



**The
Edmonton
Inner City
Housing
Society**

Insites

Affordable Housing - The Key to Healthy Communities

Home for the Holidays



Partners of EICHS Makes Project Possible

"Home for the holidays will resonate strongly for seven inner city families this year," said Councillor Ed Gibbons at the grand opening ceremony for Project 16 on Friday, November 25, 2005.

There was exuberant applause from the crowd as representatives from the federal government, the city, various foundations and other key supporters cut the ribbon to mark the official opening of yet another successful Edmonton Inner City Housing (EICHS) project which provides safe and affordable housing for low-income, disadvantaged inner city residents.

This new seven-unit row housing at 112 Avenue and 87 Street will be filled with families who no longer have to face the burdens of slum housing and landlords, lack of money for food or the instability and stress that having no fixed address

brings. The rent for these new homes will be set at the Alberta Works (welfare) shelter allowance rates which means the two bedroom units will be \$428 per month and the three bedroom units \$503 per month. Utilities are included in both.

Making Project 16 possible was a collaboration of many partners. First and foremost was Vinterra Properties Inc. which designed the project for free and built it at cost, which makes it truly non-profit housing.

Other major partners were:

- The Edmonton Housing Trust Fund who contributed over \$650,000 for the project;

- The City's Low Income Housing Capital Assistance Program which gave over \$106,000 in funding;
- The Stollery Foundation;
- The Strathcona Rotary Club; and
- The Allen Family Fund of the Edmonton Community Foundation.

EICHS contributed funds from our Housing Development Fund.

With over 2,000 homeless on the bitter cold streets this holiday season, there is an obvious need for decent housing in our city. Currently, the waiting list for EICHS housing is over two years. Staff members reluctantly have to say "no" to the

increasing number of callers asking for available units.

Councillor Gibbons stated that with a province as rich as Alberta, there is no reason why there can't be more projects of this kind. Collaboration between people of the nonprofit, public and private sectors can make a difference and yield effective results.

This, after all, was the message of the prayer ceremony and project blessing by Sister Marion Garneau and Linda Winski who led the gathering in the recitation of "It is in the shelter of each other that the people live."

Poor Housing Equals Poor Health

The Social Determinants of Health



Phil O'Hara

Our understanding of what makes us healthy is evolving. We know intuitively that social and economic factors, such as having an income near the average income, having adequate and affordable housing, and being connected to family and friends, greatly contributes to our health and wellbeing.

On the other hand, evidence shows that the contribution of medicine and health care have lesser affects. Instead, other key factors, or social determinants of health (SDOH), such as income distribution, housing, education, social exclusion, early life, etc., are the primary influencers on population health. The Canadian Institute for Advanced Research estimates that the social and economic environments contribute to 50 percent of a population's health status, while the "illness care" system contributes only 25 percent. Yet approximately 95 percent of our health funding is spent on the health care system.

According to the World Health Organization, SDOH are "the conditions in which people live and work." They are the causes behind the causes of "ill-health." We are all influenced by the health determinants, not just vulnerable populations. Research shows that the size of the gap between rich and poor within a society greatly affects everyone's health. Basically, the larger the gap is, the lower the health status of the overall population.

Evidence shows that the socioeconomic circumstances of individuals and groups are equally or more important to

health status than medical care and personal behaviours, such as smoking. The influence of SDOH is especially strong in the case of chronic diseases such as heart disease and stroke, diabetes, cancers, as well as injuries and infectious diseases.

The emphasis on traditional adult risk factors (e.g. cholesterol, diet, physical activity, and tobacco use) is misguided given that these factors are poor predictors of heart disease, stroke and adult-onset diabetes rates among populations. Instead, the factors that do make a difference are living in poverty as children and adults, the stress associated with living in those conditions, and the adoption of health threatening behaviours as a way of coping with living in

these circumstances. In fact, difficult living circumstances during childhood are especially good predictors of these diseases.

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We know that housing is both a basic prerequisite for health and an important determinant of health. Not surprisingly, people who are homeless experience poorer health - musculoskeletal, chronic breathing problems, arthritis, rheumatism, diabetes, headaches, seizures, and so forth. They are also at greater risk of premature death compared to the general population.

Using longitudinal data, researchers have found that housing plays a significant and independent role in health outcomes. Living in substandard and crowded housing is unhealthy for both children and adults. It leads to higher rates of infectious and respiratory diseases, severe/

moderate ill health by age 33, and psychosocial distress which, in turn, can undermine a person's health.

Poor housing can often aggravate other problems associated with low income and further negatively affect health. Individuals and families who are forced to spend a disproportionate amount of their income on rent often face food insecurity and possible malnutrition. They often feel socially excluded (another SDOH) when they are unable to participate in healthy community activities such as recreation and social programs.

Alberta has much to learn from the approaches of other countries in improving health by addressing SDOH. In the late 1990s, Sweden launched an innovative public health strategy based on a social determinants model. Unlike our strategies that largely focus on mortality and morbidity, the overall aim of the Swedish strategy is to "create social conditions which ensure good health for the entire population."

For more information you can download a file from the website of The Edmonton Social Planning Committee: www.edmspc.com/documents/sdoh%20discussion%20paper.pdf

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EICHS Resident Profile



Clara Gladue, a new resident of EICHS Project 6, enjoys playing an active role in the community. In fact, she has been so busy recently that it was difficult to track her down for an interview. When I finally did catch up with her, she had a peaceful and positive presence about her in spite of her action-packed schedule.

“I feel much calmer and content now... I have more drive to be ‘out there’ and give to my family and the community,” she says.

And give to the community she does. Clara is a board member for a local Christian Aboriginal Fellowship where she serves as a pastoral assistant and volunteer wherever needed. She also provides prayer services for funerals and frequently makes hospital visits. She enjoys reaching out to people in general, whether that be to her neighbours of EICHS, or people she meets at other community events. For example, Clara is active with the Kids’ Club and the Christian AAA Club, which is similar to AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) but is focused, too, on life issues that move beyond substance abuse issues and problems.

Her hobbies include drawing and will soon include participating in a local Christian band with a fellow she met at the Kids’ Club. Life for her right now, she says, is great. She adds too, that she has faith that everything will work out for the best. “I don’t fear much,” she says with a laugh.

That faith was hard to come by several years back. What placed her in a tough situation financially was the fact that her mom fell ill at the time when her marriage deteriorated. She put her personal life on hold to take care of her mother while she single handedly raised her four children, including a special needs son.

Clara and her four children found themselves in a cramped three bedroom residence in an unsafe neighbourhood. It was definitely slum housing in terms of the landlord never fixing problems that arose. In addition, there were heating problems and maintenance concerns. In fact, Clara and her children found themselves homeless after a fire broke out in the building. Not an unusual circumstance, especially when older, uncared for buildings usually contain a myriad of electrical issues and potential hazards.

She was relieved to have found EICHS through a reference from the Boyle Street Cooperative. It is definitely more spacious - the kids are certainly enjoying it as they each have their own room. There is room in the budget too, for the necessities such as a healthy diet. In the last building, potential money for food was spent on utility bills. Further, the project managers and maintenance staff definitely respond to problems promptly and go above and beyond their duties to help residents out. For example, Clara is thankful for her part-time job of assisting with the caretaker duties in her building.

“This new home is a blessing in disguise... I was on a waiting list for almost three years and patiently waited and waited.”

Her children, now five, 14, 17 and 19, enjoy their new living space and actually feel it’s a real home. They have also adapted well to the neighbourhood, with some of the children attending an inner city school.

There are great community groups as well that can be tapped into such as the Native Friendship Centre and the Boys and Girls’ Club.

The entire family enjoys the inner city community. When asked about the safety of the neighbourhood, Clara shrugs her shoulders and says that nothing ‘bad’ has happened so far. For the most part, she says, the people seem fairly unassuming. She adds that her immediate neighbours are very friendly.

After being in the stressful situation of not knowing where her and her children would live or how they would live, Clara sympathizes with the growing numbers of low income people and those who are homeless. She firmly believes more housing must be available to meet the diverse needs of many people - from those of youth to seniors to the mentally or physically challenged. How will these goals be accomplished? She gives some ideas, from more adequate funding across the board to connecting with others and forming collaborative partnerships to continue to provide safe and affordable housing.

“We (society) definitely need more of this kind of housing... people from all walks of life must work together to continue building.”

With her energy and spirit she thinks she could definitely help make it happen. Clara attended her first EICHS board and resident function recently. We hope to see her at many more.

The EICHS Community

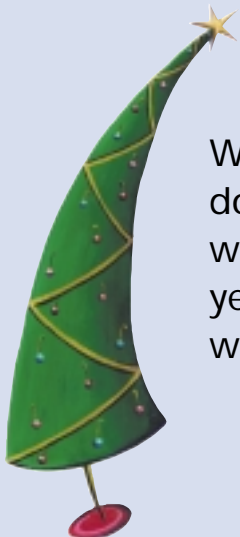
Have Fun & Get to Know Your Neighbours!



Residents, families and board members, staff and supporters enjoyed Edmonton Inner City Housing's summer BBQ.

Events such as these are a great opportunity to get out, have some fun and meet the EICHS community.

Thank You and Have a Wonderful Holiday Season



We extend a warm thank you to everyone - donors, members, staff and volunteers - who have supported us throughout the years and played a key role in getting us to where we are today. **All the best in 2006!**

Celebrate
the
Holiday
Season
with us



We are pleased to welcome you to our annual holiday dinner. You may choose from two dates:

Saturday,
January 14, 2006
Project 4 -
Common Room
(at the rear of building)
9535 - 108 Avenue
Noon - 2:30 p.m.

Sunday,
January 15, 2006
Rotary Millennium
House - Common Room
(at the rear of building)
9617 - 106 Avenue
Noon - 2:30 p.m.

All food and refreshments will be provided