

Regina Community Plan 2007: A Home for All

Appendix I:

Regina Community Plan 2007 Report Summaries

prepared for the Regina Homelessness Committee
June 2007

Regina Community Plan 2007

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REGINA HOUSING PROFILE

This summary is excerpted directly from Appendix IV: Regina Housing Profile, by Margaret Eberle.

Households at risk of homelessness

- About 7,500 Regina households were at risk of homelessness in 2001.
- Average core need household income (\$13,971) was very low in comparison to the median Regina household income (\$46,847).
- The depth of need has increased since 1991, as core need households spend an increasing share of their very low incomes on shelter (from 45% in 1991 to 51% in 2001).
- Most households in core need are paying 30% or more of their income on shelter costs.
- Almost 1,400 core need households fail the adequacy standard because they live in housing that is in poor condition and needs major repairs.
- Over 1,100 core need households are living in over-crowded conditions.
- More than three quarters of all core need households are renters (5,695).
- Core need households are almost equally split between families (53%) and single persons (47%).
- 17% of Regina's younger households are in core need compared to 10.8% of all households and only 10% of households with a maintainer age 65+.
- Seniors form the smallest share of all age groups in core housing need (17%)
- Aboriginal households represent almost one quarter of core need households and are concentrated among renters.
- Owner households in core need tend to be older than renter households.
- Over 40% of households paying 30% or more of their income for shelter resided in Central Zone.

Population at risk of homelessness

- About one quarter of the population living in unaffordable housing are children, and they are most likely to live in the East, North and West Zones.
- Youth (age 15-24 yrs) and seniors living in households with unaffordable housing are concentrated in South Zone.
- Persons living in non-family households and paying 30% or more of their income on shelter are concentrated in Central and South Zones.
- Immigrants (regardless of period of immigration) comprised 8% of people living in unaffordable housing in 2001.
- This population has a high unemployment rate of 23%, almost double the city average in 2001, suggesting that they face challenges in obtaining or maintaining employment.
- According to a variety of sources, it appears that a significant number of the at risk population is living with mental illness, addictions, both or other challenges, and service providers are having a difficult time meeting their needs.

Homeless population

- While little is known about the number or characteristics of the homeless population in Regina, most agree that absolute homelessness is not the most pressing issue.
- Existing emergency spaces are running below their capacity of 79 persons a night which suggests the number homeless on any one night is below that figure
- Regina transition houses saw almost 400 women plus their children in 2006, although some women may have stayed more than once.

Housing stock

- There appears to be an adequate supply of rental housing in Regina, as indicated by current availability and vacancy rates.
- A significant share of the dwelling stock is in poor condition requiring major repairs (8%), with 15% of units in Central Zone needing major repairs.
- Less expensive units tend to be located in older buildings built prior to 1940 that are more likely to be in poor condition.
- The non-market housing supply of approximately 5,700 units is focused on serving seniors and families, with less emphasis on single persons.
- There is excess capacity in emergency shelters, while transition houses for women fleeing violence turn away clients on a fairly regular basis.

Affordability

- Affordability is significant issue for those with the lowest and fixed incomes, including single person households.
- Single person households in core need cannot afford to rent a bachelor unit.
- A family receiving income assistance with 1 or 2 children would be unable to afford the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment.
- Low-income households turn to apartments in poor condition that rent at lower prices.
- Current average resale house prices are in line with adjusted median household incomes making home-ownership a possibility for Regina households at or above median household incomes.

COMMUNITY VOICES: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS OR AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS

This executive summary is excerpted directly from Appendix V: Community Voices: Recommendations from People Who Are Homeless or At Risk of Homelessness, by Marc Spooner.

Introduction

Maintaining and strengthening the existing services currently offered is vital - there are a wide variety of organisations providing a strong support system, yet many of these programs hang precariously by the slimmest of fundraising threads. The current system of programs and services should not be considered stable due to the lack of guaranteed, long-term funding.

Specific Recommendations and Key Actions

1. Focus on youth as a critical strategic area.

Key action:

- Create a “one-stop” location for the coordinated and mentored delivery of services and placement of “at-risk” youths.
- Create a short-term, 24-hour, youth-only shelter.
- Create secondary longer term housing opportunities for those enrolled in educational and or life/work skills training programs and extend the length of these programs to 2 years.
- Enhance support to programs that provide much-needed work experience opportunities and that reach out to the youth by going out to them in the parks where they congregate, or in the schools where they might attend, to let them know that help is available - that there are people who care.

2. Focus on life-skills training/counselling.

Key action:

- Create more programs and/or maintain continued support for the delivery of life-skills, counselling, parenting, and social skills training and modelling.

3. Food and Foodbank.

Key action: (see also transportation below)

- As long as present food services are maintained, the individuals consulted did not believe lack of food was an issue, although some questioned the quality, as well as the

lack of fresh fruit and vegetables. The relatively new location of the Regina & District Food Bank (now located at 425-445 Winnipeg Street) was also seen as a barrier to access, even when serviced by a City of Regina daily bus route.

- Create additional nutritional programs to teach healthy eating and provide opportunities for people to cook (learn) and take away food that they may not otherwise be in a position to prepare or even possess the needed equipment/ingredients to make.

4. Focus on transportation to various services/or service “to you.”

Key action:

- Create a transportation service/bus to essential facilities.
- For example, supporting a van or bus service (in addition to the City of Regina buses) to bring clients to the Foodbank would be seen as helpful. A transportation service could also improve access to, and participation in, other existing services and programs including, kids’ programs, recreational centres, women’s groups, grocery stores, and so on.

5. Focus on raising awareness of the many services currently offered and supported by the various levels and branches of government, nongovernmental organisations, and community-based organisations.

Key action:

- Create a map of services that could be used by both service providers and at risk populations.
- Continue to explore alternative knowledge dissemination initiatives and awareness-raising activities, including video-enhanced podcasts and specialised websites among others. These could also result in increased public support for the services currently being offered.

6. Research as a transformative process.

Key action:

- Capacity-building should be incorporated into any research, consultation, and/or evaluation process undertaken by municipal, provincial, or federal levels of government. This project, for example, involved the input and training of research assistants from the university and First Nations community. Adopting such a model allows the research, by its very nature, to work towards positive solutions.

COMMUNITY AGENCY INTERVIEWS, FOCUS GROUPS AND PROJECT EVALUATIONS

This executive summary is excerpted directly from Appendix VI: Community Agency Interviews, Focus Groups and Project Evaluations, by Joanne Kowalchuk.

Regina has had two previous plans on homelessness to guide funding and service decisions based on community identified priorities. During these first two phases of the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI), the Government of Canada invested over Eight Million Dollars, through seventy projects, to prevent and reduce homelessness in Regina. Beginning in 1999, Phase One principally funded capital projects, whereas in 2003 the second phase shifted the focus towards transitional, supportive and preventive services.

This community consultation was designed to clarify what has changed since 2003, to document what needs are now being seen in the community and to establish the most effective way to respond to these needs in Phase 3 of Regina's Community Plan on Homelessness.

The consultation included in-depth interviews with representatives of twenty-four community organizations involved in serving the homeless or those at-risk of homelessness in Regina. It also included focus groups with representatives of community associations, housing providers and the City of Regina. Other data collected included a project evaluation questionnaire, as well as updating and expanding the Assets and Gaps Tables which summarize statistics, client profiles, services provided, as well as gaps, trends and priorities with regard to an extensive list of shelter, youth, residential and human service providers.

Many changes were reported since 2003, including significant demographic shifts, systemic changes in terms of government services and programs, as well as some changes related to the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) and the Regina Homelessness Committee.

The barriers and gaps preventing people from moving into stable housing were concentrated around four main areas:

- i) the lack of safe, affordable, quality housing
- ii) the lack of long-term supports to enable housing stability
- iii) systemic barriers to accessing housing and achieving personal stability
- iv) negative societal attitudes

KEY FINDINGS REGARDING WHAT IS NEEDED:

- A holistic, co-ordinated, integrated approach to service provision that includes long-term programs and services with a continuity of supports for all those who need them, particularly those in the high, complex needs group: people with addictions, mental health and cognitive disorders like FASD or some combination of these challenges. Aboriginal people also, are over-represented in the high needs group as a result of systemic historic and institutional barriers.

- Access to safe, affordable housing for all who need it, including young singles, with opportunities for low-income home ownership.
- Communities that are inclusive of diversity, within safe neighbourhoods that provide a comprehensive range of supports and services to ensure a good quality of life.
- Comprehensive, enlightened social policy that can substantively address systemic barriers and gaps in service.
- Continued community development and strengthening of community networks in order to maximize resources and service provision.
- Improved and ongoing communication and community consultation, as well as education of citizens and leaders regarding not only the needs, but the contributions that people with challenges and disabilities can make to the community if given proper services and support.

In summary, what is needed is a comprehensive community plan that includes all levels of government, the private sector, community agencies and associations, housing providers, as well as citizens. The development of a strong community network with meaningful, ongoing consultation, particularly with recipients of services, will enable barriers and gaps to be more quickly identified and corrected. Inclusion of determinants of health as benchmarks, along with assessments of which agencies are the best suited to deliver programs and services will make targeting of resources more effective. This process will enable the development of both short and long-term strategies leading to realistic action plans. Long-term investment now is crucial in order to meet the growing needs of those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

The key values and beliefs needed to guide this process centre around the concept that at the base of community development is human relationship. Many people have stopped believing in their ability to achieve a better quality of life for themselves and their families. They must be helped to regain their goals and dreams. This process must be driven by the belief that all citizens have a right to a safe, affordable, well-maintained place to live and a good quality of life.

INTERVIEWS WITH GOVERNMENT AND KEY SERVICE AND HOUSING PROVIDER MANAGERS AND POLICY ANALYSTS

This executive summary is excerpted directly from Appendix VII: Interviews with Government and Key Service and Housing Provider Managers and Policy Analysts, by Barbara Kahan.

This report presents the results of eight individual interviews and one group interview with managers and policy analysts from municipal, provincial and federal government and key service and housing providers on the topic of homelessness and housing. There was a high degree of consensus among interview participants. However, some topics may require clarification, for example: is more home ownership required or is the current ratio between rented and owned close to optimal.

Underpinnings

Interview participants discussed underpinnings to provide guidelines for processes and activities to address homelessness and sub-standard living conditions.

- **values.** Interview participants identified nine values: equity, collaboration, prevention, social inclusion, citizenship, choice, flexibility, accountability, and sustainability.
- **vision.** A composite vision of Regina's housing situation in 20 years includes all Regina residents living in homes that promotes health, independence, security, positive social interaction, and dignity. Regina residents will have ready access to a range of support options with sufficient intensity and flexibility to meet individual requirements. Each home will exist in a positive environment, including safety, green spaces, amenities and cultural activities.
- **beliefs.** Interview participants identified six key beliefs, including the existence of enough resources to adequately house all people and the idea that housing is integrally linked to other aspects of life.
- **theory.** Interview participants' observations formed a three-part theory.
 - *Impacts of a positive housing situation* range from better individual health to more community engagement.
 - *Factors contributing to homelessness or sub-standard living conditions* include lack of support, insufficient high quality housing, and low income combined with high rental and home ownership costs.
 - *Requirements to eliminate homelessness and sub-standard living conditions* include: address underlying issues, for example through education, employment and community development activities; emphasize prevention; act collectively; and provide choice in supports and housing.
- **evidence.** Interview participants discussed the importance of: developing and following best practices, information from a variety of sources, and policies that change as new information comes to light.

Assets

Interview participants listed a number of positive changes which have occurred over the past few years, for example:

- capital construction such as Wichihik Iskwewak transitional housing, Red Ribbon Place and Souls Harbour Rescue Mission
- increased enforcement of housing standards
- improved relationships between government levels
- greater integration of housing and services
- more funding partnerships and more housing-service partnerships
- new service-based programs to better meet the needs of people who are at particular risk of becoming homeless or living in sub-standard conditions, for example mental health transitional care to help people stay in their homes, drug treatment court for people with addictions who have committed non-violent crimes, and family treatment to assist youth at risk of running away
- new housing programs such as the Centenary Affordable Housing program and the quality rent supplement

Examples of other current assets identified by interview participants include programs such as KidsFirst and strong leadership. Future assets either in the discussion stage or with plans well underway include a brief detox, individualized funding packages, more partnerships, greater integration of housing and services, and a “determinants of successful communities” approach which would involve increased intersectoral work.

Challenges

Interview participants also discussed challenges:

- insignificant improvement for most people who are homeless or living in sub-standard conditions
- the necessity to guard against a self-perpetuating homelessness system
- insufficient service and housing options for people who face, in addition to very low income, other hurdles such as mental illness, addictions, or FASD
- other challenges such as short-term funding for CBOs, rising costs of utilities and building materials, territorialism, lack of over all coordination, the feeling of exclusion by Aboriginal people, and limited involvement of homeless people in decision making

Key Elements of a Comprehensive System

Interview participants identified key elements of a comprehensive system to ensure that every Regina resident has a high quality home:

- a range of individualized support and housing options
- strategic planning and implementation
- key stakeholders working together
- funding
- prevention

- community building

Conclusion

Interview participants were clearly committed to tackling issues of providing a high quality home for everyone and had a strong awareness of assets available to build on as they work to address challenges.

RESULTS FROM THE COMMUNITY PLANNING SESSION

This summary of key themes is excerpted directly from Appendix VIII: Results from the Community Planning Session, by Joanne Kowalchuk.

While each working group summary provides information on housing, support and other issues specific to the area, the following are themes that appear to be common to all groups:

Funding:

- adequate funding for individuals and core, sustainable funding for organizations
- adequate staffing and staff training resources

Housing and supports:

- there is a severe lack of housing and supports for the most vulnerable groups, including those with addictions, mental health and cognitive disorders like FASD, young singles and particularly, young males leaving incarceration – as well as for high numbers of Aboriginal people
- a broad range and continuum of housing and supports is needed, including crisis, transitional and long-term options, as well as resources for those with very high, complex supervision and management needs
- there is a need for long-term addictions programs, including transitional supports
- supports must incorporate traditional Aboriginal approaches

Systems/process:

- formal and informal agreements/partnerships are needed to eliminate gaps and barriers and to facilitate collaboration and coordination of services and resources at all levels from the executive level of government to the CBO sector:
 - ❑ adequate support should be given to grassroots agencies already providing needed, quality services
- concepts/approaches to be embraced:
 - ❑ global, holistic, strengths-based, relationship-based, wrap around
 - ❑ single point of entry, one-stop shopping, one door service system
 - ❑ clear, simple processes and language for those trying to access services
 - ❑ much improved communication between government, agencies, community and recipients of services
- specific suggestions:
 - ❑ central registry of all housing and social services – central help desk
 - ❑ one-stop, 24-7 Resource Centre – personalized, not automated
 - ❑ directory to help navigate the system – 211 service
 - ❑ brochures/pamphlets directed to specific groups with listings of services, programs, agencies, contacts, housing i.e. Towards youth

- coordinated services: Housing Providers Network; Rental Registry
- use Best Practice models (existing here and in other places) to develop new programs and pilot projects: (a few mentioned were)
 - Drug Treatment Court
 - Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods
 - Housing Standards Enforcement Team
 - KidsFirst
 - Cedar House, My Home, Quint in Saskatoon
- more consultation of recipients of services:
 - development of a Participant Advisory Group
 - peer support programs, including qualitative research
- need for more education and awareness, as well as community involvement:
 - mentorship programs
- build on what is working:
 - services and programs that currently exist and the commitment, dedication and passion of their staff
 - continued development of natural collaborations - partnerships and networks

REVIEW OF SELECTED REPORTS AND RESEARCH RELATED TO HOMELESSNESS

This executive summary is excerpted directly from Appendix IX: Review of Selected Reports and Research Related to Homelessness, by Barbara Kahan.

The purpose of this review of reports and research was to gather information to develop a best practices approach in addressing homelessness issues. The best practices definition used is a comprehensive one which recognizes the importance of consistency between practice and evidence, values, theories, evidence, and understanding of the environment.

Guidelines for Decision Making

Possible guidelines for decision making were identified, based on values, evidence and other elements that contribute to best practices.

values and vision

Equity, inclusion and a range of accessible housing and service options which meet individual needs were some of the key values and vision pieces implicit in many of the documents reviewed.

evidence

Strategies that current evidence indicates effectively address homelessness in general include:

- combining housing and supports
- housing subsidies
- collaboration and partnerships
- participation by former or current clients
- a “housing first” approach

Examples of effective strategies for specific populations are: ACT for people with mental illness, positive youth development approach for youth, and harm reduction approach for people with substance use issues.

theory

Documents provided a theory of homelessness and housing issues based on a combination of beliefs and evidence:

- **factors contributing to homelessness.** Factors influencing homelessness, by contributing to low income, a lack of low-cost high-quality housing, or other challenges, range from public policy and market forces to personal circumstances and service issues.
- **impact of housing and homelessness.** Housing status affects the individual, the community, and the country as a whole, for example regarding health, social inclusion and the economy.

- **solutions to homelessness.** Key components of a strategy to ensure a home for everyone include:
 - a range of available and accessible high quality *housing* options that people can afford and which exists in a positive community environment
 - a range of *supports* that meet individual needs, involving high quality staff and information sharing, coordination and integration
 - adequate long-term *funding* for support programs and for social and affordable housing
 - *policy* which among other things is based on “horizontal connections,” for example between housing, social, economic and environmental policy streams
 - *community building* to increase social inclusion and community capacity and to reduce poverty
 - *working together* which involves including as part of the solution: people who are homeless; other key stakeholders ranging from agencies to government; all relevant sectors from housing to health

understanding the environment

A review of Regina’s environmental assets and challenges indicate that many assets exist in Regina, which need to be built on and enhanced, for example with respect to housing and service options and working together. Specific populations, ranging from Aboriginal peoples to youth, have needs which are not being met. Examples of key assets include individual people who have knowledge of homelessness through lived experience, community based organizations, and government-funded programs such as the National Homelessness Initiative (now Homelessness Partnering Strategy), the Saskatchewan Rental Housing Supplement, and the City of Regina’s Inner City Housing Stimulation Strategy.

Information on Specific Populations

The group of people who are homeless is composed of several specific populations ranging from Aboriginal peoples and youth to people with mental illness and people with legal system involvement. Many of these populations overlap, with some individuals belonging to two or more of these groups. The specific populations have many commonalities, including:

- low income as a key factor influencing homelessness issues
- the need for a wide range of individualized housing and service options
- the need to be involved in decision making and implementation for different aspects of housing and services

Examples of what makes some of the populations unique include the long-term discrimination faced by Aboriginal peoples, abuse and neglect as a major cause of youth homelessness, the challenge of treating people who have both mental illness and substance use issues, the difficulty many people with FASD have in living independently, and the need for planning to help people who have been incarcerated re-enter the community when their sentence ends.

Conclusion

Documents reviewed indicate that it is possible to eliminate current homelessness and prevent future homelessness. Following best practices guidelines will make it possible to provide a high-quality stable home for everyone.