



**The
Edmonton
Inner City
Housing
Society**

Insites

Affordable Housing - The Key to Healthy Communities

Doors Open to New Opportunities for Inner-City families

The doors to Project 14, two fourplexes built to house eight inner city families, are now open.

As of April 1st, over 40 people will have the opportunity to participate in the inner city community - the children will play in its parks and fill classrooms of the neighbouring schools; the parents will tackle parenthood and other family issues without worrying about their housing. These families will have more than a much needed roof over their heads - they will have a place to call home.

The \$900,000 housing complex, located in the Norwood community at 112 Avenue and 95 Street, is the latest edition to the successful projects that the Edmonton Inner City Housing Society (EICHS) has been able to create. Funding came from all three levels of government, EICHS supporters, and EICHS's Housing Development Fund.

The project was built in partnership with Vinterra Properties Inc. (VPI) who designed the project for free, and then built it at cost. Project 14 is truly non-profit housing.

During the project's ribbon cutting ceremony on March 29, 2004, Stan Woloshyn, Minister of Alberta Seniors, said he was proud to be able to contribute to helping people get a good start in life. Affordable and social housing advocates hope that more assistance from the government is forthcoming.



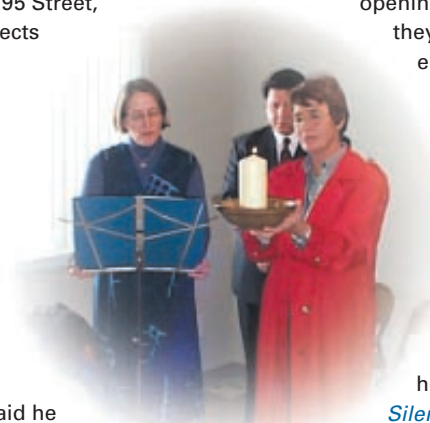
A happy moment as the ribbon is cut. Representatives from the Federal, Provincial, and Municipal governments, along with VPI staff and EICHS board and staff, open the new homes.

City Councillor Janice Melnychuk, who also attended the project's opening, said now that the families have the housing they require, they can turn their attention to other needs such as securing employment. She commended housing projects like this one for not only creating homes, but for building stronger communities.

"We're trying to address the housing need as best we can, but there's still a lot to do. We're really just scratching the surface today," said Sandeep Dhir, President of EICHS,

He continued by noting that Edmonton's last homeless count in 2002 indicated that there were over 1,900 people homeless people on the streets of our city. Moreover, over 1,200 of those are classified as "absolute homeless."

Silence filled the room where Kate Quinn led participants in a blessing of the latest project. A candle, symbolizing hope and new beginnings, was lit. Hope that other families will be able to walk through the doors of affordable housing and begin a new life.



Project 15 will be at 119 Avenue & 77 Street



Project 16 will be at 112 Avenue & 87 Street

More families will find a home at EICHS in 2005

In late Spring of this year, EICHS purchased two, three-lot parcels of land, thanks to funding from the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund. Projects 15 and 16 will fit these now empty lots at 119 Avenue & 77 Street and 112 Avenue & 87 Street. EICHS hopes to have new family units completed by Fall 2005. The doors to affordable housing keep opening!



Community Action Project (CAP) reorganizing to address power crisis in inner city

By **Michael Walters**

The Pressures

In order to have the *power* to create sustainable changes in our community, we need to create a public space for citizens to come together to relate and act rather than just react. CAP organizers and leaders have carried out hundreds of one to one meetings in the past three years with residents of North Central Edmonton about the pressures our neighbourhood is facing. It is clear these pressures are going beyond the capacity of individuals or individual institutions to deal with on their own.

As we look ahead to the next 5-10 years, we see the pressures are changing. There are five key pressures: (1) Housing Issues like affordability, availability of safe housing and utilities costs, (2) Gangs and Criminal Activity, (3) Development Issues (lack of and the wrong kind), and (4) Cost of living security-income, employment, food security and quality. (5) School closures (which are not really closures as much as they are transfers from the central neighbourhoods to the suburbs.)

These kinds of pressures highlight a major crisis in the community: the powerlessness of our residents, community institutions, and organizations. Our people, our money and our leaders are not organized sufficiently to even imagine acting to address these pressures in a real way.

Gaining Financial Independence

To build an organization powerful enough to effectively address the major pressures on our community, we need financial independence. We must create a dues based organization. This ensures the organizations' ability to act on their collective values without having to cater to the values that come attached with other people's money.

Other people's money begins to control you and in Canada this is going to get worse. Foundation money will increasingly force

community organizations into service/reactionary modes. This will prevent action to hold decision-makers accountable or deal with political and social issues in a transformative way.

Change requires confrontation and tension.

Foundation and government money require that we avoid confrontation and tension. Neighbourhood institutions that want to build power to pursue the common good must pay their own way.

In addition to independence, dues create ownership. People and organizations will be committed to developing and participating in a Neighbourhood Council when they are personally invested in it.

The Opportunity

We have created a Steering Committee consisting of institutional and community leaders. These leaders see that we can do more if we strengthen the social fabric of our community. By weaving our community institutions and organizations together we will have more power to achieve the common good in North Central Edmonton, than if we remain in our current isolation. Steering Committee members will do 1-1 relational meetings with people in their institutions and on their blocks as well as within other institutions and blocks.

We will organize into six caucuses: a Faith Caucus, a Schools Caucus, a Community League Caucus, a Block Club Caucus, a Community Organizations Caucus and a Local Business Caucus. Caucus leaders will be responsible for carrying out 1-1 relational meetings with as many potential leaders in affiliated institutions and organizations as possible. We will engage institutional leaders in reflection about what they could gain and what they could give by coming together in a dues paying neighbourhood council.

Who can be Part of the Reorganized CAP?

The new organization will be made up of institutional members; therefore, individuals will need to be members of these community institutions and organizations. Our institutional base will be adequately diverse to accommodate individuals wishing to become involved.

CAP has been working at revitalizing North Central Edmonton for the past seven years and has some good victories, for example ridding the neighbourhood of hundreds of slum and decayed buildings, revitalizing our parks and ensuring funding for the future of our public library. We have as well worked closely with the Edmonton Inner City Housing Society to ensure the building of much-needed safe and affordable housing for our community's families.

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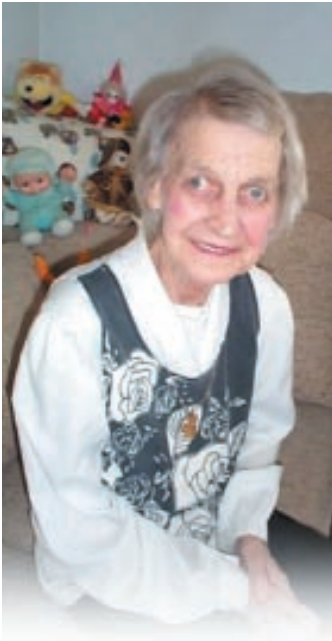
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www.eichs.org

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A special thanks to the Wild Rose Foundation

A generous grant (\$31,426) from the Wild Rose Foundation will give EICHS the opportunity to purchase building maintenance equipment such as power washers, wet/dry vacuums and so forth; office equipment such as a new photocopier; computer upgrades for the office; and the computer training staff required for set-up. Staff members, board members, tenants and supporters extend a gracious thank you.



If you ever have the pleasure of engaging in a conversation with Barbara, a long time resident of inner city housing, you will most likely feel inspired and walk away with a smile on your face.

From a foreign land to a new found home in the inner city

Her 76 years comes with some spirited advice: Always be who you are, no matter what; don't worry if you haven't got a whole lot of money, as long as you have a whole lot of time and the basic necessities are taken care of; be grateful for your health; and always, always maintain your sense of humor.

Barbara definitely has the life experiences to dispense this kind of advice. She battled meningitis as a child and was reliant on medication until recently (a 'success story' she notes), survived severe bombings of her hometown in Norwich, England during the second World War at just 13 years of age, left her friends and family in 1958 to accept a job in Canada, arrived in Montreal by ship and traveled by train to Western Canada, survived the turmoil of losing the one man she absolutely adored, to name just a few.

The job was that of a helping hand on a dairy farm north of Edmonton. Her cooking skills, she admits, were not exactly up to par. "One of the children had to show me how to make stew... she laid all the ingredients and so forth out on the table," Barbara says with a laugh. Eventually, however, she got the hang of it and remained on the farm for six years.

With a strong desire to move to the city, she booked herself in to the YMCA and took various jobs such as housekeeping. She decided to live wherever she found the most work and, for her, that ended up being in what is now the inner city area. That

was more than 25 years ago, and there are no regrets.

Of her humble apartment in Project 9, she says "I hope to live here until I die." She has been living in this housing unit – sold to inner city housing eight years ago – for 18 years.

She has always considered the other tenants and late landlord family. She is thankful for the friendly lady who has been her neighbour since she moved into the building in 1986. Barb explains that her friend even visited her in the hospital when she needed company the most.

She includes inner city housing staff in her definition of family. In fact, she says, one of the project managers helps her with her banking and crucial errands once a month. She is grateful that she can count of someone to assist her when she needs it.

She is thankful for the friendly lady who has been her neighbour since she moved into the building in 1986. Barb explains that her friend even visited her in the hospital when she needed company the most.

However, one can clearly see how spry and independent she is, and it shows when she talks about walking around the neighborhood – which is a great accomplishment considering she's broken both of her hips.

"Oh, yes, I run into people I see on a continual basis... they're all quite friendly... they say hello to me or 'Hi Grandma, how's it going?'"

She is still comfortable with doing her own grocery shopping and, if the load is too heavy, she'll take a bus or cab home. She also enjoys her outings to Operation Friendship, an inner city agency that provides housing and other services for seniors. Once there, she lunches with other seniors and spends the afternoon playing cards or other games with them, and then walks home on her own.

She's never frightened walking around herself, and believes there is more crime in other parts of the city. Bad things happen everywhere she says.

Barbara feels there are so many great benefits to inner city living. She includes close proximity to downtown, many shopping options, and its friendly inhabitants on her list of reasons why.

Of course, over the years, she has seen many changes to the area. Old buildings have been restored or demolished and rebuilt. If she could change one factor about the community, she would make more room for affordable housing where those buildings are replaced.

Some of the inner city's exterior might have been altered throughout the years; however, the strong feeling Barbara has for it has not.

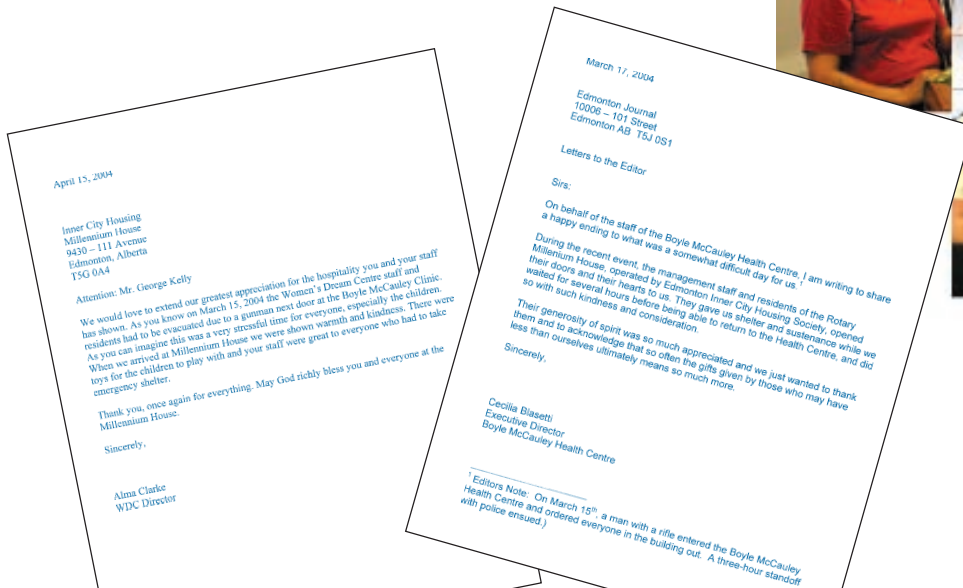
"I love this area very much... this is my home."

The EICHS Community

Millennium House helps out

By Sarah Campos-Silvius

On Thursday, April 22nd, 25 residents of Millennium Rotary House were treated to a feast of pizza, cake, and pop, thanks to Cecilia Blasetti and Colleen Novotny of the Boyle McCauley Health Centre. They were simply expressing their gratitude to residents of the House. During an armed standoff incident on March 15 in the Boyle McCauley Health Centre, staff and patients were evacuated and Millennium House opened its doors to them. "Some folks lent us their phones, so we could reach loved ones who might be watching the news and worry about us. And, we had a bathroom to use!" adds Novotny. "We were treated royally," says Blasetti. "Thank you to everyone who shared their home with us."



EICHS Christmas celebration



The EICHS family (tenants, staff, volunteers and supporters) celebrate another holiday season together.

Once again, thank you

To all of our friends, family, donors, sponsors and volunteers:
Thank you for your continued support of our organization and our goals.
We look forward to another successful year with your time, consideration and help.

You are invited to the EICHS AGM

Wednesday,
June 23, 2004

6:00 p.m.
(meeting)
7:00 - 7:30 p.m.
(special event)

Rotary Millennium House
Common Room
9617 - 106 Avenue

Everyone welcome!
Refreshments
& snacks will be served.