



Westmount Supportive Housing

What We Heard Report



Edmonton

August 2021

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Edmonton and its housing partners are committed to addressing homelessness by building **900 units of supportive housing in all areas of the city by 2024**. Supportive housing is a type of affordable housing that also provides on-site support services to help people who have experienced homelessness maintain their housing. The Westmount site is one of the first five sites under development to help meet this goal. The current non-market housing ratio in Westmount is 4.42%, well below the City's target of 16%.

The Westmount site consisted of three City-owned lots at 11039, 11045 and 11049 130 Street. It was selected in accordance with policy [C601](#), which provides guidelines for identifying locations for affordable and supportive housing. This site was selected due to the parcel's zoning, regular shape and ability to be developed, alignment with surrounding built form (multi-unit residential buildings), and proximity to amenities like Westmount mall, Coronation Park, Woodcroft Library, and frequent transit options.



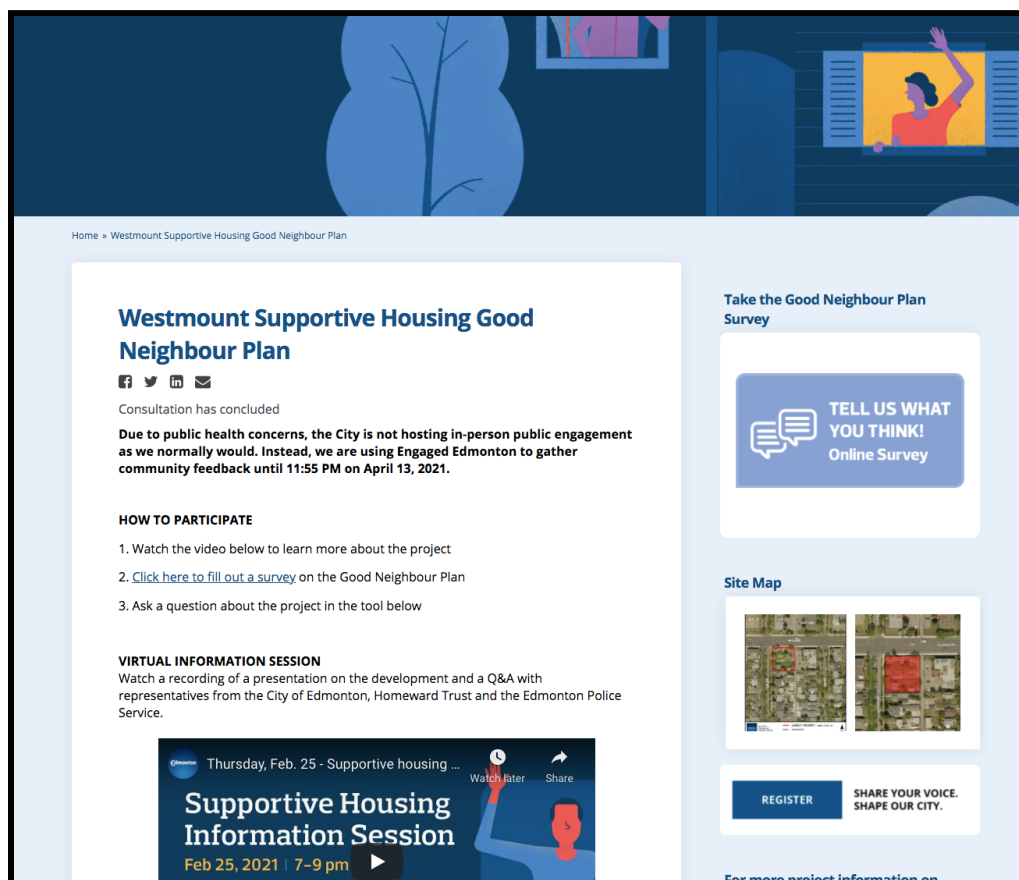
In March 2021, City Council approved the sale of the site to Homeward Trust for \$1.00. Homeward Trust is a not-for-profit organization that works on behalf of the community and in partnership with government and local agencies to end homelessness in Edmonton. Homeward Trust manages public funding from the City of Edmonton, the Government of Alberta, and the Government of Canada. Homeward Trust will own the supportive housing building, act as property manager, and contract an operator (typically a non-profit social service agency) to run the supportive housing program. Operators are required to follow standards that are common across all supportive housing developments to ensure they are run effectively, safely and securely using evidence-based approaches. This includes abiding by legislative requirements, Homeward Trust's policies and standards, City bylaws, and the description of how the operator will provide support and services as approved in its contract.

In spring 2021, the City of Edmonton and Homeward Trust invited Westmount residents to participate in an engagement process to gather feedback on a draft Good Neighbour Plan ([Appendix I](#)) for the supportive housing. This report summarizes the feedback that was heard during this process and will be considered by the operator as it develops a final Good Neighbour Plan prior to occupancy.

ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

Due to health concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City and Homeward Trust used virtual engagement methods to gather community input on a draft Good Neighbour Plan ([Appendix I](#)):

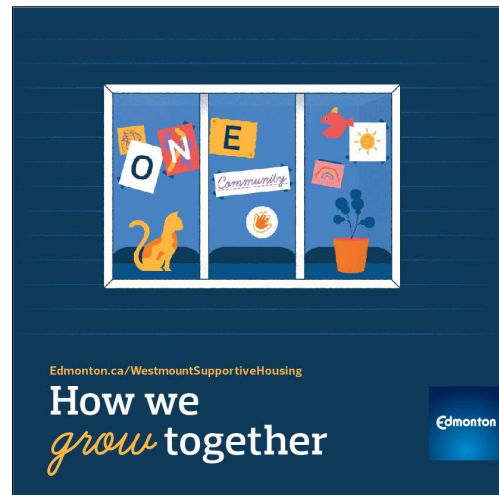
- A [virtual information session](#) was held on February 25, 2021 to answer community questions. Panelists included representatives from the City, Homeward Trust, and the Edmonton Police Service. A recording of the session has received more than 570 views.
- An **Engaged Edmonton page and survey** were publicly accessible from March 15 - April 13, 2021. The Engaged Edmonton page included a video about the project with background and frequently asked questions. The page received 529 visits and 73 survey responses.



Communications

The City used a variety of **communication methods** to inform Westmount residents about engagement opportunities:

- **On-site signage**
- **Mail outs** to neighbours within a 200 metre radius
- **Letter and introduction video link** delivered to residents of St. Andrew's Centre
- **E-mailing list** subscriber sign-up and email updates
- **Stakeholder outreach**, including virtual meetings with:
 - Westmount Community League and Inglewood Community League
 - Crossroads and 124 Street Business Improvement Area representatives
 - Westglen School and Westmount Jr High School principals
 - Westglen's School Council representative
 - St. Andrew's Centre management



- Targeted **social media advertisements**
- **Social media posts** via the Community League
- [Westmount Window](#) newsletter advertisement
- City of Edmonton **engagement calendar and public service announcement**

Focus

A Good Neighbour Plan is a tool for developing and maintaining a positive relationship between supportive housing and the community. It outlines the shared commitments of the operator and the community, and identifies a contact for the community. It also includes an issue resolution process for resolving concerns.

Engagement participants were asked to provide input and feedback on a draft Good Neighbour Plan ([Appendix I](#)) by answering the questions below. The supportive housing operator will review this feedback and develop a final Good Neighbour Plan prior to the development's occupancy.

- **Question 1:** What suggestions do you have for your community to get to know and build positive relationships with the supportive housing Site Operator? For example, community meet and greets, donation drives, barbeques, etc.
- **Question 2:** Can you suggest any key groups or people the Site Operator should reach out to in order to build relationships with the Westmount community?
- **Question 3:** Do you have any feedback on the draft commitments and responsibilities outlined?
- **Question 4:** Do you have any feedback on the issue resolution process in the Good Neighbour Plan?
- **Question 5:** Is there anything else that should be addressed by the Good Neighbour Plan?

Public Engagement Spectrum

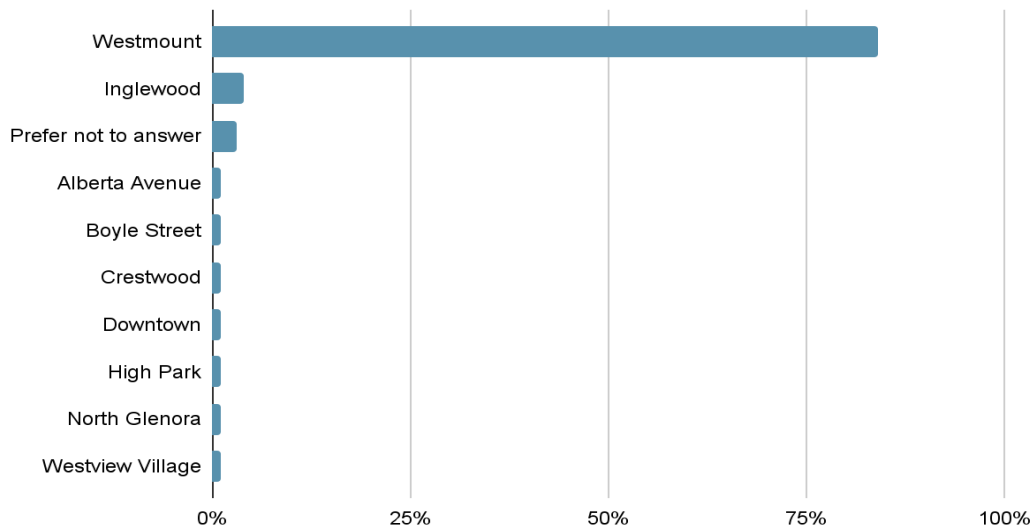
Community input was collected in accordance with the **Advise section of the City's Public Engagement Spectrum**.



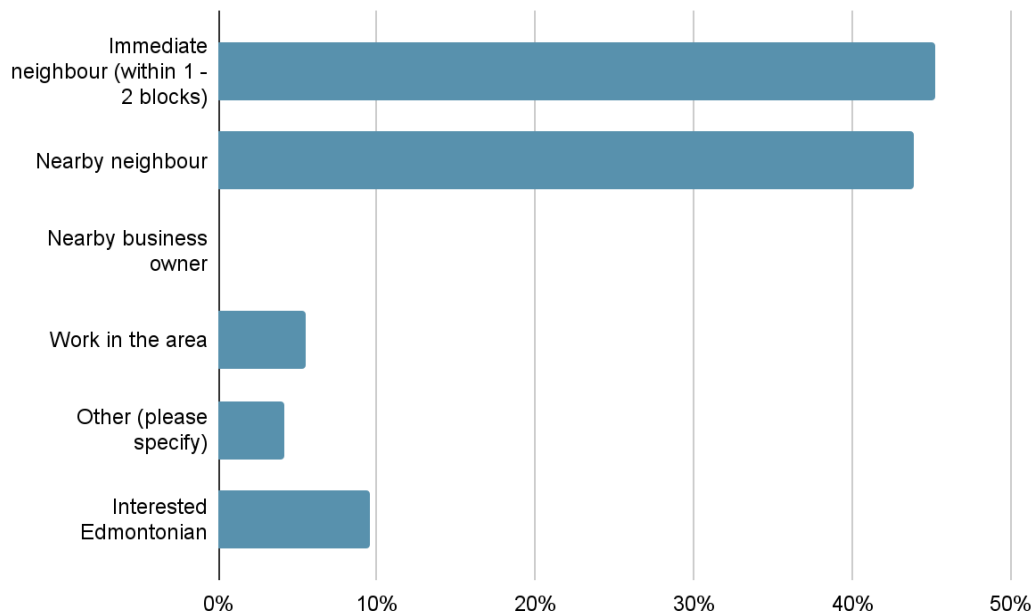
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The following is a summary of survey demographic information provided by respondents.

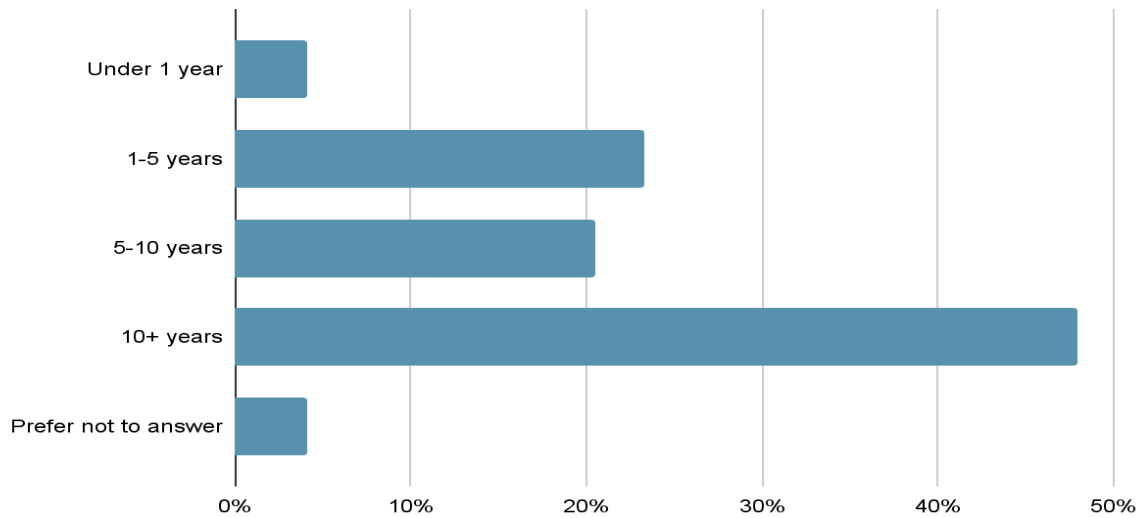
1. Neighbourhood



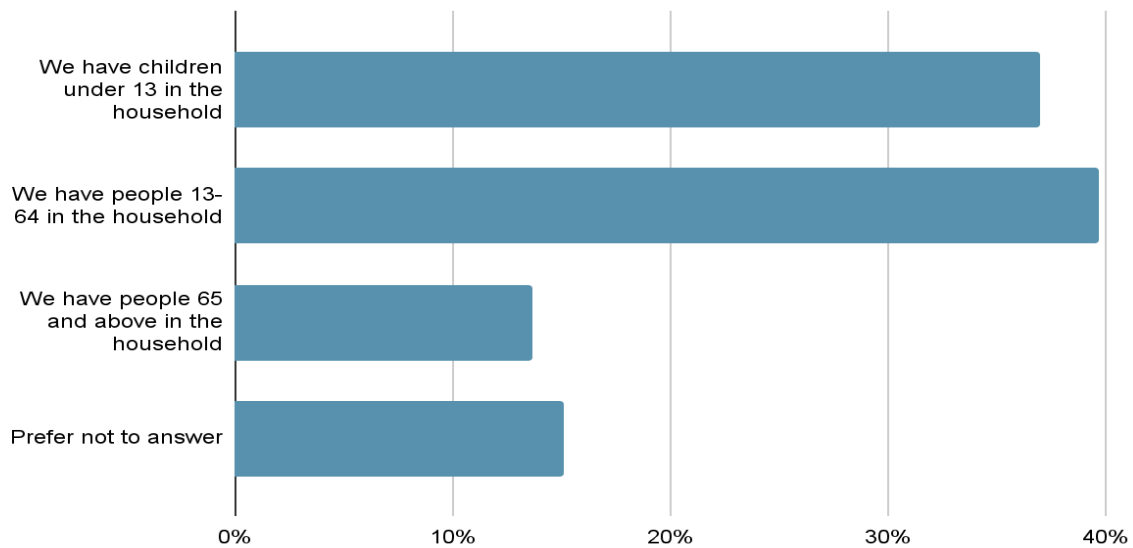
2. Location



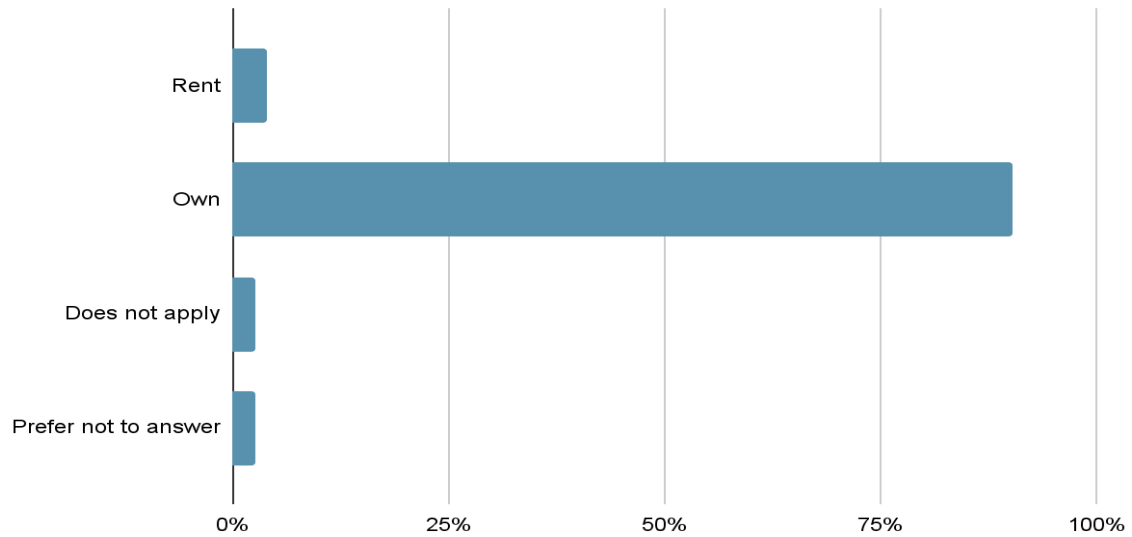
3. Length of time living / working in community



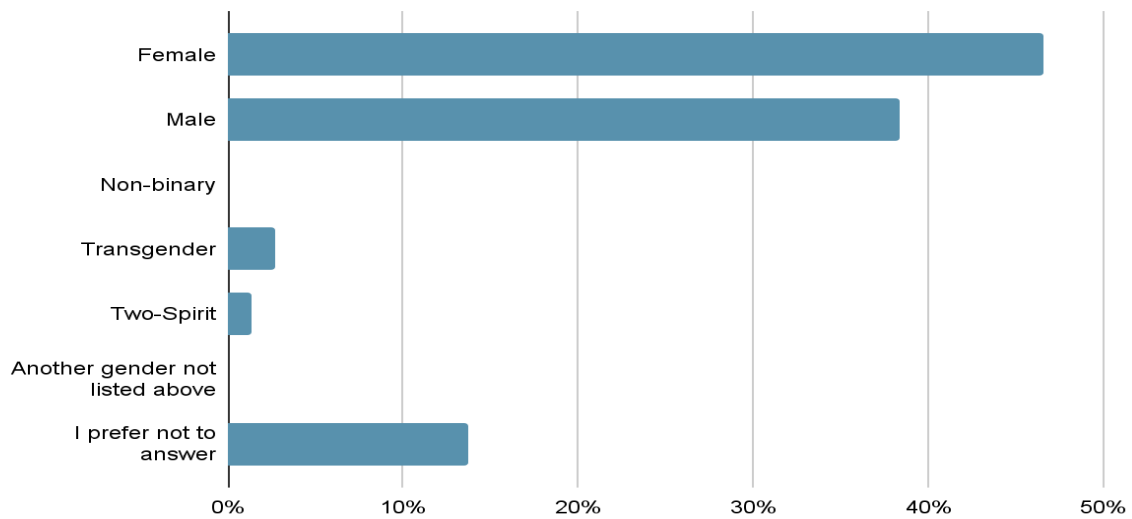
4. Household Composition



5. Household Status

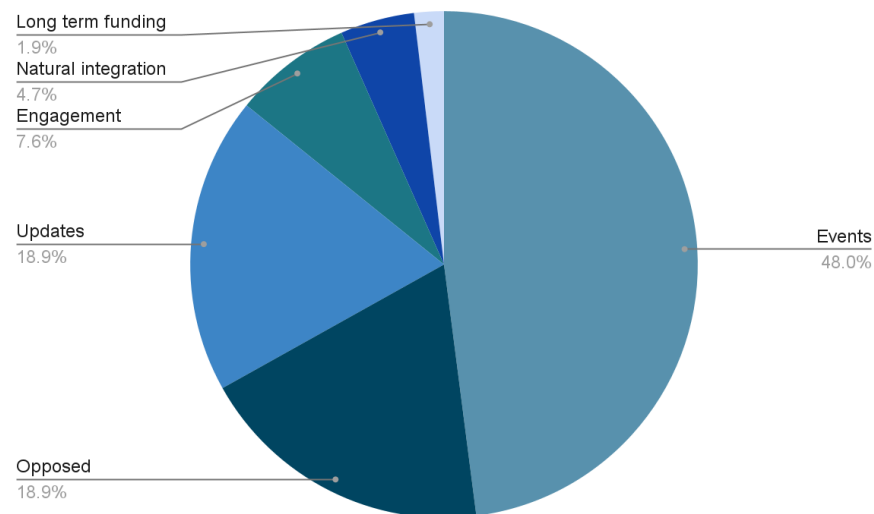


6. Gender



WHAT WE HEARD: QUESTION 1

What suggestions do you have for your community to get to know and build positive relationships with the supportive housing Site Operator? For example, community meet and greets, donation drives, barbeques, etc



33 of 65 respondents stated that community events would be the most effective way for the site operator to establish meaningful relationships and connections with the local community. A wide range of types of events were suggested, including formal gatherings such as:

- Barbeques
- Community potlucks
- Block parties
- Town hall meetings
- Open houses and/or tours of the facilities to meet staff and residents
- Partnered events including fundraising drives, which could include the Community League, local school(s) and/or church(es) in the area.

Other suggestions to support positive relationships included:

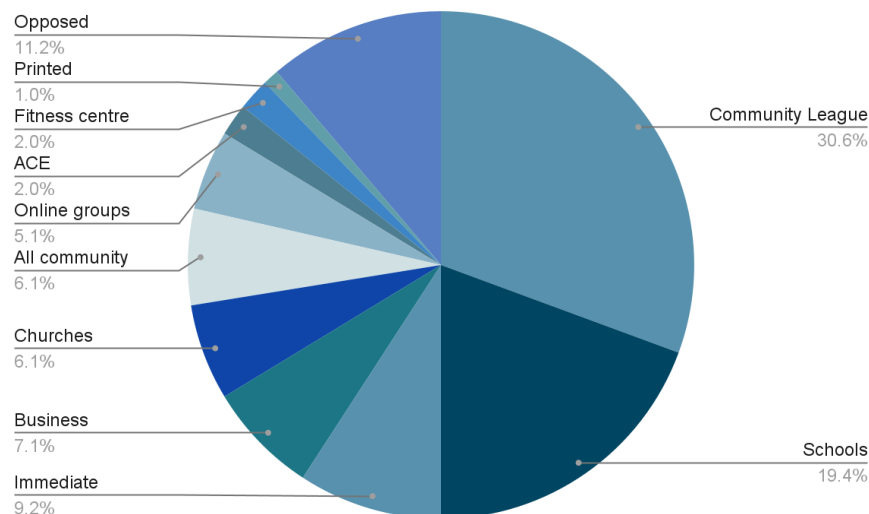
- **Provide updates to the community** on progress for the supportive housing development through formal written methods or more informal online methods such as social media (13 comments).
- **Organize formal engagement sessions** (both in person or virtual) to provide the community with updates and additional information (3 comments).
- **Allow for less formal and more natural integration** of the residents into the community via natural, daily, neighbourly interactions (2 comments).
- **Ensure adequate long term funding** is provided to the project, in order to guarantee longer term success and not just a temporary housing solution (1 comment).

13 respondents expressed their opposition to a supportive housing development in the community, with a range of explanations as to why:

- The City did not adequately engage the community before deciding to go ahead with the project.
- The size or scale of the project is not appropriate for the community.
- The specific location is too close to schools in the area.

WHAT WE HEARD: QUESTION 2

Can you suggest any key groups or people the Site Operator should reach out to in order to build relationships with the Westmount community?



Respondents emphasized that the operator should reach out to local, community level organizations to establish relationships. **The Community League was most frequently cited** (29 of 96 comments¹) as a strong initial connection point to the community, and to foster longer term relationships. Other organizations suggested by survey participants included:

- **Schools** in the area/school board (18 comments)
- **Immediate next door neighbours/alley adjacent residents** to the development (9 comments)
- The **business community** including the 124 Street Business Association and its leadership (7 comments)
- **Local area churches** and religious institutions (6 comments)
- **All community residents/homeowners** in the area (6 comments)

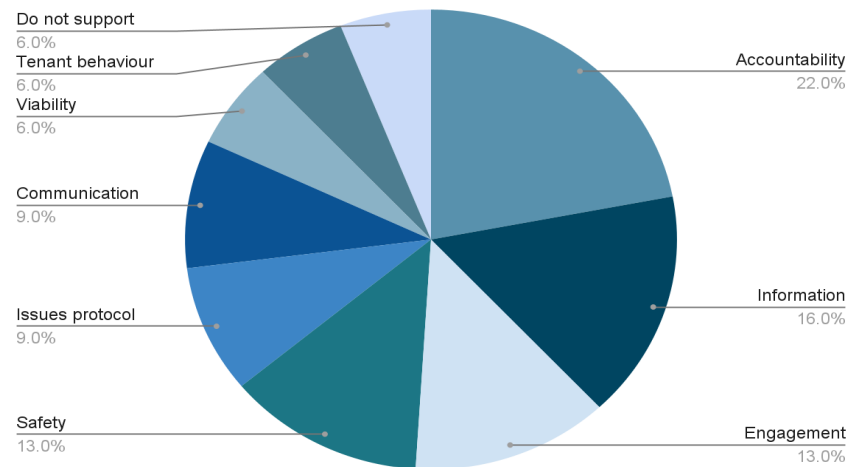
¹ There were 96 comments from 56 respondents

- **Online community groups** such as the community buy and sell, buy nothing, and active Facebook groups (5 comments)
- **Abundant Community Edmonton** (2 comments)
- **Westmount Fitness Centre** (2 comments)
- **Printed publications** such as the Westmount Window (1 comment)

11 respondents noted their opposition to the development of this supportive housing in the community and/or with the lack of engagement by the City before making a decision on whether to proceed with the project in the area.

WHAT WE HEARD: QUESTION 3

Do you have any feedback on the draft commitments and responsibilities outlined?



13 respondents said they had no additional feedback to add to the current plan.

There were **32 other comments** including:

- The operator needs to be **accountable and be specific about how this plan will be followed / guaranteed** (7 comments).
- **More information is needed** about the plan and how it will be customized for the community, including what supports will be available at the site, building security, and what will happen to property values (5 comments).
- The **amount of community engagement is inadequate**, more is needed to discuss this plan to hear concerns about size and security (4 comments).
- There are **general safety concerns** about a project that needs this level of support services. Some respondents are also worried about family safety in the area, loitering or roaming in the community, school and traffic safety, and increased population in the area (4 comments).

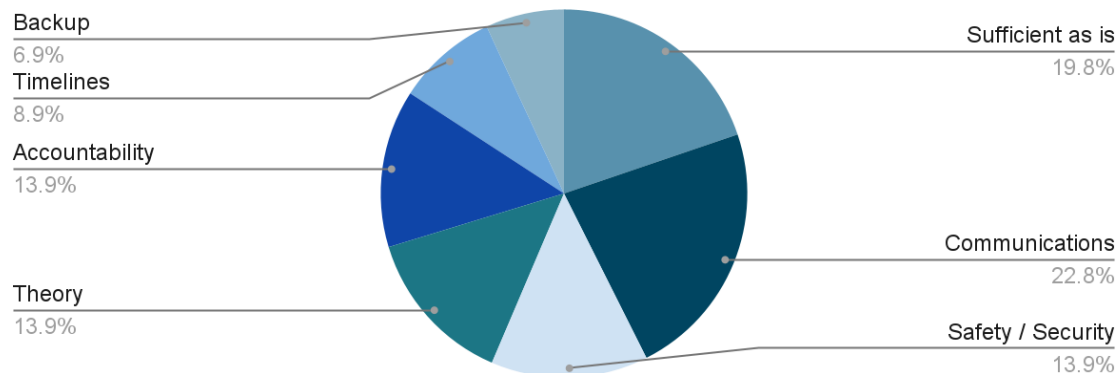
- Concerns that an **issue resolution process** would be needed at all. In addition, timelines seem unclear and the process seems to favour the operator (3 comments).
- There needs to be **frequent and consistent communication** between the building operator and the community (3 comments).
- How does this plan / policy address a potential breakdown **if funding ends or operator ceases?** (2 comments)
- There need to be **guidelines for tenant behaviour** in the building and community/screening for previous violent records (2 comments).
- **Do not support the project** (2 comments).

Some individual responses included:

- Operator should keep and maintain the planter boxes on 130 Street.
- Operator should act as a third party between Homeward Trust and the community.
- The City should run the development directly in order to ensure it sticks to this plan / policy.
- There should be a commitment by the operator to ensure there is no overcrowding in the building.
- Tenants should not feel pressured to participate in community activities.

WHAT WE HEARD: QUESTION 4

Do you have any feedback on the issue resolution process in the Good Neighbour Plan?



9 out of 44 respondents agreed with the process as is, with no need for changes. Other respondents suggested improvements in the following categories:

Communications (10 comments):

- The operator should report back to the community annually on the number of issues and how they were resolved, be transparent about how the process is working, and ensure the community can contact the operator at all hours.
- Have an online forum / page or use Facebook, which is popular in the community.
- Develop easy ways to contact the operator when there is an issue or if there is an emergency (such as a phone number for texting/calling, social media pages, web forums and/or a non-emergency line - either 311 or another alternative).

Safety/Security (6 comments):

- Some respondents were concerned about why the issue resolution process is needed at all as it suggests there will be a rise in safety concerns / criminal / violent activity in the community (6 comments).

Theory vs. Practice (6 comments):

- Theory is good but will this work in practice and will the operator follow this plan?
- Concern that this will not be followed by the operator or the City longer-term.

Accountability and Competency (6 comments):

- For this plan to work the operator must be accountable and competent, this plan needs to be followed consistently and properly with penalties or consequences if they don't adhere to it.

Timelines (4 comments):

- For the resolution process, more clarity is needed on this. Some respondents also stated they want to see shorter resolution times.

Backup contact (3 comments):

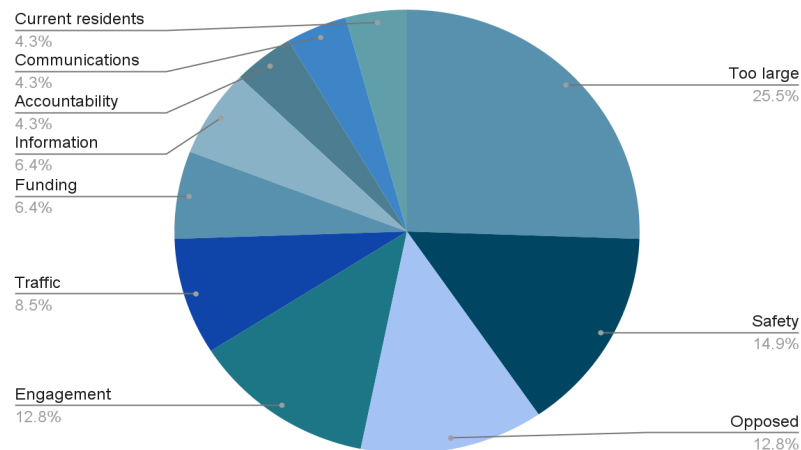
- The operator should ensure that there is a backup contact in case the primary one is unavailable. The operator should also ensure someone is available at all times.

Other standalone comments:

- Ensure clarity between a supportive housing development vs. a homeless shelter, as many fellow residents don't understand the difference.
- Is there a process for dealing with community residents opposed to the whole project? They will complain about everything.
- How do we keep residents from roaming too much?
- What happens if funding dries up?

WHAT WE HEARD: QUESTION 5

Is there anything else that should be addressed by the Good Neighbour Plan?



7 respondents had no additional comments.

There were **51 additional suggestions** including:

- **The building size is too large.** The developments should be spread out more as they are too concentrated. The number of units is too high which creates crime concerns. There will also be increased garbage that needs to be addressed in terms of storage (12 comments).
- **Building security and safety** of the local area should be addressed more in the plan to protect from loitering and possible criminal activities (7 comments).
- **Opposed to the project** (6 comments).
- **More engagement** with the community was / is needed, so that the plan can be customized to fit the community (6 comments).
- There needs to be a plan to reflect an increase in **traffic and vehicles**, address delivery trucks blocking roads and enforce alleyway parking. There also should be no parking on streets (4 comments).

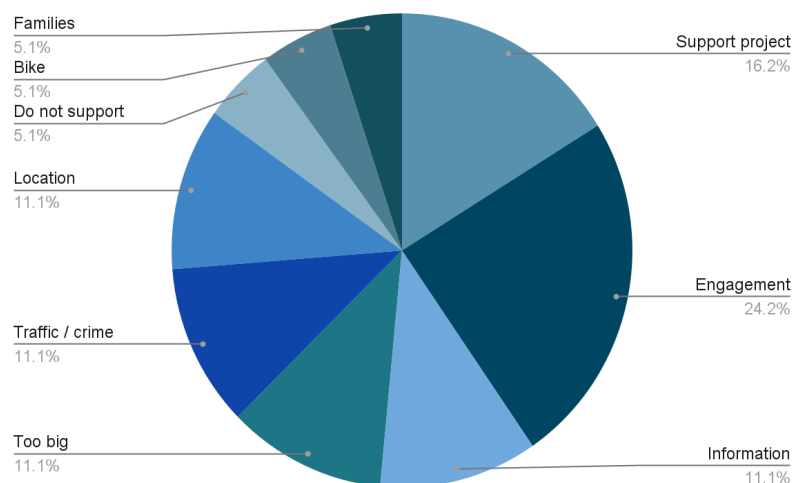
- There needs to be a **long term funding commitment** to ensure the project is not abandoned or falls apart (3 comments).
- **More information is needed about successful models** of this sort of housing development and information should be shared with the community to demonstrate that a development of this size will have success (3 comments).
- There should be a commitment by the developer / operator to be **accountable and strictly follow guidelines** for occupancy, resolution process / ensure competent management of this facility (2 comments).
- There should be **ongoing communication and annual updates** or updates every couple years to build trust and transparency with the community (2 comments).
- There should be **appropriate conduct for current residents in the area**. Rich people should relocate if they complain too much about this. The project is needed in the city (2 comments).

Other comments included:

- Add more welcoming language, it doesn't currently sound welcoming.
- Consider the health and safety of tenants / guests.
- There should be a commitment to maintain the yard space.
- The new residents should be treated the same as anyone else.

WHAT WE HEARD: QUESTION 6

Is there any other feedback you would like to provide?



Six responses were in full support of the project with no additional feedback. Other responses included:

- **More engagement** is needed on the project / plan to ensure it meets the needs of the community. Some respondents were in favour of the development while others were opposed, but most agreed that they would like more chances to work with the City on this project (9 comments).
- Some respondents indicated they want **more information / data about comparable projects** to learn more about these types of projects, and how they can be successful (4 comments).
- Some respondents feel that the **development is too big and has too many units** for the area (4 comments).
- Some respondents indicated additional considerations and assurances should be made regarding **traffic impacts**, as well as a perceived **risk of crime** (4 comments).

- Some respondents **do not like the location of the development and have concerns about it being located near single family homes** (4 comments).
- **Do not support the development at all** (2 comments).
- **Bike storage / rack location needed** (2 comments).
- Want to see **supportive housing for families** and bigger units to support this instead of just single people (2 comments).
- Other responses:
 - Hope there is long term funding for the development.
 - Ensure the operator is held accountable when developing and running the project, there should be consequences / penalties for cutting corners.
 - What if the program fails, what happens then?
 - The City should run this properly, not contract out to another party.
 - Do not trust City of Edmonton staff.
 - If the project fails, residents will be very unhappy.
 - Ensure residents are included in community activities.

NEXT STEPS

The City of Edmonton and Homeward Trust wish to thank Westmount community members for their participation, comments and feedback during this process. The Westmount supportive housing site operator will review this report and develop and distribute a final Good Neighbour Plan prior to the opening of the Westmount supportive housing development.

APPENDIX I

Draft Westmount Supportive Housing Good Neighbour Plan

This draft is for engagement purposes only. Once an Operator has been selected, it will review the community's feedback and develop a final version of the plan.

Introduction

Homeward Trust and the Operator are committed to developing and maintaining positive community relations between the Westmount Supportive Housing site and the surrounding neighbourhood. One of the ways we demonstrate this commitment is through a Good Neighbour Plan. The Good Neighbour Plan outlines how Homeward Trust and the Operator will engage with the community to be a good neighbour, how community members can maintain open and productive communication and how issues are resolved, if they arise.

We share a desire to:

- Create a peaceful and safe neighbourhood
- Ensure a clean and attractive community
- Ensure all individuals have a right to housing, privacy and security
- Share respectful, open and honest communication
- Help each other address concerns and solve problems

Supportive Housing

Supportive housing is a home. People who live in supportive housing find safety, stability, and a community of healing where they can recover and grow.

Supportive housing is not a shelter, drop-in, bridge housing, halfway house or any other type of temporary accommodation. It is long term housing. Residents sign a lease and pay rent, while also receiving financial support and the 24/7 health, wellness and life skills support they need to succeed. On-site supports are specific to the needs of residents with the goal of increasing self-sufficiency, independence and health.

Homeward Trust Edmonton

Homeward Trust Edmonton is a not-for-profit organization that works on behalf of community and in partnership with government and community agencies to end homelessness in Edmonton. Our efforts are driven by community need and priorities outlined in *A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's Updated Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness*. We are committed to working with the neighbourhoods where supportive housing is located.

Homeward Trust will act as property manager and select an Operator for the site through a competitive process. The Operator will be responsible for day-to-day operations of the site and for meeting the needs of residents.

Operator description

To be completed when Operator is selected

Commitments and Responsibilities

Homeward Trust and the Operator commit to:

- Communication with the community
- Property maintenance and cleanliness
- Appropriate staff training and staffing levels
- Ensuring regular communication with the community related to the operation of the site and Good Neighbour Plan
- Exploring opportunities to build relationships and stay connected with the community, including Community Leagues
- Providing a simple and direct issue resolution process

Neighbouring residents, businesses, Community Leagues and organizations commit to:

- Communication with the Operator
- Participating in building relationships and staying connected with the supportive housing Operator, if interested
- Accessing the issue resolution process and working directly with the Operator if issues arise.

Program Standards

Homeward Trust selects and contracts Operators through a competitive and open procurement process. The Operator is responsible for the operation of the Supportive Housing site. They specialize in building the capacity of people to live healthy lives, maintain housing and integrate into the community.

Operators must follow standards to ensure the program is run effectively, safely and securely using evidence-based approaches. This includes abiding by legislative requirements, bylaws, Homeward Trust's policies and standards and the support and services identified in their contract.

Operators are required to meet or exceed program standards in eight categories:

Administration – Supportive Housing programs align to Edmonton's updated *Plan to End Homelessness*, including the Housing First philosophy, and abide by administrative policies, procedures and rules that facilitate stable, secure housing for residents/tenants and comply with relevant local, provincial and federal laws, regulations and standards.

Physical Environment – The design, construction, appearance, physical integrity and maintenance of supportive housing provide an environment that is home-like, functional, safe and secure, conducive to residents'/tenants' stability and appropriate for the surrounding neighborhood.

Accessing and Exiting Supportive Housing – There are coordinated and consistent referral, intake and exit procedures that reflect the Housing First philosophy, are low barrier for residents/tenants and facilitate initial and continued access to stable, secure housing. In the case of Edmonton, this would mean working with Coordinated Access to attain residents/tenants.

Community Engagement – Community engagement planning and activities support residents'/tenants' community integration, contribute to positive community relationships and help to build understanding of the role, purpose, and benefits of supportive housing in neighbourhoods.

Property Management – Property management activities foster residents'/tenants' independence, security, housing stability and reputation within the community.

Support Services – Supportive Housing support services are comprehensive, resident/tenant-centered, voluntary and effectively foster residents'/tenants' housing stability and independence. This includes both onsite programs and in-reached services such as medical and mental health supports, or other programming that supports the individual in maintaining housing. These external services are linked by a comprehensive case plan.

Evaluation and Reporting – Supportive Housing programs reliably and consistently capture and report on accurate and meaningful data about the effectiveness, efficiency, and outcomes of their activities, and use this data to facilitate, and improve the performance of those activities on an ongoing basis. The property management standards ensure that the building is attractive, clean (inside and outside) and safe both for the residents and the surrounding community.

Positive Community-Building and Relationship-Building Activities

To be completed when the Operator is selected; examples include community meet and greets, community events, holiday events, donation drives, etc.

Residents

Homeward Trust and the Operator undertake an intake process to ensure residents are a good match for supportive housing and meet site-specific criteria. The Operator ensures that each resident /tenant signs a lease /occupancy agreement, with no limits on length of stay if the terms and conditions of the agreement are met.

Upon signing an occupancy agreement, the Operator provides residents/tenants the following:

- Orientation to the building, including safety, security, 'house rules' and community amenities (e.g. public transportation, community league, local services, recreation and leisure)
- Explanations of their responsibilities to retain their housing, including how to stay in compliance with their occupancy agreement, keeping their unit clean, complying with 'house rules,' paying rent and other expenses and behavioural expectations

Issue Resolution *(To be completed when Operator is selected)*

Each Supportive Housing site has an established and clear process by which the community and the Site can work together to resolve urgent and non-urgent concerns and escalate to formal concerns if required.

Emergencies

If there is an emergency, please contact 911. Emergencies include risk/ harm to life or property.

Non-emergency Issues

Individuals may reach out to the supportive housing Operator's Community Contact. The Community Contact is the first point of contact for sharing any concerns and feedback. In most cases, this individual will be able to resolve issues.

Operator's Community Contact *(to be identified once the Operator is selected)*

Name:

Phone Number:

Email Address:

The Issue Resolution process:

1. Phone or email the Community Contact
2. The Community Contact will respond within 24 hours of receiving the inquiry or the first business day after receiving an inquiry. Timelines may be expedited if the issue is considered urgent.
3. If the feedback is related to a concern, it is expected that this be investigated and resolved within seven business days. If this timeframe is not possible, the site Operator will communicate an anticipated time frame for resolution.
4. The site Operator will provide a written summary of how the concern was resolved to the individual who shared the concern and Homeward Trust.
5. When appropriate, the person sharing a concern will be provided any additional follow up measures.

If the Operator's Community Contact is unable to resolve a concern or an individual feels it is necessary to escalate the concern, the individual will have the opportunity to follow the Homeward Trust Issue Resolution Process.

As part of this process, the concern and the response to the concern will be recorded and addressed in the spirit of continuous quality improvement. If Homeward Trust receives notification of issues directly and not through the community contact, Homeward Trust will facilitate connections to the Operator to resolve the matter if appropriate.

Homeward Trust Issue Resolution Process:

1. The individual will submit their issue to Homeward Trust's Quality Assurance process. Concerns can be submitted in writing or verbally to the main contact provided above.
2. Homeward Trust will reply within two business days to confirm that the concern has been received and is being investigated. If the issue is urgent, the individual with the complaint will be encouraged to contact emergency services. An urgent situation is something that involves risk or harm to life or property.
3. Homeward Trust will review and investigate the concern and reply to the complainant within seven business days* to either:
 - Request more information; or
 - Provide the complainant with an update, including how it has been, is being, or will be resolved

*The seven-day timeframe allows time to investigate and put in measures to address the issue. As indicated in Step 2, the Operator responds to an issue within two days and will make any immediate steps to address the issue as soon as possible.

Please note that the timeframes outlined in the above process may be exceeded if:

- There is agreement with the person sharing the concern; or
- A significant delay cannot be avoided either because of a delay or inaction by the person making the complaint or a requirement to engage other parties or another mechanism, process, or system to resolve the concern

Homeward Trust respects that people with concerns have the right to:

- Have their views heard, respected and considered
- Request a review of a decision affecting them
- Access advocacy and support during the Issue Resolution Process
- Receive information about how and why a decision was made
- Respond to the reasons for a decision, and where possible, the information used to make that decision

Individuals raising issues are encouraged to:

- Share the issue as promptly as possible after the behaviour, activity, or observation they are concerned about is identified
- Provide information to support their concern, including any new or additional information they become aware of
- Provide contact information
- Share concerns in a respectful manner
- Respect the confidentiality of an individual's personal information, and the obligation of Homeward Trust to protect that confidentiality
- Act in good faith during the process

The Issue Resolution Process Applies To:

- Appearance of a supportive housing site
- Behaviour or activities of tenants/residents of a supportive housing site
- Behaviour or activities of staff of a supportive housing site
- Anything that contravenes positive community relationships and neighbourhood enjoyment
- Other infractions that contravene Homeward Trust's policies, standards, and Good Neighbour Plan

Accordingly, the following types of issues are either outside of Homeward Trust or the Operator's authority or, for legal reasons, cannot be addressed through the Issue Resolution Process:

- Concerns about areas that are set out in legislation or regulation and are beyond Homeward Trust and Operator's authorities
- Complaints about events that are before court or other legal proceeding

Actions for First 30 days of Site Opening*To be completed when Operator is selected*

Action(s)	Description	Timeline/Notes
<i>(example) Connect with Key Stakeholders</i>	<i>Follow up on engagement meetings to: Introduce Operator Continue to answer questions Identify relationship-building activities Other</i>	
<i>(example) Identify possible community-building and relationship-building activities</i>		