



Every One's Home

Red Deer's Vision and Framework on
Ending Homelessness by 2018

February 2008



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A MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



It has been my great privilege to Chair the Mayor's Task Force on Ending Homelessness since 2005. *EveryOne's Home - Red Deer's Vision and Framework on Ending Homelessness by 2018*, is the culmination of three years of considerable thought and examination of the issues that impact homelessness – not only in our own community but across North America.

It has been a process that involved numerous people including Task Force members, individuals who have experienced homelessness, researchers, community-based service providers, the private sector and the faith community.

Our understanding of the nature of homelessness has evolved and changed as we have become more aware of the complexities related to this social issue. The journey has required us to re-think our approaches and test our relationships. It has reminded us of the value of each and every member of our community and reinforced our commitment to provide opportunities that build on individual assets.

Like many other municipalities in this province, the availability of affordable and appropriate housing options is a critical concern in Red Deer. We know that there are many people whose current housing situation is tenuous and that there are many others who are caught in the cycle of homelessness, often staying in shelters or with friends with little hope of ever having a home of their own. These are very real concerns and we continue to work on alleviating these needs through strategies that address housing development.

Ending homelessness is not just about the provision of housing however it is about creating a community environment that is accepting and tolerant so that people are supported in obtaining housing and successful in keeping that housing. It is about creating a community where people feel they belong and where healthy relationships can be fostered.

As a Task Force we have often been asked, "Where do you start?" The answer is simply, "Wherever you can." The strategies outlined in this framework support a coordinated, consistent approach and offer multiple starting points for the work we need to do over the next ten years. As a city, Red Deer is well positioned to assume this commitment. We have already moved far beyond the starting line in many respects and have been nationally recognized for our leadership in this area for many years.

As I look forward to the next ten years, I cannot express enough appreciation for the time, energy and expertise that so many have given toward this initiative. I also commend our provincial and federal partners in joining this call to action. It is through our basic humanity and the united efforts of all that we will truly make a difference.

 Mayor Morris Flewwelling 

INTRODUCTION

This document articulates a vision and framework to end homelessness in the city of Red Deer and represents a true community effort. Under the leadership and direction of our Chair, Mayor Morris Flewwelling, numerous individuals and organizations have contributed valuable time, expertise, passion and creativity to the process (please see Appendix 1 for acknowledgements).

We believe that housing is fundamental to quality of life and it is difficult to imagine people living without a 'home'. However, this is a stark reality for some residents of Red Deer today. The word 'home' means not only a person's physical shelter but also the extent to which they enjoy social and economic well-being.

We understand that there are multiple factors that have contributed to the increase in homelessness over the past few decades. They include the lack of affordable housing, deinstitutionalization and increased poverty.¹ Other factors are substance abuse, addiction, and the decline of casual labor.²

We agree that homelessness is both a moral and economic issue for Red Deer. We know that there are successful solutions which can change lives and end homelessness for individuals and on that basis, we have a moral obligation to take the actions needed. Given the economic boom in our province and region some might expect that the factors that contribute to homelessness would be addressed with increased prosperity. However, the growth of the local economy has negatively impacted the situation by placing affordable housing beyond the reach of many and exposing people to the risk of homelessness.

Our community has always shown great leadership and commitment in developing supportive programs such as outreach and crisis response services, emergency shelters and drop-in programs to address this issue. We have responded with compassion, wisdom, action, and resources in meeting the needs of those experiencing homelessness or at risk of losing their housing.

Through community partnerships we have added more affordable and transitional housing units as the years have passed. Many individuals and families have been helped out of the isolation and risk-prone nature of homelessness into more stable and secure housing. But this has not been enough.

The trend of increasing homelessness and the challenge of affordable housing as emergent threats to a healthy community have become a huge concern for

¹ Homelessness in Canada. Retrieved February 8, 2008
<http://www.answers.com/topic/homelessness-in-canada>

² Dupuis, J. (2000). Homelessness: The U.S. and Canadian experience. Retrieved from [http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/BP/prb0002-e.htm#HOMELESSNESS%20IN%20CANADA%20TODAY\(txt\)](http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/BP/prb0002-e.htm#HOMELESSNESS%20IN%20CANADA%20TODAY(txt)) February 8, 2008.

service providers, housing advocates, the faith community, businesses, local planners, political representatives and our municipal government.

Despite significant efforts by many stakeholders, homelessness continues to be an issue in our community. A more concerted and collective effort is called for.

In early 2005 Mayor Morris Flewwelling, at the request of members of the Red Deer Housing Committee, convened an unprecedented group of public, private and not-for-profit leaders representing a wide spectrum of the community to develop a vision and framework to comprehensively address the issue of homelessness. This group became known as *The Mayor's Task Force on Ending Homelessness*.

The mandate of the Task Force was to engage community leaders and to champion the belief that systemic change can result in ending homelessness in this city. It was therefore imperative to craft a vision and framework that would reshape our approach to tackling the issue of homelessness through enhanced relationships and increased political will.

Over the past three years, the Task Force built on effective examples and collaborative partnerships. The success in reaching this point has required a united and genuine effort and a strong belief that it will take each and every one of us working together, to end homelessness.

There is no situation that is not transformable.

There is no person who is hopeless.

There is no set of circumstances that cannot be turned about by human beings and their natural capacity for love of the deepest sort.

✎ Archbishop Desmond Tutu ✎

UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS IN RED DEER

Planning, Community Priorities and Research

Since the early 1990's people have come together to actively address housing needs through the *Red Deer Housing Committee*. Among other significant accomplishments, the Committee oversaw the development of the first community housing plan *A Journey Home*, in 2000³ and an update of the plan in 2003.⁴ These plans established priorities for housing and related supports for women and children, youth, individuals with mental illnesses, and individuals with active addictions. The priorities guided the community in developing affordable housing, services and supports, and provided a focus on which to base funding agreements and decisions. Around the time of the 2003 update, the Red Deer Housing Committee had been studying the work of the American housing advocates, and showed exemplary leadership in bringing this initiative to our community.

In 2006 the Red Deer Housing Committee commissioned a study for the Mayor's Task Force, to identify routes into and out of homelessness and to examine services and supports. Key findings were as follows:⁵

- 65% of the people identified as homeless were males between the ages of 25 and 44.
- 52% were single and 28% were either separated or divorced.
- One in three people identified themselves as Aboriginal.
- Nearly one in three had spent time in foster care.
- People experiencing homelessness were found to have low education, low income and be unemployed.
- Issues of housing affordability, substance abuse, physical health, mental health, and disability were also identified as routes into homelessness.

³ Red Deer Housing Committee. (2000). *The Journey Home – A community housing plan*.

⁴ Red Deer Housing Committee. (2003). *The Journey Home – A community housing plan*. Update 2003-2006.

⁵ Red Deer Housing Committee. (2006). *Ending Homelessness in the The City of Red Deer*.

- Routes out of homelessness included increased income, access to affordable housing, flexibility in housing start-up requirements, access to mental health services, and having supportive relationships.
- Main stream and not-for-profit agencies were found to differ significantly in their approaches to service delivery.

In 2007, the community came together to examine current needs and re-evaluate priorities for housing and support. Two key priorities emerged from that process:

- to have secure housing and support for those who are homeless with a high acuity of mental illness and poor physical health
- prevention of housing loss for individuals and families living in core need and who are at imminent risk of losing their housing stability

Homeless Survey

As noted in the Introduction, *The Mayor's Task Force on Ending Homelessness* was established in 2005. One important activity undertaken by the Task Force was to track over time, the approximate number of people in Red Deer who are experiencing homelessness. The *Homeless Survey* was implemented in 2006 and administered by community agencies. It was conducted on a twice yearly basis in order to account for seasonal variations.

Definitions

People experiencing homelessness are defined as individuals and families who lack shelter, or are temporarily residing at an agency (shelter, hospital, jail) and expected to be on the street by the end of their stay, or are temporarily staying with friends and relatives.⁶

Those "at risk" of homelessness are defined as individuals or families who are at imminent risk of eviction from their current housing, who pay too high a proportion of their income for housing, or who live in unacceptable housing circumstances.⁷

⁶ Mayor's Task Force on Ending Homelessness in Red Deer. (2006). Homeless survey report. P1.

⁷ The City of Red Deer. (2007) Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Plan 2007-2009.

Two key findings from the four Homeless Surveys are:⁸

1. The number of respondents in October of each year were somewhat higher than in May (see Table 1). It is assumed that people were not accessing community agencies to the same degree in May due to the warmer temperatures.

Table 1. Number of survey respondents in October and May in 2006 and 2007.

Month/Year of survey	Number of survey respondents
May 2006	104
October 2006	128
May 2007	110
October 2007	117

2. In all four surveys, people experiencing homelessness were most likely to be

- male,
- relatively homeless (i.e., at an agency or shelter)
- a Canadian citizen,
- homeless in the past, and
- alone.

⁸ Mayor's Task Force on Ending Homelessness in Red Deer. (2007). Homeless survey report.

Two other studies completed over the past few years have informed the work of the Task Force. The City of Red Deer *Affordable Housing Strategy* articulated ways that The City could support and encourage the development of an increased supply of affordable housing through an integrated cross-corporation strategy.⁹

In 2007, The City of Red Deer commissioned the *Aboriginal Housing Needs and Priorities in Red Deer*¹⁰. The report stressed the need to ensure a strong Aboriginal voice and perspective through Aboriginal community members as well as their agencies, in matters related to housing. The findings reinforced the importance of feeling a sense of belonging and the need for shelter. The shelter needs were described as follows: a safe, supportive and stable environment where there is room for everyone and where there can be healing of the spirit and mind while attending to needs of the body. Overall the results suggest that there continues to be a variety of opinions on how services should be developed and accessed.

As we move forward in this work as a community, continued dialogue is critical in developing approaches that are respectful and provide opportunities for full participation of all Aboriginal people.

⁹ Sierra Systems. (2006). Report to the The City of Red Deer - Affordable Housing Strategy.

¹⁰ Seidel, R. & Plante, C. (2007). Aboriginal Housing Needs and Priorities in Red Deer (Draft) Final Report.

Leveraging Resources

In addition to learning about homelessness, Red Deer has benefitted from a wide range of financial and human resources in order to address the issues and needs. The Government of Canada's involvement in funding capital projects, services and supports through the National Homelessness Secretariat dates from 1999 to the present. Funding is allocated based on locally developed community housing plans approved at the federal level and Red Deer has participated in this program since its inception. Currently, the Homelessness Partnering Strategy is the cornerstone of the federal funding program.

In February 2007, the provincial government announced the formation of the Alberta Affordable Housing Task Force to find solutions for homelessness and affordable housing. In response to the recommendations, the province created the Municipal Sustainability Housing and Capital Enhancement Program. Red Deer began to receive funding through this program in spring 2007.

The City of Red Deer has played a strong role in supporting the community through planning, facilitation and fund administration. The community has been able to use available resources based on established priorities, to develop affordable housing units and supportive services (see Appendix 2 for a listing of key projects to date).

Now I'm safe and warm.
I have a place to rest in the daytime.
Now I'm able to return to work.

✎ Tenant of Potter's Hands Housing ✎

THE MAYOR'S TASK FORCE

Since 2005, the Mayor's Task Force has been a champion in raising awareness about homelessness. Red Deer was the first Canadian city to establish a Task Force and over the past three years we have learned a great deal about the complex nature of homelessness. Red Deer's bold initiative has captured the attention of other communities in Alberta and has received recognition across Canada and in the United States.

The Task Force has worked closely with over 30 other planners from the community including front line service providers, concerned citizens and the private sector. We have heard the personal stories, concerns and hopes of over 200 individuals in our community who have been affected by a wide range of issues related to homelessness and the lack of appropriate, affordable housing.

Housing First

An approach that focuses on helping individuals who are currently living on the street access and sustain housing as quickly as possible. It promotes housing stability and individual well-being, without requiring the individual to be clean, sober or involved in treatment. This approach is intended for people with the greatest need, who require individualized support services to maintain their housing.¹¹

Guiding Principles

The Task Force adopted the following principles to guide their thinking about homelessness and about the individuals who are experiencing it:

- We promote a "Housing First" approach. All members of our community deserve safe, appropriate and affordable housing –housing regardless; housing without judgment of personal circumstance
- We respect the individual rights and civil liberties of all members of our society, with a special focus on our most vulnerable citizens.
- We acknowledge the inter-related root causes of homelessness and that homelessness is a complex social issue.
- We recognize that we are all part of the causes of homelessness: we are all part of the solution to end homelessness. We operate without blame.
- We believe that all sectors of the community and all citizens are responsible for addressing those root causes.
- We balance a long term focus on ending homelessness, fuelled by short-term progress.

¹¹ Canadian Mental Health Association. News release February 4, 2008

- We will remain open to adapting our work as we listen to the community, learn more about homelessness and how to eliminate it and respond to our changing environment.
- We believe that shelter is not housing.
- We believe that managing homelessness costs society more than providing appropriate housing, even when an individual requires significant supports.

Vision, Goals and Targets

The Task Force began with a vision to collectively modify the human services system from one that manages homelessness to one that prevents it. This vision was rooted in the belief that all residents of Red Deer deserve to live in dignity and should have opportunities to fully participate in the community.

The goal of the Task Force is to end homelessness in Red Deer by 2018. We recognize that this goal is ambitious and people may find it unrealistic. However, we believe that by not setting a high standard for our community we will continue to *manage* homelessness rather than create positive changes that seek to *end* it. From our work and investigation of the issues over the past three years we are well aware that this is a challenging goal to set. However, commitment has remained steadfast.

“Living in a home means everything to me.
I have my sanity back.
I have my happiness back.
I have time now to live and dream”

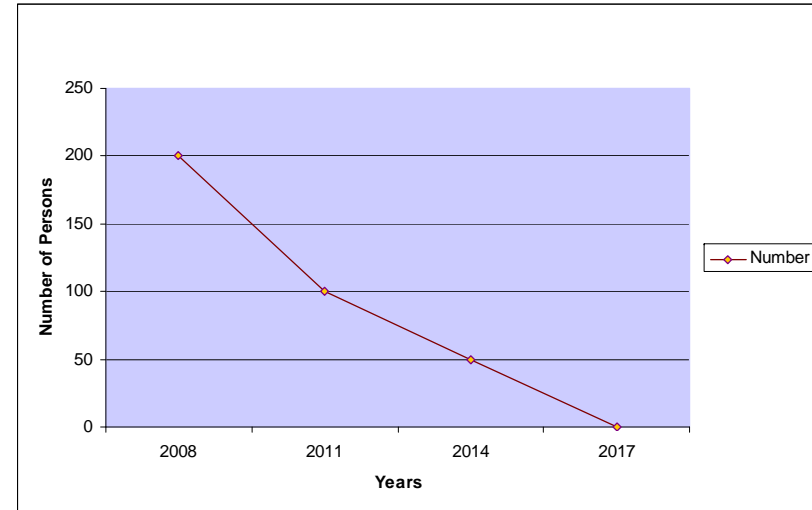
➤ Tenant of Central Alberta Safe Harbour
Society for Health and Housing ➤

The Task Force is committed to making real progress toward this goal on a year by year basis and intends to reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness by half every three years (see Graph 1). Progress on achieving these targets will be monitored and tracked.

Based on what we know, the Task Force agreed to establish 200 as a baseline to estimate the number of individuals experiencing homelessness. This figure is higher than the numbers identified through the Homeless Survey because community experience suggest that voluntary participation in the survey was under-representative of the known population.

By working together in the spirit of collaboration and respect, and by creating the conditions that foster an environment for change, we believe that Red Deer will be well positioned to achieve these targets over time.

Graph 1. Projected target reduction of homelessness.



THE FRAMEWORK

As part of the Task Force's mandate, a review of best practices for addressing homelessness was undertaken that included the work of the Canadian and American housing advocates. A Framework was developed that will help the community to organize and create focus and energy in six key priority areas that are likely to result in substantial reductions in homelessness. The Framework uses the metaphor of a river to describe homelessness by creating interventions both from an "upstream" and "downstream" perspective (see Figure 1).

The three "upstream" priority areas are preventative in nature: building and sustaining healthy relationships, enhancing prevention at a systems level, and prevention through emergency service and supports. These priority areas focus on reducing the likelihood that individuals who are "at risk" will fall into the river of homelessness.

The three "downstream" priority areas relate to how we as a community will focus our work on "pulling people out of the river" of homelessness. These are providing emergency assistance, housing options, and support.

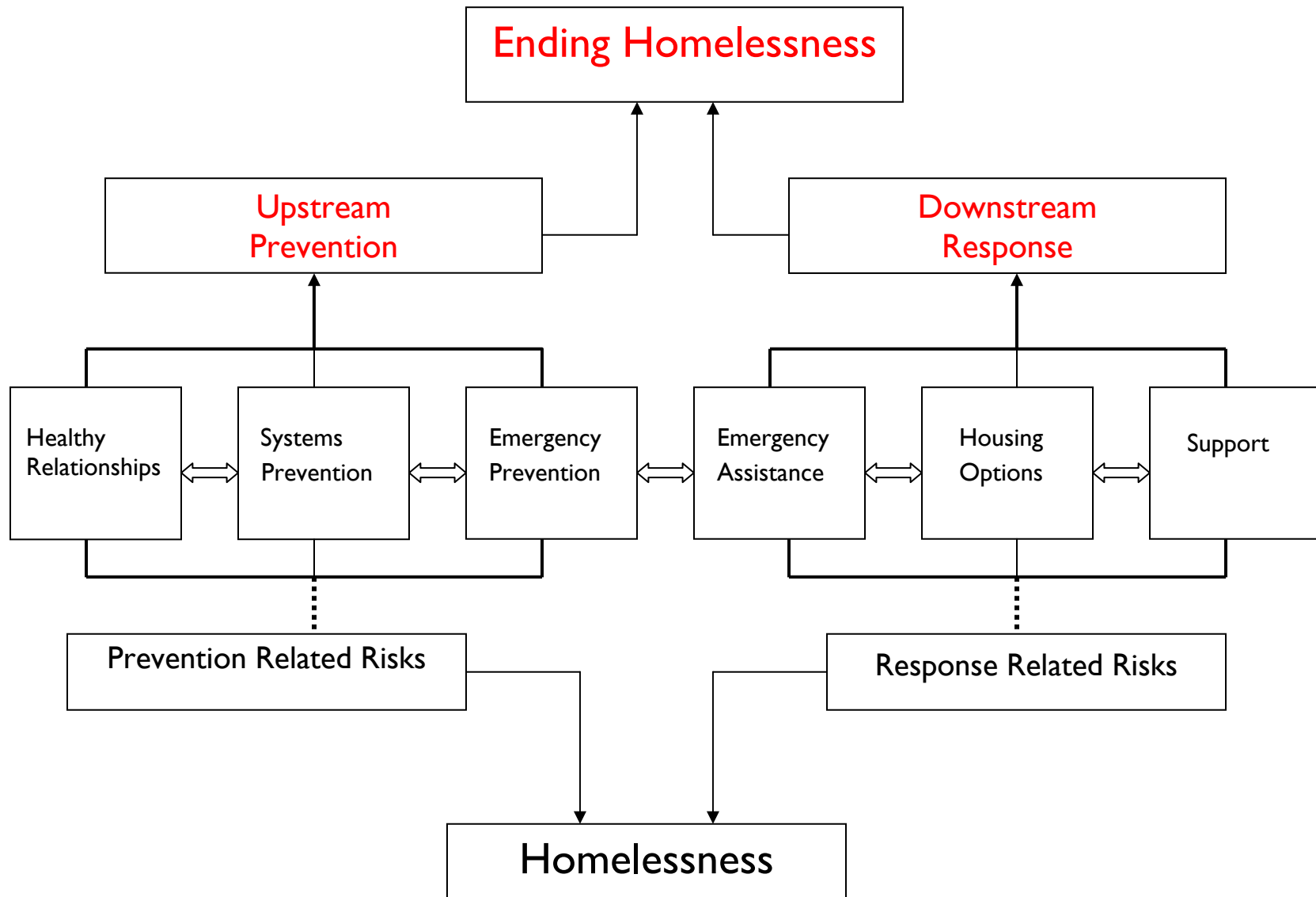
We believe that it is critically important to focus on priority areas that prevent homelessness as well as those which assist an individual to leave homelessness. The Framework diagram illustrates these concepts and shows

how they are inter-related as an individual moves from homelessness to housing stability.

Through the process of creating the Framework, the Task Force made broad recommendations for the development of strategies:

1. "Close the front door" – prevention of homelessness through systemic changes in policies, procedures, partnerships and processes.
2. "Open the back door" – reduce the amount of time in homelessness with options for rapid re-housing and required supports.
3. Promote the "Housing First" approach - provide stable housing first, then customize support services based on individual needs.
4. Create opportunities for individuals experiencing homelessness to develop supportive relationships.
5. Ensure appropriate housing and supports for our most vulnerable community members; Aboriginal people, active substance users, individuals with mental illness and/or chronic physical health conditions, women and children leaving domestic violence, international newcomers and individuals leaving institutional settings.
6. Increase stock and accessibility of permanent affordable housing.
7. Enhance inter-agency collaboration and case management services.

Figure 1. Framework diagram



Elements of the Framework

In 2007, the Task Force broadened the consultation process to include frontline service providers and community members affected by homelessness. This effort resulted in the development of 12 desired outcomes and 48 strategies based upon the six key priority areas. The main elements of the Framework are:

Desired outcomes - the desired outcomes are crafted to be specific, measureable, achievable, realistic, and time bound.

Strategies - these actions build on the assets we have in Red Deer while addressing any gaps that exist. They create a strategic focus by maintaining a strong connection to our community priorities.

Lead partners - these partners became involved because they have a particular role or interest in the various strategies. They offer a great deal of knowledge and experience. They have participated in a high level of information sharing, consultation and showed great willingness to listen.

As this work unfolds, the Lead Partners may change as new people become engaged in the issues. Leadership and ongoing involvement from these key community partners will be an integral part of implementation and promotion of this work over time.

Potential indicators have also been identified under each desired outcome, however further work will need to be done with Lead Partners to determine the best way to create outcome measures and indicators of success.

“The responses to the homelessness issues must focus on housing facilities and support services that will provide the commitment and flexibility to realize significant long-term changes in the lives of the individuals and families experiencing a housing risk or crisis.”

➤ Red Deer Community Housing Plan, 2003 ➤

The following section is a detailed description of the key priority areas, the strategies, desired outcomes and Lead Partners.

1. Healthy Relationships

An important aspect of ending homelessness is increasing the capacity of individuals to access and maintain secure housing by providing necessary supports for people to build and sustain healthy relationships. This is a key characteristic of a healthy community. A healthy community is one that continually seeks to prevent homelessness by fostering positive connections and ensuring there is stable housing for all people.

Desired Outcomes	Strategies	Lead Partners
<p>1.1 Red Deer is a healthy community that fosters healthy relationships.</p> <p>[Potential indicator: Degree to which people feel a sense of belonging.]</p>	<p>1.1 Support the creation of open spaces and built environments that enhance social interaction and inclusiveness.</p> <p>1.2 Provide opportunities for cultivating and nurturing positive and significant relationships that generate a sense of belonging and inter-connectivity.</p> <p>1.3 Link the Cultural Master Plan with homelessness and conduct a social mapping exercise to support homelessness initiatives.</p> <p>1.4 Develop and implement a communication and awareness project to increase understanding of the issues around homelessness and particularly people's fear of homelessness.</p> <p>1.5 Create a platform for people to tell their stories about homelessness to increase public engagement and dialogue, and to enhance community acceptance of diversity.</p>	<p>Aboriginal Community and Agency Service Providers</p> <p>Central Alberta Addictions Consortium</p> <p>John Howard Society</p> <p>Welcoming And Inclusive Communities</p> <p>Youth Serving Organizations</p>
<p>1.2 Disadvantaged people have the support to build and maintain healthy relationships.</p> <p>[Potential indicator: Level of awareness of supports]</p>	<p>1.6 Assess and build community capacity to support all individuals regardless of age or circumstance (e.g., at risk youth, individuals with mental illnesses or addictions, sex offenders) in sustaining healthy relationships and secure housing.</p> <p>1.7 Foster the values of an inclusive community by nurturing relationships and valuing diversity of all citizens of Red Deer.</p> <p>1.8 Ensure appropriate protocols and approaches are followed to strengthen relationships with and participation by Aboriginal people, international newcomers, persons with disabilities, and youth.</p>	<p>As above</p>

2. Systems Prevention

An inclusive and effective housing system is the foundation for strong, healthy and sustainable communities. Policies and programs must address both the backlog in supply of affordable housing and plan for the future housing needs of families and individuals. This requires collaborative partnerships among all orders of government, the private sector, and not-for-profit agencies and non-government organizations.

Desired Outcomes	Strategies	Lead Partners
<p>2.1 Effective communication strategies are in place with the local, provincial and federal governments.</p> <p>[Potential indicator: Evidence of two-way communication systems are in place]</p>	<p>2.1 In partnership with the <i>7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness</i>¹² create a communication mechanism for input to the <i>Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness</i> to bring local and provincial issues forward and to collaborate on solutions of common concerns.</p> <p>2.2 Identify opportunities to inform policy regarding homelessness at the municipal, provincial and federal levels.</p>	<p>Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission; Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry; Alberta Justice – Probation Services; Central Alberta Child and Family Services Authority The City of Red Deer, Social Planning David Thompson Health Region – Mental Health Services, Michener Services, Red Deer Catholic School Regional Division #39, Red Deer College, Red Deer Housing Committee, Red Deer Public School District #104</p>
<p>2.2 The not-for-profit sector is adequately and sustainably resourced.</p> <p>[Potential indicator: Level of resources and capacity of non-for-profit to provide service and supports]</p>	<p>2.3 Identify ways to allocate funding that reduces competition between service providers.</p> <p>2.4 Increase support of the not-for-profit sector by advocating with all levels of government and between systems of the financial needs of the not for profit sector.</p> <p>2.5 Support initiatives in the not-for-profit sector that build capacity to increase individualized and personal support services for people who have multiple needs.</p>	<p>Red Deer Funders Forum Red Deer Housing Committee Not-for-profit sector</p>
<p>2.3 Reduce the level of poverty in the community.</p> <p>[Potential indicator: Level of poverty (as defined by a measure of income and housing costs)]</p>	<p>2.6 Support initiatives at all levels of government and in all sectors that promote raising income support levels to reflect current basic goods and services costs.</p> <p>2.7 Explore feasibility of extending income supports for shelter costs, in cases of extended hospitalization, rehabilitation or incarceration.</p>	<p>As above</p>

¹² 7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness consists of representatives from the 7 largest cities in Alberta. It was formed in 2000 in response to new funding from both federal and provincial governments. The network exists to enhance communication of issues, concerns and strategies related to homelessness.

3. Emergency Prevention

One of the most effective ways to address homelessness is to prevent it from happening in the first place. These strategies focus on mitigating risk associated with events that lead to homelessness and that reduce the length of and number of times a person falls into the cycle of homelessness.

Desired Outcomes	Strategies	Lead Partners
<p>3.1 There is effective collaboration between institutional, clinical and community support services.</p> <p>[Potential indicator: Frontline service providers have greater knowledge and awareness of each other's mandate]</p>	<p>3.1 Foster increased understanding and planning among key clinical and community-based service providers about roles and responsibilities in serving the best interest of mutually served individuals (those "at risk" and known to service providers).</p>	<p>Canadian Mental Health Association Central Alberta AIDS Network Society Central Alberta Women's Outreach Society Crisis Centre, David Thompson Health Region – Mental Health Services; Red Deer Regional Hospital; Centennial Centre for Mental Health and Brain Injury, Family Services of Central Alberta, Mayor's Task Force members Red Deer Housing Committee, Red Deer Native Friendship Society, Safe Harbour Society, Salvation Army</p>
<p>3.2 There is increased awareness of housing supports and assistance</p> <p>[Potential indicator: Level of knowledge of referral services available]</p>	<p>3.2 Improve communication to increase awareness of all potential users of services of housing supports through the provision of up-to-date materials that are visible and widely available in community.</p> <p>3.3 Improve communication about existing services and supports to other agencies and to the general public (in order to reach those "at risk" but unknown to service providers) through a variety of sources.</p>	<p>Canadian Mental Health Association Red Deer Native Friendship Society</p>

3. Emergency Prevention cont'd

Desired Outcome	Strategies	Lead Partners
<p>3.3 Evictions are prevented</p> <p>[Potential indicator: Decreased number of evictions]</p>	<p>3.4 Establish a flexible, accessible community-based fund for costs related to prevention of eviction not covered by other sources (such as for ID and heavy cleaning).</p> <p>3.5 Increase opportunities for those living at risk, to increase their income through community economic development, flexible employment, and support services.</p> <p>3.6 Support capacity of service providers to advocate and negotiate with systems, landlords and building owners on behalf of individuals who are at risk of homelessness due to financial, behavioral or relationship issues.</p> <p>3.7 Work with Framework Lead Partners for Housing Options to explore a) short term (2-3 day) respite housing to prevent roommate and/ or family relationship breakdown and b) emergency housing for unexpected losses due to unforeseen events.</p>	<p>Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Fund partners¹³</p> <p>Framework Lead Partners for Housing Options and Systems Prevention¹⁴</p>

¹³ The Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Fund is part of the Government of Alberta's response to the recommendations of the Alberta Affordable Housing Task Force. It is designed to provide short term assistance to prevent Albertans from becoming homeless and to help individuals and families stabilize their shelter arrangements.

¹⁴ See Appendix 1 for list of Lead Partners

4. Emergency Assistance

These strategies identify approaches that will provide immediate assistance to those who are currently homeless, with the intent of promoting quick and effective response for a wide range of needs related to housing, safety, finances and information.

Desired Outcomes	Strategies	Lead Partners
<p>4.1 Effective and reliable emergency assistance is available so that no one is turned away from assistance</p> <p>[Potential indicator: Level of responsiveness to emergency needs]</p>	<p>4.1 Create a pro-active response before there is a need for an emergency response through community-based triage, better public information and collaborative partnerships –“build the person back into the community”</p> <p>4.2 Create a community-based ‘reception centre’ that offers range of services and facilitates immediate meaningful connections.</p> <p>4.3 Create more immediate housing options that have minimal requirements and that are year round.</p> <p>4.4 Explore models of engagement and service delivery to meet needs of “at risk” homeless youth and collaborate on development of resources to respond to their needs.</p> <p>4.5 Increase the capacity of emergency services and community-based frontline service providers to work together and to follow up on individuals with high needs.</p> <p>4.6 Establish flexible fund that can cover gaps such as acquiring identification, Alberta Health Care Premiums, transportation to medical detox, etc.</p> <p>4.7 Explore a RCMP/Outreach Pilot Program – “mobile partnership” to respond to high needs individuals during peak hours.</p> <p>4.8 Continue to explore possibility of a 211 telephone line to manage non-emergency calls.</p> <p>4.9 Explore 24/7 comprehensive community-based team for crisis response.</p>	<p>Central Alberta AIDS Network Society Central Alberta Women’s Emergency Shelter Child and Family Service Authority The City of Red Deer, Emergency Medical Services The City of Red Deer, Social Planning Community Information and Referral Society Coordinated Community Outreach Team Crisis Centre David Thompson Health Region Community Crisis Response Team Employment Placement Support Services Front line service providers Parkland Youth Homes Red Deer Housing Committee Safe Harbour Society Systems Prevention Group Welcoming and Inclusive Committee Youth and Volunteer Centre</p>

5. Housing Options

A range of affordable housing options are required in order to meet the needs of individuals and families who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness. This range includes housing that can be offered in conjunction with various levels of support and independent housing without support. The development of housing options to meet projected growth rates requires a coordinated effort between all orders of government, the private sector and the not for profit sector. Based on growth projections, available shelter space and analysis of core housing need (ie: lacking in at least one area of either suitability, affordability and /or adequacy) it is estimated that approximately 213 additional housing options will be required each year.

Desired Outcome	Strategies	Lead Partners
<p>5.1 Affordable housing options meet the short and long term housing needs for all Red Deer citizens.</p> <p>[Potential indicator: Level of housing stock; cost of housing]</p>	<p>5.1 Short term (2008-2009): Support initiatives that will create additional and new housing stock, such as new construction, making existing rental units affordable and accessible, and opportunities for affordable home ownership.</p> <p>5.2 Support "Housing First" as a best practice community approach for individuals who have multiple barriers to obtaining and maintaining permanent, stable housing.</p> <p>5.3 Long term: A range of housing options will provide an additional 213 units annually to reach projected growth. [Targets: 10% Single Room Occupancy and/or Hostel, 30% 1 bedrooms, 30% 2 bedrooms, 30% 3+ bedrooms]</p> <p>5.4 Incent secondary suite development in residential areas and second story residential development (where desired by building owners) in commercial areas.</p> <p>5.5 Establish a corporate entity to preserve, manage and develop community housing assets (e.g., Housing Development Corporation).</p> <p>5.6 Explore options and opportunities to support fund development in the community to end homelessness.</p> <p>5.7 Collaborate with The City and residential and commercial land developers to secure property for affordable housing through land banking.</p>	<p>Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Canadian Home Builders Association Canadian Mental Health Association Catholic Social Services The City of Red Deer, Economic Development The City of Red Deer, Social Planning The City of Red Deer, Social Planning and Land & Economic Development Heritage Family Services John Howard Society Mayor's Task Force members Piper Creek Foundation Potter's Hands Housing Red Deer and District Community Foundation Red Deer Housing Authority Red Deer Housing Committee Safe Harbour Society Twilight Homes Foundation</p>

6. Support

Some individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness need outreach and supportive services to assist them in securing and maintaining their housing. The length of time a person may need support varies on an individual basis. Community support services should be well organized, have capacity and be responsive in order to build on an individual's personal assets as they work towards greater stability.

Desired Outcome	Strategies	Lead Partners
<p>6.1 Support services are accessible and within the reach of individuals in our community</p> <p>[Potential indicator: Number of people accessing support]</p>	<p>6.1 Increase flexibility and choice in support options.</p> <p>6.2 Create clear messaging regarding available supports and services.</p> <p>6.3 Reduce the number of times an individual has to “tell their story” in order to access appropriate supports and services.</p> <p>6.4 Create opportunities where possible within existing programs and services that are more flexible in order to promote individualized success in employment and vocations.</p> <p>6.5 Assess and increase where needed, a range of individualized services and supports that promote a greater quality of life.</p>	<p>Canadian Mental Health Association, Central Alberta AIDS Network Society, Central Alberta Women's Outreach Society, The City of Red Deer - Social Planning, Deer Park Alliance Church, Employment Placement & Support Services, Mayor's Task Force members, Red Deer Native Friendship Society, Safe Harbour Society, Schizophrenia Society</p>
<p>6.2 There is increased capacity of service providers to provide appropriate support to individuals.</p> <p>[Potential indicator: Evidence of shared leadership in planning and delivery of service]</p>	<p>6.6 Establish a Case Managers network to meet the following objectives: triage for better overall use and coordination of resources, better flow of information, facilitate working relationships, and to foster trust.</p> <p>6.7 Develop a preferred collaborative case management model that is adopted and used consistently by service providers.</p> <p>6.8 Create a common tool to assess needs and indicators of success for individuals in housing.</p> <p>6.9 Assess existing community-based services that provide assertive street outreach stabilization and determine if enhancements are called for.</p> <p>6.10 Increase capacity of service providers to provide necessary support services on a macro level (e.g., case management, service provider planning).</p> <p>6.11 Increase capacity of service provision on a micro level (supports to individuals).</p>	<p>Framework Lead Partners for Emergency Assistance and Systems Prevention Group</p>

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The anticipated next steps for realizing the vision for ending homelessness in Red Deer is to convene an Advisory Committee. Committee members will support and guide the implementation of the strategies outlined in the Framework. The Advisory Committee will include representatives from the Mayor's Task Force, the Red Deer Housing Committee, the Urban Aboriginal Elders, the community at large, the Red Deer and District Community Foundation, and The City of Red Deer Social Planning Department. The City of Red Deer will provide resources and support to establish a community-based position to coordinate this work over the next three years.

The Mayor's Task Force together with the Advisory Committee, will support the implementation of the strategies through the following functions:

Educate the community

- Educate the entire community about the scale, root causes and costs of homelessness.
- Dramatically increase the public's awareness of the scope and nature of homeless in Red Deer and challenge the community to join in the effort to end homelessness within ten years.

Raise aspirations

- Create civic and political will of local citizens and organizations, in order to contribute to efforts to reduce homelessness.

Ensure strategic focus

- Identify root causes and trends around homelessness.
- Continue to seek out effective strategies and approaches on ending homelessness from other communities.
- Support outcome measures and data collection methods and share the results with the community.
- Set priorities based on community responses and changes, through review and assessment of the six key areas of the Framework, including the desired outcomes and strategies.
- Review overall progress on ending homelessness and assess trends affecting homelessness.

Support local action

- Support the work of local Lead Partners in the key areas of the Framework.
- Assist Lead Partners to “untie the systemic knots” that prevent their efforts to make progress on a case-by-case basis.

Represent Red Deer

- Represent Red Deer at community, provincial and federal events on the issues related to homelessness.

“We’ve been watching communities tackle complex issues like homelessness, gang violence, ecological resiliency and poverty for five years now. Based on what we’ve learned, we feel that there are four reasons why the members of the Mayor’s Task Force and the residents of Red Deer are in a great position to significantly reduce homelessness in the city.

The first is that the people involved in the initiative have committed to a concrete set of milestones to eliminate homelessness, such as reducing the number of people experiencing extreme homelessness by one-half every three years.

Second, the Task Force *Framework* is designed to help people avoid homelessness and to more effectively assist them if and when they become homeless.

Third, the group’s emphasis on identifying a pool of general strategies – rather than layers upon layers of precise plans – in each area of the Framework is important because detailed plans have a habit of quickly becoming irrelevant in our fast changing communities.

Finally, the Vision and Framework was developed by a remarkable cross section of residents, businesses, service providers, organizations, government agencies and community. The people of Red Deer will need to choose and adapt their strategies – sometimes very quickly – to reflect the ever changing political, economic and social landscape that affects homelessness.”

 Mark Cabaj 

Tamarack - An Institute for Community Development

APPENDIX 1: Acknowledgements

This Vision and Framework represents a true community effort. Numerous individuals and organizations have contributed valuable time, expertise, passion and creativity to the process. We would like to thank and acknowledge them all.

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The Red Deer Housing Committee for their vision.

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Mayor's Task Force (past and present members)

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Bernadette Majdell (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation)
Bill Olafson (Earl's Restaurant)
Bruce Buruma (Red Deer Public School District #104)
Cal Dallas (Red Deer Chamber of Commerce)
Cheryl Wowk (Red Deer Public School District #104)
Cindy Hay (Service Canada)
Cindy Jefferies (Councillor, The City of Red Deer)
Connie Reichel (David Thompson Health Region)
Cora Fedyk (Aboriginal Elder)
Craig Staniforth (Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission)
Dave Wolkowski (Alberta Justice)

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Geoff Olson (Piper Creek Foundation)
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APPENDIX 2: Projects addressing homelessness in Red Deer

Funded Projects 2000-2006
Central Alberta Housing Society - shelter workers and transition house
Coordinated Community Outreach Team – 4 agency partnership: Canadian Mental Health Association, Central Alberta Housing Society, Central Alberta Women's Outreach Society, Red Deer Native Friendship Society
Potters Hands Ministries - affordable housing development and Volunteer Coordinator position
Loaves and Fishes Benevolent Society - renovations and extended hours for Inn from the Cold program
Shining Mountains Living Community Services - Tawow Recovery Home, Helping Hands Mobile Outreach Services and motor home purchase
The Loan Circle - emergency fund
Central Alberta Housing Society - rent grants
Central Alberta Women's Outreach Society - Welcome Home kits
Safe Harbor Society - program supports for drop in
Central Alberta Housing Society - community training
Central Alberta Women's Outreach Society - emergency fund
Parkland Youth Homes - renovations
P&S Investments - appliances for Convent park apartments
Residential Society – Staff Supports and House Purchase
Safe Harbor Society - Mats overnight shelter program
Schizophrenia Society - renovation and support staff

Funded Projects 2007-2009¹⁵
Coordinated Community Outreach Team - Canadian Mental Health Association, Central Alberta Women's Outreach Society, Red Deer Native Friendship Society, Central Alberta Safe Harbour Society for for Health & Housing
Red Deer Housing Authority: nine unit building (down payment)
Potter's Hands Ministries: Volunteer Coordinator
Habitat for Humanity – land purchase
Heritage Family Services Ltd. – two condominium purchases
Schizophrenia Society of Alberta – Red Deer and Area Chapter (Lovella Center Society) – mortgage payout & repairs
Potters Hands Developments – tax relief (two years)
Potters Hands Developments – 60 new units
Shining Mountains Living Community Services – 12 unit building purchase
Central Alberta AIDS Network Society – Street Nurse
Central Alberta Safe Harbour for Health & Housing – staff supports and building purchase for Detox site

¹⁵ This is a list of projects funded to date.