



The Saskatoon Housing and Homelessness Plan (2011-2014)

Prepared by Insightrix Research Inc.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
INTRODUCTION	1
What is the purpose of this report?	1
Progress since the last plan	1
Community Profile	2
Summary of the Findings	3
SASKATOON'S HOMELESSNESS: THE CURRENT REALITY	4
How Many?	4
Absolute Homeless	4
Hidden Homeless	5
Relative Homeless	6
Importance of a Count	6
Who is experiencing homelessness?	7
Where are the homeless people?	8
Perceptions of Saskatoon Neighbourhoods	10
Why are People Homeless?	11
Poverty	12
Moving for economic or social opportunity	14
Financial crisis: affordable housing	14
Physical limitations, mental illness and addictions	16
Family conflict: Abuse and Family Violence	18
Discrimination	18
Case Study – Success Story in Saskatoon	19
THE COST	20
HOUSING IN SASKATOON: THE CURRENT REALITY	22
Continuum of Housing	22
Core Housing Need	22
City of Saskatoon Housing Initiatives	23
Saskatchewan Housing Corporation	25

PUBLIC CONSULTATION OUTCOMES	25
Saskatoon Emergency Shelters	26
Saskatoon Transitional Housing	28
Knowledge Sharing and Research	29
Housing First.....	31
Youth	33
Saskatoon Affordable Housing	33
Policy	34
SASKATOON COMMUNITY PRIORITIES, OBJECTIVES & INDICATORS	36
IMPLEMENTING THE COMMUNITY PLAN	39
APPENDIX A – STUDY METHODOLOGY	40
APPENDIX B – DEFINITIONS	42
APPENDIX C – HOUSING FIRST (LITERATURE REVIEW)	46
APPENDIX D – GLOSSARY	49
APPENDIX E – COMMUNITY ASSET LIST.....	51
REPORT ARTWORK.....	57

INTRODUCTION

In many of Saskatoon's neighbourhoods, there are residents who are in a place of despair and experiencing a loss of hope, where for some living in the park, under a bridge, or just walking around the city aimlessly in search of warmth is their reality. These are Saskatoon residents experiencing homelessness.

What is the purpose of this report?

The Saskatoon Housing and Homeless Plan covers the next funding phase (2011- 2014) of the Federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) administered through Service Canada. The purpose of the report is to build upon research conducted in 2007 identifying baselines and priorities for addressing the problems of people who find themselves homeless in Saskatoon, those who are at risk of losing their homes and the needs and challenges for affordable housing.

The report illustrates the main issues facing Saskatoon in terms of housing and homelessness gathered through a consultation process. Consultation included 24 in-depth interviews (majority of which were conducted in-person), 9 focus groups, an online bulletin board, a service provider survey and a general public survey. Where appropriate in the report, anonymous quotations and pictures are used to give further details on the concept being examined. In addition, an in-depth literature review was also conducted.

This report also details the complexity of homelessness and investigates who is homeless in Saskatoon, routes to homelessness, costs of homelessness and the community needs as gathered through the public consultations. The priorities for addressing homelessness and affordable housing are presented in this report as well as the indicators from which we can measure, in the future, our success in achieving these priorities.

Progress since the last plan

As mentioned, the last plan was conducted in 2007. The city has fully met or partially met a number of its priorities and objectives previously identified in the plan. In the past four years:

- A total of 68 emergency shelter beds were added in Saskatoon (target was 100 beds)
- A total of 113 transitional housing units were added (target was 100 units)

Following is a table that lists the number of beds for each housing type:

Residential Facilities	2007	2010	Change 2007-2010
	Number of Beds/Units	Number of Beds/Units	Number of Beds/Units
Emergency shelters (beds)	219	287	68
Transitional housing facilities (units)	238	387	149
Supportive housing facilities (units)	4,733	4,800	67

Other initiatives undertaken since the last plan include:

- A homeless count was conducted in 2008
- More organizations are now using the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)
- Coordination and navigation among providers has improved at both the agency level and the system level with the development of regular shelter provider meetings and improvements in service delivery at the individual agency level
- Coordination and navigation for families and individuals seeking support has improved with the recent safehousing.ca initiative undertaken by the Salvation Army.

Community Profile

This report details the present homeless and housing situation in Saskatoon. Housing needs can be described on a continuum. At one end are those individuals and families experiencing absolute homelessness. At the other end are those individuals and families who are able to meet their housing needs without assistance. In the middle is a range of low and moderate-income households, many of whom are living paycheck to paycheck and find it difficult to secure adequate housing.

Everyone needs a decent standard of living. Essential to the achievement of this standard is access to adequate housing. Housing fulfills physical needs by providing security and shelter from weather and climate. It fulfills psychological needs by providing a sense of personal space and privacy. It also fulfills social needs by providing a gathering area and communal space for a family.

In Saskatoon, providing a decent standard of living to all its citizens has been challenging. Housing prices have risen in Saskatoon and affordability has decreased. Between 2007 and 2008, Saskatoon's housing prices increased by 51.7%, the largest increase in the country. At the same

time, the average rent has increased more than the national average. Vacancy rates have been below 2% for the last three years (recently this increased to 2.6%). As well, according to CMHC, over the past year there have been no new additions to Saskatoon's private rental stock in the form of rental project completions. In fact, the Saskatoon private rental universe declined by 120 units between 2009 and 2010. As a result, the CMHC is forecasting a slight decline in the average apartment vacancy rate to 2.1 per cent in October 2011. The highest vacancy rate in the city exists in the southwest region of the city, in the core neighbourhoods, at approximately 5.6%.

Summary of the Findings

In Saskatoon, there is a diverse mix of people experiencing homelessness: men, women, couples, new immigrants, single mothers, single fathers, families and teenagers. According to the consultations and the literature, there are many reasons people become homeless. Some of these factors include: poverty, physical disability or mental illness or addiction, a difficult childhood history, time in foster care, family conflict, lack of supportive relationships and a lack of education.

In terms of community needs, Housing First has been mentioned by a number of participants during the consultation process. The secondary research conducted for this project is clear on the outcomes of Housing First compared to other models in terms of housing retention, cost reduction and quality of life. There are a variety of housing first initiatives occurring across North America, however the basic premise of Housing First is getting people into permanent housing as quickly as possible (or staying in their existing housing) and bringing in supports to help them deal with any issues they are facing (e.g. addictions, mental health, etc.). By providing all the wrap-around services this enables people to stay in homes and to deal with any issues that might lead to problems with housing.

There were a variety of other issues identified during the consultation process. These included issues focused on emergency shelters, transitional facilities, sharing knowledge and research, youth homelessness and affordable housing. In addition, concerns with a variety of policy matters were also identified (e.g. social assistance rates, national housing strategy, etc.).



The Current Reality in Saskatoon

SASKATOON’S HOMELESSNESS: THE CURRENT REALITY

Saskatoon residents experiencing homelessness live: on the streets, in parks, in abandoned buildings. Some make use of the shelters, others couch-surf, depending on the goodwill of friends and relatives.

How Many?

Absolute Homeless

The Community-University Institute of Social Research (CUISR) conducted the first count of Saskatoon’s homeless population on May 22, 2008. This is the most recent count at the time of this report. The 2008 Homeless Count estimated that 260 people (228 adults and 32 children) in Saskatoon were homeless. This is a ‘point-in-time’ count; a snapshot of the situation on just one day and included the absolute and sheltered homeless population. Of the 260 people included in the count, 199 people (169 adults and 30 children) were housed by service providers (emergency housing and transitional housing) and 48 people (46 adults and 2 children) were counted outdoors.

Location	Number of Adults	Number of Children	Total Number	Total Percent
Shelters	169	30	199	76.5%
Outdoor	44	0	44	16.9%
Detox Center	7	0	7	2.7%
Hotel	6	0	6	2.3%
Campground	2	2	4	1.5%
	228	32	260	100.0%

It is acknowledged that there are many limitations to the counting method used. The method underestimates the number of people experiencing homelessness, particularly because homeless individuals are difficult to contact. When the above numbers are compared to counts conducted in other municipalities, after adjusting for differences in population, Saskatoon’s homeless numbers are lower than would be expected.

It is possible that the Saskatoon homeless count project had a lower detection rate than other municipalities for several reasons. One reason for the lower than expected numbers could be due to the fact that for safety reasons, surveyors were unable to go onto private property and as a result would not have counted individuals staying on private property. Another reason for the lower than expected count could be due to the fact that only a limited number of survey areas were

included in the count. In addition, on the night of the count, there was a large police presence in some neighbourhoods, which could have also resulted in fewer individuals staying outside, particularly in the low-income neighbourhood in which the count was conducted. Moreover, to enhance volunteer safety, volunteers were equipped with reflector vests when conducting their surveys and this may have further discouraged participation as some of the volunteers may have been mistaken for police. Also, homeless individuals and families staying in the city jail, and Safe House Shelter were not included in the count (Community-University Institute of Social Research, 2008).

Based on all these reasons and on feedback from the service providers, it is expected that the Saskatoon homeless count is higher than what was actually recorded in the 2008 count. It is estimated that at any given time, 260 individuals live on the streets, 287 individuals use emergency shelters, and 496 individuals use transitional housing.

Hidden Homeless

More concerning is that the numbers in the previous section don't reflect all of Saskatoon's hidden homeless: people who find a temporary couch to sleep on with friends or family while seeking affordable housing, adults who live in cars and abandoned buildings and sleep in church basements and women who accept housing from a man, even in dangerous situations, rather than being on the street. There are estimates that the hidden homeless make up the largest proportion of Canadians experiencing homelessness. It is estimated that for every 1 homeless person you see on the street there are 4 that you don't see (Raising the Roof).

The issues and concerns regarding the hidden homeless were evident in the consultations held with homeless people, the general public and the service providers in Saskatoon. Examples cited by participants included knowing of women "hooking up" with men for an evening to have a safe place to stay, people staying with friends and families until they are asked to leave and

"I didn't want to receive money from social services and wanted to live off the grid. I slept under the bridge for a couple years and used cardboard boxes to cut the winter wind." -- Research Participant



people staying in businesses that are not shelters or transitional housing but places where people are keeping their operations open late at night to accept those looking for a place to stay. In addition, during the public consultation, people admitted to opening their own homes to help people out for the evening and letting them stay in their homes. Stories were also shared of faking an illness to stay in a hospital for a night or two or waiting it out in coffee shops, having refill after refill, to stay in a warm place even if only temporarily.

Relative Homeless

Although not homeless, the prevalence of people living in inadequate housing is an issue based on the results of the public consultations. Relative homelessness include situations where people's homes do not meet the basic housing standards of adequate protection from the elements, access to safe water and sanitation and provide secure tenure and personal safety .

There were examples of situations where people are living in conditions that are not appropriate or unsafe. Examples cited by research participants included currently living in apartments with 5 other people in a 2 bedroom apartment so as to be able to afford the current rent costs. Another example cited was a young woman with 2 young children that needed to live close to an elementary school, having to rent a main floor of a home where there is drug activity occurring in the basement suite and suite above her main floor. This was however the only place she could afford that was near a school for her children and in a building that was somewhat better than other places she had viewed.

Importance of a Count

Service providers and policy decision makers want to know the numbers of homeless and hidden homeless in the City. Saskatoon has completed one homeless count as previously described and has not undertaken any hidden homeless research. Making decisions on an unknown number of people has been seen to be difficult resulting in, at times, paralysis in decision making.

A recent example was the Cold Weather Alerts discussed for the city of Saskatoon. A Cold Weather Alert prompts shelters to make extra spaces available for the night, and to relax curfews and service restrictions. Street outreach services, volunteer organizations, and other agencies that provide

“Recently I worked with a community based organization to find an immigrant family, which had 5 family members, a place to stay in Saskatoon. The only place they could find that the family could afford was in the core neighbourhoods. Within a week of moving into their new place their apartment was broken into. Now, their kids are being bullied and the entire family is scared of living in that neighbourhood. Welcome to Saskatoon!” -- Research Participant

homeless services are also alerted. These groups notify homeless people about the extreme weather conditions, and the services available to them, and may provide emergency transportation to reach these services and shelters. The concept of an alert system was discussed at City Council as an option for Saskatoon, but not having an accurate tally of the homeless was raised as an issue.

Another use of the data is on measuring outcomes. Municipalities such as Edmonton and Calgary with their plans to eliminate homelessness in these cities, conduct counts each year. These counts are done in order to benchmark the success of their efforts year after year to see if outcomes for the homeless are improving given the community's initiatives to address homelessness.

Who is experiencing homelessness?

One thing that was evident from the consultations is that people do not plan to be 'homeless'. Many people can't imagine homelessness happening to someone they know. In Saskatoon, there is a diverse mix of people experiencing homelessness: men, women, couples, new immigrants, single mothers, single fathers, families and teenagers.

In Saskatoon, according to the 2008 count, 46% of people experiencing homelessness are Aboriginal, although the Aboriginal community makes up just 10% of the city's population. A significant number of people experiencing homelessness also have jobs. In the 2008 count, nearly 70% of the people interviewed in shelters were employed and of those 74% worked full time. Many have migrated to Saskatoon, attracted by the boom. They just can't afford rent once they get here.

"We lived in an RV for a while. My mom would lock the RV door when she was doing drugs or had her boyfriends over. I would go to a friends or somewhere to find a place to stay." -- Research Participant

Posting on Homeless Nation (www.homelessnation.org)

*I'm a 26 year old self-taught computer tech/network admin, currently bouncing from couch to couch, room & board in Saskatoon. I guess by definition I would be considered the hidden homeless in that I've always managed to find a place to stay even if it's a friend, family, or a condemned house (*shudder* hopefully I never have to go back to that) Right now I'm working at getting a job, finding somewhere cheap to live, & trying to go back to school.*

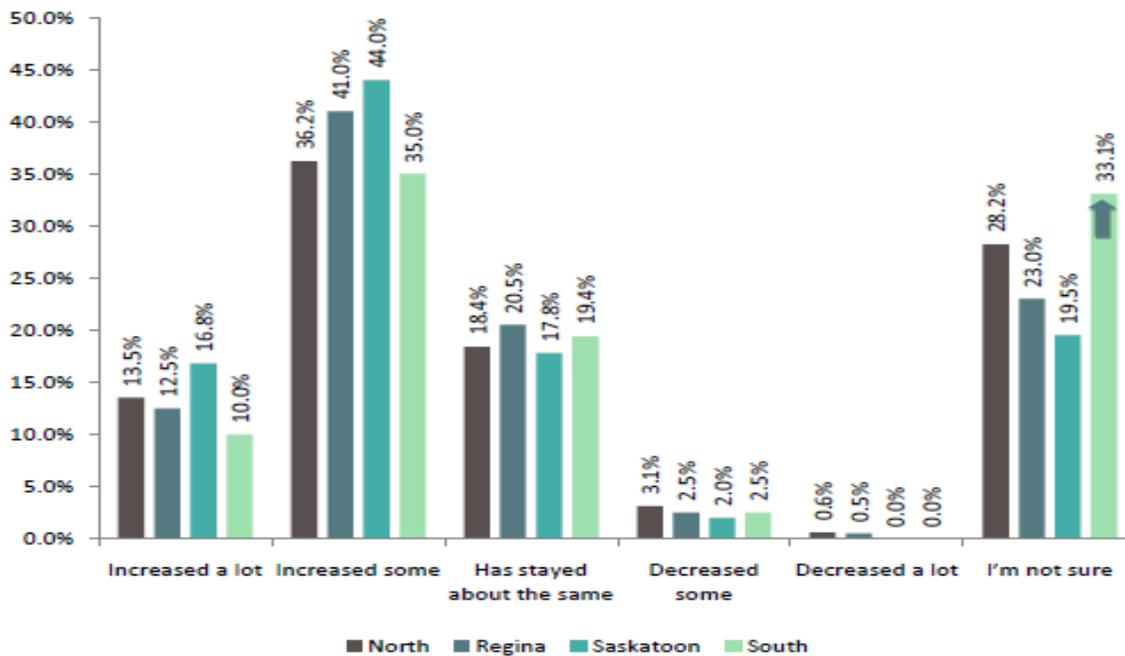
Where are the homeless people?

In Saskatoon, there are indications that homeless individuals tend not to occupy the types of visible public areas as is the case in municipalities such as Vancouver and Toronto. Saskatoon does not have the public transit infrastructure (e.g., subway or light rail transit) found in larger municipalities, where homeless individuals might stay to shelter from the elements. Thus, it is expected that fewer individuals are outdoors relative to some of the larger Canadian cities.

However, during the focus group consultations with the general public, participants mentioned seeing more homeless people today than previously. Notably, many participants mentioned seeing homeless people downtown when they are going to and from their place of work. Also participants mentioned seeing more homeless people on “the east side”, an area where historically homeless people were not as visible. They also mentioned seeing more homeless people occupying ATMs locations, particularly downtown, as a place to sleep. They do not recall seeing this occurring previously.

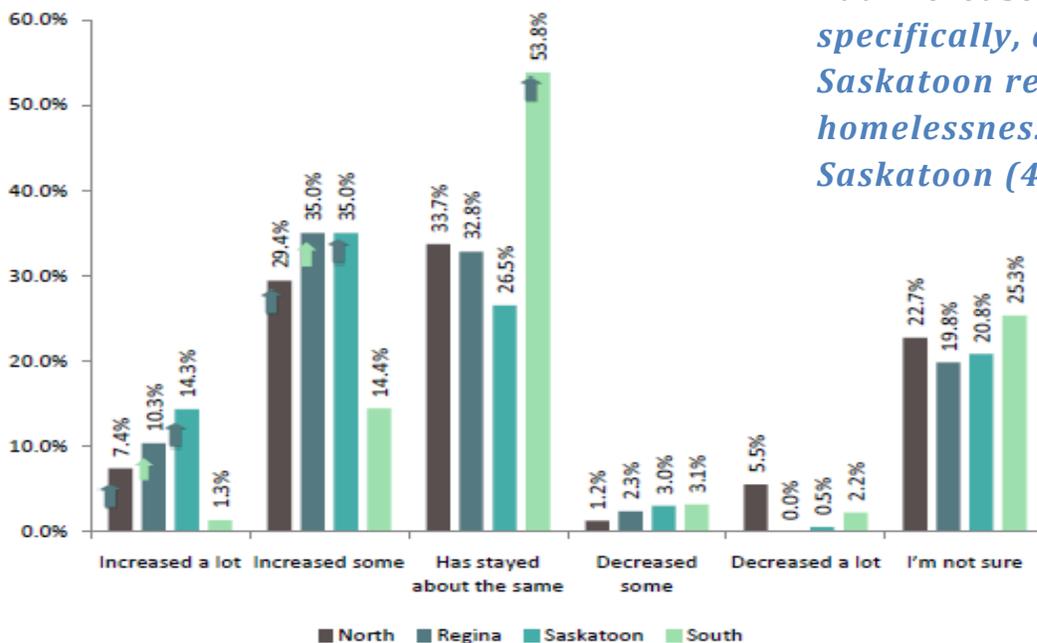
The focus groups also reinforced the findings of a survey Inshtrix conducted with over 1,200 Saskatchewan residents (400 of which were from Saskatoon). In the survey, 60.8% of Saskatoon residents felt that homelessness had increased in Saskatchewan. When asked if homelessness had increased in Saskatoon, 49.3% of Saskatoon residents indicated homelessness had increased in Saskatoon.

“Common places to sleep include “the forest” (the area of trees on the east side of the river bank), parks, setting garbage containers on fire and sleeping up close to the garbage container, under the bridges, and under loading docks .”
-- Research Participant



Q3. Compared to three years ago, would you say the number of homeless people in Saskatchewan has increased, decreased or remained about the same? Base: all respondents, n = 1283.
Base: all respondents, n = 1283.

When asked if homelessness had increased in Saskatoon specifically, almost half of Saskatoon residents felt that homelessness had increased in Saskatoon (49.3%)



Q4. What about the community in which you live? Would you say the number of homeless people has increased, decreased or remained about the same compared to three years ago? *If you live on a farm or acreage, please comment on the community closest to you or where you pick up your mail.* Base: all respondents, n = 1283.

Perceptions of Saskatoon Neighbourhoods

During the focus group consultations with the general public, participants mentioned an East/West divide in Saskatoon with the west side harbouring many of the city's homeless. They saw value in having all different types of residents integrated in the city neighbourhoods rather than having ghettos in the city. Even though there has been development on the west side, the general public, particularly those from the east side, still tend to see the west side of city as less desirable. Anecdotally, as mentioned in the consultations, this has been reinforced by the real estate industry when selling properties on the west side in terms of suggesting families not look at locating on "that" side of the city.

Be that as it may, there are a group of core neighbourhoods that do harbour a large proportion of the homeless. In many of these areas, it was also stated in the consultations that there is also a high prevalence of drug behaviour that occurs in these neighbourhoods.

Many of the transitional housing and low rentals are located in these less desirable neighbourhoods. As one service provider mentioned, this is where the land is the cheapest and where they can afford to build facilities. Having these facilities in neighbourhoods where there is easy access to drugs and other addictive substances is not in the best interest of the person trying to be helped.

There is a NIMBY (not in my backyard) factor that does arise when developing facilities in non-core neighbourhoods, however based on the consultations of both the general public and those needing support, there is at least some common understanding that the development of ghettos is not where residents want to live in.

"I was forced to move out after the City condemned the building I was living in. It was all I could afford. I am in a shelter now and don't really want to go back to the neighbourhood as I am afraid I will start using (drugs) again." - Research Participant

Condemned House in Caswell Hill



Why are People Homeless?

According to the consultations and the literature, there are many reasons people become homeless. A personal tragedy can become a catalyst, triggering a series of bad events, each adding a layer onto the problem. Research conducted by other municipalities as well as information shared by the service providers during the consultation illustrates the multiple issues homeless people face and the obstacles they need to overcome. It is apparent that there is not one reason individuals or families become homeless or one pathway into a life on the streets. Rather, homelessness appears to be the result of a cumulative series of risk factors that increase the probability of homelessness. Some of these factors include:

- Poverty.
- Physical limitations, mental illness and addiction.
- Difficult childhood history.
- Time in foster care.
- Family conflict.
- Lack of supportive relationships.
- Lack of education.

“I went to a variety of foster care families. It was a horrible experience. For my entire life I have been a pay cheque for someone.” -- Research Participant

None of these factors by themselves or in combination means certain homelessness. However, the higher presence of risk factors increases the probability of homelessness when they are met with a triggering event. Triggering events are those events that cause the loss of housing. These can include:

- Financial crisis.
- Moving for economic or social opportunity.
- Health crisis.
- Family conflict.
- Landlord/roommate conflict.
- Undiagnosed addiction and mental illness.
- Discrimination.
- Crime (either as victim or perpetrator).



Once people lose their housing, they can quickly become trapped in a system of multiple, cumulative barriers that make regaining housing extremely difficult. Following is additional information on a few of these risk factors and triggering events experienced by some residents in Saskatchewan and Saskatoon in particular.

Poverty

Poverty is a big contributor to homelessness. As discussed in the Social Development Report Series (2009), work commissioned by the Canadian Council of Social Development and reported by the Community-University Institute for Social Research, not everyone benefits from a booming economy. Despite improvements in Saskatchewan's economy, there is a growing gap between the rich and the poor (Social Policy Research Unit, 2006). There are pockets of high poverty in Saskatoon (Diamantopoulos & Findlay, 2007). And the "working poor" struggle to support their families as the costs of living rise. In particular, the increases in housing costs have made it more difficult for residents to become homeowners (National Food Bank, 2007), while at the same time rent increases and the conversions of rental units to condominiums further impact the living costs for those who rent their dwellings.

Relative to most provinces in Canada, a large proportion of Saskatchewan's population is of Aboriginal descent. In 2006, Statistics Canada estimated that 141,890 Saskatchewan residents – 14.9% of the provincial population – were of Aboriginal origin (Statistics Canada, 2006). And research indicates that Aboriginal people are particularly vulnerable to poverty. In 2001, the Social Policy Research Unit reported that Aboriginal people were almost four times more likely to experience poverty than the general population in Saskatchewan (SPRU, 2006).

Additional statistics (Regina Food Bank, 2010) concerning poverty in Saskatchewan are as follows:

- Saskatchewan's (2006) overall poverty rate is 15.3% — affecting 140,000 people.
- Saskatchewan has the third highest provincial child poverty rate in Canada.
- In 2007, there were 35,000 children under age 18 living beneath the poverty line (before-tax Low Income Cut-off) in Saskatchewan.
- 45% of Aboriginal children in Saskatchewan live in low-income families.
- The poorest in Saskatchewan are children living in female single-parent families, with a poverty rate of 47.5% (19,000).
- Lower income earnings are particularly acute for Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis people, women, seniors, people with disabilities, recent immigrants, and racialized or marginalized groups.

“As an outreach worker we would go into people’s homes and it would break your heart to see the conditions the children were living in. You just want to do something.” -- Focus Group Participant



In terms of changes in the cost of living (Regina Food Bank, 2010), following are additional observations:

- Food prices rose 6% in 2009, compared to the core inflation rate of 1%. Prices for dairy products rose 6.6% and for vegetables rose 8.3%.
- Moreover, from 2002-2009, all items in the consumer price index (food, shelter, transportation, etc.) increased by 17.5% in Saskatchewan.
- In 2009, Saskatoon's average rent increased 8.3% — the second highest increase in Canada. Today, the average rent in Saskatoon for a 2 bedroom apartment is \$934.

The total amount of after-tax income available to a single mother (aged 31-50) with a child (age 9-12) on SAP is \$1611 (Regina Food Bank, 2010). With the average rent of a two bedroom suite in Saskatoon costing \$934, a single mother with a child on SAP would be spending approximately 58% of their monthly income on shelter.

The situation for a single mother working full-time at \$9.25/hr is slightly better however this is still higher than the 30% figure which is used to measure affordability. Total after-tax income for a minimum wage earner who is a single mother (aged 31-50) with a child between the ages of 9 and 12 is \$2303. If this individual were living in a 2 bedroom apartment, they would be spending approximately 41% of their monthly income on shelter.

Source of Income	SAP (Social Assistance Program)	TEA (Transitional Employment Allowance)	Minimum Wage
Basic Allowance	\$255	853	1443
Shelter Allowance	\$598	--	--
Utilities	\$148	164	--
Pre-Employment Allowance	--	20	--
Deductions	--		(82)
Total Income	\$1001	\$1037	\$1,361
Other Resources			
Canada Child Tax Benefit	112	112	112
CCTB (3 rd + Child Supplement)	--	--	--
National Child Benefit Supplement	173	173	173
Universal Child Care Benefit (< age 6)	--	--	--
Family Shelter Supplement	256	256	256
Saskatchewan Employment Supplement	--	--	250
SES Under 13 Supplement	--		63
GST Credit	\$51	\$51	\$52
PST Credit	\$18	\$18	\$36

Total Income/Other Sources	\$1611	\$1647	\$2303
Expenses			
Rent (2 Bedroom)	\$934	\$934	\$934
Remaining Funds	677	713	\$1369
% of income spent on rent	58%	56%	41%

Please note that the rates were that which was current at the time of this report.

Moving for economic or social opportunity

It's the 'low-income – homelessness' vicious circle: without a permanent address, people can't access income support benefits; without money, they can't get a home. For some, getting that job doesn't help either: if they make enough to afford rent in Saskatoon, they still can't pull together first and last month's rent and a damage deposit. Outreach workers struggle with what they refer to as inadequate services for people in need of income support.

They cite navigational challenges: people looking for help must deal with the bureaucracy issues. Examples were cited whereby the homeless have to wait by the telephone to get the OK from their case worker that they can stay at the shelter another night. This impedes them from getting a job and worrying about anything else other than a place to sleep for that upcoming night. Furthermore it was mentioned how difficult it is to get a guarantee letter which states the damage deposit will be taken care of by social services. Landlords will not wait for the applicant to get their letter and even if the applicant gets a hold of the case worker and manages to get a rush put on getting the letter, it is often too late.

Financial crisis: affordable housing

The average rent price in Saskatoon is \$934 for a 2 bedroom apartment. In terms of rental units, a combination of very little new rental housing being built in the past decade, rooming houses and older hotels being torn down, and a high number of rental units being converted to condos, means that the stock of rental units has shrunk significantly and costs have increased.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation conducted a survey of private apartment rental projects in October 2010, which found the average vacancy rate in the CMA to be 2.6 per cent, a 0.7 percentage point advance from a 1.9 percent vacancy rate recorded during the October 2009 survey. According to CMHC, a number of competing factors contributed to the increase in the vacancy rate. There had been

Average Apartment Rents in Saskatoon Census Metropolitan Area by Bedroom Type (2008 – 2010)

Bachelor		
Oct-08	Oct-09	Oct-10
518	568	599
1 Bedroom		
Oct-08	Oct-09	Oct-10
675	739	765
2 Bedroom		
Oct-08	Oct-09	Oct-10
841	907	934
3 Bedroom		
Oct-08	Oct-09	Oct-10
860	918	959

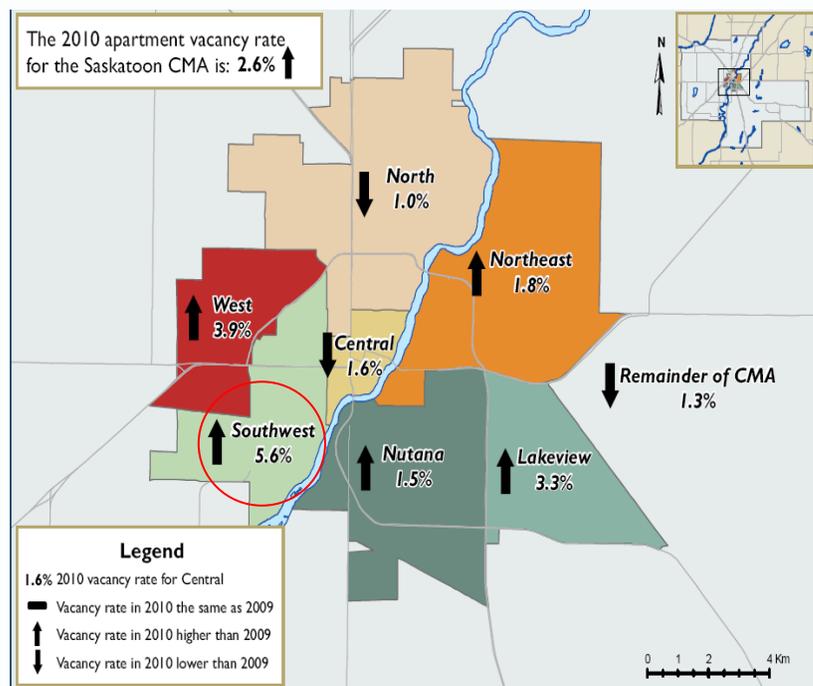
movement of renters to homeownership due to a slower pace of increase in house prices coupled with near historically low mortgage rates.

As mentioned by the focus group participants, the Southwest zone (core neighbourhood areas) has the highest vacancy rate in the city as it contains the highest proportion of older structures. This area of the city continues to attract low-income households, as rents here tend to be the lowest in the city.

Over the past year there had been no new additions to Saskatoon’s private rental stock in the form of rental project completions. In fact, the Saskatoon private rental universe declined by 120 units between 2009 and 2010. As a result, the CMHC is forecasting a slight decline in the average apartment vacancy rate to 2.1 per cent in October 2011. In 2010 and 2011, employment gains are forecast so this will draw in substantial numbers of migrants which will mean low vacancy rates over the forecast period. In addition, going forward, rising prices of both new and resale homes will inhibit some renter households from moving to homeownership. Although rentals are coming from the secondary rental market via condominium investments, these are frequently at prices (due to the higher mortgages) beyond the scope of many residents. One thing to note however is that funding has been allocated for 1,000 new purpose built market rental units under the City of Saskatoon's Rental Land Cost Rebate Program (see page 24). Most of these units are now under construction and 464 units are scheduled to be complete by the end of 2011.

As a result of increased competition from condominium rental units and in order to counter the draw toward homeownership, property owners are expected to temper the pace of rent increases in 2011. Next year, CMHC predicts a \$16 increase in monthly rent which will bring the two-bedroom average apartment rent in the Saskatoon CMA to \$950.

In terms of purchasing, it is estimated by the Saskatoon Real Estate Association that the average price of a home is \$295,768. In 2010, 2,381 homes broke ground across the Saskatoon Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), marking a 67 per cent increase from the 1,428 units that began construction in 2009.



Physical limitations, mental illness and addictions

The deinstitutionalization of people requiring mental health treatment began years ago across North America, but started to have a significant effect in Saskatchewan in the early 1990s, as more psychiatric patients were released from facilities. The plan was for community based mental health service providers to take over; however, there were a number of people with mental illnesses now living on our streets. Without consistent treatment, many stop taking medications, which can cause a downward spiral. Addictions, such as substance abuse and gambling, are also considerable factors in the homelessness equation.

During the consultations with service providers many noted that they are seeing an increase in the number of people with addictions. It was mentioned that the incidence of drugs such as IV drug use, heroin, prescription medications and cocaine are more prevalent than has been historically. The increasing prevalence of IV drug use has also impacted the incidence of AIDS and HIV in Saskatoon.

Between Nov. 1, 1985, and Dec. 31, 2008, there were 64,679 reported cases of HIV in Canada. While most provinces and territories have had a stable, or declining, rate of positive HIV test reports since 2002, Saskatchewan has seen a steady increase. Between 2004 and 2007, there was an average increase of 24 new cases of HIV per year. In 2008, there was an increase of 50 cases from 2007 (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2008).

A needle in Optimist Park in Saskatoon



Number of positive HIV test reports by province/territory and year of test (all ages)

Province/territory	Year of test							Total	
	1985-2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	n	%
British Columbia	11,005	409	441	400	361	391	358	13,365	19.8
Yukon	36	4	4	1	2	0	2	49	0.1
Alberta	3,832	160	172	175	222	218	210	4,989	7.4
Northwest Territories	35	1	1	3	2	4	0	46	0.1
Nunavut ²	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	0.0
Saskatchewan	425	40	54	78	102	124	174	997	1.5
Manitoba	986	109	104	114	80	80	88	1,561	2.3
Ontario	23,050	1,103	1,176	1,121	1,147	1,068	1,120	29,785	44.2
Quebec ³	11,783	615	527	567	584	536	649	15,261	22.6
New Brunswick	322	10	6	7	14	13	8	380	0.6
Nova Scotia	589	19	33	22	23	18	10	714	1.0
Prince Edward Island	33	0	3	0	5	0	1	42	0.1
Newfoundland and Labrador	212	11	9	8	7	0	3	250	0.4
Total^{4,5}	52,309	2,482	2,530	2,496	2,550	2,452	2,623	67,442	100.0

In 2010, researchers in Saskatoon examined the reasons behind the growing HIV/AIDS infections by administering a survey to injection drug users and sex trade workers who have not tested positive for HIV. The research, an element of the Saskatoon HIV/AIDS Reduction (of harm) Program, was aimed at determining why HIV is spreading at a fast rate in the city. The surveys -- which took place between April 2009 and April 2010 -- included respondents found at four different sites in Saskatoon. A separate group of 159 people who have tested positive for HIV also filled out the same survey.

The researchers examined the data collected, and one of the findings that caught their attention was the high number of respondents who experienced severely traumatic events in their lives. Furthermore, many of those who have HIV and who are at risk of contracting HIV are dealing with addictions that make treatment difficult and many are homeless (according to this study [33% of those living in lifestyles that are risk of getting HIV/AIDS are homeless](#)). For those that already have HIV/AIDS, being homeless means worrying about where their next meal and shelter is going to be let alone getting appropriate health care treatment.

Given that many people with or at risk of HIV/AIDS represent a significant number of homeless people in Saskatoon, the SHARP survey can be seen as reflective of a number of homeless people in Saskatoon. Following illustrates the prevalence and complexity of those who are at risk of getting AIDS/HIV (many of which are homeless) according to the survey:

- Physical assault by adult partner 58%
- Physical assault by someone other than adult partner 58%
- Physical assault as a child 64%
- Seeing family members assaulted when you were growing up 81%
- Sexual assault during adult life 36%
- Sexual assault as a child 51%
- Seeing someone physically assaulted or abused 79%
- Seeing someone seriously injured or violently killed 57%
- Losing a child through death 29%
- Death/permanent separation from parent/parent figure before age of 18 48%
- Death of adult partner 51%
- Attended a residential school 32%
- Had a parent/grandparent who attended residential school 65%

In this study, reference was made by the participants to their desire to commit crimes in order to access the justice system so they would have a place to sleep. Also HIV is hitting Aboriginal people disproportionately hard. Most of the respondents to the survey (87 per cent) were identified as Aboriginal.

Family conflict: Abuse and Family Violence

Research also shows that individuals and families who experience homelessness often have histories of family violence, particularly in the case of women and children (Shinn, 1999). Isolation is a problem; abusers cut off communication with family or community support networks and victims have little or no access to family finances. If shelters are not available, victims are often forced to choose between staying in a violent situation or escaping to the relative safety of the streets.

Discrimination

During the public consultations leading to the development of this Plan, participants shared information on discrimination on the part of some landlords. The discrimination was on multiple levels and included:

- Not wanting to rent out places to those on social assistance;
- Not wanting to rent out places to those who are aboriginal;
- Not wanting to rent out places to those who are a visible minority; and
- Not wanting to rent to a single mother.

This was mentioned by many of the research participants including those who were victims of the discrimination as well as the service providers that were assisting them. The service providers shared information of clients being turned away from apartments which were available, when the landlord saw the client wasn't Caucasian. In addition, those seeking rental accommodations indicated they have been charged "viewing fees" from landlords so as to "weed out" those who are on social assistance.

Case Study – Success Story in Saskatoon

For as long as I can remember my childhood consisted of being in and out of foster care. My mother was not able to keep clean long enough to continually take care of me and my older brother Cody. Although I wanted to live with my mother it was hard because of the alcohol and drug abuse. I did not know who my father was when I was growing up. At the age of 13 I began to get into the life of drugs, gangs, and parties. By the time I was 14 I already had criminal charges. I knew that this was not how I wanted to live my life, but I didn't know how to make positive changes for myself. So I continued down this road and ended up in jail.

On March 9 2007 Don Meikle and Egadz Operation Help came to me with a way out. They offered me a place to live and support to living a healthy lifestyle. When I first began living in the My Home it was difficult because there was now people in my life that cared and pushed me to succeed. Wanting to make a change, but still battling with my past made me continue to runaway and end up in jail. When I finally made a decision to accept the My Home as “my home” and my family I was able to begin a new life. Over the past 5 years of being in the home I have developed skills that made me the person I am today.

I am a successful parent to a 2 year old boy. I am taking classes at Nutana Collegiate, and will be taking a construction course. I am involved in groups that are helping me deal with my childhood so that I am able to move forward in a positive way. I have no longer a criminal record and I am not in any type of the street life. I want to thank the positive people in my life from the My Homes and Egadz for providing a healthy home for me and my child, and helping me get through my struggles in life so that I can continue to work on the person I want to be.

-Ashayla B – Age 19

Egadz “MyHome” in Saskatoon





The Cost of Homelessness

THE COST

Unfortunately there has not been an analysis of the cost of homelessness in Saskatoon; however, there have been many studies conducted in other centres. According to the Edmonton Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness, a variety of U.S. studies estimate the cost of chronic homelessness, for one person over one year, ranges from \$35,000 to \$150,000. The same studies show the cost of providing housing and supports for that same person ranges between \$13,000 and \$25,000 per year (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness). The Calgary Homeless Foundation estimates that one person experiencing homelessness for one year costs taxpayers on average \$94,000. Providing that same person with housing and the most intensive supports and services, costs on average \$30,000 to \$35,000 per year (Calgary's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness, 2008).

Homelessness means more time in hospital, more calls for emergency medical services, and more costs associated with the justice system. Most research into the cost of homelessness focuses on the sub-population of people with severe addictions and/or mental illness. These tend to be the chronically homeless. While this group typically represents between 10 and 30% of the overall homeless population, the chronically homeless consume upwards of 50% of the resources attributed to homelessness (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness). Without proper access to primary health services, people experiencing homelessness rely instead on emergency and acute care health services.

People experiencing chronic homelessness also tend to cycle through a range of emergency and institutional facilities. Overall costs tend to be significantly higher for institutional responses than is the case for community/residentially based options, even when a fairly high level of service is provided in the latter. According to the Edmonton Report, institutional users often incur daily costs well in excess of \$200/day and, depending on facility, can reach as high as \$600/day. Emergency services also tend to involve higher costs than the community/residentially based options. In Edmonton, a homeless person admitted to hospital (from September 1/07 – August 31/08) spent on average 28 days in hospital compared to 9 days for the general population. One day in hospital costs approximately \$1,400.

Because there is no price tag at the end, and no one gets an invoice, it's really lost on how expensive it is to have someone go through all the systems- the justice system, the health system, and running up bills or costs that aren't unnecessary, but in some cases could be avoided or dealt with in a different way.

Studies across Canada have shown that institutional responses (detention, prison, psychiatric hospitals) for a person experiencing homelessness cost taxpayers between \$66,000 and \$120,000 each year. Emergency shelter costs average between \$13,000 and \$42,000 per person, per year. The price of supportive housing for that person would be between \$35,000 and \$40,000 per year (Pomeroy, 2005).

Equally important is the human cost of homelessness. The growth of the homeless population translates into an increasingly large 'underclass'. It represents a loss in the city's potential labour force.



The Current Housing Reality

HOUSING IN SASKATOON: THE CURRENT REALITY

Continuum of Housing

Housing needs can be described on a continuum. At one end are those individuals and families experiencing absolute homelessness.

At the other end are those individuals and families who are able to meet their housing needs without assistance. In the middle is a range of low and moderate-income households, many of whom are living paycheque to paycheque and find it difficult to secure adequate housing.

Housing prices have risen in Saskatoon and affordability has decreased.

Between 2007 and 2008, Saskatoon's housing prices increased by 51.7%, the largest increase in the country. This increase was due to several factors, including the cost of materials and labour as well as high demand for land and a strong housing market. The increase in housing prices is a concern, as wages are not increasing at the same rate, leading to lower housing affordability. At the same time, the average rent has increased more than the national average. Vacancy rates have been below 2% for the last three years (recently this increased to 2.6%).



Core Housing Need

The population most at risk of becoming homeless is comprised of households experiencing the effects of poverty in Saskatoon. Due to economic pressures, approximately 34,000 individuals have been identified as being “at risk of homelessness” or living in unaffordable or unacceptable housing. To determine this statistic, multiple data sources were reviewed. First, CMHC data based on the 2006 Census indicated that 8.5% of residents were in core housing need (2% of owners and 6.5% of renters were in core housing need with the main issue relating to affordability). Statistics Canada estimated that 8,515 families in Saskatoon were in core housing need. At this time, the average house price was \$160,547 and the median income of families was \$65,748 and individuals were \$20,333. The price to income ratio for purchasing was about 2.4 in 2006 using the income of families number. The average rent in 2006 was \$608 for a 2 bedroom apartment. It is estimated by the Saskatoon Real Estate Association that the average price of a home is \$295,768 (Saskatoon Real Estate Association). The average rent price is now \$934 for a 2 bedroom apartment.

According to Statistics Canada the median income for 2008 was 79,500 for a household of 2 or more people and 24,400 for single households. This means that rent has increased by 53% and income at the household level with 2 or more persons by 21% and in a single household by 20%. The difference between the rent increase and that of median income levels is approximately 33% or only 40% of the difference in rent is covered by raising income levels. As such one would assume that those in core housing risk would be at least 60% higher than was recorded in 2006. This would mean that those estimated to be in core housing need is 13.6% or approximately 34,312 households (assumes number of households are presently 100,919 vs. 91,190 in 2006).

City of Saskatoon Housing Initiatives

During the public consultations, the participants commented on the City of Saskatoon’s efforts made at increasing the supply of affordable housing, both rental and entry-level ownership. In 2007, the City adopted a Housing Business Plan to achieve a target of 500 affordable dwelling units annually. This plan encourages support and partnership with other agencies – financial institutions, developers, investors and faith-based providers to achieve the targets. Programs the City offers includes:

- Equity building program assists households with incomes between \$44,500 and \$70,000 with the purchase of an entry level home. Eligible households receive a down payment loan for 5% of the purchase price which must be re-paid over a five year period. Homebuyers must be currently renting in Saskatoon and can purchase any home in the city that is priced between \$180,000 and \$280,000. The Equity Building Program is offered in partnership with Affinity Credit Union.
- The City of Saskatoon, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation have created the Mortgage Flexibilities Support Program to increase affordable homeownership opportunities in Saskatoon. With a 5% down payment grant from the City of Saskatoon and mortgage loan insurance from CMHC or Genworth Financial, qualified homebuyers can purchase of a new home. Private homebuilders provide new units that can be sold at prices that households with incomes below the Maximum Income Limits can afford. Total household income of the buyer must meet the provincial Maximum Income Limits: Singles and Couples - \$44,500, Families with Dependents - \$52,000.
- An affordable housing reserve whereby the City provides a contribution of 10% of the capital cost to social housing projects. Since 1987, The reserve has paid or committed funding for the creation of over 2,400 housing units, including



The Lighthouse Supported Living Expansion, 227 – 20th St. E.



Affordable Rental Housing, 806 Bedford Rd

social (public) housing, private sector market affordable housing, and new homeowner co-operatives.

- Land Pre-designation program whereby the City identifies sites in new City-owned neighbourhoods for housing that can be provided at low price points for affordable and entry-level ownership opportunities. Once identified, these sites are made available to housing providers through a Request for Proposals (RFPs) process.
- Any affordable rental project that is provided on a non-profit basis is eligible to receive a 5-year abatement of the incremental increase in property taxes.
- New Zoning District for Entry-level and Affordable Housing whereby the City has created a new zoning district designed specifically for entry-level and affordable housing. This district may be applied in both new and existing neighbourhoods, and includes provisions for higher density that can reduce the cost per unit.
- Permit applications for affordable housing projects benefit from a priority review process which means that the reviewing branches and departments review these applications first.
- To encourage the creation of new and the legalizing of existing secondary suites, the City rebates permit fees for building, plumbing, and development permits as well as a portion of the Legalizing an Existing Suite (LES) Occupancy Permit fee (50% in 2011, and 25% in 2012). The City's permit rebates complement the HomeFirst Secondary Suites Program offered by Saskatchewan Housing Corporation. Home owners who build or renovate a secondary suite are eligible to apply for a forgivable loan of 50% of construction costs up to \$24,000.
- The City of Saskatoon's Rental Rebate Program provides a \$5,000 per unit cash grant and a five year incremental property tax abatement for the construction of purpose built, multi-unit rental housing. The units must stay in the rental market for a minimum of 15 years. Funding was set aside for 1,000 units from 2008 -2012 which has been fully allocated. Additional funding, may be allocated to this program in 2011.

In the 2011 City of Saskatoon Business Plan, it was stated that based on sharp cost increases for both land (+95%) and construction costs (101%) has eroded the ability to reach 500 units per year. With funding of \$2.5 Million fixed to the end of 2012, it is estimated that the Housing Plan will achieve approximately 365 units per year.

In addition to building affordable housing, long term operating costs and safety have also been important considerations. Substandard housing can lead to safety issues such as fires and mould. The City is constructing new housing in the Pleasant Hill Village project to Energy Star standards, and some units will include solar electric and solar thermal hot water systems.

Efforts, including the programs described above have increased home ownership among those who may have not have been able to do so without such programs. However, there are still those residents who may never be able to nor want to own their own homes and the new neighborhoods lack affordable and rental housing. Rental housing is found in many of the city's neighborhoods,

with the heaviest concentrations located downtown and near the university. However, there is generally a lack of rental housing in the newest neighborhoods. The strong market for ownership housing in the past decade and the recent escalation of house prices have made these neighborhoods among the least affordable in the city and, as a result, the least diverse economically and socially.



Re-used McNab Park Housing sold through the Mortgage Flexibilities Support Program, 209 Camponi Place

Saskatchewan Housing Corporation

On August 8, 2011 the Government of Saskatchewan released *A Strong Foundation – The Housing Strategy for Saskatchewan*, along with a *2011-2012 Provincial Action Plan*, which outlines the government’s key activities for the strategy’s first year of implementation.

This strategy involves the entire housing sector and promotes a housing environment where all Saskatchewan people have access to homes that enhance their well-being, build local communities and contribute to a growing province.

In March and April 2011, the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation (SHC) held consultations with over 350 housing stakeholders throughout the province in order to develop tangible solutions to the housing issues facing Saskatchewan. As a direct result of what was heard at consultations, the result was five broad strategic priorities:

1. Increase the housing supply;
2. Improve housing affordability;
3. Support individuals and families in greatest housing need;
4. Enhance strategic planning for housing; and
5. Collaborate, communicate and educate.

Across the province, housing experts stated that every member of the housing sector has a role in providing housing solutions. The strategy is intended to serve as a roadmap to work together. Under each priority with the strategy are objectives and examples of what action can be taken to reach those objectives. It is anticipated that the housing sector will see themselves within these objectives and potential actions and be motivated to make the difference needed to build a strong housing environment in Saskatchewan.

Specifically as it relates to homelessness, the strategy identifies a growing need for supports for individuals and families who face the greatest housing need. As a result, the strategy aims to: identify and address gaps in housing supports and services; provide the appropriate response for the issue at hand; develop partnerships to co-ordination of housing and support services; link housing programs with other social programs; and create housing first approaches for those who are homeless.



Public Consultation Outcomes

PUBLIC CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

Through the consultation process, there were a number of issues identified. Below is a brief description of the public consultations that were conducted during the course of this study, followed by the issues that were identified by the research participants.

The study began in November 2010 and was complete in March 2011. During this time a number of activities were undertaken to solicit input from stakeholders throughout the housing continuum including:

√ In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with 24 stakeholders, majority of which were conducted in person. The participants during this phase included a variety of service providers involved in emergency, transitional and supportive housing. It also included builders/developers, other researchers and those knowledgeable in setting up housing first initiatives in other municipalities.

√ An Online Bulletin Board

An online bulletin board was created and available for 30 days. Questions regarding homelessness and housing were posted on the online bulletin board. Participants were invited via email to participate. Participants included housing and support service providers. In total 19 agencies took part in the online bulletin board.

√ Focus Groups

In total 9 focus groups were conducted with a variety of participants. The focus groups included:

- A general public focus group
- 1 focus group with at risk youth (at risk or have experienced homelessness)
- 2 focus groups with homeless individuals
- 5 focus groups with service providers (housing and support)

√ General Population Survey

To gauge the level of knowledge and comprehension of housing and homeless issues, the general public was surveyed regarding their perceptions of homelessness in their community. Over 1,200 Saskatchewan residents participated in the study (including 400 of which were in Saskatoon). The findings of the report can be reviewed on the Saskatoon Housing Initiative Partnership website: <http://www.saskatoonhousingpartners.com/uploads/Public%20Perceptions%20of%20Homelessness%20Dec%202010.pdf>

√ Provider Survey

To confirm the number of beds/units for the emergency, transitional and supportive housing stock, providers were contacted to determine and/or confirm the number of beds/units they currently

provided. In the cases where we were unable to speak to the appropriate person, website searches were utilized and where possible numbers confirmed with Service Canada.

Following are the issues identified through the consultation process and categorized in the areas of:

- Saskatoon Emergency Shelters
- Saskatoon Transitional Housing
- Knowledge Sharing and Research
- Housing First
- Youth
- Affordable Housing.
- Policy

Saskatoon Emergency Shelters

Capacity

According to the shelter providers, demand for shelters is running at 120-130% capacity. There are not enough emergency shelter beds in Saskatoon. According to one shelter, more and more people can't pay rent and they are seeing a lot of "working homeless". A significant proportion of their clientele are going to school and/or working and are creating a bottleneck at emergency shelters.

Presence of Immigrants

There have been increasing numbers of immigrants and refugees visiting the shelters. The number of immigrants to Saskatoon has increased significantly in recent years from 3,002 in 2004 to 5,416 in 2008. According to shelter providers, there was a surge during the summer months in 2010. The recent increasing numbers of immigrants has further complicated service delivery at the shelters due to cultural differences and language barriers.

Damp or Wet House

Consultation with the service providers revealed that many providers would like Saskatoon to examine the concept of providing temporary shelter for people under the influence of drugs and alcohol. The emergency shelters that currently offer temporary shelter have policies that restrict the admission to anyone who is intoxicated or under the influence of drugs stay at their facility. This is a policy the shelters have adopted because in many cases, allowing people who are under the influence to mix with others battling an addiction is

"We need to take a harm reduction approach and care for those in society regardless of their behaviours. We need to have a tolerant and friendly place where people can go and relapse rather than be relapsing on the streets. This would be a place where people care and we can provide both housing and healthcare. The police station is not the appropriate place to deal with these issues." -- Research Participant

counterproductive. However, these people who are under the influence still need a place to stay and using a harm reduction approach requires that housing be available .

Harm reduction is a philosophy of public health, intended to be a progressive alternative to the prohibition of certain potentially dangerous substances and generally involves a reduction in dosage. Harm reduction, based on the premise that reducing the amount of alcohol/drugs used by individuals or changing the way in which they are used, may be a more effective strategy than the promotion of complete abstinence. With the escalating prevalence of drugs and alcohol, the Brief Detox Center in Saskatoon is full most of the time. The Brief Detox Center has regular users who use the center after relapsing. Having a damp shelter where those who are under the influence can stay would help those who are battling addictions and may have relapsed. It would also enable the formation of formal program to have individuals go from the damp shelter to longer-term housing and/or supports for addictions treatment rather than just end back on the street.

Another option presented was the concept of a wet house whereby facilities allow alcohol on premises (in managed doses or in specific areas). Wet houses are meant to accommodate people who have complex behaviours and requirements and would otherwise avoid accessing a shelter or similar service, generally because they would have to relinquish their alcohol.

Free Shelter

For some, being on social assistance is embarrassing and they would rather choose to “live off the grid”. It was felt that having the option of a free shelter or mat service where one can go without having to be on social assistance would benefit this group. A mat program could be held at schools, churches or basically any building in which heat is supplied throughout the night.

Central Intake

Characteristics of clientele at the emergency shelters have changed and continue to change. The increased presence of drugs and alcohol and mental illness has made the provision of shelter more challenging than ever. Having the appropriate supports for those addicted or suffering a mental illness is critical to assisting these people with complex needs. Development of common assessment measures and a central intake to guide clients to the most appropriate resource is beneficial. It was suggested that this service should be open 24/7 and available when needed by the homeless. Homelessness does not just occur during standard business hours; therefore it should be available when required by the person facing a possible homeless situation.

Family Emergency & Transitional Facilities

With increases in the number of working poor, families need to be treated as a whole unit rather than broken up between shelters. The need for the development of a shelter that takes in whole families (including men) was expressed.

Emergency Center for Men and Children

During the consultation, shelters mentioned noticing an increasing number of men with children. Emphasis had been in prior years to ensure that emergency spaces were available for women with children. Currently, there are no places for men with children to go. The community expressed the need for a shelter where fathers can stay with their children.

Saskatoon Transitional Housing

Transitional Housing with Supports

The issues homeless people are facing are complex and multiple. There is a need for increased counselling supports in a variety of areas including addictions, prior abuse/physical assaults, family breakdown, as well as increasing knowledge and training on the basic social and life skills (including budgeting; nutrition; cooking skills; parenting skills; responsibilities of being a good tenant; financial literacy, and finding employment). In terms of waits lists, each provider interviewed indicated they had significant wait lists for their services with some up to 2 years in length.

Increased Health Services

As mentioned, mental health and/or addictions issues are common to many of those who are homeless. Many service providers commented that mental health and addictions services are vastly inadequate and need significantly increased resources. In addition, cognitive disabilities and behavioural challenged persons (e.g. those suffering with FAS and acquired brain injury) need supportive assistance as they do not necessarily fall under the traditional mental health umbrella.

Location of Transitional Housing

In focus groups, homeless individuals indicated that people recovering from addictions did not want to go back to their old neighbourhoods for fear of relapsing and going back to their drug use. As such it was felt that transitional housing designed to assist people needs to have the supports present and should be located in areas other than the city core.

Also during focus groups, participants from the general public and service providers discussed the resulting segregation of the city into an “east side” and a “west side”. The existing funding amounts from government to community based agencies that offer affordable rentals pushes these organizations into purchasing lots and/or buildings in the core where the costs of ownership are much lower. This then results in the city being

“To make a change with a person means having people that are recovering from addictions not be placed in areas of the city where drugs are prevalent.” -- Research Participant

“ghettoized”. It was mentioned that the city is trying to rejuvenate the core but these areas are still not desired places to live by those trying to fight an addiction or as a safe place to raise a family.

Family Transitional Facilities

With increases in the number of working poor, families need to be treated as a whole unit rather than broken up between facilities. Just as is the case with emergency shelters, development of transitional facilities that accommodates whole families (including men) is needed.

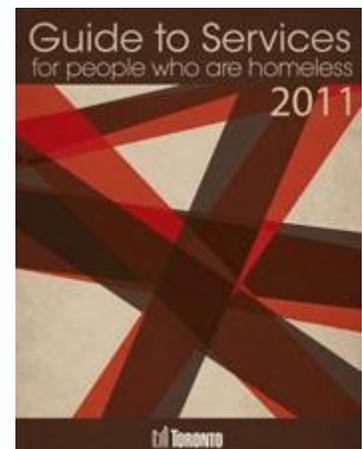
Unit size needs to be increased

Unit sizes were also a concern among the service providers. When confronted with taking in a family of 5 or more people, most providers do not have suitable space. There is a need for both emergency and transitional units to be developed to accommodate these larger families seeking assistance.

Knowledge Sharing and Research

Directory of Support Services (including Housing Options)

Focus groups with the providers as well as with the homeless themselves indicated there needs to be an easy, unthreatening way to access information and resources for those that are homeless or at risk of being homeless. What is required is a listing of support services available to people facing homelessness (and this could include those services that supply essentials such as food, showers, etc.). In addition, a full listing of housing options would also be beneficial. An example located through the secondary research was that produced by the City of Toronto: <http://www.toronto.ca/housing/guide.htm>.



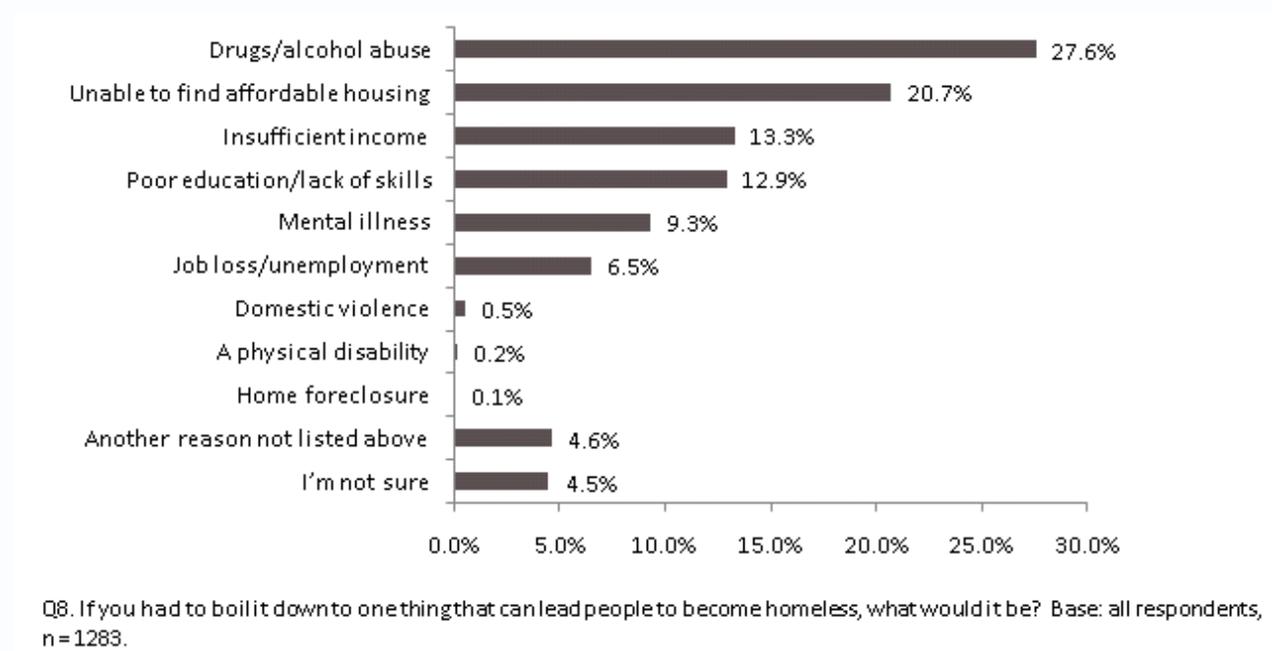
Hidden Homeless Count – During the focus groups with homeless individuals, it was apparent that stacking/overcrowding is prevalent. In addition, many women are taking up sexual relations with men in order to have a safe place to sleep. It is these stories that reveal the extent of our hidden homelessness is likely great and not currently estimated or measured. Service providers indicated that there may be measurement tools that have been used in other centers that could be applied here to try to grapple with what this number is. With the colder temperatures we have in Saskatchewan, it is likely that we have a greater hidden homelessness issue than we anticipate.

Increased Communication

There are a lot of passionate people and organizations in Saskatoon ready to assist on the issue of homelessness. However, there is a need for more information among all agencies involved in housing and assisting the homeless (or at risk of homelessness) to better understand efforts being

made by the community. During the consultations it was apparent that those involved in the sector did not have a complete understanding of what each other was doing. This is less prevalent among many of the shelter organizations as they regularly communicate and refer clients. However there are advocacy groups and some involved at the emergency and transitional housing levels that are not aware of initiatives underway or being considered. Consultations suggest that it would be beneficial to have these agencies better understand where the community as a whole is heading in ending homelessness. The directory mentioned earlier may also be helpful. One participant mentioned the need for a 211 system to enhance communication among providers.

Need to Increase Public Awareness – The survey of the general public as well as the focus groups revealed misconceptions the general public has regarding the homeless. However, at the same time it revealed a high level of knowledge regarding the city’s housing issues. Following are the results to the general population survey (a component of this project) as to the primary reason people are homeless:



The general public believes drugs and alcohol abuse are the primary causes of homelessness. Although affordable housing and insufficient income were among the top reasons, the primary reason was credited to drugs and alcohol.

Furthermore, when conducting the focus groups, participants mentioned they did not know where the homeless stayed in the winter time. As one participant mentioned “Well they don’t stay outside now, (i.e. January) do they?”

Overall the public understands rising house prices (as many of them are, or may know someone being impacted by the rising prices – e.g. can’t get into the home buyers market) likely have had an

impact on why people are homeless, however the knowledge level of the general public on homeless is not very extensive.

In terms of possible solutions, service providers indicated that there could be campaigns on the issue of homelessness in Saskatoon to draw attention to the true plight of homeless individuals in Saskatoon; encouraging private sector involvement at the Community Advisory Board level to further engage the community; and advertising/distributing success stories and case studies to show how organizations in the community have made a difference. Increased public awareness could mean more dollars and interest from the private sector.

Homeless Count – During the consultations, a number of participants mentioned we need to understand how many homeless people there are in Saskatoon. Although the count was completed in 2008, anecdotally, service providers believe it is too low. Comparing the counts to that completed in other municipalities, it is likely that due to some of the study limitations, the number of homeless people counted is lower than actual. It has been suggested that summer would be an appropriate time to perform a count as due to weather reasons this may bring out more of the hidden homeless. It was also suggested that perhaps the count could be done a couple times during the year to measure the difference between two points and time. It was felt that this may give a more accurate count of the homeless in Saskatoon.

Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) – HIFIS is used by the majority of emergency and transitional service providers. However, those agencies that work with women that are victims of domestic abuse have yet to fully integrate HIFIS into their operations. In addition there are still some emergency and transitional providers that are not fully using HIFIS. Additional training on the use and benefits of HIFIS is required to fully transform agencies' data collection activities over to HIFIS.

Housing First

Overwhelmingly, service providers asked that the community examine housing first concepts for Saskatoon. There are multiple programs in other municipalities that follow the housing first model and service providers were very insistent that Saskatoon have a well defined plan to implement housing first in Saskatoon.

Need to look more internationally for Solutions

Comments were raised by a number of participants that Saskatoon needs to look more internationally for solutions to housing and homelessness. Examples included multi-generational mortgages (as done in Europe) as well as Housing First options as done in many municipalities in Canada and throughout the United States.

Housing First Initiatives

There is a strong desire in the community to implement Housing First. Having Housing First in the community was mentioned by the majority of the service providers as being critical to any future homelessness or housing initiatives. In a couple of the focus groups, this was identified as the top priority for the community.

Central Intakes/Service Coordination (Housing First)

Based on the secondary research conducted, it was revealed that a version of Housing First is being implemented in other smaller centres including Medicine Hat, Lethbridge and Red Deer. As an example, Medicine Hat has recently set up a central intake. At the central intake, the workers initially try first to divert the visitor from homelessness. If that is not possible, they then try to prevent it from occurring. If that is not possible, they then determine the best case management approach to help the visitor stay housed or to get housed. Who is responsible for the central intake can be different in different communities. In some communities it is a shelter, in others communities it is a separate non-profit organization.

Increase in Drug Use and Mental Illness

As mentioned previously, service providers indicated they have noticed a large increase in the incidence of drugs and mental illness in the city. In many cases the drug use has brought about the mental illness and in other cases, drugs are used as a coping mechanism for those with a mental illness. This group of homeless or at risk of homelessness individuals can benefit from a Housing First approach by dealing with the addiction and medicating the mental illnesses they are experiencing.

AIDS/HIV Medical and Housing Issues/Hospice Needed/Palliative Care

In consultation with the health service providers, they referred to Saskatoon as the AIDS capital of Canada.

With numbers increasing, health service providers see a need for special housing for those afflicted with AIDS and HIV. With the closure of places like the Barry Hotel, many HIV/AIDS patients have disappeared and no longer receiving their medicine.

It has been requested by service providers that we need to take a harm reduction approach to those with AIDS and HIV. Traditional housing options may be not be enough as they have certain medical conditions that require the use of elevators which may not be available in some conventional rental properties. This group also faces stigma due to having AIDS and HIV.

***“We have people with AIDS and HIV dying under the bridges. They are homeless, some with addiction issues, no place to go, not receiving the medicine they need and not dying with dignity.”
- - Research Participant***

Youth

Increases Services for Youth at Risk

During the consultations, it was mentioned that, more youth are becoming homeless as they are lured here for employment reasons. They arrive here to find they can only earn minimum wage jobs.

In addition, as the population grows so does the number of youth becoming homeless for other reasons (e.g. family breakdown). Youth expressed the need for more emphasis on literacy, employment assistance, emotional support, addictions, to prevent homelessness among this age group.

*“The jobs we are getting pay minimum wage. You can’t live on minimum wage. Anything that pays more than minimum wage is usually only part-time.” - -
Research Participant*

Saskatoon Affordable Housing

Affordable housing in Saskatoon has been a major issue for the past few years as the average price for a new home has increased as well as rental rates.

Affordable Rents

In Canada, housing is considered to be unaffordable if more than 30% of household income is spent on shelter costs. If a household is spending more than 30% of their monthly income on shelter, there is less money left over for other expenses. Affordable rentals are seen as a major issue contributing to homelessness in Saskatoon. Without affordable rentals being available, people cannot move up the continuum resulting in a backlog of people at the emergency shelter and transitional housing level.

Seniors

Seniors have been acknowledged to be at risk of homelessness due to a lack of affordable rental units. Being on a fixed income they are unable to pay market rents and need affordable housing dependent on their income rather than the market’s definition of affordable. In addition, many seniors are facing financial pressures related to increased rents if they are renters, and high costs to stay in their own homes if they are homeowners. Access to services to assist seniors to stay in their own homes is seen as a priority for the community.

Need for more Social Housing

During the focus groups, participants mentioned the importance of social housing. It was stated that there is a role for safe social housing and that for people facing barriers to housing, social housing could be a solution. This would be helpful for those facing housing issues due to poor references, poor credit checks and racism. It would help deal with those situations in which a private landlord may view the person as not a good “risk”. Social housing would enable these

people to build up their reputation as a good tenant and who will then be more willingly accepted in the private market. It was also mentioned that this housing could help those who fall off the “funding cliffs” when it comes to programs for affordable housing.

Cooperative Housing

The model of cooperative housing has decreased over the years with only a few housing facilities still in existence in Saskatoon. This was mentioned by some participants as a great way to expand affordable housing in Saskatoon. This model of housing enables residents to take control of their home and have a say in the functioning of the cooperative. It builds a strong sense of community among those that live in the housing complex and enables them to pay below market rents.

Young families need to be a focus

The City of Saskatoon has made great strides in encouraging home ownership. Participants overwhelmingly agree that Saskatoon has been a leader in encouraging young families to buy their first home. Programs such as the Equity Building Program and the Mortgage Flexibilities Support program need to be encouraged and further expanded to avoid funding cliffs to free up rental stock.

Larger Rooms required for rent

As was mentioned with transitional and emergency housing, larger affordable rental housing needs to be made available. With the increasing immigrant population as well as many people stacking to afford existing rents, there is a requirement for larger rooms to be available for affordable rents. Focus groups with the general population and those homeless (or at risk of being homeless) revealed it is fairly common to find 4-6 people staying in a 2 bedroom apartment so that they can afford the rent.

Policy

Finally, the last barrier in this section deals with issues research participants mentioned from a process perspective. These revolved around bureaucracy and who should be responsible for homelessness in Saskatoon.

Getting in touch with Social Services

It has been mentioned that the social service workers are difficult to get a hold of in a timely manner. This was a concern among both the homeless and the service providers. One of the examples provided was securing a “guarantee letter” for the damage deposit on a rental place.

“People are too concerned about the negative stereotypes of social housing. There is a role for social housing. We don’t need to call it affordable housing.” - - Research Participant

Normally it takes many days to get a copy but if you can contact the case worker you can sometimes get the process expedited. Many times however it is difficult to get a hold of the worker to get the required letter. If the worker is not available, the letter cannot get processed.

Another example of difficulties when contacting the Ministry of Social Services is the hours of operation of the offices. It is on weekends that many rental deals are finalized. Since Social Services is not open on weekends, the client cannot get their guarantee letter which makes it difficult to get a place. As a result they are frequently passed over if another renter is available and can immediately pay the security deposit.

Social Assistance Rates

Another area of concern with the majority of service providers and homeless individuals was the level of social assistance paid to cover shelter and other necessities. As stated in the Provincial Task Force on Housing Affordability (2008), the inadequacy of current shelter benefits is reflected in the growing number of individuals who are appealing current shelter allowance amounts because their rent exceeds the maximum benefit provided by the Ministry of Social Services. Service providers suggest that mechanisms should be explored to ensure that shelter allowances and the rental housing supplement keep pace with housing cost increases. This could be achieved through regular review of shelter rates and the rental housing supplement or indexation of these benefits to the cost of living.

National Housing Strategy

Finally, many participants commented that one of the greatest needs is a national housing strategy. According to many of the service providers, the federal government is viewed as off loading the responsibilities to other levels of government.



Community Priorities, Objectives and Indicators

SASKATOON COMMUNITY PRIORITIES, OBJECTIVES & INDICATORS

Based on the public consultations and literature review a number of priorities and objectives have been set for the community of Saskatoon. Also included are indicators that will be used to measure the success of achieving each priority area. They are as follows:

1 *Address the gap in meeting the housing needs of individuals and/or families with complex behaviours or requirements for those who are homeless.*

Objectives:

- ✓ *To increase spaces for individuals and/or families with complex behaviours or requirements who are homeless.*
- ✓ *To improve accessibility to housing for individuals and/or families with complex behaviours or requirements who are homeless.*

Indicators:

- ✓ *Client Services - Number of individuals who have experienced housing transitions as a result of housing placement/discharge planning.*
- ✓ *Capital Investments - Number of new permanent emergency shelter beds, either in a new facility or added to an existing facility.*
- ✓ *Capital Investments - Number of new transitional housing beds/units, either in a new facility or added to an existing facility.*
- ✓ *Capital Investments - Number of new supportive housing beds/units, either in a new facility or added to an existing facility.*

2 *Increase the number of appropriate transitional housing units with on-going supports for homeless or at risk of homelessness individuals and families.*

Objectives:

- ✓ *To increase the number of appropriate transitional housing units with on-going supports for homeless or at risk of homelessness individuals and families.*
- ✓ *To increase the number of appropriate transitional housing units with varying sizes of units for homeless or at risk of homelessness individuals and families.*

Indicators:

- √ *Client Services - Number of individuals who have experienced housing transitions as a result of housing placement/discharge planning.*
- √ *Capital Investments - Number of new transitional housing beds/units, either in a new facility or added to an existing facility.*

3

Enhance coordination of information among agencies and support initiatives that improve communication around the homeless issue and the services available for the homeless or individuals and families at risk of homelessness.

Objectives:

- √ *To improve communications between organizations about the services they provide for the homeless or individuals and families at risk of homelessness.*
- √ *To improve communications with the homeless or individuals and families at risk of homelessness by expanding information on services and resources available.*

Indicators:

- √ *Coordination and Data Management – Community planning*
- √ *Coordination and Data Management – Local research, knowledge development*
- √ *Coordination and Data Management – Information sharing*
- √ *Coordination and Data Management – Coordination of service provision*

4

Implement elements of the Housing First Concept in Saskatoon.

Objectives:

- √ *To implement key elements of the Housing First concept in Saskatoon including a central intake and common assessment measures.*

Indicators:

- √ *Client Services - Number of individuals who have experienced housing transitions as a result of housing placement/discharge planning.*
- √ *Coordination and Data Management – Partnership and network development*
- √ *Coordination and Data Management – Coordination of service provision*
- √ *Coordination and Data Management – Emergency shelter usage data collection activities (including HIFIS)*

5 *Conduct research that better meets the needs of policy decision makers and those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.*

Objectives:

- √ *To support research to determine the portion of the city's absolute homeless.*
- √ *To support research to determine the portion of the city's population that are hidden homeless.*
- √ *To support the expansion of HIFIS in the community and ensure its sustainability.*

Indicators:

- √ *Coordination and Data Management – Local research, knowledge development*
- √ *Coordination and Data Management – Emergency shelter usage data collection activities (including HIFIS)*
- √ *Coordination and Data Management – Data development*

6 *Increase the number of affordable housing units for individuals and families in Saskatoon.*

Objectives:

- √ *No objective as this is not funded under the HPS. However, the Government of Saskatchewan recently released A Strong Foundation - The Housing Strategy for Saskatchewan, along with a 2011-2012 Provincial Action Plan, which outlines the government's key activities for the strategy's first year of implementation. This strategy is long term and targeted. It is intended to provide direction for all sectors to contribute to a strong housing continuum. The Housing Strategy for Saskatchewan 2011-19 and the 2011-12 Provincial Action Plan can be found at: <http://www.socialservices.gov.sk.ca/housing-strategy>.*

IMPLEMENTING THE COMMUNITY PLAN

The following venues will be used to communicate the Plan document:

- Copies posted to the City of Saskatoon and Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership websites;
- References to the Plan and where to obtain copies provided in newspaper advertising for future Calls For Proposals;
- Copies available to potential applicants at an information session designed to guide them through the application process; and
- Copies distributed to key stakeholders by the Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership.

Human Resources

Currently there is no formal plan for identifying existing human resource assets for implementing the priorities. Many community partners offer skills development in the areas of strategic planning, fundraising, public awareness, media relations, working with volunteers, board governance, etc.

Financial and Non-Financial Resources

Implementing the Saskatoon Community Plan For Homelessness and Housing is the responsibility of all Saskatoon stakeholders whether they be Federal, Provincial or Municipal agencies, non-profit housing or service providers, or private entities or citizens. Some initial effort to identify the financial and non-financial resources upon which the Plan will draw to achieve success towards the articulated goals has been started.



Appendices

APPENDIX A – STUDY METHODOLOGY

The study began in November 2010 and was complete in March 2011. During this time a number of activities were undertaken to solicit input from stakeholders across the housing continuum. Following is a brief description of the activities undertaken by Insightrix during the course of this study.

Literature Review

A detailed literature review was conducted to determine key issues within the housing sector and in Saskatoon in particular. Prior research on housing and homelessness was reviewed. From this literature review, a list of contacts for interviews, focus groups and other research activities was identified. The literature review also identified demographic changes impacting housing and homelessness in Saskatoon.

In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with 24 stakeholders, majority of which were conducted in person. The participants during this phase included a variety of service providers involved in emergency, transitional and supportive housing. It also included builders/developers, other researchers and those knowledgeable in setting up housing first initiatives in other municipalities. Where in-person interviews were conducted, a tour of the facility was also typically provided.

Online Bulletin Board

An online bulletin board was created and available for 30 days. Questions regarding homelessness and housing were posted on the online bulletin board. Participants were invited via email to participate. Participants were able to answer the questions posted as well as respond to others if they desired to do so. Participants included housing and support service providers. In total 19 agencies took part in the online bulletin board.

Focus Groups

In total 9 focus groups were conducted. The focus groups included:

- A general public focus group
- 1 with at risk youth (at risk or have experienced homelessness)
- 2 with homeless individuals at a shelter
- 5 with service providers (housing and support)

General Population Survey

To gauge the level of knowledge and comprehension of housing and homeless issues, the general public was surveyed regarding their perceptions of homelessness in their community. Over 1,200 Saskatchewan residents participated in the study (including 400 of which were in Saskatoon). The findings of the report can be reviewed on the Saskatoon Housing Initiative Partnership website:

<http://www.saskatoonhousingpartners.com/uploads/Public%20Perceptions%20of%20Homelessness%20Dec%202010.pdf>

Provider Survey

To confirm the number of beds/units for the emergency, transitional and supportive housing stock, providers were contacted to determine and/or confirm the number of beds/units they currently provide. In the few cases where we were unable to speak to the appropriate person, website searches were utilized and where possible numbers confirmed with Service Canada.

Update Meetings

Update meetings were also held at regular intervals throughout the project. Bi-weekly meetings were held with the Saskatoon Housing Initiative Partnership. Meetings were held also with Service Canada as required. Updates were also delivered in person at two of the Saskatoon Community Advisory Board for Homelessness meetings.

APPENDIX B – DEFINITIONS

Homelessness - Typically refers to (a) a personal or family condition of living without access to an adequate, permanent, safe, and secure home; (b) a societal problem consisting of a growing number of people living without access to adequate, permanent, safe, and secure homes.

Homeless - Persons or families living on the streets or in other places that are not intended or suitable for permanent residence.

- **Absolute homeless:** Homeless persons or families who have no shelter at all. An alternate term for these persons or families is the shelterless.
- **At-risk of homelessness:** A person or family that is experiencing extreme difficulty maintaining their housing and has no alternatives for obtaining subsequent housing. Circumstances that often contribute to becoming at-risk of homelessness include eviction, loss of income, unaffordable increase in the cost of housing, discharge from an institution without subsequent housing in place, irreparable damage or deterioration to residences, and fleeing from family violence.
- **Relative Homelessness:** A situation on which people's homes do not meet the basic housing standards of:
 - Adequate protection from the elements
 - Access to safe water and sanitation
 - Provide secure tenure and personal safety
- **Hidden Homelessness:** Hidden homelessness refers specifically to people who live temporarily with relatives, friends, neighbours or strangers (a practice often known as "couch surfing") because they have no other option.
- **Chronic homeless:** Homeless persons or families who have been continuously homeless for a year or more, or homeless multiple times over a several year period.
- **Hard-to-house:** Persons or families who typically face multiple, difficult barriers to accessing and securing permanent housing due to issues such as substance abuse, mental illness, disabilities, HIV/ AIDS, behavioural issues and other issues.
- **Transient/temporarily homeless:** Persons or families who have been homeless for less than 1 year and have had fewer than four episodes of homelessness in the past 3 years.

Housing First - Describes the approach or model of programs that aim to help homeless persons or families quickly access and sustain permanent, affordable homes. The key principles that distinguish a Housing First approach from other strategies include:

- An immediate and primary focus on obtaining permanent housing that is not time-limited.

- Varied, flexible, and responsive support services are offered around the clock, often including a persistent outreach team.
- Access to permanent housing is not conditional upon engaging any support services, and vice versa. The only way people lose their housing is by violating their lease agreement.
- Financial assistance, often in the form of rent subsidies, security deposits, income supports, as well as assistance with budgeting and financial literacy.
- Assistance with the development of relationships with landlords, negotiating lease agreements, paying rent on time, and searching for appropriate housing.
- Case management services help people keep their housing and become successful at improving their overall well-being and independence.

Continuum of housing- The spectrum of accommodation options that meet a range of needs and standards, including physical adequacy, space and capacity, and affordability. The continuum is often used in reference to a model of housing and support services whereby people progress from one end of the spectrum (short-term housing) towards the other (safe and affordable market housing).

Short-term housing

- Emergency housing/shelters - Provide temporary, typically overnight, accommodation to people who would otherwise sleep on the streets. They are not intended to be regular residences. Shelters may also provide support services in relation to addictions and/or mental health, health, education and employment needs.
- Transitional housing - Typically provides temporary accommodation (up to 3 years) to individuals who wish to stabilize their housing situation while resolving other issues in their lives, such as unemployment, addictions and/or mental health, education and violence. Individuals and families living in transitional housing have access to a mix of supportive services that would enable them to move towards self-sufficiency and more independent living.

Long-term housing

- **Supportive housing:** Typically provides long-term accommodation with a support component to allow people to live as independently as possible. The housing providers, whether public, private or nonprofit, receive funding to provide the support services to the residents, who also often receive some direct funding. Supportive housing can be called special needs housing. *There is a distinction between supportive housing and supported housing. The latter refers to accommodations with support services that are not linked to the housing.*
- **Social housing:** Social housing is provided to very low-income households who are capable of living independently, without a need for support services. On-going subsidies (either to publicly-owned operators or to community-based, nonprofit housing corporations, or to

private landlords) enable rents to be paid by residents on a 'rent-to-income' basis (usually 30% of gross household income). Social housing is also called subsidized, community, or public housing.

- **Affordable housing:** Housing that provides permanent accommodation to low-income individuals and families who earn less than the median income and spend more than 30% of their gross household income on housing. Typically, households who live in affordable housing do not require on-going support services or housing subsidies.

Case management - A collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation, and evaluation of the options and services required to meet an individual's health and human service needs. It is characterized by advocacy, communication, and creative resource management to promote quality, cost-effective outcomes.

Support services - Programs, services and strategies used in helping persons and families to enhance their independence or self-sufficiency and prevent homelessness. Examples include counseling, assistance with daily living activities such as meals and housekeeping, treatment, financial supports, and development of personal, social, and employment skills, among many other kinds of care.

Harm reduction - Any policies, programs, or practical strategies designed to reduce harm and the negative consequences related to substance abuse, without requiring the cessation of substance use. Harm reduction is typically characterized by meeting substance users 'where they're at,' addressing conditions and motivations of drug use along with the use itself, and acknowledging an individual's ability to take responsibility for their own behavior. Examples of interventions include safer use, managed use, and non-punitive abstinence.

Multiple diagnoses - People who have chronic alcohol and/or other drug use problems and/or a serious mental illness and/or are HIV-positive. Related and synonymous terms include dual diagnosis, triple diagnosis and co-occurring disorders..

Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)- provides shelters and service providers with data entry and analysis software, training, and support, which enhances operational capacity. This tool allows communities to collect and analyze data on homelessness and shelter users in Canada that is of vital local and national significance.

The Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) - is a Government of Canada program that encourages communities to work with all levels of government, the not for-profit sector and the private sectors to move beyond immediate and emergency needs to address the more long term issues facing people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The HPS places greater emphasis on measures to prevent and reduce homelessness, and more focus on the construction and renovation of transitional and supportive housing with related services.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)- enhances Canada's housing finance options, assist Canadians who cannot afford housing in the private market, improve building standards and housing construction, and provides policy makers with the information and analysis they need to sustain a vibrant housing market in Canada.

APPENDIX C – HOUSING FIRST (LITERATURE REVIEW)

The secondary research conducted for this project is remarkably clear on the outcomes of Housing First compared to other models in terms of housing retention, cost reduction and quality of life. There are a variety of housing first initiatives occurring across North America, however the basic premise of Housing First is getting people into permanent housing as quickly as possible (or staying in their existing housing) and bringing in supports to help them deal with any issues they are facing (e.g. addictions, mental health, etc.). By providing all the wrap-around services this enables people to stay in homes and to deal with any issues that might lead to problems with housing. Services and supports vary in intensity and can include:

- psychiatric and/or substance abuse treatment,
- daily living skills training / health, wellness and recreational activities,
- help with family reconnections,
- money management training,
- vocational and supported employment services.

There are some common core principles for Housing First and these include:

- Housing that is not coercive.
- Housing that focuses on helping people with higher acuity first
- Using intensive case management approaches (i.e. people are extensively trained in how to handle the complex issues as opposed to just well intentioned)
- Following a harm reduction perspective in the delivery of service
- Ensuring all services are client centered

These principles mean a change in the way people think about working with people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. It means:

- Changing the system, not the person. Outreach workers come to clients in their homes, rather than expecting them to show up at various agencies during office hours.
- Respecting client choice for accepting clinical services. Clients can continue to use alcohol or other substances until they're ready for treatment. But they must comply with standard lease agreements.
- Focusing on learning to be a good tenant. Clients are helped with skills in money management, conflicts with neighbors and apartment upkeep.
- Focusing on strengths and community building. Some projects include community rooms for meal sharing, peer support and connection to the community, as part of the transition to successful permanent housing.

A relatively recent Housing First initiative in Edmonton, undertaken by Homeward Trust, focuses on supports beyond housing. There is a recognition that the answer to homelessness is housing; however it is rarely housing alone. Other supports are needed to address all the issues which contribute to a person's housing challenge. These issues may include addictions, mental or physical health issues. Homeward Trust provides funds for several support initiatives including assistance for persons living in their own homes as well through short-term and transitional housing.

For clients in their own home, the emphasis is on preventing homelessness by using a variety of supports. The supports are delivered by teams at agencies across Edmonton. In terms of the short-term and transitional housing, Homeward Trust supports a variety of different types of housing options including addictions and recovery (provides a safe alternative for those who have chosen to enter a recovery program, but are waiting for space to become available), Youth Transitional Housing (provides supports to young people who are working on finding permanent housing) and shelters for families (provides families with assistance in locating housing).

Housing First forces everyone to look at the entire system and determine what is working in the community and what needs to be improved. This approach is very evident in the United States. In the US with the recent signing of the Homeless Emergency and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, homelessness initiatives will not be measured by the success of a single project but rather the entire system. This means all service providers must work together to make the system work for the benefit of the clients.

Difficulties with Housing First

Objections to the Housing First approach and/or certain elements of the initiative were expressed by various service providers during the consultation process. One of the objections was that a Housing First initiative would be difficult to implement in Saskatoon because social services is administered through province rather than through the municipality.

A secondary objection was heard that dealt with the low housing stock in Saskatoon. With vacancy rates projected to be close to 2%, it was seen as not feasible to offer a Housing First initiative given the demand landlords face for their housing. Both of these objections were further studied and discussed with others knowledgeable in Housing First Initiatives.

In terms of the funding issue and who administers social services it was viewed that this could be an issue but may be able to be overcome with coordination between the City and Province. In other jurisdictions where the municipalities administer social services, the cities still work with the province in administering payments through the provincial disability program.

In terms of the objection due to low rental stock, there have been remedies implemented in other communities wanting to implement a Housing First initiative. Remedies other communities have implemented include:

- Putting people into shared housing relationships
- Offering full rent or time limited subsidies
- Changing the nature of transitional housing by:
 - o making transitional housing into permanent housing for some residents, and/or
 - o making transitional housing into permanent supportive housing for some residents

Based on the overwhelming requests during the consultations, Housing First is a concept that needs to be considered in determining the priorities for the upcoming 3 years.

APPENDIX D – GLOSSARY

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APPENDIX E – COMMUNITY ASSET LIST

Asset Inventory		
Emergency Shelters - 287 Beds	# of Beds	Contact Information
Brief Detoxification Unit (BDU)	12	655-4195
Lighthouse Supported Living Inc.	30	653-0538; crystalmondzuik@shawlink.ca
Salvation Army – Men’s Hostel/Noah’s Ark	42	244-6280; jordan.cooper@salvationarmyscc.com
Salvation Army - Mumford House	40	244-6280; jordan.cooper@salvationarmyscc.com
Salvation Army - Youth Room	2	244-6280; jordan.cooper@salvationarmyscc.com
Salvation Army - Mental Health Room	1	244-6280; jordan.cooper@salvationarmyscc.com
Saskatoon Crisis Nursery	10	242-2433; lisa@crisisnursery.ca
YWCA - Crisis Shelter	38	244-0944; bmacpherson@ywcaskatoon.com
CUMFI Infinity House	16	955-2332; infinityhouse@sasktel.net
Interval House	34	244-0185; info@saskatoonintervalhouse.org
Emergency Winter Shelter	15	652-3999; kari@emmanuelbaptist.ca
Urban Safe House	5	306.384.0004
CUMFI McLeod House	17	665-0425
Larson House - Social Detox	19	655-4195
Tamara's House	6	683-8867
Transitional Housing - 387 Units		
CUMFI Fostering Families	22	370-9771; loelke@sasktel.net
Adelle House	12	668-2761; info@saskatoonintervalhouse.org
CUMFI Wellness Centre	10	370-9771; saskatoonfasdproject@sasktel.net
Egadz My Homes	35	931-6644
Structured Independent Living Home (2)	10	931-6644
Wilson Crescent	10	931-6644
Jay's Place	5	244-8347
Cedar House	5	244-8347
Pine House	5	244-8347
Basswood House	5	244-8347
Cress Housing	11	244-7747
Lighthouse Supported Living Inc.	67	653-0538; crystalmondzuik@shawlink.ca
Meewasinota Aboriginal Healing Centre	36	651-3405
Quint Developments – Men’s Youth Lodge	10	978-4041
Quint Developments – Pleasant Hill Place	5	978-4046
Salvation Army - Men's Transitional	12	244-6280; jordan.cooper@salvationarmyscc.com
Salvation Army - Bethany Home	18	244-6758; malba_holiday@can.salvationarmy.org
Salvation Army - New Frontiers	21	244-6280; jordan.cooper@salvationarmyscc.com
YWCA - Residence	18	244-0944; bmacpherson@ywcaskatoon.com
YWCA - Margaret's Place	5	244-0944; bmacpherson@ywcaskatoon.com
Lighthouse New Addition	65	653-0538; crystalmondzuik@shawlink.ca

Long-Term Supportive Units – Approximately 4800 units
Abbeyfield House
Central Haven Special Care Home
Cheshire Homes
Circle Drive Place
Elmwood Residences Inc - Group homes
Elmwood Residences Inc - Respite Home
Elmwood Residences Inc - Lodge
Extencicare Special Care Home
Lighthouse - Long Term
Luther Heights - "Life Lease"
Luther Heights - "Subsidized"
Luther Riverside Terrace
Luther Tower
Luthercare - Group homes
Luthercare - Personal Care Homes
Luthercare - Family Homes
Mazenod Residence
Oliver Lodge - Special Care Home
Oliver Place
Parkridge Centre
Porteous Lodge Special Care Home
Saskatoon Convalescent Home
Saskatoon Housing Coalition-Group home
Saskatoon Housing Coalition-Supportive Apartment Program
The Village
Sisters of Sion Special Care Home
St. Ann's Home
St. Joseph's Special Care Home
Stensrud Lodge
Sunnyside Adventist Care Centre
Personal Care Homes
Approved Mental Health Homes
Bethany Villa
Circle Drive Special Care Home
GNE Care Home
M & M Private Home Care
Ilarion Village - Assisted Living Suites
Affordable Rentals
Bethany Court, Manor, Tower and Villa

CUMFI
Columbian Manor
Cooperative D'Habitation Villa Bonheur
Cress Housing Corporation
Elim Lodge
Hector Trout Co-operative
Jubilee Residences
LutherCare Communities
McClure
Oliver Place
Quint apartments
Private Rental Housing (rents below \$550)
Rainbow Housing Co-operative
Saskatoon Housing Authority
Sasknative Rentals
St. Volodymyr
Terra Housing Co-operative
Shelter Benefits and Supplements Programs
Affordable Ownership
CAHP – Homeownership Option
Affordable New Home Development Fdn
Habitat For Humanity Saskatoon
Quint Development Corporation
Core Services
Child Hunger and Education Program
Friendship Inn
Miracle Mission & Shiloh Training Centre
Rainbow Community Centre
Salvation Army
Saskatoon Food Bank & Grassroots Learning
The Bridge on 20th
Victory Manor Inc. Gospel Mission
YWCA
SK Income Support Programs
Saskatoon Transit Services
Assistance Services
AIDS Saskatoon
Alvin Buckwold Child Development Program
Building A Nation Circle of Wellness
Catholic Family Services
Children's Advocate Office

Christian Counselling Services
CUMFI
Department of Community Resources
Egadz Youth Centre
Elizabeth Fry Society
Equal Justice For All
Family Healing Circle Lodge
Family Service Saskatoon
FSIN Women's Council
Global Gathering Place
International Women of Saskatchewan
John Howard Society
Métis Family Community Justice Service
NewComer's Center
Office of the Rentalsman
Provincial Mediation Board
Saskatchewan Assoc for Community Living
Saskatchewan Fetal Alcohol Support Network
Saskatoon Assoc for Community Living
Saskatoon Council on Aging
Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Services
Saskatoon Family Support Centre
Saskatoon Indian & Métis Friendship Centre
Saskatoon Open Door Society
Saskatoon Refugee Coalition
Saskatoon Tribal Council Children's Centre
Saskatoon Tribal Council Family Centre
Western Region of Métis Women's Assoc
Life Skills Services
Big Brothers Big Sisters
Nutana School Integrated Services
Parenting Education Saskatchewan
Public Legal Education Assoc
Saskatoon Adlerian Society
Saskatoon Community Village
Saskatoon Society for Protection of Children
White Buffalo Youth Lodge
Employment Development Services
Advantage Youth Co-op
Building A Nation
Business Info Source

Canada-SK Career & Employment Services
Community First Development Fund
Continuing Education Services
Core Neighbourhood Youth Co-op
Crocus Co-op
First Nations University
Gabriel Dumont Institute/Dumont Tech Inst
Métis Employment & Training
Northern SK Independent Living Centre
READ Saskatoon
SK Abilities Council
SK Assoc of Rehabilitation Centres
SK Literacy Network
SK Community Youth Arts Program
SK Intercultural Association
SK Regional Economic & Co-operative Dev
STC Training & Employment
SIAST
SIIT Career Village
University of Saskatchewan
Health and Treatment Services
Awasis Kids First
Canadian Mental Health Assoc
CRU Youth Wellness Centre
Inner City Centre
Mediclinic
Métis Addictions Council
Nightingale Nursing Group
Real Choices Pregnancy Centre
Saskatoon Community Clinic
Saskatoon Health Region
Saskatoon Home Support Services
Sexual Health Centre
Westside Community Clinic
Victorian Order of Nurses (VON)
Community Volunteer Services
Correctional Services Canada – Parole
Corrections & Public Safety – Community Op
Mennonite Central Committee
Neighbourlink
Saskatoon Health Reg – Mental Health Serv

Saskatoon Services For Seniors
Skills/Research/Communication Networks
Anti-Poverty Coalition
Homelessness Advisory Committee
Provincial Assoc of Transition Houses
Reg Intersectoral Ctee on Human Services
Saskatoon Communities For Children
Saskatoon Community Foundation
Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership
Saskatoon Overnight Shelter
Urban Aboriginal Strategy
United Way of Saskatoon

REPORT ARTWORK

The drawings in this report were supplied by the Saskatoon Community Youth Arts Programming (SCYAP). The Saskatoon Community Youth Arts Programming (SCYAP) Inc. is a charitable organization that delivers art and culture based programming to address the social, economic, and educational needs of youth-at-risk.

SCYAP was established in 2001 to offer street-level, youth-oriented solutions to crime and unemployment by using an interest in visual art as the key to personal development and redirection towards a healthier and more productive life. SCYAP's programs give youth the opportunity to make a connection with the wider community and earn the recognition and confidence that comes with it.

The Urban Canvas Project (UCP) is a 39-week intensive program of arts training for youth aged 16-30 facing multiple barriers to employment, many of whom are First Nations, Métis or members of ethnic minorities. Training in art skills is accompanied by sessions on personal and professional development, job skills, health and literacy. Participants contribute to large works of public art conceived in collaboration with community organizations.

The pieces of art contained in this report are works produced from Urban Canvas participants when they were in their prospective projects. To view more pieces of youth art please visit SCYAP's art centre at 253rd Ave South, Saskatoon, their website, www.scyapinc.org, or their facebook page, www.facebook.com/scyapinc. All proceeds from art sales go back into programming at SCYAP. To learn more about the artists please contact SCYAP at 652-7760.

Below are the names of the artists, a picture of their work used in this report and the UCP group number in which they participated.



Artist: Lynda Flett

Group Number: UCPVIII



Artist: Tyrone Whitehawk

Group Number: UCPV



Artist: Andrew Almightyvoice

Group Number: UCPIX



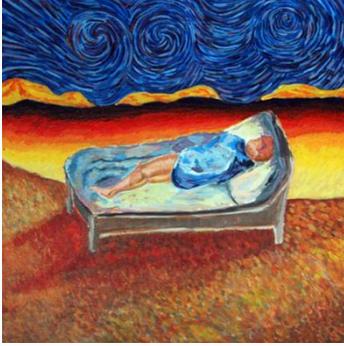
Artist: Derek Keenatch

Group Number: UCPVI



Artist: Thora Gudmundson

Group Number: UCPVII



Artist: Lynda Flett

Group Number: UCPVIII



Artist: Ashley Morin

Group Number: UCPVII



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