



"Bringing Lethbridge Home"

Until Everyone Has a Home... 2nd Annual Progress Report 2010-11

Quick Facts

- This year 359 people (including 155 children) without stable housing now have a permanent home
- Street homelessness has decreased by 53% over the past 2 years
- The number of people staying at the Emergency Shelter has decreased by 23%
- Overall 25% decrease in homelessness in Lethbridge
- 475 affordable housing units developed
- Over 600 people have taken advantage of services at Project Homeless Connect
- Over 360 community volunteers are involved to make a difference
- However, 1295 households remain on waiting lists for housing and subsidy services



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Until Everyone Has a Home...

July 2011

"Bringing Lethbridge Home" is happening

Social Housing in Action is proud to provide the 2nd Annual Progress Report to the City of Lethbridge (the Community Entity), our partners, the community, and our provincial and federal funders; Housing and Urban Affairs and Service Canada.

During the second year of the implementation of our 5 Year Plan to End Homelessness (2009-2014) over 40 agencies and 100s community members work together to make it happen and are proud of the significant milestones achieved. People experiencing homelessness have secured and sustained safe and affordable housing, people have moved from living on the street to their own home, coordinated support services are provided and affordable housing units have been developed.

Through outreach and follow-up support, people experiencing homelessness are engaged and permanent housing is secured and sustained. The recidivism rate, even for people with complex needs, remains well below the national average of 15%. Lethbridge, with all of the Housing First Agencies, averages 5%.

Lethbridge is experiencing a major shift as we move from just managing homelessness to ending it. This is the direct result of the Housing First approach, coordinated and established support services for people as they are housed. However, despite our best ef-

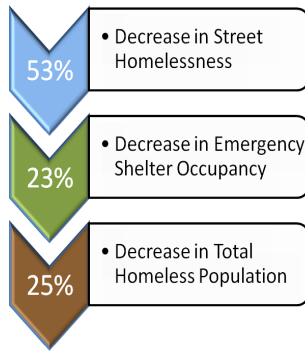
orts, people are still needing affordable and accessible housing options. To this end, applications have been forwarded for the development of an innovative housing project in the London Road area, supported housing for men, as well as 2 additional Sunrise homes for youth. The Covenant Health project for supportive housing for seniors with complex needs has also been approved.



The Bottom Line

Housing is a basic right not a privilege or reward that is conditional. As *Bringing Lethbridge Home* comes to the end of the second year of the Plan, it can be concluded that *Bringing Lethbridge Home* is entrenched, proving to be effective and continues to move forward as people are successfully housed and stay housed. Other conclusions include the following:

- Ending homelessness is directly impacted by the availability of housing choices
- Housing First has a definite social and economic impact
- Success is directly related to the capacity and ability of the Housing First agencies to effectively deliver the programs
- Addressing the root causes of homelessness requires a systemic approach. Poverty reduction, access to affordable housing choices, employment opportunities, mental and physical health, and addiction free lifestyles are contributing factors to preventing homelessness in the first place



Success Story

“Mary” is a 25 year old female who has been involved with the YWCA for about 6 years. She has struggled with a drug addiction for all of her adult life. Her choices have led her into prostitution, fraud, theft, alienation from her family, some short jail stays, 2 abortions, and the birth and adoption of a son she delivered. Due to the stability of having a place to call home, as well as the supportive staff, something began to change with Mary. She started saying, “I’m not happy with my life. There must be something more I can do.” Mary has recently applied and has been accepted into a college program this fall. She has held the same job for 3 months now and is so proud of the paychecks, the things she can buy for herself, and the positive future she sees for herself.

How are we doing? Who is doing it?

Moving from just managing homelessness to ending it is having a definite impact in Lethbridge. As a result of the adoption of the Housing First approach by our funded programs, the following highlights are noted:

- 53% decrease in street homelessness
- 23% decrease in emergency shelter occupancy
- Overall 25% decrease in the total homeless population

The funded programs are con-

gratulated for their efforts to *Bring Lethbridge Home*.

YWCA provides transition and outreach services for women and children fleeing family violence, supportive housing for women and the YPM Sunrise House for youth 18-24.

Community Resource Services get people connected with housing and services and are available at the Lethbridge Resource Centre, through the MUST Outreach and the Clean Sweep program by providing employment opportunities while keeping our Downtown clean and refreshed. These programs

also assists people to further participate in community life.

Niitoyis Women and Children’s Centre is fully occupied and extends a welcome to women and children moving from Reserve to urban life.

Pathways Community Outreach Team houses and supports people with the most complex needs. A specialized youth team has been integrated.

Wood’s Homes provides emergency shelter for youth under 18 and gets them connected with the services that result in permanent housing.

Goal 1-Develop and increase permanent housing opportunities

Bringing Lethbridge Home has determined that 1000 affordable housing units are required to meet the housing needs in Lethbridge. To date, 475 units have been established, not only through the allocation of Affordable Housing Grants through the City of Lethbridge, but also through significant partnerships with Lethbridge Housing Authority, Canadian Mental Health, Canada Mortgage and Housing and private developers. Positive relationships with landlords is most

important as supports are available for their tenants. A Landlord Tenant Service will be secured with an agency.

However, despite our best efforts, the availability of housing that is affordable to people living with low incomes and/or disabilities remains a challenge. The current Vacancy Rate does not necessarily translate into housing that is accessible for people with limited or low incomes. A Housing Summit is planned for Sept. 21-22 to identify opportunities and inno-

vative approaches for our community to ensure access to housing... *Until everyone has a home.*

Additional projects have been identified as priorities and funding is being secured for supported housing for men, additional 2 Sunrise Houses for youth and the Covenant Health project for seniors with complex needs. Second Stage housing for women and children fleeing Domestic Violence remains a priority.

Goal 2-Reducing the impact of NIMBY

Building welcoming and inclusive neighborhoods remains forefront with *Bringing Lethbridge Home*. This approach is also supported through the Community and Social Development Committee of Council and the Community Action Plan through the CMARD Team for A Welcoming & Inclusive Lethbridge. A special project has occurred with the London Road Association and

will expand to other neighborhoods.

Good Neighbor Agreements is a promising practice that has been implemented with many of the housing initiatives and proven effective in creating a mechanism for positive neighborhood relations and communication, thus decreasing conflict.

Bringing Lethbridge Home has enjoyed a positive and mutually beneficial relationship with the University of Lethbridge to further research the impact of NIMBY in our community and to define evidence based best practices. This research by Dr. Belanger has been published and shared not only for Lethbridge, but across Canada.

Goal 3-Expanding ‘Housing First’ in Lethbridge

As a direct result of the efforts of *Bringing Lethbridge Home*, the Housing First agencies and programs have successfully permanently housed over 359 people including 155 children this year. Intensive Case Management is the best practice model utilized.

Housing is not provided on a first come basis, but is provided after an assessment process; those with the most complex needs are housed first. This has proven to be the most effective method of ensuring those most at risk are housed to reduce

the health and social impacts of homelessness. However, it is also important to rapidly re-house people to reduce the cycle of homelessness and the tendency to become chronically homelessness. This is addressed in the plan to divert people from the risks of homelessness.

38 individuals with complex needs have been permanently housed this past year with only an 8.2% recidivism rate; well below the national average. Over 40 % have been housed from the shelter and the street.

The economic and social impacts of Housing First are noted with the significant reduction in use of emergency services, emergency room visits, hospitalizations, interactions with police, incarcerations and court appearances. Health status improvements, including nutritional well-being, significantly increases as people become connected with medical care, community services, and employment opportunities. This is a complete change in lifestyle for people and social integration in the community remains a challenge for many.



Success Story

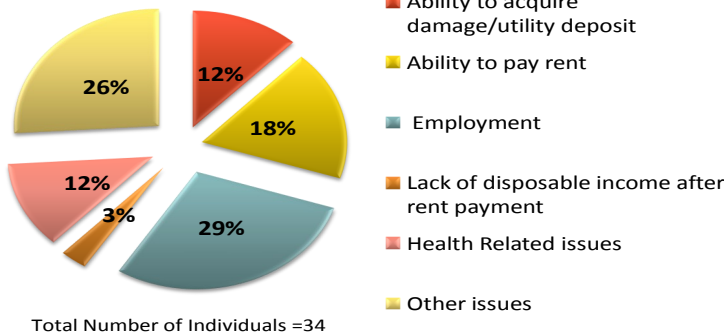
In March of this year we received a phone call from one of our partner agencies. The Executive Director advised us that one of our mutual clients had been sleeping in the alley behind their organization. This is someone we were both quite familiar with and were shocked to hear that he had fallen so far and had not asked for help. Pride is often the most significant barrier to help.

This one call set the Lethbridge Housing First Team into motion. The client was discussed at our regular Thursday morning Community Case Conference table and a plan was developed. A Case Worker was assigned as his Intensive Case Manager and supported him through every step of the process. In one month he was able to secure Income Support, start the AISH application process, attain a bachelor suite at Castle Apartments and develop a treatment plan that has allowed him to maintain his sobriety. Since being housed he has started to give back to his community. He has joined a group who provide support and education to others who struggle with addictions, he volunteers at his church and serves as an inspiration to others.



What People Told Us

Ability to Secure Affordable Housing



Goal 4-Coordinated services impacting people to stay housed

Building collaborative partnerships in the community remains a pivotal practice that the success of Housing First is contingent upon.

Partner agencies provide key services and support to people to not only keep people housed, but also prevent homelessness as much as possible. These partner agencies include Alberta Employment and Immigration, Alberta Health Services, Lethbridge

Housing Authority, Treaty 7 Housing, Aboriginal Housing Society, AISH, Addiction and Mental Health, LRPS and Fire/EMS to name a few. Their commitment and engagement is most valued.

All funded agencies have adopted the Housing First approach. *Bringing Lethbridge Home* is currently in transition to more fully integrate the services within the community.

Project Homeless Connect pro-

vided connection services for over 600 people this past year within a positive supportive environment.

Building the social capital and capacity of the agencies continues to be a priority as the shift to ending homelessness occurs. Training and development and providing opportunities for learning are critical for the professional development of the staff as well as the continued viability of the organizations.

**"BRINGING
LETHBRIDGE HOME"**

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Goal 5-Closing the front door at Emergency Shelters

This is totally doable in Lethbridge as it has also occurred in other cities. As people become permanently housed, the purpose of the emergency shelters will change to true emergency short stays until housing has been secured.

What is required in Lethbridge (as identified through a profile of the shelter occupants), is completion of proposed projects such as the Covenant

House, affordable housing options, supported housing for men and for youth ages 18-24, as well as the second stage housing following stays in Harbor House.

The efforts of *Bringing Lethbridge Home* has resulted in an overall 23% reduction in the occupancy at the adult shelter. However, there will always be a need for shelter for people in an emergency situation. The difference will be the preven-

tion of chronic homelessness through rapid re-housing within 7 days of coming to the shelter. This goal is included in the plan requiring a shift in the use and programming within the existing shelter.



Impact Of Housing First (Pathways)

Reduced use of Emergency Services and Justice Involvement with people housed

Health and Justice Involvement	2010-2011
EMS Uses	↓ 85%
Emergency Room Visits	↓ 83%
Days in Hospital	↓ 70%
Interaction with police	↓ 76%
Days Incarcerated	↓ 86%
Court Appearances	↓ 59%

Total Number of Individuals =38

Success Story

One of the highlights of "David's" new "lease on life" since being housed has been his ability and strength to re-connect with his daughter. He was proud to finally be able to give her a portrait of himself recently shot by a volunteer photographer at a Project Homeless Connect event. David has been stably housed through Lethbridge's Housing First initiative since January 2010. Since this time David's overall health has improved as he has been supported and working with his Follow-Up worker; not only to secure safe and secure housing, but to acquire a stable income through AISH. Most recently, David was given a leadership role in the supported employment program which he has been participating in since being housed.