultural perspectives of Indigenous Peoples, as well as the ongoing experience of colonization and racism as central to understanding and addressing Indigenous homelessness.

In addition, numerous populations, such as youth, women, families, people with mental health and/or addictions issues, people impacted by violence, seniors, veterans, immigrants, refugees, ethno-racial and racialized people, and members of LGBTQ2S communities experience homelessness due to a unique constellation of circumstances and as such the appropriateness of community responses has to take into account such diversity.

More detail about the Canadian definition of homelessness is included in Appendix A.

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Engagement for PathwaysHOME incorporated a wide range of community leaders and people with lived experiences in poverty and homelessness. A summary of 'What We Heard' from each of the engagement activities is included in the Engagement Summary in Appendix B:

» Initiation Workshop with Core Collaborators
» One-on-one Interviews with Key Stakeholders and First Voices
» Lived Experience BBQ
» Youth Pizza Party
» Homelessness Serving Systems Workshop with All Stakeholders
» Public Online Survey
» Strategy Development Workshop with Core Collaborators
» Workshop to Refine the Strategy

BEST PRACTICES

Significant work has been completed to reduce homelessness and poverty in communities across North America. These best and emerging practices offer insights, tools, and approaches to address challenges related to poverty and homelessness in Spruce Grove.

The following key best practice areas were investigated to address the root causes of homelessness and poverty in Spruce Grove as identified by stakeholders:

» Housing First Model
» Systems Approach to Addressing Homelessness
» Community Awareness and Education
» Innovative Approaches to Housing
» Healthy Food
» Accessible Transportation

The lack of coordination and integrated service delivery is a key best practice that has been identified in other communities. As well, the single, overarching best practice to addressing homelessness that has been embraced across North America and Europe is the Housing First model. Using a Housing First and a systems approach can have a significant positive impact on homelessness, and in some cases can completely eliminate homelessness.

The summary of Best Practices is included in Appendix C.
PathwaysHOME Theme Areas

Five Theme Areas help to organize the Actions and Action Steps required to comprehensively and collaboratively address poverty and homelessness in Spruce Grove over the next five years. Two grounding concepts provide the platform for the other themes:

1. **COLLABORATION**
2. **RECONCILIATION**

The remaining theme areas address a range of services and supports required by people in or at risk of vulnerable circumstances:

3. **HOUSING & SUPPORTS**
4. **COMMUNITY INCLUSION & CAPACITY**
5. **HEALTHY LIVING**

The following offers an overview of each theme area and includes a set of Actions to support implementation. Appendix D offers more detail for each theme area, including a set of action steps, timeline, and key collaborators.

---

01 **COLLABORATION**

Current Context & Highlights

PathwaysHOME is based on the understanding that poverty and homelessness are complex social challenges that require solutions based, collaborative approaches that build on the community’s existing assets, capacity and collective impact. Still a relatively small community, Spruce Grove and the surrounding Tri-Region benefit from close community connections among business, citizens and social serving agencies. The faith community are strong leaders for social change and can inspire a cohort of citizens to be part of the PathwaysHOME implementation plan.

At the same time, members of the community exhibit polarizing views on the issues stemming from a lack of understanding about social and housing realities, both in Spruce Grove and the wider region. People seeking help express confusion about where to go for help, and have identified the need for a single, coordinated platform. Improving the experience for those seeking help requires greater communication, collaboration and coordination among all agencies in Spruce Grove. At the same time, there is no unifying voice or single common vision knitting together the social service agencies.

There is significant opportunity through increased collaboration and partnerships to find efficiencies in service delivery, increase access for those seeking help, and address stigma through positive storytelling.

Relevance of the Theme

Collaborative decision-making models are a core component of a systems approach to addressing homelessness. In this context, collaboration usually means government (including local, provincial and federal government stakeholders) and non-government (i.e. non-profit housing and service providers) working together to make collective decisions about priority needs, strategies to address these needs, and resources required to implement strategies. In Spruce Grove, there is momentum to build on in this area, so the focus is on aligning all participants to a common set of principles and leveraging the partnerships that already exist.
In this sense, fostering a culture of creative partnerships, shared knowledge, and respect for lived experience is a key way of scaling efforts. In order to gain and maintain momentum, a platform for ongoing collaboration is required, as well as a process that allows ongoing conversation about the common vision.

Assets to Build On

- The City of Spruce Grove is working alongside City Centre businesses and property owners to reinvigorate, redefine, and reactivate Spruce Grove’s City Centre. This formal working group recognizes the unique social challenges facing the City and sees opportunity for the business community to play a role in being a part of the solution.
- Critical Connections Interagency Committee is a network comprised of social serving agencies that exists to leverage partnerships and resources to better serve clients with complex needs in the Parkland region.
- Members of the Tri-Region ministerial leadership group hold interest in supporting social change and specifically addressing poverty and homelessness in Spruce Grove. Relationships with faith leaders could be leveraged to support several actions steps identified in PathwaysHome, and there is untapped potential for partnership, capacity building, and volunteerism.

Actions

1. Formalize a Champions Table made up of passionate people from multiple diverse organizations (private companies, social serving sector, all levels of government, researchers, people with lived experience) to coordinate Strategy implementation, including government relations and funding, prioritization of action steps, monitoring and evaluation, and collaborative accountability.

2. Create a comprehensive System Map to better understand current resources, assets, gaps, and duplications to capture efficiencies in service delivery.

3. Formalize partnerships in the Tri-Region, with surrounding Indigenous Bands, and with the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Metropolitan Region.

4. Engage development industry, landlords and realtors as key partners in delivering a housing first model and increasing the supply of affordable and rental housing units in Spruce Grove.

5. Set up an integrated data management system for use by all service providers.

6. Participate in learning communities to share and learn best practices and champion preventing and ending poverty and homelessness.
RECONCILIATION

Current Context & Highlights

PathwaysHOME recognizes the need to engage Indigenous partners in the discussion and implementation of actions to address poverty and homelessness. Indeed, the strategy, like many others throughout our country, recognizes Indigenous homelessness, poverty, income, education and health disparities as ongoing forms of colonialism. Indigenous people are over represented within the homeless community and are more like to face intersecting risk factors.

PathwaysHOME has involved Indigenous perspectives, though more opportunities need to be sought to meaningfully engage all local Indigenous communities and organizations in understanding the challenges and identifying culturally appropriate solutions.

It is critical to seek the guidance of Indigenous partners through ongoing, system wide collaboration.

Elements of colonialism and racism are embedded throughout the systems, and it will take active work alongside Indigenous partners to shift to an inclusive system free from racism or stigma. There is significant opportunity for Spruce Grove to build on the work it has started and incorporate Indigenous cultural practices and cultural safety into the City's homelessness and poverty reduction approaches.

Assets to Build On

- Native Counselling Services of Alberta, including the Aboriginal Parent Link Centre program, offer advocacy and free programming focused on cultural values and traditional teachings. It will be important to engage staff, Elders and those with lived experience to understand the challenges and to learn from their wisdom and historical knowledge.
- The New Beginnings community-driven initiative addresses ways to remove barriers and strengthen relationships with urban Indigenous people in the area by enhancing regional cooperation with First Nation communities, individuals, community service providers, City departments, and other levels of government. It outlines eight priority initiatives identified by the community through an engagement process that align with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and improve engagement with Indigenous community members.
- Connecting With our Indigenous Neighbours is a Rotary based interagency partnership focused on strengthening relationships with Indigenous neighbours and partners in the tri-region and creating awareness and understanding on Indigenous issues. The vision of this group closely aligns with both the New Beginnings and PathwaysHome strategies and as such, there is huge potential to leverage the strengths of the Connecting group to take concrete action on the priority initiatives identified.
- Community Building Listening Circles is an initiative focused on deepening mutual understanding across socio-cultural boundaries with respect to Truth and Reconciliation and increasing meaningful community relationships. There are several Listening Circles being organized in the Parkland region, bringing residents together in private homes as well as in public spaces.
Actions

1. Recognize accountability for Indigenous homelessness, poverty, and income, education, and health disparities as ongoing forms of colonialism, as identified in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.

2. Work with Indigenous organizations and people to embed Indigenous cultural practices and cultural safety into homelessness and poverty reduction services and approaches. Consider a liaison position for education and awareness.

3. Formally invite local Indigenous organizations, Elders and Band leadership from Enoch Cree Nation, Paul First Nation, Alexander First Nation, Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation, Michel Band, and the Tri-Area Metis Local to be active participants at the Champions’ Table.
Current Context & Highlights

Spruce Grove and the surrounding Tri-Region benefits from a significant number of social serving agencies advocating for the best opportunities for people seeking help. Market housing is increasingly diverse: smaller homes, townhouses and rowhouses are becoming more prevalent in new subdivisions. At the same time, more people are seeking help - primarily to find housing that is affordable. The cost of living is outpacing income for fixed income individuals, and there are no facilities in Spruce Grove that provide housing with supports. Even people who are successfully housed in the community remain in core housing need with more than 30% of their gross income going to rent and utilities. Many of these individuals also lack access to employment opportunities, mental health and addictions support, and transportation services.

Although a fast-growing community, Spruce Grove is still 'too big and too small' to effectively mobilize the spectrum of housing and supports required. The city is at a size where it is too big for youth to find adequate or appropriate housing, but it is still too small to develop consistent and effective housing and addictions supports and treatment centres. Currently the detox and residential treatment centers are located in Edmonton. At the same time, more and more clients are coming to Spruce Grove from the region, seeking a safer community than what is offered in larger centres.

Relevance of the Theme

Housing First is widely considered to be the leading practice to address homelessness. Housing First is a recovery-oriented approach to homelessness that involves moving people who experience homelessness into independent and permanent housing as quickly as possible, with no preconditions, and then providing them with additional services and supports as needed. Spruce Grove FCSS currently employs a philosophy of housing first, but lacks both available housing and the comprehensive wrap around supports required to truly embrace the approach.

Housing First represents both a significant shift from how the system operates currently and is also one of the greatest opportunities in the PathwaysHOME strategy. Implementation requires integrated and coordinated service provision, increased access to housing for people seeking help, and dedicated resources to provide housing and life 'supports.'

Assets to Build On

- Meridian Foundation provides and manages independent supportive and affordable housing in the tri-region. The foundation currently focuses on seniors, but there is an openness to consider populations beyond this demographic.
- The Spruce Grove FCSS Case Management Program operates from a Housing First philosophy to increase housing stability, enhance quality of life and assist clients to develop self-sustaining behaviors. This program manages data electronically through the Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) database which could serve as a starting point for an integrated data management system for use by all service providers. The ETO database is supported through a partnership with Homeward Trust Edmonton, and this relationship could be explored further to bolster the implementation of action steps identified in the "Housing and Supports" area.
- Spruce Grove FCSS Youth Services offers preventative social supports and programming for youth while acting as a portal to community resources. The Youth Mentorship Program out of the Lions' Log cabin provides youth with a safe place to be where they can feel accepted, find community, and build genuine relationships with peers and adults who care about them.
Actions

1. Adopt Housing First as a defining practice among all service providers.
2. Support individuals to access and maintain housing in the rental market through the creation of spaces designed using a Housing First and right to housing lens.
3. Align data collection and usage on homeless individuals across all homeless-serving agencies in Spruce Grove (and ideally the Tri-Municipalities).
5. Build 30 units of purpose built, supportive housing units targeted to people experiencing chronic or episodic homelessness with higher needs, and 55 units of affordable housing.
6. Advocate to Alberta Government for ongoing adjustments to rent and income subsidies to better support people at risk of homelessness.
7. Expand the stock of affordable rental and ownership housing throughout Spruce Grove.
8. Start prevention program development to divert people from homelessness and poverty before they are in a crisis situation.
COMMUNITY INCLUSION AND CAPACITY

Current Context & Highlights

Spruce Grove is growing quickly - its population increased more than 30 percent between 2011 and 2016. Newcomers to the community introduce new social trends - both positive and negative. A paradigm shift is taking place as Spruce Grove benefits from new ideas, capacity, and energy, along with the 'big city issues' such as homelessness, social exclusion, and issues related to drug and substance use.

Residents and community leaders demonstrate a strong desire to shape an inclusive community of the future and consistently express a desire to be part of the solution to complex social issues. However, there is a need for increased awareness and understanding amongst residents and community champions as everyone builds their capacity to address new and complex community changes.

Relevance of the Theme

PathwaysHOME recognizes that the community is a central activator of solutions to poverty and homelessness. One of the major consequences of homelessness and poverty is the exclusion of individuals from mainstream life. There is an opportunity to continue to build the capacity of people with lived/living experience in poverty and homelessness in Spruce Grove. Doing so allows service providers to better understand how to serve people and allows all community members to build connections among people with lived experience.

Raising awareness and changing the mindset with regards to poverty and homelessness depends on an effective communication strategy, as well as creating spaces for the community to share and learn. This approach creates opportunities for citizens and businesses to contribute to homelessness and poverty reduction. Making sure that youth are part of these initiatives is also indicative of their long-term success. This participation allows youth to expand their connections to other parts of the community and ensure that each young person has a voice and multiple access points to community supports.

Assets to Build On

- The recently-developed Youth Mental Health Coalition is a tri-regional, multi-agency working group that facilitates new connections and synergies while supporting health and social outcomes for youth and their families.
- Spruce Grove FCSS is uniquely positioned to leverage existing community partnerships and networks to support increased capacity to address complex social issues through education and awareness.
- There are a number of regional agencies/organizations with differing mandates that serve the tri-region including the Spruce Grove Public Library, Tri-CALA, Alberta Parenting for the Future Association, and School Divisions. There is an opportunity to increase capacity and expand the reach in our response to complex social issues by efficiently aligning mandates and efforts within a regional context.

Actions

1. Develop and launch a public education and awareness campaign to address stigma about homelessness and poverty.
2. Engage community members in a series of dialogue sessions to promote understanding and reduce stigma about individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness and poverty. Make sure to meet people where they are at.
3. Create opportunities for citizens and businesses to contribute to homelessness and poverty reduction.

4. Facilitate a Lived Experience Circle in the community to build connections among people with lived experience, service providers and the Strategy’s Champions’ Table.

5. Expand connections of youth to other parts of the community to ensure each young person has a voice and multiple access points to community supports.
Current Context & Highlights

Those experiencing homelessness are exposed to many risk factors including violence, weather, and chronic health issues. At the same time, there are resource and funding deficiencies in the areas of mental health and addictions support, life skills, income and employment, and access to healthy food. As the homeless population grows, they need access to resources that are already over-stretched. Mental health supports are especially needed due to the pervasiveness and complexity of addiction and mental health issues that clients face. An example of this is a trend that youth in Spruce Grove are increasingly exposed to challenges stemming from addiction and homelessness, as well as unsafe or unhealthy living conditions. These issues are complex, inter-related, and multi-layered.

Relevance of the Theme

The capacity to maintain a healthy lifestyle depends on a person's access to proper healthcare, healthy food, education, employment opportunities, income stability, transportation, housing, and recreational activities, among others. Increasing access to a series of services such as mental health services, addictions support, early childhood development supports, financial literacy programs, and transportation lowers barriers of participation for individuals experiencing vulnerable circumstances. Another way of lowering these barriers to healthy living can come through education in the form of supporting low income individuals to shift from eating processed food to accessing and cooking healthy food. By using education, it is possible to advance access to learning about health, as well as local food production and consumption. These efforts can lower an individual's risk factors and act as powerful preventive measures.

Assets to Build On

- The newly established Youth Mental Health Clinic operates out of the Primary Care Network and offers increased access to mental health supports for youth in the Parkland region. The clinic works from a holistic approach and the team includes medical doctors, a psychiatrist from CASA (Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health), Community Connectors and a social worker.
- "The Brain Story" - There is opportunity to build on relationships with the Palix Foundation and Primary Care Network to mobilize information regarding early childhood development and brain science that relate to future health/socio-economic outcomes in adulthood.
- Existing programs and services that provide access to resources that improve and support an individual's quality of life (i.e. Tri-CALA, Alberta Parenting for the Future Association, Parkland Food Bank, Bredin Worksource, Neighbourlink Parkland, Community Kitchen) can be further leveraged.
- First Five Forever is a coalition of agencies and community members committed to supporting the importance of early childhood development in the Parkland region through community engagement, knowledge mobilization and increasing awareness of early childhood supports and resources.
- Implementation of the Tri-Municipal Regional Transit Plan is underway, offering a unified vision for future transit services and supporting strategies and infrastructure for the City of Spruce Grove, the Town of Stony Plain and Parkland County. The plan will also consider connections to the Edmonton region supporting access to a wide range of services and supports for residents.
- Spruce Grove offers a comprehensive system of parks, trails and open spaces that support physical activity and healthy living. These spaces also contribute to spontaneous recreation and neighbourhood development, while increasing connections amongst residents.
Initiatives such as the Spruce Grove Agricultural Society Community Garden illustrate the potential of leveraging partnership to improve the quality of life of residents in the community. The community garden offers residents the opportunity to improve nutrition, physical activity and socialization while mobilizing generational knowledge.

Actions

1. Advance access to, and learning about health, sustainable food, and financial literacy in the school system.

2. Support low income individuals shifting from eating processed food to accessing and cooking healthy food. Work with donors to encourage them to donate ingredients instead of processed food.

3. Encourage local food production and consumption in all neighbourhoods.

4. Expand transportation options to facilitate access and connection to all services in Spruce Grove and the Tri-Region.

5. Expand and strengthen support to families for early childhood development.

6. Advance literacy, income security and supports.

7. Increase access to recreational activities.
Implementation Costing Analysis

SYSTEMS PLANNING

A systems planning approach to homelessness provides a bird's-eye view of the Homeless Serving System by using the best available information to interpret housing supply, demand for homeless-serving services and program suitability based on need/acuity and duration or frequency of homelessness. To develop a system planning model, a 'map' of services and housing that are considered to be part of the local or regional Homeless-Serving System is first developed, along with a number of assumptions with respect to needs, demand, capacity and outcomes. Using this information, a model is built to assess intervention impacts on the level of need in the system; this helps guide courses of action against Strategy objectives.

Systems planning models use assumptions to cut through the complexity and develop informed projections for the future. However, because assumptions are relied upon, modelling comes with limitations; we cannot always foresee all economic, social or political changes that can have a significant impact on the Homeless-Serving System overall (e.g. economic recessions, changes to income assistance rates). Thus, a model is a conceptual tool we use to inform decision-making rather than the sole source of information to this end. We have to constantly update our assumption as new information emerges and changes ensue to develop real-time scenarios and risk analyses in system planning work.

UNDERSTANDING STOCK AND FLOW

A key principle of developing a system planning model is that homelessness is not static - individuals transition in and out of homelessness and access various housing programs and services throughout their journey to stable housing. System modelling must account for these dynamic changes in this population and adjust estimations of need accordingly.

The model discussed in this Plan uses a stock and flow analysis to better understand how homelessness will change over time in Spruce Grove and the Tri-Region. A stock is a quantity at a particular point in time - in this case, we consider the number of individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness. A flow is the movement of individuals between categories (e.g., at risk of homelessness, transitonally homeless, chronically homeless, stably housed). A stock and flow perspective is embedded in the concept of Functional Zero - we must ensure that outflows from homelessness exceed inflows to homelessness for a long enough period that the stock of individuals experiencing homelessness approaches zero.

ESTIMATING DEMAND

A stock and flow analysis helps us understand why local data sources on homelessness may differ. While the Tri-Region Housing and Service Needs Estimate (2018) identified at least 219 precariously housed individuals and 9 experiencing homelessness at a particular point in time during the period October 9th to November 9th 2018, this only presents a point-in-time snapshot of those who are interacting with services and agree to survey participation.

This is a limited view of homelessness and homelessness risk. To really understand the issue from a systems planning perspective, we need to look at population inflow and outflow at least over a year basis. The Survey Estimate focused on data collection from service providers over a month, not a year. In this sense, we have to count on this being an underestimation of demand. To this end, we used similar homelessness rates as other communities to cross-reference your Homeless Count number and determined a number of estimates for the Tri-region and Spruce Grove, as surmised below.
Extreme Core Housing Need

There is significant risk of homelessness due to housing unaffordability. When examining shelter-to-income-ratios for households in the Tri-Region with total income below $20,000, we estimate using Alberta data from similar size areas (Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, that about 2,500-2,600 people live in renter households are spending 50% on housing with total income below $30,000 are spending over half of their income on housing. This impacts their risk for falling into homelessness significantly.

Homelessness Patterns Typology

Generally, researchers have observed three primary patterns of homelessness; it is important to understand this as it relates to the kinds of interventions we would look to implement.

**CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS:** An individual experiences homelessness for six months or more in the past year and/or has experienced homelessness three or more times in the past year. This also includes individuals leaving institutions (e.g. mental health facilities, hospitals, correctional institutions and children leaving care) who have a history of chronic homelessness and cannot identify a fixed address upon their release.

**EPISODIC HOMELESSNESS:** An individual’s experience of homelessness is under one year and has fewer than four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. Typically, those classified as episodically homeless have recurring episodes of homelessness as a result of complex issues such as addictions or family violence.

**TRANSITIONAL HOMELESSNESS:** Homeless for the first time (usually for less than three months) or has had less than two episodes in the past three years. The transitionally homeless tend to enter into homelessness as a result of economic or housing challenges and require minimal and one-time assistance.

We estimated firstly that about 3% of the population experiences high vulnerability to homelessness (At Risk/Precariously Housed) and about 0.24% will actually fall into homelessness during that year. For comparability, larger centres fall in the 1-1.5% range. Note that these are estimates in the absence of a Homelessness Management Information System in place.

To determine Tri-Region and Spruce Grove estimates, we used 4 years of municipal census data to develop longer term estimates and generate a view of the current state. Note that throughout, we assumed Spruce Grove held 40% of the demand in proportion to their share of the population. A key distinction is also that the 4 years of data showed that the region is growing about 3.3% per year, compared to Spruce Grove at 5.3%. This difference was projected in our modelling as well.
These numbers are our best estimates and do not necessarily capture the changing nature of homelessness in Spruce Grove and the Tri-Region over time and reinforce the importance of a sector-wide Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and ongoing, real-time systems planning and modelling efforts.

Data from comparable Canadian cities was used in the model where local data was lacking (e.g., cost of implementing new program types, such as Rapid Rehousing or Prevention).

**MATCHING NEED TO PROGRAM TYPE**

Homeless serving systems use common assessment tools to triage individuals according to level of need, often referred to as acuity. This also helps to identify what type of program is likely to be a good fit, which is confirmed when a more fulsome assessment is completed. To assess demand for programs, assumptions about acuity are needed. For people experiencing chronic and episodic homelessness, the model estimates what share of these individuals have high, medium and low levels of need/acuity, shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group’s Level of Need (Acuity)</th>
<th>Program Type</th>
<th>Proportion of Acuity Group served by Program Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High acuity Chronic, episodic homelessness</td>
<td>Permanent Supportive Housing</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate acuity Episodic homelessness; Transitional homelessness; At Risk</td>
<td>Permanent Supportive Housing</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rapid Rehousing</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assertive Community Treatment</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intensive Case Management</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rapid Rehousing</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low acuity Transitional homelessness; At Risk</td>
<td>Rapid Rehousing</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prevention/Diversion</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affordable Housing</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rent Supports</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These proportions account for individuals who may re-enter the Homeless-Serving System multiple times or require a transition to a higher-intensity program to maintain their housing long-term.

**COST & PERFORMANCE ASSUMPTIONS**

As there was limited data locally available to run the cost analysis, we had to use learnings from studies and reports from other Canadian jurisdictions to develop a costs model. As the implementation rolls out, these assumptions should be refined with local data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Type</th>
<th>Target Turnover</th>
<th>Target Negative Exit</th>
<th>OpEx/Space/Yr</th>
<th>CapEx/Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Supportive Housing</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>$35K</td>
<td>$170k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable Housing</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>$3.5K</td>
<td>$125K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive Community Treatment</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>$21K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive Case Management</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>$19K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapid Rehousing</td>
<td>200%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>$8K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention/Diversion</td>
<td>200%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>$4K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent Supports</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>$2.5K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MODEL LIMITATIONS**

There are several limitations to this model. The model uses Spruce Grove and the Tri-Region population growth rate averaged using the 2014 and 2018 Municipal Census for Stony Plain, Parkland County and Spruce Grove averaged at 3.3% annually to predict how the number of people experiencing transitional homelessness will change over time. This rate was run at 5.3% for Spruce Grove as it has a higher growth. While a population growth rate reflects demography and migration, it does not reflect external factors that may uniquely impact homelessness (e.g., increases to the minimum wage or to average rents).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>Pop Change</th>
<th>Annual Avg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stony Plain</td>
<td>17,189</td>
<td>15,051</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkland County</td>
<td>32,097</td>
<td>30,568</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spruce Grove</td>
<td>35,766</td>
<td>29,526</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>85,052</td>
<td>75,145</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This rate can change significantly as a result of shifts in the economy impacting lower income populations, as well as public policy at the federal and provincial levels in particular. For instance, poverty rates are related to core housing need and homelessness risk; thus poverty reduction measures can mitigate homelessness risk; alternatively, sustained economic downturn can result in new groups entering the at-risk of homelessness group, leading to increased rates.

Again, this is an estimation that assumes that such measures are put into place and are effective. Without prevention measures proposed, as well as the new affordable housing and rent supplements, and provincial plans to address
homelessness and poverty, we cannot assume current rates of homelessness risk to change for this group. This is an estimation that assumes that measures are put into place and are effective.\(^3\)

Without consistent data sharing among programs, shelter providers and outreach teams, we continue to have limited data on the number of unsheltered homeless or provisionally accommodated individuals, particularly those sleeping rough. This model makes assumptions that a significant portion of individuals who sleep outdoors do not interface with the emergency shelter system.

Our supply-side figures are limited largely due to uncertainty about the future. Predicting the number of housing units and homeless-serving program spaces over a 5-year period is challenging for a number of reasons: political priorities and funding allocations will change, the local economy will shift, and new program types will be introduced based on research, evidence and best practice. Our model identifies the "known knowns" (e.g. confirmed affordable housing developments) and makes informed assumptions about how housing units and homeless-serving program spaces will change over time.

**IMPLEMENTATION COST SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT**

Assuming these figures as indicative of unmet demand in Spruce Grove and the Tri-Region, we then looked at most effective ways of addressing needs over the next 5 years. We modeled various scenarios in which we served all chronic and episodically homeless individuals and varying figures from the transitionally homeless and at-risk pools. We landed on the current scenarios as a means of addressing the immediate backlog of chronically and episodically homeless individuals, while still moving into prevention and diversion for all groups - though the current measures assume only 40-50% of those at risk would be served through new Plan measures.

The scenario also assumes limited capital investment focused on Permanent Supportive Housing and Affordable Housing complemented by Housing First ICM and Assertive Community Treatment to leverage already existing units in the non-market and private market.

There are several limitations to this approach; firstly, there is limited impact on lower need populations and thus limited investment in affordable housing and prevention compared to programs proposed for higher need groups. This points to the need for a complementary poverty and affordable housing strategy to step into this gap to address at risk groups in a more fulsome manner. We chose to focus this Plan on measurable impact on visible and costly forms of homelessness, with some prevention work over the next five years as a means of leveraging existing resources and housing units. By no means is this approach the silver bullet to all homelessness; if implemented however, it will make a visible dent in the current backlog and enable us to move increasingly upstream into more prevention longer term.

**5-YEAR TRI-REGION COSTS AT A GLANCE**

Supports Needed: $46.6M over 5 years to support new programs and supports.

**Housing Needed: $25M in capital for 110 new housing spaces.** Of these, 50 would be Permanent Supportive Housing and 50 new Affordable Housing spaces specifically dedicated to homeless individuals or those at imminent risk over the next 5 years. Note that these units are not meant to replace the need for affordable housing strategy at large; rather, specify the numbers needed to meet the homelessness targets in this Plan.

Cost: $46.6M over 5 yrs  
Capital: $17.6M, Supports: $29M  

---

Average: $9.3M/ year

Targets 100% chronic/episodic;
100% transitional, 40% at risk pop

Assumes capital investment focused on Permanent Supportive Housing & Affordable Housing complemented by Prevention and Housing First programs leveraging market units in housing market; this will end homelessness/ mitigate those at imminent homelessness risk.

5-YEAR SPRUCE GROVE COSTS AT A GLANCE

Looking only at Spruce Grove, the numbers would be reduced to $46.6M over 5 years to support new programs and supports and $25M in capital for 85 new housing spaces. Of these, 30 would be Permanent Supportive Housing and 55 new Affordable Housing spaces specifically dedicated to homeless individuals or those at imminent risk over the next 5 years.

Cost: $29M over 5 yrs
Capital: $12.7M, Supports: $16.1M
Average: $5.6M/ year

*40% of needs of full Tri-Region
Targets 100% chronic/episodic;
100% transitional, 50% at risk pops

Assumes capital investment focused on Permanent Supportive Housing & Affordable Housing complemented by Prevention and Housing First programs leveraging market units in housing market; this will end homelessness/ mitigate those at imminent homelessness risk.

IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT & FUNDING SOURCES

At this time, we are outlining the possible sources of spaces or funding to create new spaces below. As we work on implementing the Plan, key leaders and champions can develop a policy/funding advocacy strategy that includes briefing Ministers on Plan needs and discuss contribution options in further detail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Type</th>
<th>Possible Funding Sources</th>
<th>New Spaces</th>
<th>#Intakes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Supportive Housing- PSH</td>
<td>OPX: Health, Alberta Health Services, Justice &amp; SolGen, Community &amp; Social Services, Reaching Home, Private donors CAPX: Reaching Home, National Housing Strategy, Seniors &amp; Housing</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive Community Treatment- ACT</td>
<td>OPX: Health, Alberta Health Services, Justice &amp; SolGen, Community &amp; Social Services, Children’s Services</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive Case Management (ICM)</td>
<td>OPX: Health, Alberta Health Services, Justice &amp; SolGen, Community &amp; Social Services, Children’s Services, Reaching Home</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Rapid Rehousing
OPX: Health, Alberta Health Services, Justice & SolGen, Community & Social Services, Seniors & Housing, Children’s Services, Reaching Home,
190 942

### Affordable Housing
OPX: Community & Social Services, Seniors & Housing, Reaching Home
CAPX: Reaching Home, National Housing Strategy, Seniors & Housing, Private donors
100 149

### Prevention/Diversion
OPX: Health, Alberta Health Services, Justice & SolGen, Community & Social Services, Seniors & Housing, Reaching Home, Philanthropy orgs, Private donors
260 1,316

### Rent Supports
OPX: Community & Social Services, Seniors & Housing, Philanthropy orgs, Private donors
190 275

### COSTS BREAKDOWN (5 Years) Spruce Grove

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Type</th>
<th>Possible Funding Sources</th>
<th>New Spaces</th>
<th>#Intakes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Supportive Housing- PSH</td>
<td>OPX: Health, Alberta Health Services, Justice &amp; SolGen, Community &amp; Social Services, Reaching Home, Private donors</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive Community Treatment- ACT</td>
<td>OPX: Health, Alberta Health Services, Justice &amp; SolGen, Community &amp; Social Services, Children’s Services</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive Case Management (ICM)</td>
<td>OPX: Health, Alberta Health Services, Justice &amp; SolGen, Community &amp; Social Services, Children’s Services, Reaching Home</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapid Rehousing</td>
<td>OPX: Health, Alberta Health Services, Justice &amp; SolGen, Community &amp; Social Services, Seniors &amp; Housing, Children’s Services, Reaching Home,</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable Housing</td>
<td>OPX: Community &amp; Social Services, Seniors &amp; Housing, Reaching Home</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention/Diversion</td>
<td>OPX: Health, Alberta Health Services, Justice &amp; SolGen, Community &amp; Social Services, Seniors &amp; Housing, Reaching Home, Philanthropy orgs, Private donors</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent Supports</td>
<td>OPX: Community &amp; Social Services, Seniors &amp; Housing, Philanthropy orgs, Private donors</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT - NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY KEY FUNDING SOURCES

Federal Community Housing Initiative

» $4.3B allocated for building or revamping affordable housing units
» 50,000 new units
  , Must be matched by the Province

CMHC National Housing Co-Investment Fund

» $4.25B financial contributions, $8.65B for low-interest loans over 10 years
» Targeted at rental properties and units (some affordable home ownership) o
  Stream 1) Housing Creation
  o Stream 2) Housing Repair & Renewal
» Include at least 30% of units at 80% below avg. market rent for min. 20 years
» Must be complemented by other orders of government

Rental Construction Financing Initiative

» $3.75B / 14,000 new units over next 3 years that will support creation of new affordable housing for modest and middle income houses (touches Core Housing Need group)

Implementation Support: The System Planner Organization's Key Role

KEY FUNCTIONS

To implement system planning in practice, the role of the lead System Planner Organization that takes on day-to-day system operations and strategy work is critical. The System Planner provides the various components with the coordinating infrastructure to act as a system in practice. To undertake this work, the System Planner has necessary resources (staff, expertise, and data) as well as legitimacy vis-a-vis key stakeholders to undertake this work on behalf of community.

The System Planner leads the implementation of the community-based Plan to End Homelessness and coordinates investment in ending homelessness locally. Having a designated System Planner in place with the ability to move funds in a responsive manner in the homeless-serving system makes this role distinct from that of Collective Impact backbone supports in practice. The System Planner is swift in its strategic decision-making with community input as appropriate, while convening partners for collective action.

In the context of homeless-serving system planning, the ability to apply funds directly to develop and implement interventions, and make real-time decisions provides valuable advantage to the System Planner approach. The System Planner is most effective when it manages funds on behalf of all orders of government to ensure maximum impact and performance while engaging with diverse stakeholders through collaborative planning, research, advocacy, and capacity-building. This allows a coordinating body to align funding streams, identify needs quickly and adapt programming, and avoid competing or political interests that can erode its focus on ending homelessness.

In some cases, the System Planner also delivers key services centrally in the homeless-serving system, such as Coordinated Access and Assessment, the Homeless Management Information System, or Housing First rental assistance.

From this standpoint, the System Planner is deeply immersed in the day-to-day operations of the homeless-serving system. Its role is not just to convene stakeholders in consultation and planning activities at set intervals, but to immerse itself in the
"grind" of operations: for instance, the System Planner might engage diverse stakeholders develop 'Standards of Care' for the system, but it may also do the quality assurance work to ensure these implemented, ensure these are reflected in contracted services, and manage change management in funded and non-funded service providers through diverse technical assistance and training initiatives. Simply put, the System Planner’s work gets into micro-level as close to the program participant as possible and oscillates between these minutiae and the '20-thousand foot' view setting systems-level strategy, and advancing ending homelessness to government, donors, media, and the public.

This is where the System Planner as solely focused on the mission of advancing the local Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness becomes extremely valuable: The System Planner will do what it takes without divided loyalties to a target population, method of practice, funding source, or political slant. Its functioning is deeply entwined with a 'baked in' research in action approach: it is constantly questioning practice, probing the evidence locally, in other communities and the literature, and advances rigour across the system.

To fulfill the demands of system planning, the System Planner Organization does not work in isolation. Significant community consultation and engagement is essential. This may include specific committees, mechanisms to ensure ongoing feedback loops into planning and implementation are in place through formal and informal strategies. A System Planner Organization is deeply immersed in the operations, challenges, and strategies of the homeless-serving system and is plugged in across frontline, management, and executive leadership levels.

More than this, System Planner Organization is on top of policy developments at all government levels as well as in related public systems or community initiatives, maintaining focus on homelessness priorities through strategic engagement and stakeholder relations. A key component to this work may occur through a System Integration Table consisting of strategic stakeholders relevant to ending homelessness.

**LOCAL CONSIDERATIONS**

In practice, the System Planner role can be located within existing organizations such as the local government with a focus on ending homelessness. System Integration Tables and other advisory bodies may co-exist. In such contexts, where appropriate energy and priority is given to the homelessness work becomes even more important to deliver system planning functions locally.

In smaller rural centres, the System Planner Organization role may be delivered through coalitions with staffing support due to small funding investments. Understandably, the way in which system planning can occur and be expected to evolve is limited by these contexts.

Using a RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Inform) accountability matrix, we can think through CE and CAB participation in various roles, activities or deliverables for system planning.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System Planner Functions</th>
<th>System Planner Organization</th>
<th>Systems Integration Table</th>
<th>Other Advisory Bodies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lead development and implementation of Plans to End Homelessness;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design and coordinate the homeless-serving system;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and implement Homeless Management Information System (HMIS);</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage key stakeholders, including people with lived experience, throughout Plan activities;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage and coordinate diverse funding streams towards common ending homelessness objectives and local needs;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure comprehensive performance management, service standards, quality assurance and investment monitoring;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advance Housing First and other innovative, evidence-based supports and housing approaches tailored to local contexts;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support best practice learnings for agencies, policy makers, and peers by sharing learnings, providing technical assistance and training;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion homelessness issues locally, provincially and nationally.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and advance innovative approaches to ensure an integrated approach is in place across systems to end and prevent homelessness.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of Spruce Grove, we consider the role of the System Planner to fall within the possible purview of the City’s FCSS team. However, under such circumstances, there would need to be additional staffing support brought in to deliver the functions aforementioned with an estimate of 2FTEs, focused on System Planning Performance Management/Funding Coordination and another focused on Service Integration & Delivery. This is similar to Red Deer and Lethbridge, as well as Wood Buffalo’s approach. Of course this is a preliminary suggestion for your consideration moving forward.
**Enhancing Local System Planning Capacity**

**Funding**
Able to bring partners together to coordinate investment in highest impact activities; ensure complementary approach.

**Capacity**
Brings up collective IQ of community, services, developers, researchers, etc. to develop and implement innovative measures & best practices.

**Homeless System Planning**
Enables system-level coordination for services providers to support the Plan goals, regardless of funding source. Can coordinate with diverse departments, governments, donors, etc.

**Leadership & Accountability**
Reports to community, stakeholder engagement research & continuous improvement, policy advocacy to keep homelessness a priority, knowledge dissemination.

**Partnerships & Innovation**

**Measuring Progress**
PathwaysHOME offers a vision for an integrated and coordinated approach to reducing poverty and homelessness in Spruce Grove. It is important that indicators of progress and success are monitored by the Champions Table and FCSS to ensure that the community is on track. Importantly, monitoring progress allows the community to celebrate wins and create momentum with community members, funders, and the sector working hard to implement the changes.

The PathwaysHOME Strategy reflects a Functional Zero approach to ending homelessness. A Functional Zero end to homelessness means that communities have a systematic response in place that ensures homelessness (unsheltered homeless, sheltered homeless, provisionally accommodated or imminent risk of homelessness) is prevented whenever possible or is otherwise a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience (Homeless Hub, 2017).

The indicators to be used alongside this approach are outlined below. These will need to be refined by the Champions Table during implementation and aligned with system planning initiatives:

**LIVED EXPERIENCE**

» Housing/shelter quality, security of tenure, affordability and safety (actual and perception of these improve)
» Case management services received
» Access to appropriate supports to address diverse needs within the social serving system and mainstream public systems (e.g. addiction, employment, education)
» Process of referral and intake into programs and housing
» Housing placement, stabilization and aftercare supports
Perception of quality of life, including sense of belonging, participation in community activities, connection with friends and family

Evidence of systematic, effective and meaningful inclusion of individuals with lived experience in community coordination and decision-making across the social serving system

HOMELESS SERVING SYSTEM

A steady decline in the number of sheltered and unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness (approaching 0)

High percentage of positive exits in the homelessness prevention system (above 90%)

All unsheltered individuals are engaged with services and have been offered low-barrier shelter and housing at least every 2 weeks

No more than 10% of those who exit homelessness return to homelessness within 12 months

SYSTEMS INTEGRATION

Adequate affordable housing supply is in place and accessible to meet demand

Adequate systems and supports for youth experiencing homelessness to reunite with family or move into accommodations in a safe, supported and planned way

Formalized coordination efforts are in place with public systems to ensure appropriate referrals and timely access to services/supports – this includes public systems conducting standardized housing screenings and having standardized protocols for supporting clients experiencing or facing homelessness

Diverse public and private funding sources are committed to maintaining the service delivery levels needed to create a high-functioning system

Evidence of high levels of funding and policy coordination across government

City laws do not criminalize individuals who are unsheltered
Appendix A

Canadian Definition of Homelessness
Appendix B

Initiation Workshop with Core Collaborators
One-on-one Interviews with Key Stakeholders and First Voices
Lived Experience BBQ
Youth Pizza Party
Homelessness Serving Systems Workshop with All Stakeholders
Public Online Survey
Strategy Development Workshop with Core Collaborators
Workshop to Refine the Strategy
Appendix D

Actions to Support Implementation