

EDMONTON COALITION ON HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

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LET'S TALK HOUSING

SUBMISSION

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INTRODUCTION

The Edmonton Coalition Housing and Homelessness (ECOHH) was created in 1986. While the majority of the members are local non-governmental associations, both individuals and the private sector are represented in its membership. While not members, representatives from the municipal government participate at the ECOHH table.

ECOHH has a vision to create a broad based, unified voice to promote change to public policy, increase community knowledge and share information on homelessness and affordable housing.

ECOHH provided leadership in the formation of the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund in 1999. This fund now operates as Homeward Trust and is part of a long-term initiative to provide quality affordable housing in Edmonton by actual investment in projects.

To raise awareness of housing issues, ECOHH is the sponsor of the Homeless Memorial. In the past it also sponsored HomeFest an annual folk music festival concert to draw attention to the need for more affordable housing. When election time rolls around ECOHH sponsors an all candidate forum.

As part of preparing this submission, ECOHH wanted to include additional community voices and insights on creating a national housing vision and strategy. ECOHH conducted three community conversations with a group of 11 youth, 14 members of a co-op that offers homecare to residents, and 9 seniors. These sessions were co-sponsored by ECOHH and the City of Edmonton. We have attached the notes from these discussions in an appendix at the end of the document.

CURRENT CONTEXT

Safe and affordable housing has become a highly complicated, multifaceted and nuanced issue that has become increasingly complex over time. The 1993 termination of the National Affordable Housing Program placed the onus of this responsibility onto provinces and municipalities, many of which have been without secure and sustainable funding. Consequently,

this has created a patchwork of housing capacity across Canada (Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, 2014).

Federally, cuts to social housing will create an increased risk of eviction or even homelessness for more than 300,000 individuals and families most in need, including single mother households, single seniors, Indigenous families, newcomer immigrants, youth, and those with mental illness (Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, 2014 B; Gaetz, Gulliver and Richter, 2014).

Further, federal spending has not only been stymied for affordable housing, but also for education, childcare, and health care — gaps that have not been compensated for by increases in income, which have largely remained flat. For example, those 25-34 years of age earn about \$4,200 less than those in 1976 (Kershaw, 2015). Canadians under 45 years of age earn incomes that have not kept pace with the rising costs of housing and have higher debts than previous generations due to rising tuition fees and housing prices. This is particularly important for Edmonton as we are the youngest city across Canada and will continue to attract young migrants in search of employment (Kolkman & Escoto, 2015; City of Edmonton, 2014).

In Alberta, we have the highest proportion of working poor families in Canada, meaning there are households stuck in poverty, in spite of gainful employment (Kolkman., et al 2015). Additionally, it is estimated that half of employed Albertans are living paycheque to paycheque (Canadian Payroll Association, 2016). In Edmonton, since 2005, the cost of owning a single family detached home has almost doubled (CBC 2016; City of Edmonton 2008). As well, from 2005-2014, the cost of renting a two bedroom apartment has increased about 64% (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2014; City of Edmonton, 2008). In addition, around 24,000 Edmonton households pay more than 50% of their income toward housing—nationally, so do 20% of renters (Pomeroy, 2015). Currently, there is an estimated shortage of 35,000 affordable and social housing units in Edmonton (Stolte 2015) which could include an additional 11,000 units without federal funds set aside for repair (Osman, 2014). Further, one in six children under 18 years of age live in poverty, as do almost two out of five Aboriginal children (Kolkman et al., 2015), and over 2,300 Edmontonians are homeless (City of Edmonton, 2015).

These trends demonstrate not only the critical and declining state of affordable housing, but also speak to the importance of generating a federal policy and housing plan. We would like to thank the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos and the ministry of Families, Children and Social Development for recognizing the importance of federal leadership on housing, the commitment to creating a national housing strategy, and extending the opportunity for submissions on ideas for how to go about this. In consideration of the activities within the housing sector within the past 23 years, as well as some of the Edmontonian experiences shared with us through our focus groups, we have generated a list of a few key considerations and recommendations on homelessness and affordable housing. Following this, we have also provided specific feedback on the housing vision and key principals guiding this strategy as listed on the www.letstalkhousing.ca website.

FEDERAL HOUSING POLICY: KEY CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. REFRAMING HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

As stated in Article 25 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 1948), this entire strategy should be guided by prioritizing housing as a **fundamental human right**. For this national strategy to be successful, we need to depart from the broader social assumption of housing as a 'moral' issue whereby groups or individuals are constructed or prioritized as more deserving than others. This assumption has deepened with the continued shift of housing from a public good to a private asset. While homeownership has offered a way of building wealth and equity for some, incomes have nowhere near kept pace with the exponential increase in costs. Further, the ideation of homeownership as the gold standard of housing along with market trends has created heated housing markets within many of our major cities, significantly contributed to a decline of affordable housing that has now expanded to middle and upper class homeowners and renters, and has compounded housing barriers for low income Canadians. Consequently, the last ten years in particular have created a much larger and diverse group of people that are in need of appropriate and affordable housing.

The federal government needs to take a leadership position in taking up housing as a human rights issue, and take on the responsibility of secure sustainable and long-term funding for needed stock, required repair, and essential housing supports. With the slow decline of public funding of essential social supports, the burden of meeting essential needs has fallen on the individual, and their families and friends. This assumption that one's own individual social networks will mediate or resolve these social problems only furthers the gap of inequality for many who do not or cannot rely on family or friends. Thus, we need to meet the needs of people where they are at, irrespective of personal supports, and ensure access to housing in a way that preserves dignity and fosters empowerment. While we acknowledge that public funds are finite, we need to ensure that everyone is entitled to the dignity of a safe and affordable home, irrespective of their position in life.

2. ACKNOWLEDGING HOUSING ASSUMPTIONS

Beyond the privileging of homeownership as the ideal standard, and housing at times articulated from a moral standpoint, there are many implicit assumptions within housing that should be critically examined. One of the key issues within the housing sector, and across all orders of government is the lack of a universal understanding of key values or terms within housing. For example, "affordable" housing could mean paying 30% or less of household income, paying 25% or less of household income, paying 10-15% below market rate, accessing housing subsidies, living in social housing, and/or a way to articulate an arbitrary goal or value. Further, as incomes have remained flat while housing costs have exploded, this begs further examination of what percentage of household income is the most appropriate for housing. In addition, housing 'affordability' across households can vary drastically in meaning and in what housing choices are

available.

As the federal government is developing this policy as a national housing strategy, we need to be explicit and define housing needs, demands, and access to resources across the entire population and what overarching as well as group specific policies need to be in place. A dual income household with permanent and secure forms of employment, with housing costs at less than 15% of household income will have vastly different needs from a household only a paycheque away from eviction. Further, the prior household with have constraints, but also a variety in housing choices.

The gaps in social housing stock and repair eliminate user choice amongst low(er) income households. Effective housing solutions come from a variety of appropriate, reasonable, desirable, and highly livable housing choices which are readily available to middle and upper income households, but too often denied to households in need of affordable housing. One of the key insights we gained from our focus groups with youth, seniors, people with disabilities and co-op members was the implicit dignity and mitigation of vulnerability from having choice in one's housing. This needs to be preserved as a canon of housing for all Canadians.

Finally, the central tenant of the 'housing continuum' needs to be thoroughly critiqued for gaps between and within each of the stages, as well as for the implicit assumptions of as housing constructed as a linear continuum ending with the final goal of homeownership. The order of the types of housing within the continuum can be a misrepresentation of one's lived experience, and the tacit assumptions in this ordering should also be grappled with. Thoroughly understanding and clarifying key housing constructs is a key step in byformulating a cohesive plan and successful policy. Further, working through these assumptions will provide opportunities to decolonize and incorporate intersectional perspectives that will better guide provision of housing as an empowering process.

3. COLLABORATION, RESPONSIBILITY, AND LIVED EXPERIENCE

In the absence of federal leadership on housing up until now, housing needs have been met by other players. Moving forward, there needs to be a clear delegation of responsibility. The federal government needs to provide sustainable and secured funding that will be in place irrespective of political leadership. Meaningful and ongoing partnerships need to be developed and supported in order to collaboratively delegate further responsibility between the federal government, provinces, territories, municipalities, not-for-profits, and experts who are the actual users of housing supports and services. Policies and legislation throughout all orders of government that is currently in place, as well as in development, need to complement one another. Many gaps already exist at these sites, and could persist without collaboration.

Housing inequality, instability, and homelessness are symptoms of underlying social inequity, mechanisms, phenomenon, and barriers within and between certain groups. To truly resolve issues of housing inequality, we need to make steps to appropriately redress social phenomena that have and continue to impact certain community members and by extension, housing (in)stability, such as the ongoing intergenerational trauma of First Nations, (de)institutionalization, ableism, the links between the child care system and homelessness, disenfranchised youth, elder orphans and elder poverty, past and present trauma and discrimination of newcomers and refugees, the feminization of poverty, homophobia and transphobia, gaps within our healthcare system, rising recognition of mental health conditions and a lack of supports, stigmas of being low income, intimate partner violence, and addictions treatment and trauma. To do this work, it is essential that we build in mechanisms of equity, reconciliation, and empowerment by enabling and promoting people with lived experience as full participants and drivers in the design and ongoing evaluation of this policy. Creating this strategy collaboratively and in partnership with the very people who will be impacted by it, while taking care to respect and make space for the diversity within and across groups, will identify and enable targeting of the very mechanisms that block safe and affordable housing. We also need to take full inventory of all current housing legislation, policy, supports, services, and stock and identify what gaps exist within and outside of current models. Engaging current users on evaluating what is currently in place will help to quicken this knowledge gathering, and identify a significant level of detail of what gaps exist between systems and capital. As well, people with lived experience are eager to collaborate and share in creating solutions. These voices are key to a successful policy, and need to be fully supported, have full access to participation, and should be properly compensated.

4. EMPOWERING SOLUTIONS GROUNDED IN CHOICE(S)

Housing solutions will need to be user centered, and based on an availability of desirable choices. These options should be developed through an understanding of similarities between and within groups, and what key mechanisms funnel groups into housing instability and insecurity (i.e. agism, mobility, lack of social networks, physical disability, feminization of poverty) and what conditions create housing stability (availability of appropriate choices). While there are some overarching similarities between and within groups, no group is homogenous and differences of experience also need to be honored and incorporated. Further, slight but well informed adjustments in housing programs and dwelling designs will drastically expand the availability of affordable housing options. For example, creating policy that meets the gap for households who have too high of an income to qualify for rent geared to income subsidies, yet do not make enough income to qualify for affordable housing (10-15% below market rate) would make a big impact for households. As well, reimaging rental subsidies as supportive and to households building and developing enough human capital and resources to where they can be self sufficient and sustainably housed in market housing over the long term rather than an all or nothing model that punishes households for making a little over the low cut-offs, which often worsens economic

situations. There needs to be room for households who are in the process of improving their household's position, but are not quite at the point of being fully self sufficient over the long term as of yet. As well, during and prior to the absence of a national housing plan, there are many diverse models and housing examples that have been working; which is why it is again, crucial to engage with people with lived experience, including housing organizations, advocates, co-ops, social housing providers, and housing support providers (etc.) in order to build this knowledge.

Looking to the physicality of housing, we need to incorporate and expand to a broadened view of needs physically on new builds: all new social housing being built should be fully physically accessible, and barrier free.

Finally, the design of new housing units, inclusive of both social and market housing, should be flexible so as household needs change, the housing has already been built in a way that accommodates a range of needs, is easily adaptable, and/or there are alternative housing options within the same building or neighborhood. Housing choice and access to an appropriate range of housing supports is essential for wellbeing not only of users, but also of housing providers and agencies. For example, with the gaps in housing stock and supports, especially in supportive housing, individuals who are able to get into social and affordable housing but are currently unable to access or are waiting for a spot in supportive housing put a lot of strain on providers who can be stuck between evicting a tenant into homelessness, or creating tension and discomfort among residents and/or neighbors.

5. THOUGHTFUL AND EFFECTIVE POLICY AND EVALUATION: ITERATIVE, INNOVATIVE, TRANSPARENT

Like any new policy, this strategy needs to build in evaluation throughout each step of the initial policy process, as well as establishing ongoing measures for the long term. As a national housing policy needs to be put in place in a reasonably timely manner, we need to articulate and prioritize this policy as dynamic, whereby from the initial implementation, it continues to evolve in an ongoing and iterative process. This is essential in fully and appropriately addressing the complexity of the housing issue where changes can be made quickly as elements of the problem are addressed, new or formerly hidden issues arise, and our knowledge and expertise of the housing problem develops due to ongoing consultation, evaluation and input being built into the entire process. Further, housing is dynamic and the policy should also reflect the realities of this.

As well, we need to think more creatively about how to best evaluate this policy, by incorporating meaning through both quantitative as well as qualitative methodologies (which can offset limits in quantitative research), and which methods together can better and more innovatively measure quality of life.

This policy will not be perfect, there is a lot of do to untangle this complicated issue, but

having a more inclusive, meaningful, and iterative process will help. As will prioritizing the agency, empowerment, and voices of those who are in need and require assistance in acquiring affordable housing. This will require transparency of process, compulsory and full inclusion of all citizens, centering and privileging the voices of people with lived experience, and a commitment to empowerment and access to a range of appropriate choices for those in need of affordable housing and supports. Those who have the primary expertise of what housing policy and programs do and should look like, are users, and their voices, opinions, and ideas need to be acknowledged, centered, and be prioritized in this. And again, centering, prioritizing, and making space for the voices of those actively needing and using housing supports and services at all stages is crucial.

In addition, we commend the federal government for this call and enthusiasm in facilitating feedback and ideas on this strategy. However, we hope that this will be the first of many steps and opportunities for ongoing collaboration and in sharing the work required in creating this national housing strategy.

ECOHH'S FEDERAL HOUSING VISION:

All Canadians of every age, (dis)ability, ethnicity, culture, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, class, level of health, household/family type, are able at all times to select the most appropriate, adequate, affordable, safe, stable, comfortable, livable, accessible, secure home of their choosing from a range of readily available and desirable options that are spread out and well integrated across and within communities. In concert with the physical dwelling, all Canadians should be properly and fully supported in their housing, and empowered by readily available and appropriate housing supports. Stable housing is a human right, a lynchpin for health and wellbeing, and once in place, enables and empowers individuals and communities to thrive.

Key principles

Results-based

Environmentally sustainable: We would also like to assure materials in new builds, and necessary repairs in former builds are using healthy materials that creates a safe and healthy environment for users. By extension, the materials being replaced in repairs where possible are responsibly recycled, or safely disposed. In addition, buildings should be made as energy efficient as possible.

Performance tied to results: Measurement and evaluation needs to be an ongoing iterative process that is built in at each step of this policy. Both qualitative as well as quantitative methodologies are used, and innovative methods are employed to best measure quality of life. As well, to do a thorough and successful quantitative inquiry, a key measure that needs to be developed is an ongoing evaluation of housing needs and demands. We need to know the

depth and the breadth of what the actual need is, of what specific type of housing, for whom, and where, and whether this policy is creating the conditions for the needs to be met. Further, we need to keep ahead of housing needs as they change over time to address these gaps quickly, effectively, and proactively rather than reactively.

Self-reliance: We need to depart from the limitations and moral assumptions of self-reliance and instead focus on developing and supporting the agency, autonomy, and empowerment of individuals and households. We need to provide secure, sustainable, and appropriate housing supports when necessary to support greater housing stability, and acknowledge that the binaries of 'independent' versus 'dependent' do not meet people where they are at, and can be diminishing. Needs can and will change over time, with circumstance, age, health, and other mechanisms. Further, some needs will require supportive housing for a lifetime, but these supports will enable fuller quality of life and civic and community participation. As well, we need to keep track of what policies mitigate or create need (i.e. CNIT thresholds tied to subsidies, cost of childcare, student loan debt, deregulation of utilities, laws and regulations in place for example preventing youth from being able to rent and setup utilities). Finally, we need to ensure that an array of affordable housing options for households are readily available.

Fiscally responsible: Properly tracking fiscal responsibility includes also tracking the costs of not providing safe, appropriate, and affordable housing out of reach by the private market. Building in this measure within the evaluation process is crucial, and would support a more successful proactive approach. Further, the costs saved from spending upstream would offset costs of implementation, and stable housing would increase household participation in employment, volunteerism, and/or community life. As well, we need to assure our subsidies and social supports are truly supporting and empowering low income families in improving quality of life. For example, housing subsidies are provided on an all or nothing basis, and the ceiling has arbitrarily been assigned to core need income thresholds (CNITs). In many cases, when a household makes \$1 over the ceiling, subsidies are cut off, and a household could go from paying 30% of their income toward housing to not being able to afford housing, childcare, food, transportation, (etc.). Instead, low income families should be encouraged and supported to increase household income, without being punished for doing so, until they are at a sustainable threshold enabling market rental or homeownership. Subsidies need to be supportive, not punitive, and should be adjusted for income until the household can maintain affordable housing successfully without social supports over the long term.

Flexibility: Housing solutions will need to be user centered, and based on an availability of desirable choices. These options should be developed through an understanding of similarities between and within groups, and what key mechanisms funnel groups into housing instability and insecurity (i.e. agism, mobility, lack of social networks, physical disability, feminization of poverty, variety of social discriminations, intergenerational traumas, etc.) and what conditions create housing stability (availability of appropriate choices). While there are some overarching similarities between and within groups, no group is homogenous and differences of experience also need to be honored and incorporated. In the creation of proper and available housing

options, it is crucial to include people with lived experience coming up with and/or partnering on solutions. In addition, the governing structures of housing between the different orders of government, the not-for-profits, social agencies, and people with lived experience need to be flexible, and must reflect and adjust for the diverse needs as they exist, and as they develop. As well, we need to incorporate a broadening view of needs physically on new builds: all new social housing being built should be fully physically accessible, and barrier free. Further, despite the absence of a national housing plan, there are many diverse models housing examples that have been working; which is why it is again, crucial to engage with people with lived experience in order to build this knowledge. Finally, the design of new housing units, in the public and private, should be flexible so as household needs change, the housing has already been built in a way that accommodates a range of needs, is easily adaptable, and/or there are alternative housing options within the same building or neighborhood.

Community-centred: We should be focusing on building up our communities to be more walkable, whereby access to goods and services are within close proximity to housing. We should also be focusing on creating more inclusive neighborhoods with a mix of social housing, affordable housing, market rental, and market homeownership. Further, community-centered housing should consider additional factors essential for 'livable housing' outside of the physical dwelling, including access to public transit, proximity to work, built environments inclusive of limited mobility and disability, accessible amenities and services, and more. More inclusive and socially diverse neighborhoods provide a wealth of positive and beneficial outcomes for all.

Economic stability: With increasing globalization, prioritization of housing as a private good, a decrease in social programming, and incomes that have remained flat while housing costs have exploded, our economy is most susceptible fluctuations in the economic cycle. To achieve stability in our economy, we need to address these trends, and our household debt to income ratios. We would argue for this principal to expand to economic and social well-being whereby it has been well demonstrated that once housing has stabilized, individuals are much more able and capable of increasing participation in the workforce, volunteerism, and/or community participation. This creates an increase in economic prosperity which could be captured and better measured by using alternatives to gross domestic product such as the genuine progress indicator (Kubiszewski 2014). Further, while improving social and economic well-being, overall mental and physical health has been shown to improve through correlations between housing stability and substantial savings in health care and judicial systems. Finally, we need to better understand the homeownership and rental balance, and the carrying capacity of homeownership as higher rates of homeownership often reflect higher debt to income ratios which are less resilient and can be disastrous during times of economic downturn as demonstrated within the United States, Greece, and Ireland.

Process-based

Innovation: It would be worthwhile to think about how we could innovate to do policy differently; more transparency, user friendly, dependent on ongoing feedback, departing from the sole reliance on quantitative methodology. As well, building into policy a better process for

consultation, meaningful partnerships made up of committees of people with lived experience, creating the space and time for iterative and ongoing consultation, and creating innovative and working partnerships between the federal government, provinces, territories, municipalities, the housing sector, service providers, and people with lived experience. As well, we need to implement the insights provided by groups who have identified the physical barriers preventing safe and affordable housing and apply them in a way that is beneficial for all. For example, isolation is a serious concern for seniors and people with disabilities and limited mobility, thus we could design housing that supports social interaction while also preserving privacy. As well, all new housing and where possible in repair of previous builds, should be barrier free which does not exclude the able-bodied, and would work towards limiting barriers for seniors and people with disabilities searching for appropriate housing.

We also need to be thinking innovatively about legislation and policy that empowers rather than disenfranchises citizens. For example, we need to provide options and supports for youth, whether they choose to live independently or within a group home, or in a foster family of their choosing. Legislation providing livable wages, opportunities to rent, setting up utilities in their name, and supports on how to find and remain in housing successfully needs to be designed, implemented and supported. We need to think more innovatively about housing, what it means, and providing options for people regardless of our own implicit societal assumptions about space, ideals of family, paternalism, and assumptions that friends and family can and should offset social inequalities. Further, we need to innovate to design better policy that intervenes upstream rather than slowly reacting to more complex social problems downstream. This would be truly innovative.

People-centred: We need to position users of service at the center of housing solutions as well as each step along the way, as well as expand upon existing community capacity in designing, developing, and supporting housing solutions that are flexible and successful over the long term. We also need to take measures to humanize the issues of housing affordability, instability, homelessness, and precariousness, and shift our thinking from a moral stance to a lens of everyone having a right to housing through a human rights perspective. We also need to make steps to appropriately redress social phenomena that have and continue to impact certain community members and by extension, housing (in)stability, such as the ongoing intergenerational trauma of First Nations, (de)institutionalization, the links between the child care system and homelessness, disenfranchised youth, elder orphans and elder poverty, past and present trauma and discrimination of newcomers and refugees, the feminization of poverty, gaps within our healthcare system, rising recognition of mental health conditions and a lack of supports, stigmas of being low income, intimate partner violence, and addictions treatment and trauma.

Collaboration:

In the absence of a federal housing program and policy, a variety of capacity has been developed within provinces, municipalities, social agencies and not-for-profits, Co-ops, community organizations and coalitions, and high levels of resilience within people trying to

access safe and supportive housing. We need to build ongoing working relationships within and between each of these levels, and create space for each of these voices to be acknowledged and part of the policy process and ongoing evaluation. As a part of this, we also need to collaborate in how to best collect the most relevant and important data that we can build into the policy process that can assess in real time the effects of our national housing policy, as well as provide early warning on any emerging gaps. Finally, collaboration is crucial not only in the development of physical dwellings, but absolutely essential in our housing supports. We need to make sure that service provision across all order of government is properly funded, widely available, appropriate, empowering, and supports housing stability. The adage 'no one-size-fits all' really speaks to our dwelling, but also to our supports, which should be user centered. As housing inequality is the outcome of broader social inequity, which creates unique challenges, but also implicates the importance of the availability of affordable housing and other basic needs such as transportation, nutritious food, childcare, out-of-pocket medical expenses, educational costs, and clothing--especially as many households go without these basic needs in place of paying for shelter. Therefore, this speaks to the need for strong collaboration not only within housing, but between the additional departments and ministries within all orders of the government that are outside of housing but directly impact the ability of the household to maintain and secure appropriate housing.

In addition to the principals provided by www.letstalkhousing.ca, there are several social indicators that need to be included, such as:

Social Indicators:

- Equity of opportunity: All users are provided a range of housing options and supports that are affordable and appropriate that the user is free to choose regardless of subject position. Historical and ongoing legacies of social inequity and inequality that created barriers to housing are acknowledged, and reconciliatory work is ongoing, respectful and resolutions come from the communities affected by these legacies, of which we share the responsibility of provision. We need to work on the structural barriers to housing: youth (age), housing that is not physically accessible/does not have access to home care, meets seniors needs, precariousness of working poor households, vulnerability of low income households who do not pass credit/criminal record checks, household costs that are essential but are out of pocket (medical, transport, food, clothing, etc). And users should be able to choose their housing from any neighborhood within a municipality (neighborhoods should be walkable, fully physically accessible and barrier free (all new developments should have this as a requirement)).
- Preserving dignity and privacy of the individual/family: All housing should be a source of pride, and self-esteem for those who dwell in it, whether it be social housing or private ownership. The standards should remain. As well, social and affordable housing should be well integrated within communities, and with standards in place, should be indiscernible from market housing. When accessing supports, privacy should be implicit for all users, including youth (who should be guaranteed privacy from parents and caregivers, especially when they are the source of need). Steps should be taken here to assure users are not outed.

- Promoting Diversity: within and between neighborhoods, across all types and forms of housing.
- Freedom of Choice: Barriers are eliminated from households and individuals making a free and informed choice about their housing and supports. Further, housing needs are addressed fully in each of these choices.
- Enhancing health, safety and quality of life: Policy decisions and housing options and choices should be grounded in this goal. Steps should be taken to support households in achieving housing stability, and provided until the household can be sustainable within the long term. Supports in place should empower and support this sustainability, and supplement and provide opportunities for building and increasing human capital.
- Fostering a sense of community: Working towards eliminating NIMBYism, isolation, social economic and political exclusion within communities. Policies need to support and reflect a cultural shift from individual responsibility/failings to the social and community benefits of providing housing from a human rights perspective.
- Preserving the natural environment: Need to balance development with using materials that are environmentally sustainable, safe, and healthy for our homes and environment. This should inform the design. As well, we need to be mindful of preserving and keeping our habitats and delicate ecological systems healthy and intact.

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