



ENDING HOMELESSNESS

YEAR TWO REPORT CARD

2016 - 2017

GRANDE PRAIRIE'S FIVE YEAR PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS 2015-2019

THE CITY OF
GRANDE
prairie



Message from the Community Advisory Board on Homelessness

Community collaboration to end homelessness will change lives. The benefit to individuals of having secure long-term housing is clear. The benefit to our community as a whole is also being felt as more families are continuing to be housed with new skills and new supports in place. We are grateful for the work of our agencies and the continued funding for this enormous undertaking.



Table of Contents

- 2 Provincial Outcomes
- 4 Accomplishments and Activities in Year 2
- 7 Priorities for Year 3
- 9 Housing First Network, Partnerships & Funders

A Storied Place

In 2009 Grande Prairie adopted a Housing First approach to help people find housing, stabilize their lives, connect with the community and maintain housing long term. In the intervening years, over 1000 stories of people walking out of homelessness into a home have unfolded. Every person that has come into the Housing First program has shown courage, strength and resolve and we are fortunate to have been a part of their journey. Homeless Initiatives' role is to facilitate a healthy Housing First network through funding, research, evaluation and awareness. In 2016-17 we saw the Housing First network evolve and adapt to a changing economic environment, and we are pleased to share updates with you in this report.

Year 2 Provincial Outcomes

Our goal is to end homelessness, which means that anyone who is at risk of or experiencing homelessness in Grande Prairie is immediately supported to change their circumstance. The outputs below help us to measure progress in the Housing First program in Grande Prairie through the lens of 'A Plan for Alberta, Ending Homelessness in 10 Years'.

Outcome 1: Those housed through Housing First will remain stably housed

People Housed: This is the number of people who move from homelessness into housing. The number of people housed fluctuates from year to year due to changes in economy and in the program. An increase or decrease in this number does not indicate success or failure.

Program Graduates: These are participants who maintain their housing for at least 6 months, experience significant positive change in their life and gain stable income, enabling them to graduate from the Housing First program. Graduation is a significant milestone and, like all graduates, ours are celebrated as they continue on to new pathways in life. Many additional participants leave the program for positive reasons, but do not graduate. For example, some people move cities or are referred to another program.

Retention Rate: This number helps us to understand what proportion of participants are able to maintain their housing in the program and what proportion are not able to maintain their housing. In Grande Prairie, the majority of participants remain stably housed and leave the program for positive reasons.

Year 1:
2015-16

Year 2:
2016-17

Since 2009

210

147

1070

13

42

284
(37%)

93%

92%

80%

Year 2 Provincial Outcomes

Outcome 2: Those housed in Housing First will show a reduction in inappropriate use of health and justice systems

After 12 months in housing, we saw reductions of:

- 40% in use of Emergency Medical Services
- 60% in visits to an Emergency Room
- 17% in interactions with the Police

These numbers tell us that program participants are able to access routine health services more easily and regularly, preventing emergency situations. Stabilized mental health and addictions can also contribute to reduced health systems use. Reduced police interactions can reflect safer environment and activities in the community.

Outcome 3: Those housed in Housing First will demonstrate improved self-sufficiency, via stable income

After six months in housing, 85% of Housing First participants were receiving stable income from government or employment sources.

62% of participants with a positive reason for leaving the Housing First program had at least \$15,000 annual income from government or employment sources.

Outcome 4: Those in Housing First will demonstrate engagement in mainstream services

What we started:

At six months of housing, Housing First participants received referrals to many community services (top five listed below). Housing First staff give “active referrals” that aim to ensure follow-through.

1. Non-Hospital/Non-emergency Health, including family doctors, psychiatrists, eye doctors, dentists, chiropractors, etc.
2. Counseling
3. Financial Services including income tax completion, budgeting, credit counseling, debt reduction, etc.
4. Addictions Services including AA or NA, counseling, residential or day treatment, etc.
5. None needed – many participants receive numerous referrals in their first weeks and months in the program. By six months, they may not need any further referrals.

Accomplishments in Year 2

In Year 2 of Grande Prairie's Five Year Plan to End Homelessness, we increased housing options, improved accountability and performance in the Housing First program and saw the beginnings of first-hand feedback from individuals with lived experience in homelessness. Many of the goals in our Five Year Plan have also been met by community organizations, including establishment of an Integrated Crisis Access Team (ICAT – Alberta Health Services), transition of short term suites at Rotary House into Permanent Supportive Suites, and additional hours for and collaboration with the Police and Crisis Team (PACT – RCMP).

1: Increased Infrastructure

What we've done:

We've had nearly one year of experience with **Designated Units (DU)** - housing secured through through a legal partnership with the landlord. DUs increase the amount of housing available to program participants and decrease program costs related to move-outs. At the end of 2016-17 five DUs were available, providing permanent housing for nine adults and four children.

12 short-term supported suites in Rotary House became **Permanent Supported Housing (PSH)** in 2016 after results from a short pilot. 10 individuals were living in PSH suites in March 2017. Rotary House's partners for this community-led project have included the City of Grande Prairie, Canadian Mental Health Association, HIV North and Alberta Health Services. While this initiative has filled a gap, there is a need for more units, and for 24-hour support for an ageing homeless population with mental health and addictions issues.

The City's first **Youth Transition House** is now available for youth age 15-18.5yrs. Many youth come to the house directly

from Sunrise House Youth Emergency Shelter. Youth live in the house for up to 6 months with a supportive live-in roommate and support from the Sunrise House Youth Navigator. When it is time to leave the house, these youth will have stabilized their lives, gaining income, life skills and housing references. During 2016-17, three amazing youth were living in the Transition House.

"[The Transition House] gives them the stability that they didn't have. Somewhere that is safe to live. People there that care about them..."

In addition to supporting the Youth Transition House, the **Youth Navigator** based at Sunrise House Youth Emergency Shelter supported community youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness in areas of housing, income, health, family reunification and life skills.

The Street Outreach Team based at HIV North Society supports 20-30 new individuals per month with **transportation, harm reduction and referrals**. Street Outreach collaborates with the City's Police and Crisis Team, Parks and Bylaw, Crime Prevention and RCMP, and provides after-hours support to Housing First participants.



Accomplishments in Year 2

2. Strong, Cohesive and Integrated Community Partnerships

What we've done

The Lived Experience Committee, a subcommittee of the Community Advisory Board on Housing and Homelessness, has formed with a goal of discussing community supports issues directly with individuals who have experienced homelessness.

3. Strengthened Community Resources

What we've done

Housing First Agency **Health Check-ups** were completed with all Housing First agencies, including in-depth review of program documents and constructive feedback to facilitate improvements.

The City's Centralized Triage & Assessment team now conducts Housing First assessments in the field with the Street Outreach Team and on-location with individuals at Rotary House emergency shelter and Intox/Mat program, leading to **increased engagement with highly vulnerable groups**.

Centralized Triage & Assessment has also changed its hours to include evenings, making it easier for individuals experiencing homelessness in the community to engage with Housing First.

In addition to establishing a **Community Housing Coordinator** and Affordable Housing Committee to manage the City's affordable housing portfolio, a Housing Inventory of affordable, social and transitional housing is complete, identifying low-income families, seniors, indigenous households and individuals/families experiencing homelessness as priority groups. Both the Community Housing Coordinator and updated affordable housing information will help the City advocate for more affordable housing.

Early results from an Affordability Assessment with Housing First agencies indicated that there is a major affordability gap in housing for Housing First program participants, even after participation in the program. Further evaluation of income and housing costs will help to determine how to proceed in this area.

4. Awareness & Engagement

What we've done

The first annual Healing Hearts Memorial drew the community together to remember and reflect on those who have passed away while or resulting from experiencing homelessness. This new tradition **brings the cost of homelessness clearly to mind** as we continue to work towards ending homelessness through intervention and prevention.

Grande Prairie conducted its **fifth Point in Time Count of homelessness** on October 19, 2016. 127 individuals were counted, indicating a 23% reduction in homelessness since 2014. Over 40 people helped the City with the Count by conducting surveys with people on the streets, in shelters and at other locations. The 2016 Count marked the most comprehensive Count to date in Grande Prairie. The next Count will be on April 11, 2018 and will be Grande Prairie's first time participating in a National Count.

Overview of 2016 Count:

- 9% unsheltered
- 40% emergency sheltered
- 50% provisionally accommodated
- 32% indigenous
- 13% under 18yrs (including dependents)
- 50% experiencing ongoing and persistent homelessness
- More information at cityofgp.com/PITCount



Priorities for Year 3

Increased Infrastructure

Continue to evaluate and operate **the Designated Unit program** and **Youth Transition House**. Create a funding environment that stabilizes the Youth Transition House as a long-term endeavor.

Connect with youth-serving organizations to better understand youth homelessness, and advocate for more **prevention and housing options**.

Conduct research and planning for **24 Hour Permanent Supportive Housing**, with plans to begin implementation in 2019/20.

Establish **Transitional Housing** for individuals discharged from or awaiting entry into institutions and systems.

Build partnerships with City departments to **move the affordable housing agenda forward** to a shovel ready state.

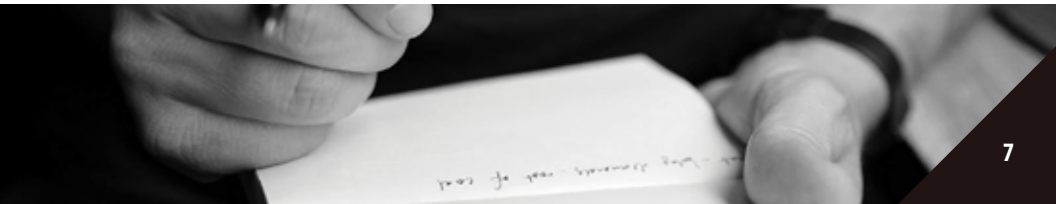
Work alongside the Indigenous community to develop affordable housing options.

Community Partnerships

Engage with new services that support individuals navigating mental health issues, justice and addiction, including ICAT and PACT.

Increase indigenous focus in service provision, including increased availability of job-readiness and other housing loss prevention programs for indigenous community members, recruitment of Indigenous staff to Housing First teams and investment in cultural teaching for Housing First teams.

Enable Grande Prairie to become a community where **refugees** can settle, through partnerships with local immigrant organizations.



Priorities for Year 3

Strengthened Community Resources

Support Housing First **core competency training** for drop-in and shelter staff.

Create a robust **evening support** program for Housing First participants.

Build capacity by following up on evaluation findings; continue to evaluate **program performance** and collaboration.

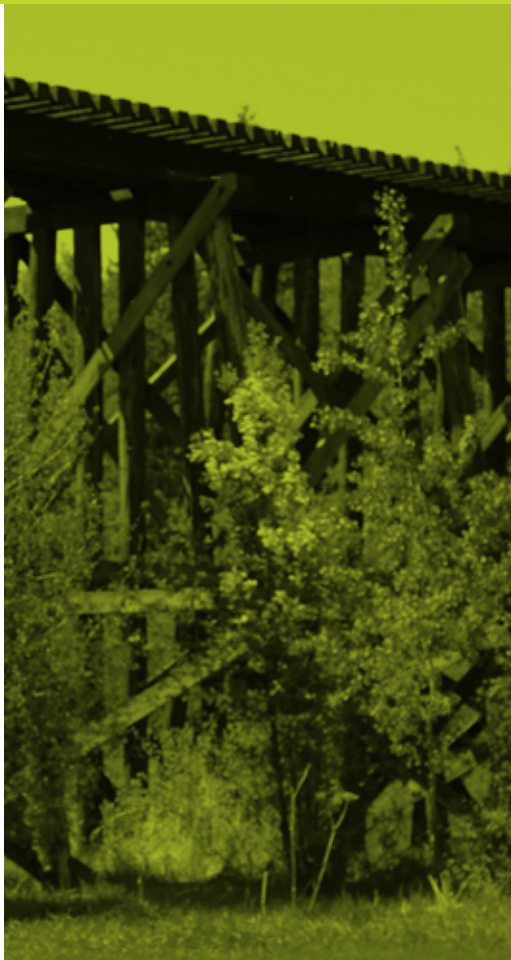
Awareness & Engagement

Enhance Homeless Initiatives' presence on social media, traditional press and community newsletters.

Participate for the first time in a **National Point-in-Time Count** of individuals experiencing homelessness on April 11, 2018.

Engage community members and Housing First participants with interactive presentations about Homeless Initiatives in Grande Prairie.

Develop a system for obtaining **feedback from Housing First participants** on program and housing satisfaction with support from the Lived Experience Subcommittee.





Housing First Networks & Funded Partners

Accredited Supportive Living Services – Intensive Case Management
Canadian Mental Health Association – Intensive Case Management
Centerpoint Facilitation Inc. – Rapid Rehousing, Housing Loss Prevention, Indigenous Supports
YMCA of Northern Alberta – Centralized Triage & Assessment
HIV North Society – Permanent Supportive Housing, Street Outreach
Sunrise House Youth Emergency Shelter – Youth Navigator, Youth Transition House
Rotary House, Grande Prairie Friendship Centre, Saint Lawrence Centre – Winter Programming
Community Advisory Board on Housing and Homelessness
7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness
Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness – 20,000 Homes Campaign

Funders

Government of Canada – Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS)
edsc.gc.ca/eng/communities/homelessness/index.shtml


Government of Alberta – Outreach Support Service Initiative (OSSI)
humanservices.alberta.ca/homelessness/16050.html

City of Grande Prairie
cityofgp.com

THE CITY OF
GRANDE
prairie



community social
development



HOMELESSNESS IS NOT WHO YOU ARE; IT'S WHERE YOU ARE.