



The
Edmonton
Inner City
Housing
Society

Insites

Fall 2011

Affordable Housing - the Key to Healthy Communities



The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society awarded funding for new family housing project

The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society has started construction on its latest family housing project. The townhouse style development will offer safe, well maintained affordable housing to large families experiencing poverty in the inner city.

This new family housing development is located in the community of Elmwood Park, along the Fort Road. The site was vacant for several years, and was recently used by snow removal companies to dump snow. A new townhouse development will most certainly be a positive addition to the neighbourhood—and will serve a greater purpose of helping people and families. The site is close to amenities, schools, major shopping and public transit.

The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society offers its sincerest thanks to our donors, including the Allen Family (through the Edmonton Community Foundation). As well, we thank the Province of Alberta and the Homeward Trust of Edmonton, each of which made significant capital contributions towards this project.

"This new project will really help large sized families in need," says Cam McDonald, Executive Director of The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society. *"Unfortunately for many low income inner city*

families, accommodation often means renting substandard property that most people in our City would call uninhabitable. The inner city still has a lot of unsafe, substandard housing with leaking roofs, broken or leaky windows that are not repaired by landlords, and with that comes the cold, mouldy rooms... leaking taps or toilets, faulty appliances, outlandish utility bills, unsafe stairs and rotting floors... the list goes on and on," continues Cam.

Currently, The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society has at least a three year wait list for large families wanting a decent, appropriately sized place to call home.

"It's because of this that we remain committed to building new housing for families," says Cam. *"This is how we can do our part to overcome poverty in the inner city community."*



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Community, politicians, and local artists celebrate the Grand Opening of **ArtsHab Alberta Avenue** a flagship project in the **revitalization of 118 Avenue**, conceived and built by **The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society**.

"As I drove here today, I was struck how this neighbourhood has changed so much... at how vibrant and beautiful it is," said Mayor Stephen Mandel at the grand opening of ArtsHab Alberta Avenue on its second floor deck on June 30, 2011.

"And this new housing co-op will make homes and studio space available to local artists," he continued. *"This project is about revitalizing communities by investing in people."*

Partners instrumental in this new and innovative housing project include the Arts Habitat Association, Artists Urban Village, City of Edmonton and the Government of Alberta through the Cornerstones Affordable Housing Program, and The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society.

"We are pleased to support the City's efforts to revitalize the Alberta Avenue area and provide low income artists – who earn less than 50 percent of the income of the average Albertan – a safe, affordable place to call home," says Cam McDonald, Executive Director, The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society.

Linda Huffman, the General Manager of Arts Habitat Association of Edmonton, graciously acknowledged the time and hard work that The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society dedicated to this key flagship project in the redevelopment of the Avenue. *"There was so much hard work done over the past couple of years, and I feel that we have been offered a gift, and we truly appreciate the contribution of The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society, which has helped make this project a success."*



Mayor Mandel presented a special plaque to David Tam, Chairman of the Arts Habitat Association, to mark the special occasion.

"This housing co-op is an example of a sustainable, vibrant and affordable housing model," says Tam.

One of the event highlights was when Garrett Spelliscy, a local artist and co-op member who now calls the ArtsHab his home, addressed the crowd.

"This has been a real community effort... This new affordable housing co-op has given us a place to live, work, play and thrive... and within a one-of-a-kind neighbourhood."

A note to our donors and supporters: Donations given to The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society were not used in this community development project. Our donated funds are used exclusively to build affordable housing for vulnerable individuals and families experiencing poverty in the inner city.



Marc Munan, a long-term Edmonton Inner City Housing Society Tenant, finds hope through creative expression



Inside a modestly sized, unassuming art studio across from City Hall hangs a picture of Marc Munan's interpretation of the inner city.

The ink-based sketch, set against a colourful, vibrant and playful palette, depicts all the amenities and leisure opportunities a community should have: walkways, trees, shopping centres, grocery stores, banks, parks and playgrounds—and healthy, happy people and families.

Marc's a local artist who commits time each week to work in the studio, with just the word "Art" sprawled across one of its outside windows. Since 10 years of age, he has expressed himself creatively through a mixed medium of ink, felt, pencil and charcoal. His passion may have been passed down by his father Louis, a sculptor who's "Gigi" stands tall on Rice Howard Way.

He not only passionately pursues art, but has an avid interest in inner city issues as he has been a long-term tenant of The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society for some 20 years.

"I share their concern for people in the inner city community and I think what they're doing for the City is fantastic," says Marc with conviction. "My dream for The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society is to continue to grow and remain strong."

The inner city really feels like 'home' to Marc. He enjoys the neighbourhood's rich culture and character, and has the ability to look at the world from different points of view. Marc is quick to point out, for example, the myriad of places of worship that reside within just one block from another in the heart of the inner city.

Marc found himself at Edmonton inner city housing through a long journey of self reflection and understanding. At just 18, after being diagnosed with schizophrenia, he ran away from home—the City of Edmonton—from everything.

After refusing to take his medications, based on the belief that he could manage his own health, he found himself on the streets of Vancouver. Although 'street smart' with the know-how to survive when and where it counts, it was certainly a struggle with his diagnosis.

He eventually made his way back to Edmonton and applied for housing support after reading a bulletin board posting about The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society. He thought the residents and The Edmonton Inner City Housing staff were warm, friendly and helpful. He is appreciative that Dawn, housing project manager, is a kind-hearted and understanding person who he likes to deal with.

"I share their (The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society's) concern for people in the inner city community and I think what they're doing for the City is fantastic.... My dream for The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society is to continue to grow and remain strong."

Marc took part in some of the inner city housing's community activities, such as Thanksgiving dinners and meetings in the common room. He also hung around the 'cook house' in the backyard where he would catch up with some of his neighbours.

He also applied his art knowledge as a volunteer with the Nina Haggerty Arts centre, taking his time to help those who are physically and/or mentally challenged. He likes seeing them be able to express themselves through art, while also finding some healing.

And that's where Marc is at today: In a really good place where he has found health and well-being after a long, long—yet certainly interesting and dynamic—journey.



Project 20 almost complete - from a derelict warehouse to a new affordable housing project

Project 20, situated in the neighbourhood of Parkdale, just west of Northlands, is now 90 percent complete. The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society anticipates its opening in October of this year.

"We look forward to seeing how the green technologies such as the Geothermal/Solar Hybrid hot water system, the high efficiency boiler, and the Argon Gas Windows will reduce the utility costs," explains Cam McDonald, Executive Director, The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society.

"Utilities make up a big piece of our total operating expenses... As well, the building is non-combustible (made up with concrete and steel), which means our insurance premium for this building will be reduced by well over 50 percent," he continues.

As a result, The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society will be able to keep the rents truly affordable for those experiencing poverty. Just as importantly, they will be able to continue to provide support for its tenants, and help see them through times of adversity, especially when they are at risk of losing their housing.

"It's truly remarkable to see the transition from a derelict warehouse to what this project will be and represents, a place to call home for those in our inner city who can now focus on making their lives better, healthier and happier," concludes Cam.

We have accomplished so much since the publication of our last newsletter, and we wish to take this time to extend our sincere thanks to all of our staff, board members, members, volunteers and donors for your continued support. Thank you for sharing our vision to provide safe, decent, affordable housing—may we continue to do so for years to come.

Building a Caring Community

The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society would like to thank **St. Alphonsus Parish** for making our tenants feel warm and welcome in the community.

The Parish has given the great gift of community to those we house by hosting celebrations such as a special Valentine's dinner where a great time was had by all!



Collaboration and Summer time fun!

On July 24th, St. Alphonsus Parish, The Edmonton Inner City Housing Society, and the Eastwood Community league got together to co-sponsor a summer BBQ at the new Eastwood Spray Park and Playground, right next door to St. Al's Parish. Volunteers served up hamburgers, corn on the cob and lots of other goodies.

Over 200 people enjoyed the BBQ, including over 50 Edmonton Inner City Housing Society Tenants living in the Eastwood area. Everyone had a great ol' time and we wish to give a huge thank you to everyone who supported or helped out with this event.

Special thanks to the Province of Alberta

The Government of Alberta granted the Edmonton Inner City Housing Society \$19,833.00 from the Provincial Community Spirit Grant Program. Proceeds were used to buy furnishings and window coverings for our family housing projects.

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