

# Habitat For Humanity PDS Community Housing Implementation Plan Report

June 2016

# HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

## INTRODUCTION

Strathcona County's Mayor's Task Force on Community Housing has recommended that Planning and Development Services examine various topics regarding Community Housing opportunities within the County. This report is in response to the following item of the April 26, 2016 report:

*2.5 That Administration prepare a report on options for increasing Habitat for Humanity development in Strathcona County*

## PROCESS

This report is a collaborative effort between Planning and Development Services, Family and Community Services and Habitat for Humanity.

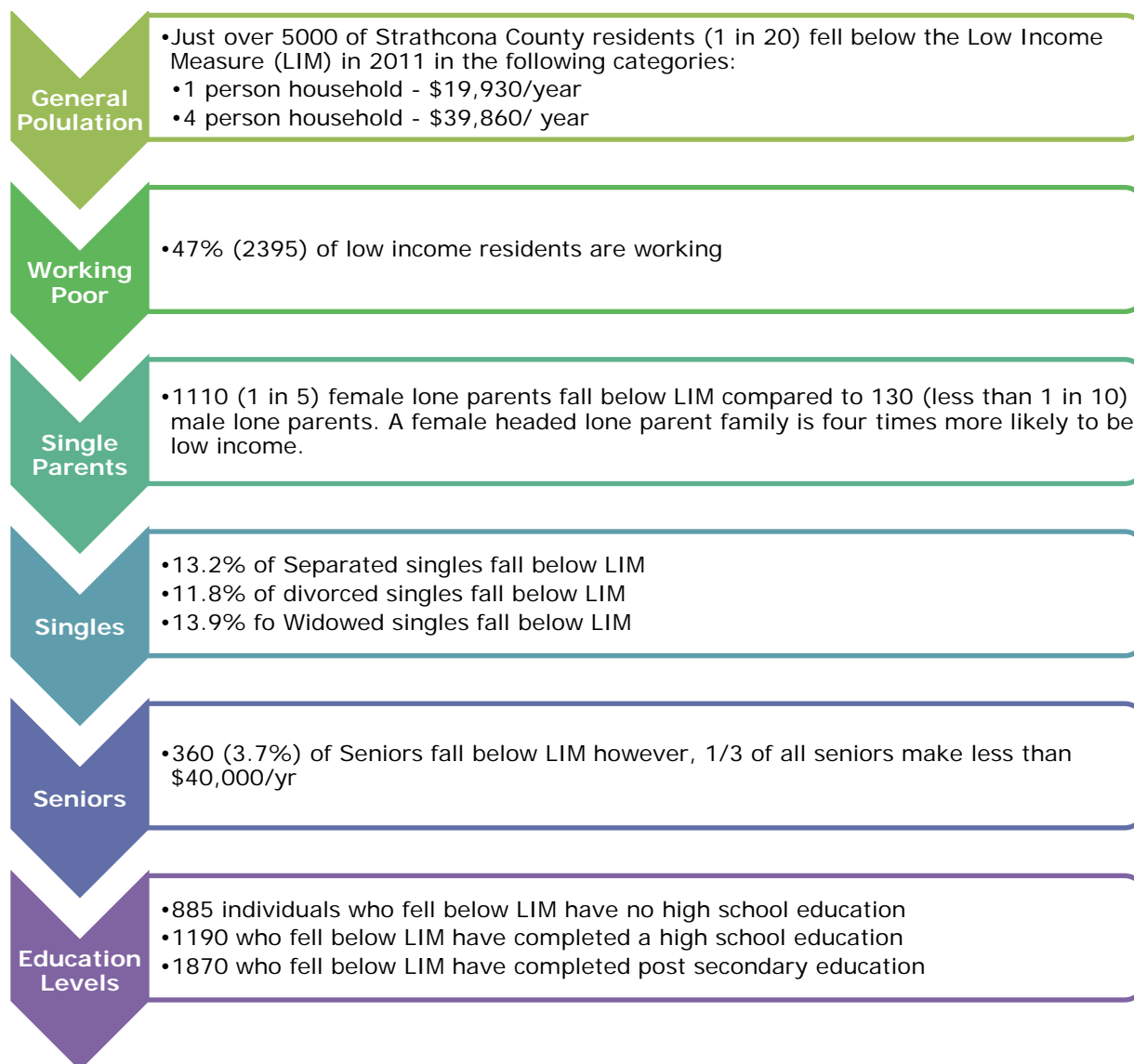
## BACKGROUND

A *Snapshot of Economic Vulnerability in Strathcona County* is completed and maintained by Strathcona County Family and Community. The report reviews the housing and assistance available to low income individuals within Strathcona County.

Housing	Affordable Housing	Food Bank	Municipal Subsidies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In addition to having the fewest number of rental units in the region (619), Strathcona County also has the highest rent at an average monthly cost of \$1,236, along with an extremely low vacancy rate of 0.2%.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rental housing includes: 55 subsidized spaces within two housing co-ops, 69 affordable housing apartments for families and 169 affordable apartments for seniors.</li> <li>Note: there are long waiting lists for all of these housing options.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2387 adults, 445 teens and 1513 children (under 12) received support from the Strathcona Food Bank in 2013.</li> <li>2729 adults, 482 teens and 1686 children (under 12) received support from the Strathcona Food Bank in 2014</li> <li>3686 adults, 797 teens and 2024 children (under 12) received support from the Strathcona Food Bank in 2015.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals are qualified using the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) for 2015 - \$20,386/year for a single and \$38,544/year for a family of four.</li> <li>Usage of Transit subsidies has increased from 137 in 2009 to 361 in 2015.</li> <li>Recreation Access Program (RAP) usage in 2008/2009 was 723 and increased to 1438 in 2014/2015. RAP offers subsidized recreation opportunities.</li> </ul>

## BACKGROUND (CONTINUED)

The report also includes several statistics regarding the amount of Strathcona residents who fall below the Low Income Measure (LIM).



Given the local need for Community Housing within Strathcona County, Habitat for Humanity offers expertise and resources that can be of immense assistance.

## HABITAT FOR HUMANITY (HFH)

Habitat for Humanity believes in making affordable housing accessible to low-income families who could not otherwise afford to own a home.

They make this possible for families by:

- Building homes using volunteer labour and donated cash and building materials
- Selling these homes to partner families with a required commitment of 500 volunteer hours
- Offering families an affordable and sustainable no-interest, no down-payment mortgage, with monthly payments set at 25 % of gross income (this includes principal repayment and property tax - at the discretion of the affiliate, homeowner insurance may be collected as well, in which case payments would not exceed 30% of gross household income)

Habitat homes help families avoid making impossible choices between rent and other basic necessities by providing them with a mortgage they can afford. An affordable mortgage allows their partner families to ensure their needs are met – including childcare, transportation, groceries, education, school supplies, medical and dental expenses, clothing, furniture, and more.

Partner families' monthly mortgage payments go into a revolving fund held by the affiliate that built the home. This fund is reinvested into the community, as it is used to build more homes for low-income families in need.

## PROJECTS

Habitat for Humanity is involved in several different types and scales of projects within the Edmonton area ranging from single family homes to condominium complexes. Their homes are designed to fit seamlessly into a community and vary based on location and need.

Habitat for Humanity does not use waiting lists. When they are able to secure a site for a build they will select from qualified families.



HABITAT HOME IN EMERALD HILLS



HABITAT HOME IN LAKELAND RIDGE

## PROJECTS (CONTINUED)

The smallest community in Northern Alberta that Habitat for Humanity is involved with is Fairview, a community of 2,000. If land could be procured Habitat may be interested in building within a hamlet.

Habitat for Humanity does not provide housing for families making less than \$30,000 per annum. They fall into the affordable home ownership section of the housing continuum providing a transitional stage between subsidized housing and home ownership.

The following chart indicated the current number of Habitat for Humanity homes by the local Habitat affiliate:

Community	Population	#Builds
Sherwood Park	68, 782	12
St. Albert	63, 255	35
Spruce Grove and Stony Plain	48, 163	23
Leduc	29, 304	5
Fort Saskatchewan	24, 040	12 (16 additional units planned for 2016)
Cold lake	15, 736	32
Edson	8, 646	15

## SOCIAL BENEFITS

The Habitat for Humanity program has seen significant social improvements in the lives of families after moving into a Habitat home. The ability to own your own home can boost self-esteem affecting every aspect of life for both adults and children. Children often see a significant increase in their grades and social abilities. Further, during periods of unexpected change such as illness or job loss Habitat is willing to renegotiate with their families, assisting in tough times.

Children who grow up in Habitat for Humanity homes are significantly less likely to require social housing assistance in the future.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Habitat for Humanity is involved in partnerships with several different types of organizations including:

- Women's Shelters;
- Seniors Associations;
- Housing Associations;
- Developers; and
- Municipalities.



## PARTNERSHIPS (CONTINUED)

Due to their ability to construct homes at a very low cost they are able to pass on their cost savings to other organizations in need. Also, developers and municipalities have offered assistance by way of donations, grants, and lands.



## EDUCATION

Habitat for Humanity holds educational sessions for potential partner families and the public. The organization strives to ensure that the public is aware that Habitat homes are purchased by partner families and are not given for free.

The first year of home ownership for the partner families is probationary. They must prove to the organization that they can be responsible home owners. The organization provides educational sessions on home maintenance and neighbourliness to ensure the success of their families.



## RE-STORE

Habitat for Humanity currently operates four (4) ReStore locations within the Edmonton Area. They are looking for a potential location for a fifth on the south side of Edmonton. ReStore sell new and used building materials that have been donated. The revenue from the ReStore covers the cost of the Edmonton area HFH fundraising administration allowing the organization to place all of their fundraising money directly into the community.

## PAST INVOLVEMENT IN THE COUNTY

Strathcona County provided grant funding totaling \$1,575,000 to assist in the creation of the twelve (12) existing Habitat for Humanity homes in Sherwood Park. This funding was provincial funding provided through the Provincial Municipal Sustainability Housing Program and Capital Enhancement Program.

Several of these homes were donated by home builders within the area. Compared to other urban areas within the Capital Region, Sherwood Park sports one of the lowest numbers in Habitat for Humanity builds.

Habitat for Humanity reuses the mortgage payments from Habitat for Humanity home owners to invest in additional builds within the area. The more Habitat homes within the community the more funds that will be available for additional builds.

## ASSISTANCE NEEDS

Habitat for Humanity builds homes using volunteer labour and donated construction materials. The overall cost of constructing the homes is low. The main obstacle for the program is the acquisition of lands. **Land is a challenge given the limited inventory designated for community housing projects and the expense involved in acquiring the lands. In order to increase Habitat for Humanity development in Strathcona County, options below that focus on providing land have been identified.**

## OPTIONS

### Grants

- Strathcona County could create a municipally funded grant program for Habitat for Humanity builds which would assist the organization in the purchase of lands within Strathcona County.

### Lands

- Strathcona County could sell municipally owned lands to Habitat for Humanity at reduced costs.

### Developer Incentives

- Strathcona County could explore the options listed under the Developers Incentives report to indirectly aid Habitat for Humanity and other Community Housing Organizations.

