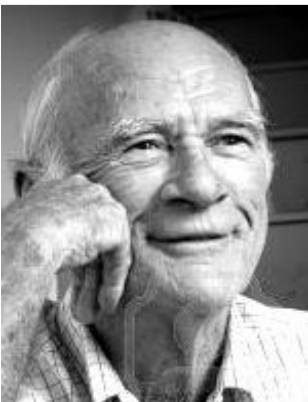




**CREATING  
OPPORTUNITIES**



**HOUSING OUR  
COMMUNITY**



Affordable Housing  
**BUSINESS PLAN**  
City of St John's  
2014-2017

**ST. JOHN'S**

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# Introduction

The Affordable Housing Business Plan flows directly from the *City of St. John's Housing Charter*<sup>1</sup>, drafted by the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Affordable Housing (MACAH)<sup>2</sup> and adopted by Council in 2011. The *Charter* states as its mission:

*"The City of St. John's will leverage its unique capacities and **build strong partnerships** to produce, protect and promote affordable housing for the people of St. John's."*

The Plan begins with a context section that situates the efforts of the Plan on the Housing Continuum. The focus is on the 'housing crunch' – faced by growing numbers of households that have incomes too high to be eligible for subsidized housing, but still struggle to afford rental and ownership options in the current housing market. The Context section also outlines **market and demographic realities** and also provides a **definition of affordable housing** in that context. There is also an outline of **the partners** who will be engaged in the implementation of this Plan: their current responses to address the shortage of affordable housing and potential new areas of collaboration.

The Housing Business Plan proposes a new approach to a complex issue, where problems are viewed as opportunities for collaborative action and investment that produces many dividends. The experience of communities across Canada shows that investment in innovative housing solutions can produce social, economic and environmental dividends such as stronger support networks, jobs in the residential construction industry and reductions in energy costs and greenhouse gases - among many others.

**Implementation Strategies** are identified along with an analysis of how they will be carried out as well as the financial implications.

In addition to the strategies, the *Affordable Housing Business Plan* sets out a concrete **target**: to create 500 affordable homes in the City of St. John's by 2017. This target is not one that the City can meet on its own. This is the bench mark that will guide and inspire the action of **all** the City's partners as we work together to address housing needs in our community. Finally, the Plan includes an **Evaluation and Communication** section, which outlines how progress toward the target will be monitored and regularly shared with the public.

The ultimate goal of this process is to achieve the vision outlined in the Housing Charter:

*"St. John's will be a vibrant, inclusive and thriving city with a **wide range of affordable housing options** that contribute directly to community health, sustainable growth and economic security."*

The City of St. John's looks forward to working with our partners to achieve that vision over the next four years.

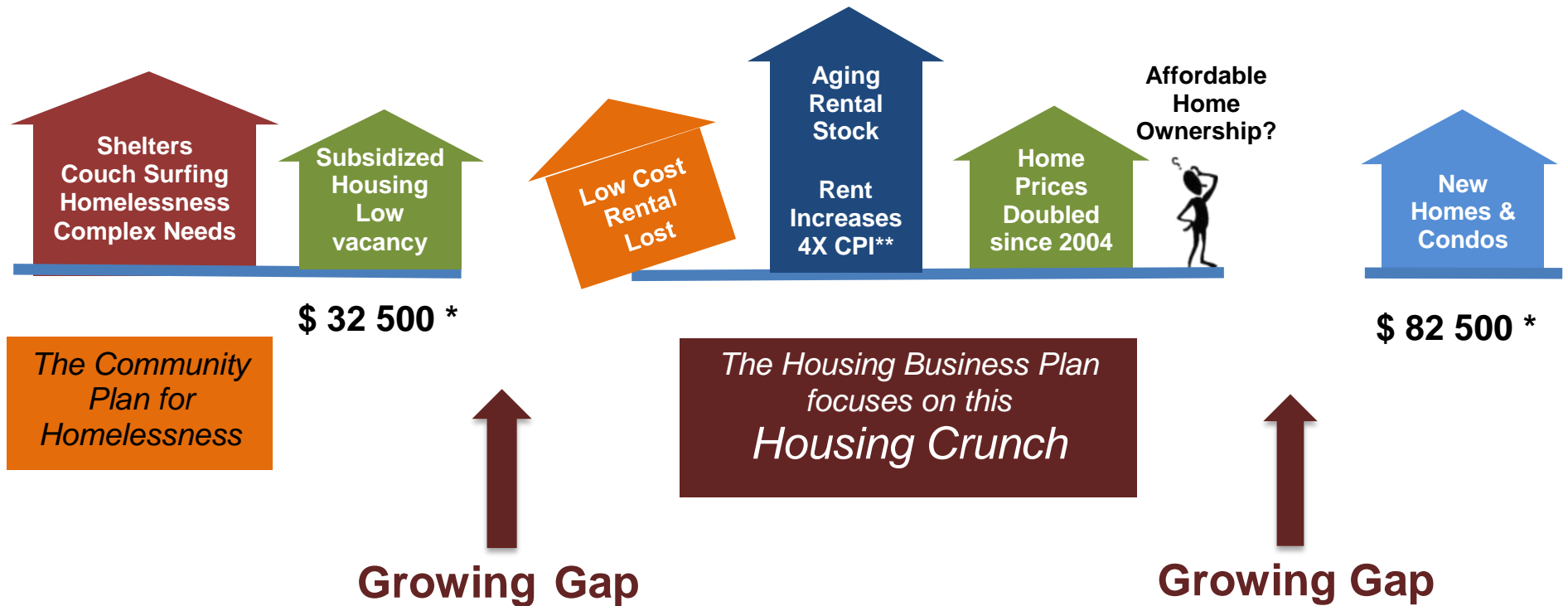
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<sup>1</sup> See appendix A for the full Charter

<sup>2</sup> See appendix B for membership of MACAH

# The Housing Continuum: A Focus on the 'Crunch'

- Over 35% of local households are in this **housing crunch**
- Many work in the single biggest sector of the economy
- Ineligible for subsidy but can't afford market prices
- **They need more housing choices**



Notes:

\*With an income over **\$32 500**, a household is not eligible for social housing, but market rents are not affordable. Households with incomes under the local median of **\$82 500** cannot afford to purchase at current average house prices.

\*\*CPI = Consumer Price Index

# Context: Housing Market Realities in 2014



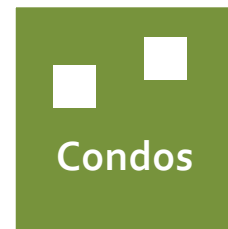
- Local rental vacancy rates were in the bottom five in Canada for much of 2008 -12. Availability of affordable rental is still very low.
- Increases in average market rent have outpaced inflation for several consecutive years.
- Most existing rental stock is old. Very little local rental construction occurred in the three decades before 2012.

- New home prices doubled between 2004 and 2013.
- Housing prices in St. John's rose faster than any city in Canada for much of 2008-13.
- Average MLS house listings prices have increased 54% since 2009 alone.



- Vacancy rates are low in social housing; very little turnover
- Little new stock is being constructed.
- Many households find themselves with incomes too high to qualify for social housing but too low to afford market rents.

A high percentage of local rental stock was converted to condos in the past decade.  
Much new condo construction is at higher 'luxury' price points. Vacancy rates for new condos is increasing, indicating that the market is saturated.



## Defining *Affordable Housing*

This document is based on the City's core belief that housing is a human right and that everyone needs and deserves a *home* that is affordable to them.

For housing to be considered **affordable**, it must cost less than **30% of pre-tax income** including housing and related costs (mortgage or rent, along with property taxes, home energy, water and repairs). This Business Plan seeks to promote the creation of more housing choices that are affordable to a wider range of people according to the 30% criteria. While the focus will be on households in the 'housing crunch' identified in the diagram on page 4, the City has a long history of pursuing housing solutions for people with incomes below \$32 500 as well. This plan will incorporate and encourage continued collaborative efforts right across the housing continuum.

To be even more specific about affordability, the Targets section of the Plan identifies income ranges on page 16. The 500 homes produced must be affordable first and foremost to the people who are most seriously impacted by shortages of affordable housing. In addition, the homes must reflect the needs of a diverse population and be spread throughout all regions of the city.

# Context: Demographic Realities

## Working Families



- Working families power the local service industry which comprises 25% of the economy
- Affordable rental options are limited
- Home prices have risen out of reach for many
- Housing choices must be close to work, school

## New Talent



- Employers say housing price and availability is becoming a barrier to attraction and retention of new talent
- The leap to home ownership is getting harder
- Artists and other creatives are seeking space where they can work and live

## Seniors



- The fastest growing age segment of the population is 45-64: the seniors of the very near future
- Accessible and affordable housing is crucial to healthy aging in place
- Seniors have significantly lower median income
- Many live in older, inefficient housing stock with high energy costs

## Students



- A huge population with shrinking rental options
- More innovative solutions like *Home Share* are needed

## New Canadians



- Provincial government plans to **triple** immigration over next five years
- Attracting and retaining new comers is key to filling labour gaps
- Affordable rental and ownership options are needed

## Complex Needs

- Number of people with mental health and addictions issues is rising, placing strain on social support systems
- Pioneering approaches are successfully integrating supportive housing into the community



# Housing Affordability = *Housing Choices*

Different people have different housing needs based on their household size, employment, ability, health, income, stage in life, and a host of other factors. Affordable housing is about creating and promoting a **range of housing choices** as diverse as the city itself.

*"A community should not be judged on its economy alone. We need to ensure that everyone in our society has a **housing choice** so that we can build on these prosperous times. Prosperity tends to widen the gap in options available. **Our challenge is to find ways to narrow this gap.**"*

*Craig Williams, Developer*



# Housing Choices = Opportunities

When the problem of an affordable housing shortage is viewed as an opportunity to create housing diversity it shifts perspective positively and radically. As a local home builder stated eloquently:

*"The greatest way to mobilize huge amounts of capital, resources and innovation towards affordable housing is to show industry that building affordable housing is an "opportunity" and not a "problem". Treated as an opportunity... building a continuous supply of affordable housing becomes part of the norm and **becomes part of our main business model as builders.**"*

*Greg Hussey, Home Builder*

Communities across Canada are already beginning to realize the practical benefits of engaging partners from all sectors to create more diverse housing choices as a part of their regular 'business'.

Collaborative investments in innovative solutions produce economic, social and environmental dividends for the entire community:

## Economic Dividends

- Adequate supply of high quality and affordable housing attracts and retains young talent
- Construction and renovation create employment; and can be an opportunity to engage marginalized members of the labour force, such as youth at promise.
- Creates housing for workers in the service and hospitality industry close to their work
- Home ownership increases household equity, economic security, investment in the local economy.
- Building affordable rental housing creates local small business opportunities;
- Pilot projects provide opportunities for businesses to build capacity and skill to open new housing market niches (such as age friendly housing, energy efficient construction, affordable condos)
- Housing construction and renovation generates revenue for all levels of government

## Social Dividends

- Housing is the fundamental basis from which to pursue health, employment and basic social needs.
- Accessible, age friendly housing promotes healthy aging in place, which is not only more desirable for most households but also more cost effective for society.
- Evidence from several national studies shows that proactive investment in housing solutions is far more cost effective than reactive, emergency responses for people experiencing housing crisis.

## Environmental Dividends

- Higher density housing promotes affordability and makes more efficient use of land: that reduces the community's ecological footprint and prevents costly urban sprawl.
- Increasing energy efficiency in homes produces very significant and highly cost effective reductions in a community's greenhouse gas emissions.
- Remediation of brownfield<sup>3</sup> sites as housing makes a community more beautiful and liveable in addition to cleaning up contamination.

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<sup>3</sup> A former industrial or commercial site where future use is affected by real or perceived environmental contamination.



# Engaging Partners to Create Opportunities

Partnerships are essential to the success of this Business Plan and collaborative investment in housing solutions is the only way to realize the full potential of the economic, social and environmental dividends. This is a summary of the partners that must be engaged in this Plan, including their current activity related to affordable housing and potential new areas of collaboration. The St. John's **Mayor's Advisory Committee on Affordable Housing (MACAH)** is a hub of leadership and partnership for the City's housing initiatives, and includes representation from most of the stakeholders in this section.

## Federal Partners

The Government of Canada, through **Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)**, works with its provincial and territorial partners to reduce the number of Canadians in need by improving access to affordable, sound and suitable housing. CMHC has partnered with the City of St. John's by sponsoring the City's annual Housing Forum, typically held on National Housing Day on November 22. CMHC's Corporate Representative for NL is an active member of the City's MACAH as well as several subcommittees. More recently, the City has explored CMHC Seed Funding to resource early development work on an affordable home ownership project. CMHC Seed Funding and other grants can be very useful resources for future innovation.

**Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS)** allocates funding to address St. John's community priorities through Community Plan to Reduce Homelessness developed by the multi-stakeholder Community Advisory Board called the St. John's Advisory Committee on Homelessness. Since 2001, HPS has invested \$18 million in supportive and transitional housing, shelters and community capacity building. This funding is disbursed annually by means of a request for proposals and helps to fund both shelter construction and community capacity building initiatives. In 2013 the City became the Community Entity which administers HPS funding, and the 2014-19 renewal of HPS funding by the federal government bodes well for continuing collaboration.

**Canada Lands** transferred 2 acres of land for the City's 46 unit Pleasantville housing initiative in 2010 through the HPS [Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative](#). This Initiative and the partnership hold promise for future housing projects as well.

## Provincial Partners

**NL Housing** owns and operates over 2800 units of affordable housing in the City, and provides a substantial annual operating grant to support the City's 426 Non-Profit Housing units. NL Housing is also the lead agency for the implementation of Secure Foundations housing action plan of Provincial Government and the administrator of the jointly funded Affordable Housing Initiative grants which are disbursed to non-profit and private sector proponents via regular requests for proposals. NL Housing is on the leading edge of social media engagement on housing issues, making them a very valuable partner and mentor for future communications projects.

**Advanced Education and Skills** delivers income and employment supports and also oversees the poverty reduction and immigration strategies for the provincial government. Both of these partners are members of the Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Affordable Housing.

## Private Sector Partners

[Canadian Home Builders Association- NL](#) is the voice of the province’s residential construction industry. Membership includes new home builders, renovators, developers, trade contractors, manufacturers, suppliers, lenders, and other professionals – the companies and people who provide Newfoundlanders and Labradoreans with quality housing. Through the voluntary efforts of its members, the CHBA-NL serves both consumers and producers of housing by promoting quality, affordability, and choice in housing for all. CHBA-NL members contribute real solutions and make positive changes that promote and protect the interests of the industry and consumers by working with municipal, provincial, and federal governments in the areas of significant importance - labour market needs, government-imposed costs, the underground economy, and housing affordability.

## Community Sector Partners

**St. John’s Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness** is community led and comprises over 30 organizations providing both strategic leadership and front line services to address homelessness in the St. John’s region (including the **NL Housing and Homelessness Network** – another valuable partner working at the province-wide level). The Committee’s Community Development Worker is now on contract through the City as the Community Entity that administers the federal HPS funding that funds the position. Several members of the Committee serve on MACAH.

Another important community partner on MACAH is the **Canadian Federation of Students – NL** which is active in collaborative initiatives like Home Share NL. The community housing sector in St. John’s has gained a national reputation for its high level of organization, collaboration and creativity and the potential for future partnership is formidable.

**Faith Communities** have become engaged in addressing housing issues through initiating housing projects, spearheading policy advocacy and providing services to people in housing crisis. Faith communities have made very significant contributions already, and there is certainly more potential.

## Resident Partners

Residents in the community also represent interesting potential for collaboration. St. John’s is home to several grassroots organizations that promote citizen participation in the development of solutions to local issues. There are also several active neighbourhood associations that can be engaged to promote inclusive and affordable local housing solutions. Even at the household level, homeowners who choose to take part in Home Share programs, energy retrofits, or secondary suite renovations (among other practical solutions) make an important and tangible contribution to expanding housing choices. The potential for citizen engagement via social media is also an area that requires intentional exploration.

# Implementation Strategies

## Increase Engagement

Action	Implementation	Financial Implications
<p><b>Convene a Partnership Forum</b> Bring diverse stakeholders together to publicly sign on to the Business Plan targets.</p>	<p>This event will be a half day forum in fall 2014. The main stakeholders identified in the Plan will be invited to discuss of how each of them can help to achieve the Plan’s targets.</p>	<p>Event can be held in Foran room for very little cost.</p>
<p><b>Craft a Social Media Campaign</b> Design a campaign that engages the public to generate and take part in practical, local housing solutions.</p>	<p>Communications staff and all MACAH members will be engaged to help craft this strategy. Community input will also be sought early in the design process. This City has a wealth of internal expertise to draw upon.</p>	<p>This campaign can be planned and implemented by staff with stakeholder input and engagement with little to no cost.</p>
<p><b>Cultivate a Base of Landlords</b> willing to rent to those seeking affordable housing (including those who may require supports) based on models like Calgary’s <a href="#">Community Partnership Housing Program</a>.</p>	<p>A workshop has been planned with Boulder County Housing, recognized as a municipal best practice on landlord engagement. This workshop will inform the next steps in development of this strategy.</p>	<p>The workshop will be held via teleconference. Long distance phone charges will be absorbed by the City.</p>
<p>Engage multiple stakeholders in the creation of new policy and program models to <b>address under-reporting of property standards violations</b> in rental housing.</p>	<p>The Rental Housing Action Team of MACAH is working on several initiatives: revision and dissemination of a handbook on property standards protocols; a landlord engagement strategy (above); review of rental licensing models in other jurisdictions.</p>	<p>Costs will be minimal: printing handbooks internally, teleconference calls with other jurisdictions on rental licensing and other best practices.</p>

## Inform Action

Action	Implementation	Financial Implications
<p><b>Conduct a Seniors Housing Market Survey</b> Design and implement a comprehensive survey of seniors housing needs and emerging market opportunities. Publish findings widely.</p>	<p>An RFP has already been published to secure a consultant to do the research.</p>	<p>\$25 000 has already been secured to fund this research project from City Council and Provincial Office for Aging and Seniors.</p>
<p><b>Convene an Innovative Housing Workshop</b> Invite local and national experts to share practical and innovative housing designs that meet emerging market needs</p>	<p>A workshop series on innovative housing options will be created with CHBA-NL and Harris Centre. Workshops on different topics will then be rolled out over a number of months on diverse housing forms to meet local needs.</p>	<p>Workshops will involve minimal costs and can be hosted in the Foran Room or other free venues.</p>
<p><b>Align the City and NL Housing Waiting Lists into a single list; and work with the province to Create a City Wide Housing Registry</b> based on models like <a href="#">London</a> and <a href="#">Waterloo Region</a></p>	<p>Terms of reference are being drafted for a feasibility study for a local housing registry.</p>	<p>Funding is required for the feasibility study – several external sources are being considered. Council may decide to contribute toward the completion of the study (\$10 -20 000).</p>

## Revitalize Policy

Action	Implementation	Financial Implications
<p><b>Adopt Alternative Development Standards</b> Complement the new Municipal Plan with comprehensive and flexible regulations that enable and encourage housing innovation.</p>	<p>A small housing team can work with the staff and/or consultants who craft the new Municipal Plan regulations.</p>	<p>No additional costs will be incurred. The regulations must be rewritten – this effort will inform that ongoing process.</p>

## Unlock Resources

Action	Implementation	Financial Implications
<p><b><i>Create an Inventory of Land for Potential Redevelopment as Housing</i></b> Identify opportunities where underutilized land can be used for housing and approach the owners about creative possibilities.</p>	<p>A staff team has already compiled an inventory for Ward 2 and research has been completed on several pieces of land that have potential. Next a strategy will be developed to approach the land owners to discuss potential redevelopment opportunities. Once this process is complete in Ward 2, lessons learned can be applied to complete an inventory in other wards.</p>	<p>Initial phase of inventory in Ward 2 has been completed by staff at no additional cost to City. Additional wards will be completed in the same manner. The Housing Catalyst Fund described below may be a source of funds to get redevelopment projects started.</p>
<p><b><i>Establish a Housing Catalyst Fund</i></b> With the City providing the initial investment and inviting partners to help it grow, this fund can leverage significant resources for innovative housing solutions.</p>	<p>A small team of staff and some external stakeholders can be assembled to research best practices and develop a concept paper for Council review.</p>	<p>The team can develop a proposal for the fund, including where the funds will come from and how they will be used. The proposal will determine the annual amount to be invested in the fund. It is recommended that other partners (government and private sector) also be engaged to contribute to the fund to increase its leveraging power.</p>

## Lead Innovation

Action	Implementation	Financial Implications
<p><b><i>Encourage Energy Retrofits</i></b> Bring partners together to create collaborative projects to reduce heating costs and increase housing affordability; with a view to applying lessons learned throughout the city.</p>	<p>A team of diverse stakeholders has begun practical discussions on retrofit opportunities and the role that each party can play in making them happen. In the aftermath of recent power supply issues, utilities may be more interested than ever in the energy efficiencies that scalable retrofits can produce.</p>	<p>The City will not be playing a capital role in retrofit projects. Our role is as a convenor and catalyst, bringing partners together to discuss innovative options. Minimal costs for hosting events or teleconference workshops may be incurred.</p>

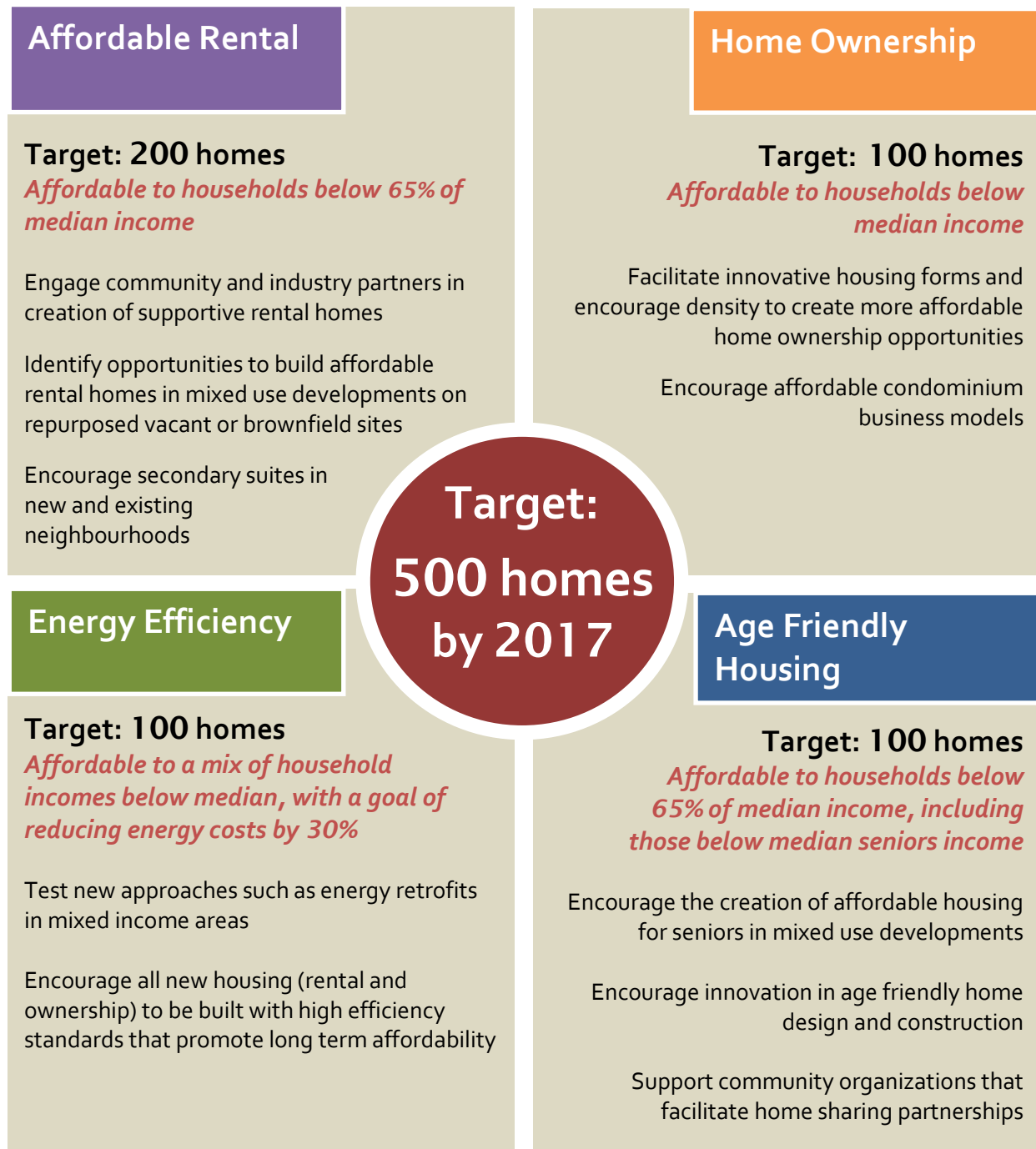
<p><b>Facilitate an Affordable Home Ownership Pilot Project</b> A project that uses City land and private sector innovation to create medium density home ownership possibilities.</p>	<p>An RFP process is already underway to select a proponent to develop the attainable subdivision on City owned land in Shea Heights. This project will be a testing ground for innovative affordable home ownership approaches.</p>	<p>Overall costs for this project will be minimal for the City, since the subdivision will be created by a private sector proponent (selected in RFP process). CMHC has already agreed to provide \$10 000 in seed funding to the winning proponent to help them develop their winning proposal further before development begins.</p>
<p><b>Facilitate a Housing Design Competition</b> An open competition with awards for designs that incorporate affordability as well as other important features to meet the needs of our changing population.</p>	<p>A concept paper is currently being drafted for Council review. This paper grew out of discussion at the 'Make Room in the Boom' Housing Forum in November 2013.</p>	<p>The concept paper will include a budget: items include prize money, a small budget to publicize the competition and a small amount to help the winning proponents translate their winning ideas into housing. CMHC will also be approached to provide seed funding to winning proponents for this purpose.</p>
<p><b>Promote Mixed Use Development</b> Identify an opportunity to incorporate affordable housing into a commercial construction project (e.g. hotel, mall, office) and work with developers to facilitate it.</p>	<p>The City can develop an RFP process to engage private sector interest in mixed-use projects that include housing. This could also fit into the land inventory project, or be a stand-alone initiative.</p>	<p>This project requires further research and development to determine the budget, but it will follow the same theme as other projects in this Plan. The City will be a catalyst, engaging other partners to help fund this pilot project.</p>
<p><b>Promote an Affordable Condominium Pilot Project</b> Invite an experienced non-profit developer like <a href="#">Creating Homes</a> to build an affordable condo project and grow local capacity to build more.</p>	<p><b>This initiative may fit into the Shea Heights project or the land inventory project. If not, it could be developed as a stand-alone RFP if land can be identified.</b></p>	<p><b>The City will play a catalyst role here as well: not building a condominium project but rather creating the conditions and engaging the partners to help it happen.</b></p>
<p><b>Facilitate a Housing First pilot initiative</b> Earmark some City-owned housing (as it becomes available) to help people most in need to get out of the cycle of homelessness.</p>	<p>The City will work with the St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness as they develop and implement their 2014- 2019 Community Plan to identify how this project could work.</p>	<p>This will not involve the creation of new housing but rather potential re-purposing of existing City resources. Costs will be minimal, but cannot be exactly determined until the details of this project are worked out in conjunction with End Homelessness St. John's.</p>

# Build Capacity

Action	Implementation	Financial Implications
<p><b><i>Create a St. John's Housing Initiatives Partnership (SJHIP)</i></b>            A non-profit, independent entity that provides capacity and expertise to affordable housing initiatives – modeled after <a href="#">SHIP Saskatoon</a>.</p>	<p>The first step is to create a small working group to guide the development of this initiative. Several other cities including Saskatoon and Calgary have created similar organizations. The development of a proposed model will begin with a teleconference with cities that have been identified as best practices.</p> <p>The vision is to create a diverse board of directors that brings organizations together to form collaborations to do what no one organization can accomplish alone.</p> <p>SJHIP would play a role of facilitator – helping identify opportunities and the potential for collaboration to create projects with better outcomes in terms of design, affordability, and distribution across the city. SJHIP would also be a capacity builder and technical assistance provider; a one-stop-shop for affordable housing project development.</p>	<p>Cost depends on the model chosen: this requires more research. A concept paper with proposed budget will be presented to Council for consideration.</p>

# Targets: Concrete, Collaborative Goals

Setting a concrete target to meet together inspires collaborative action and provides a benchmark to evaluate progress. The overall target of 500 homes by 2017 is broken down into four priority areas. Each priority area also includes an income range to ensure that the housing is truly affordable to those who are most seriously impacted by shortages of affordable housing.



*See Appendix C for more on the income ranges.*



# Evaluation and Communication

“We strongly believe that housing stability for our residents is fundamental to our prosperity and vibrancy as a city.”

Mayor Dennis O’Keefe

Progress toward the target of 500 homes will be consistently monitored and reported throughout the four years. The City’s existing regulation regime already ensures that City staff is aware of all new residential construction and significant renovation projects undertaken in the city. Evaluating progress toward the Business Plan target will therefore involve careful monitoring of those projects to ensure that they include affordable options in the four categories outlined on page 16. The Affordable Housing Coordinator will help to create a simple monitoring process and provide support as required to staff in departments that review, approve, inspect and collect data on housing projects on a daily basis.

Based on all available data collected by various City departments, as well as input from the key partners outlined above, the Affordable Housing Coordinator will compile an annual report including:

- A comprehensive account of affordable housing built or renovated in the city during that year that meets the target criteria
- An account of housing that overlaps various target categories. For example, an affordable owner-occupied home might also include secondary suites that contribute to affordable rental targets. In addition, if the whole structure is built to a high energy efficiency standard, or using age friendly standards, it could count toward those categories as well.
- An initial analysis of successes and areas for improvement.
- A progress update on *Implementation Strategies* initiated or completed (pages 11-15).
- An initial analysis of emerging needs and trends in the housing market.

This report will be submitted to the Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Affordable Housing for review and analysis. The MACAH will also add recommendations to Council regarding:

- Required action by the partners to address any shortfalls where targets are not being met
- Required action that needs to be taken in response to emerging needs or trends

A draft of the final report will be presented to Council for consideration. After Council consideration, the report would be presented to the public at the City’s annual Housing Forum. The forum is usually held on National Housing Day on November 22 – a date that commemorates the 1998 call by the Canadian Big City Mayors Caucus (of which St. John’s is a member) for national action on housing. The annual report would then be open for feedback from stakeholders at the forum – and modifications to strategies required or even the targets themselves as necessary.

The final report would be presented to Council for formal adoption, with recommendations to be carried out over the coming year to maintain momentum toward the target of 500 homes by 2017.

From a communications standpoint, MACAH may wish to consider creating an annual communications plan with specific activities and goals to ensure that the affordable housing issue maintains an appropriate level of public attention and that the stories of success and action are shared broadly. This would also provide an opportunity for further collaboration between partners - a key consideration in the Housing Business Plan – and would also provide an opportunity to coordinate messaging on housing issues with other stakeholder groups. The communications plan can also help to ensure that the following objectives are met and that the key messages below are integrated into all communications:

### **Communications Objectives**

- To increase and to improve access to information about affordable housing for the public
- To share the stories of what the City is doing to address affordable housing in multiple formats (traditional media, social media, print, dialogue, presentation, etc.)
- To coordinate messages about housing with key stakeholder groups
- To report action and progress towards the goals identified in the Affordable Housing Business Plan
- To utilize existing platforms for communications, where possible, and to devise new methods for communications and engagement that advance the City's goals on affordable housing
- To facilitate open, two-way communications between stakeholder groups
- To seek opportunities to engage those in need of affordable housing options in the planning, design, development and evaluation stages of initiatives taken up by the City

### **Key Messages**

- Affordable housing is a critical issue for the City of St. John's.
- We want St. John's to be a vibrant, inclusive and thriving city with a wide range of affordable housing options that contribute directly to community health, sustainable growth and economic security.
- The affordable housing issue is not unique to St. John's.
- The City is learning from the experiences in other jurisdictions and applying best practices to St. John's.
- The City cannot tackle the issue of affordable housing alone; addressing this issue will require a collective effort from all levels of government as well as from private and community partners.
- The City is investing its financial and human resources, as well as its physical resources (in the way of land) to improve access to affordable housing.
- The Affordable Housing Business Plan sets a concrete target - 500 new, affordable homes by 2017 – to be achieved in collaboration with private developers and government partnerships.
- Affordable housing is not low-income housing.
- To be considered "affordable" housing must cost less than 30 per cent of pre-tax household income. The city's efforts on affordability are focused particularly on ensuring that people with incomes below median have access to affordable housing choices.

### **Evaluation**

The City of St. John's will utilize formal and informal mechanisms to measure success on individual strategies arising from this umbrella strategy; including comprehensive media monitoring and analysis for key messages and changes in public opinion, social media monitoring, surveys and questionnaires pre- and post – initiatives; and regular evaluation of success towards objectives for MACAH.

# Appendix A: City of St. John's Housing Charter

## **Mission**

The City of St. John's will leverage its unique capacities and build strong partnerships to *produce, protect and promote affordable housing* for the people of St. John's.

## **Vision**

St. John's will be a vibrant, inclusive and thriving city with a wide range of affordable housing options that contribute directly to community health, sustainable growth and economic security.

## **Housing is Fundamental**

Affordable Housing is:

- a foundation for a safe, prosperous and healthy community;
- a vital part of the infrastructure of our City;
- a human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- a key pathway out of poverty;
- a sound public investment that contributes to resident well-being and the economy.

## **Values**

The City's efforts to produce, protect and promote affordable housing will reflect the following values:

### **Collaboration**

We will engage many partners in our work, focusing on the particular strengths of each partner.

### **Sustainability**

We will produce and promote affordable housing solutions that incorporate both economic and ecological sustainability out of respect for future generations who inherit these solutions.

### **Accountability**

We will set challenging, achievable goals and report regularly and publicly on our progress.

### **Ingenuity**

We will build innovative solutions based on successful leading edge approaches that are carefully and creatively adapted to current and local realities.

### **Congruency**

We will review relevant City decisions and policies using an *affordable housing lens* to ensure that they are congruent with our mission of production, protection and promotion.

# Appendix B: MACAH Membership

The Mayor's Advisory Council on Affordable Housing (MACAH) was formed in 2009 by City Council to be a hub of leadership and partnership on housing issues in the City of St. John's. The Committee meets approximately six times per year and reports directly to Council. Membership is outlined below:

## City of St. John's Representation

- Two City Council Members
- Representative from Mayor's Advisory Committee on Seniors
- City Staff from Planning Engineering and Development, Community Services and Corporate Services Departments

## Government Representation

- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (Canada)
- NL Housing (NL)
- Advanced Education and Skills (NL)
- Human Resources, Labour and Employment
- Eastern Health

## Private Sector Representation

- Canadian Home Builders Association – NL

## Community Sector Representation

- St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness
- NL Housing and Homelessness Network
- Stella's Circle
- Choices for Youth
- Canadian Federation of Students

# Appendix C: Income Ranges - Rationale

The income ranges outlined in the Target section on page 16 provide a real world and locally relevant guideline for the concept of 'affordable housing'. The Business Plan's overall objective is to create housing that is affordable to households with **incomes below median** (about \$76 500 in 2013). Further detail for each category is outlined below:

## **Rental Housing - Target: 200 homes**

### *Affordable to households below 65% of median income*

Rent increases have significantly outpaced inflation in St. John's since 2009 and consequently many households find themselves with incomes too high to qualify for subsidized housing but too low to afford market rents. Average rent for a two bedroom apartment is predicted to top \$850 in 2014. The Business Plan seeks to create rental housing that is affordable to households with incomes above the NL Housing income cutoff of \$32 500 and below 65% of median income (~ \$50 000). The latter figure is the minimum income at which a household can afford average 2 bedroom rent plus utilities.

## **Home Ownership - Target: 100 homes**

### *Affordable to households below median income*

The average house price for St. John's is predicted to rise above \$306 000 in 2014. At that price point, even a household earning median income would have to spend approximately 35% of pre-tax income to cover the mortgage, property tax and utilities. The Business Plan seeks to create ownership housing at price points that are below average to ensure they are in the affordability range (30%) for households earning median income and below.

## **Energy Efficiency - Target: 100 homes**

### *Affordable to a mix of household incomes below median, with a goal of reducing energy costs by 30%*

As above, the goal for energy efficiency measures is to bring the cost of housing into the affordable range for households earning below median income range. The vision for energy efficiency programs is to engage many households with a range of incomes (below median). The 30% energy cost reduction target is comparable to the outcomes from the successful local *Train for Trades* program and reflects a vision for deep retrofits that have a significant impact.

## **Age Friendly Housing - Target: 100 homes**

### *Affordable to households below 65% of median income, including those below median seniors income*

Seniors are the fastest growing segment of the population with a wide range of needs as their household size and income levels decrease – median income for seniors is only \$26 500. Many seniors are downsizing from single family homes in search of quality rental housing that they can afford with shrinking incomes. The Business Plan seeks to create seniors rental options at below average rent to ensure that this growing seniors housing market is well served.

# Appendix D: City Action on Housing Issues

The following is a summary of action that the City has taken in recent years to address housing and homelessness issues with its many partners:

## Leadership and Partnership

- The Mayor's Advisory Committee on Affordable Housing was created in 2008 including stakeholders from all levels of government as well as industry and community partners.
- An Affordable Housing Coordinator was hired in 2010.
- St. John's Council adopted an Affordable Housing Action Plan and Charter in February 2011 which outlined the City's commitment to housing as a priority issue and concrete strategies to address the shortage of affordable housing options from 2011-13.
- City Council was the first funder (and committed to two years) for the Home Share Pilot project and city staff served on advisory committee for this pioneering local initiative that creates housing partnerships between seniors and students.
- A draft of *Housing Business Plan* for 2014-2017 is coming to Council soon for review.

## Building and Land Projects

- The City built 30 new units of affordable housing in Pleasantville, together with NL Housing, using land acquired through the federal government's Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative. Twenty four of the units created will become part of the City's Non-Profit Housing portfolio, which means that the City will now own and operate approximately 450 units of social housing. This project includes office and social enterprise space for the NL Housing and Homelessness Network. The City contributed \$500 000 toward the development of the social enterprise space.
- The City donated land to Habitat for Humanity and Saint Vincent de Paul for their affordable housing developments.
- City land in the Shea Heights area has been earmarked for development of attainable housing. An RFP has gone out to attract qualified private sector proponents to create a plan for the site. The private sector has shown great interest in this project and the RFP.
- City staff has compiled an inventory of lands in Ward Two that could be suitable for redevelopment, including affordable housing options.

## Policy and Information Sharing

- City of St. John's introduced new energy efficiency standards for all new home construction which will improve long term affordability and reduce greenhouse gases.

- City staff conducted national research and convened a workshop with the local private sector to craft a comprehensive submission on housing possibilities as part of the Municipal Plan review process.
- The City hosted a workshop on rental property standards with a large and diverse representation from community and government stakeholders and has convened a working group to develop concrete solutions to promote safe and healthy rental housing.

### Homelessness Responses

- The City has been an active member of the St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness (SJCACH) since its inception in 2000. This diverse group has developed several four-year community plans to address homelessness through shelter creation, awareness raising, and community capacity building.
- In 2013 the City took on the role as the Community Entity that administers the federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy funds that power the work of the SJCACH
- The City waives permit and development fees for building projects initiated by the SJCACH
- City Hall is one of the many sites where the NL Housing and Homelessness Network's annual pancake breakfast is hosted. Proceeds go to projects that address homelessness.

### Housing Forums and Outcomes

**2011 City Housing Forum** was a catalyst for the pioneering NIMBY project spearheaded by the Canadian Home Builders Association NL. The City serves on the committee that is guiding this project which focuses on promoting inclusive communities.

**2012 Seniors Housing Forum** sparked great interest in the private sector and identified three strategic action priorities. Developer ND Dobbin publicly credited the Forum as the catalyst for the seniors housing projects they are currently developing throughout the city.

The forum also sparked the *Seniors Housing Research project*, which has been funded by the city and several partners to identify seniors housing needs and how the market can meet them.

**Canadian Housing Renewal Association Congress 2012** saw 350 delegates come to St. John's from all over Canada. The City sponsored the Congress and co-presented a workshop on collaborative partnerships for housing solutions.

**2013 City Housing Forum** kick-started development of five new initiatives: an affordable housing design competition; an inter-faith housing working group; an Alternative Development Standards design project; a Housing Registry research project; and a shipping container housing pilot project.

## Advocacy

- The Mayor's advocacy with the province in 2010 prompted their creation of a cross-sectoral committee to produce comprehensive statistics on housing needs.
- The City worked with several partners to launch an awareness campaign on housing issues in 2011 including a community poster campaign and a YouTube video.
- The Mayor wrote several letters to provincial ministers on priority issues such as: making provincial land available for housing; strengthening the Residential Tenancies Act; and promoting housing affordability to attract and retain skilled workers and new talent.
- The Mayor wrote several letters to the Prime Minister and federal Cabinet Ministers calling for a national housing strategy, improved federal tax policy to promote affordable rental construction; and continued investment in social housing.
- The City convened a working group on affordable home ownership, engaging several government and private sector partners to devise homegrown solutions. The ideas were adopted by the province and the city looks forward to the rollout of this program.