

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING ROUND TABLE
COLD LAKE MARCH 24, 2009
MEETING NOTES**

The meeting started by identifying the objectives:

- Create an opportunity for networking and information sharing among affordable housing practitioners
- Provide updates on housing initiative and learn about diversity in affordable housing projects, funding and community collaboration
- Provide tools to affordable housing groups in all stages of affordable housing development.

Group discussion and session presenters discussed four main topics:

- Best Development Practices
- Housing Authority Models
- Funding
- High Demand For Affordable Housin

PRESENTATION NOTES

**Presentation 1 - RUNNING AFFORDABLE HOUSING LIKE A BUSINESS
Presentation 2 - AFFORDABLE HOUSING MODELS**

Bryan Lutes, president of the Wood Buffalo Housing and Development Corporation (WBHDC), provided an overview of its institutional and housing development models.

Some of the key points in the presentation are as follows:

- Organization is a not- for-profit outfit, and profits from venture are reinvested into creating more affordable housing.
- The WBHADC started out with seed money form municipality and seeks to make decent profits by running like a private developer needing to pay itself to be sustainable.
- Net assets of the organization are currently at \$ 200 million.
- The waitlist for affordable housing helps determine the needs.
- Resources are sought from various sources (e.g., provincial and federal grants and lending from financial institutions) excluding fundraising because of institutional restrictions.
 - Obtained land as grant from province.
 - Serviced lands bought from the province and sold to developers or businesses for profits which have been reinvested into affordable housing.

- Acquired land at reasonable price from government for affordable housing.
- Stays out of competition with private developers; private developers are encouraged to make portions of their projects affordable.
- Manages various types of rental housing (e.g., government's homeless shelter, transitional housing, seniors housing, subsidized housing, and affordable housing).
- Runs home ownership program geared to income.
- Partners with small businesses for homeownership for their employees.
- Prices are set taking into account construction costs or mortgage amount to be covered in sale or in rent over time.

Some of the key points of discussion on Bryan's presentation include:

- To build the best products comparable to other homes marked at market prices.
- Encourage to build at one location a mix of housing types that includes social and affordable housing, and houses at market prices to prevent the creation of 'ghettos'; recommend a third of each housing type for a single location.
- Municipality now provides special consideration to fast-pace approval of affordable housing development applications.
- Taxation system has discouraged development of rental units by developers country-wide; they would rather build condominiums to sell and make quick incomes.
- Encourage marketing of your organization and achievements; admits that the WBHADC has not done well in promoting itself.
- It brings in social supports in helping with renters and homeowners that are struggling; does hold people accountable for damages to units.
- A project management board is key to developing diversity in housing; salaries of staff should be secured and affordable housing is sustainable when profits are reinvested into it.
- WBHADC has established about 90 units, powered by geothermal energy, offering air conditioning in summer; pay back of this project is expected in three years.
- Have had local politicians - MLA and Council - lobby province for crown land for their projects.
- Encourage to 'think big'.

For more information on WBHDC's work, see power point at www.nadc.gov.ab.ca

Presentation 3 - CMHC FUNDING/FEDERAL PROGRAM UPDATES

Kelly Wagar, Corporate Representative of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) offered an overview of their organization and answered questions from the group. Key points from the presentation include:

- CMHC supports innovation financing options, affordable housing and provides housing advice to the public.
- Various resources including research information and resource centres exist for this cause.
- It has defined affordable housing as one that does not exceed 30% of household income.
- It works with local groups such as government and non-for-profit groups to facilitate affordable housing.
- It offers funding in the form of seed money, for proposal development, affordable housing initiative, assistance programs for owning a home, adding units, and conversion of non-residential units to residences, shelter enhancements and mortgage loan insurance flexibilities and others.

For more information on CMHC's presentation, see www.nadc.gov.ab.ca

Discussion points are as follows:

- Steady progression from low to high end homes is almost inexistent anymore.
- Incentives for developers to build affordable housing could include density bonus for those that could make some of their units affordable.
- To build to meet the wise expectations of consumers; Classic Construction Ltd is an example of housing organization doing good work and making money from affordable housing.
- When down payment is coming from a developer - as a banker - , that can get sketchy for CMHC funding; CMHC does work with developers so as to meet CMHC funding requirements.
- CMHC encourages exploring several financial options and partnerships.
- Encourage individuals to take advantage of CMHC monthly web forums at www.cmhc.ca

Presentation 4 - GETTING YOUR COMMUNITY BEHIND YOU

“Getting your community behind you” was presented by **Vic Stapleton, Director of Economic Development/Recreation of Town of Bonnyville**, focusing on how the Town has garnered community support in their multiplex and affordable housing projects. Some of the key points on the topic for a successful affordable housing project include the following:

- To consult community (e.g., service providers, government, business community and associations) through facilitated workshops to document the gaps in affordable housing
- To bring together human and financial resources and foster friendships, communication and synergies
- Engage a facilitator to assist board in the development of their vision, principles, goals and objectives, in a solitary environment and ensure the results are acceptable to the group, and register organization
- With the leadership of individuals willing to move forward on affordable housing, create short and long term goals, research best practices and seek professional and financial assistance
- Marketing of ideas to be catchy and strategic (e.g. the name “ Three Little Pigs” for Bonnyville’s affordable housing group sparks conversation and spreads the word; a logo that represents an inclusive community can also be a sell); utilize both traditional and modern communication styles - word of mouth/door to door, internet/TV etc.
- A resource plan that would lay out both financial and human resources to meet project that could be drawn from existing sources, including community is important; creativity is key to raising funds (e.g., selling in parts a project can encourage business and professional community to take up cost of developing one or more units or an area etc. which could be branded in return)
- Obtain professional assistance in project, capital and timelines planning

DISCUSSION NOTES

Burning Question

- How do you sustain affordable housing once you have it built?
- What kind of communication can enable the community and council support for affordable housing?
- How do we create awareness of needs, corporation and community collaboration?
- How do you encourage the investment community to provide diverse housing types to increase inventory, also of smaller houses?

Types of Affordable Housing

- Cold Lake - Non-for-profit society with volunteer board, and with support from the city of Cold Lake (Cold Lake Affordable Housing Society-Fundraising provides community visibility).
- WBHADC – private organization, not a not-for-profit, publicity, tender everything, with support from RMWB which has charitable status. WBHC working with other service providers have stayed away from fundraising, thinking business.

- Bonnyville – established society, working in relationship with municipality, not into fundraising. (1st project – 1.5 million – no mortgage). \$500.00 for rent, you have to approach the right way for funding.
- Westlock – project is owned and run by the Town of Westlock with input/advice from a volunteer advisory committee.
- (planning and development, tourism, economic department, etc).
- Beaver Lake Metis – Difficulty in running as a business because of the social connections, nepotism.
- Lakeland Lodge – managing social housing, rent supplement.

Comments:

- Developers involved in affordable housing targeting seniors and others. Working with developers, amending bylaws to support their development.
- To consider man hours in projects in deciding whether to contract out. Can not run organization solely on volunteer groups.

Strategies/Resources

- Working with real estate agencies e.g. Fort McMurray Housing Association (WBHADC).
- CLAHS – working with other housing societies/groups for information.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help.
- To work collaboratively to address issues of potential home owners/renters in a holistic manner.
- To be aware of possible opposition to affordable housing (support of council is paramount).
- Housing is only a metaphor to an individual or community's well being. Housing may imply aspects e.g. social network, culture, politics and economics.
- Meeting this might come from breaking silos and offering the support needed. May need the house as a first step.
- Mohawk's Bays of Quinte, Peterborough is successful in the affordable housing organization.

Burning Question

- What incentives could be provided to encourage developers to build affordable housing?
- Are developers willing to be involved in affordable housing?
- How do we balance the current market situation and sustaining affordable housing?
- How can we maximize funding for affordable housing?
- What is government's responsibility in addressing affordable housing – reducing upfront servicing cost?

NEXT STEPS / WRAP UP

What do you think of today?

- Positive, thanks for including community. Every community is in same situation of providing affordable housing, definition, criteria, see who is coming through the door. All social issues, regardless of creed or culture. Compassion – social advocacy. Share knowledge and experience. It is important to open and share experiences. Bonnyville's approach speaks for itself.

Northern Community Objectives – Explore Together

- Challenge industrial organization – chasing same dream. Looking for money. What is it about WBHDC is doing that can be modeled in smaller communities?
- To be smart and meaningful.
- Remove burden from volunteers.
- Combine existing assets i.e. senior lodges
- Build property management into the operations.
- Spend money form from Ottawa.
- CLASH model combined within lodge could set a new model.
- Recreation/Health keeps them linked.
- Seniors housing circle – social support, met culture requirements.
- Don't know what the need are and don't have the support to identify

What steps do we as a group, need to take to move forward?

- CLAHS and counterparts talk- look to identify synergy groups. Have the conversation far more alike than dislikes. Focus on community road map.
- Focus; stay focused on what it is you are doing. Pull spectrum-Jack of all trades, master of none.
- Share information with other communities.
- Province-scattered responsibilities in many departments. You are dealing with various housing representatives.
- Who is responsible for housing and can we task them with following up with the needs of the community.

Should we stay together, connected? Promote affordable housing in communities.

- Yes
- What gets measured gets done. What synergies have you created to advance affordable housing? Have any contacts been made?
- Identify contacts.

- Awareness of network/resources.
- Provincially-who is responsible?
- Problem when the shovel ready project is not funded through RFP process when the need is there, what can be done.
- Working together, support project to make sure it is done by strengthening proposals through synergies.
- Larger communities get the attention first. We should combine smaller communities together.

Next meeting will be held in September, 2009.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Organizers

- **Cold Lake Affordable Housing Society**
Michelle Bourdon, Phone: 780 812-4403
- **Northern Alberta Development Council**
Cynthia Arku, Phone: 780-623-6983

Presenters

- **Wood Buffalo Housing and Development Corporation**
Bryant Lutes, Phone: 780 799-4045
- **Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation**
Kelly Wagar, Phone: 780 423- 8728
- **Bonnyville Affordable Housing Society**
Vic Stapleton, Phone: 780 826-3496