

March 5, 2024

Matthew Pitcher
Housing Solutions Coordinator
Community Social Development | City of Lethbridge
3rd Floor, City Hall 910-4th Avenue South, Lethbridge, AB T1J 0P6

Mr. Pitcher,

RE: Affordable Housing Grant Funding Request for 416 Stafford Drive North

BACKGROUND

416 Stafford Drive North will be the first recovery focused, purpose built supportive housing facility in Lethbridge. Supportive housing moves individuals who have experienced long-term homelessness into affordable, individual suites, with on-site and community-based services to help them regain stability and maintain housing. Once housed, they are better able to address other challenges they face, including long term recovery from addictions and mental or physical illnesses. On-going data shows that this cost effective approach works to keep people housed and over time, improving their physical and mental health and sobriety. Estimates show that the average cost per person for emergency services before supportive housing is more than \$67,000 per year, and that supportive housing results in reducing these costs by approximately \$40,000.

416 Stafford Drive will be home to 30 individuals based on need and complexity. These are exclusively studio units. Each has their own bathroom with shower, bar fridge and kitchenette area. There is a main commercial kitchen and dining area on the main floor.

This is a planned, long-term investment into recovery orientated, affordable housing in Lethbridge. Residents will be selected on need and acuity, with a focus on reducing the number of seniors currently calling the Lethbridge Shelter home. This will also be a positive step for those transitioning from treatment programs into stable housing rather than back to the streets and perpetuating the cycle of addiction.

416 Stafford Drive North will offer wrap around supports to the individual while providing a secure place to call home. Programming will have recovery focused goals, while providing on-site medical support and rapid access to in house clinical staff. Referrals for the supportive housing program will be recovery based and suited both to the success of the program and the individual. A focus on the whole person and overall lifestyle changes will help to mitigate the occurrences or reoccurrences of homelessness and addiction in our community.

COMMUNITY BENEFIT

This complex has been planned with equal focus on the community in which it is located and the residents it will house. A roof top garden, security fencing and most importantly, living areas contained on second and third floors focus on a reduction of loitering in the community and safety of residents. These design features are important to meeting community commitments and improving the relationships between facility residents and the community.

On-site staff members will provide essential services and long-term housing support to individuals based on their needs. The property will offer 24/7 staffing, including daytime assistance by Community Support Workers, AHS, PDD and overnight security personnel. On-site kitchen service, secured yard and restricted access will also provide additional security to the participants and increase community well-being. Additionally, property maintenance will be managed on-site by LHA Maintenance Staff during regular hours (8:00 AM to 4:00 PM), with emergency after-hours support available when necessary.

CURRENT STATUS

Rezoning to Direct Control completed on September 19, 2024.

DEV15064 Development Permit approved February 28, 2024.

Groundbreaking ceremony at direction of Minister Nixon, March 7th, 2024.

Class C Estimate completed and finalizing design with budgetary considerations, March 5, 2024.

Expected completion date September 01, 2025.

PROJECT COMPONENTS AND COSTS

Hard Costs: \$ 9,700,519.85

Soft costs / Scope of Work Costs: \$1,575,480.15

Total Costs: \$11,276,000.00

REQUEST

Our current total budget for the project is \$11,276,000.00 of which we have secured funding through an investment by the Province of Alberta to improve the well-being of those at risk in Lethbridge of \$10,226,000. To successfully implement all planned features and ensure the project's success, we are seeking additional funding to bridge the remaining amount of \$1,050,000.00 from the City of Lethbridge. A contribution of approximately 7% of the project cost.

416 Stafford Drive is designed to implement key features and infrastructure that are crucial for promoting safety and wellness within our community. Failure to obtain this request could

potentially be at the cost of these very features- additional security fencing and the roof top deck. Each of these components have been carefully selected to create an environment that fosters a sense of security and well-being amongst our residents and the surrounding community.

SUMMARY

We understand the challenges faced by city council in allocating funds, and we sincerely appreciate your commitment to the well-being and recovery of our community. We are confident that with your support, 416 Stafford Drive will significantly impact the City of Lethbridge's need of supportive housing and strengthen the foundations of its affordable opportunities for living.

We look forward to the opportunity to discuss this funding request further and explore how we can collaborate to make 416 Stafford Drive a reality for our community.

Sincerely,

Robin James

Robin James, CAO
Lethbridge Housing Authority

Built in Lethbridge Solution

416 Stafford Drive



Homelessness is a complex issue that requires a comprehensive and recovery-oriented system of care. One which addresses the underlying causes of homelessness and supports individuals in their journey towards stable housing and full participation in society. A recovery-oriented system of care is based on the principles of empowerment, hope, and person-centered care. It emphasizes the importance of addressing the social determinants of homelessness, such as poverty, mental illness, and addiction.

There is a growing demand for supportive housing in Lethbridge as more individuals struggle with developmental delays, mental health and addiction issues, as well as homelessness. Supportive housing provides individuals with a safe and stable living environment, along with access to on-site supports and services to help them maintain their housing and work towards long-term recovery.

Many individuals who require supportive housing in Lethbridge face significant barriers to accessing and maintaining housing, such as a lack of income, criminal records, and difficulty securing employment. As a result, many individuals end up cycling through shelters, emergency rooms, and the criminal justice system, which can exacerbate their mental health and addiction issues.

The support services offered through supportive housing can help to break this cycle by providing individuals with a stable and supportive living environment, combined with access to a range of services such as counselling, independent living skills, medication management, healthcare, and employment supports, as well as a sense of community. This can help individuals to address the root causes of their challenges, build life skills, continue their work towards recovery.

The day-to-day life of residents in supportive housing resembles that of any other recovery-focused living arrangement, with daily routines, social interactions, and personal development. Stable housing often allows residents to rebuild relationships with family and loved ones.

By working together to address the root causes of homelessness, mental health and addiction issues, we can help to build stronger and more resilient communities in Lethbridge and beyond.

The Office of the Minister for Alberta Seniors, Community, and Social Services has approved capital grant funding to Lethbridge Housing Authority for supportive housing in Lethbridge.

This \$10.2 million bilateral agreement between CMHC/National Housing Strategy and the Alberta Government, demonstrates the positive moves forward for Lethbridge with Lethbridge Housing Authority.





What makes this project different?



Lodge-style, barrier-free, private studio home, for long-term/permanent residency.



24/7 security procedures and access to staff and onsite support services.



Referral to health care, mental health and addiction services. Possibility of onsite pharmacy and primary care provider.



Residents will pay rent for their home. This will be sustainable through funding from the Government of Alberta.



Nutritious meals will be provided onsite, providing a further sense of community and strengthening mental health.



Residents will enhance their life-skills, learning skills such as maintaining their home.



Community Challenges

Substance Use

According to Alberta Substance Use Surveillance data — which is publicly available online — 79 people died of unintentional opioid poisoning in the city last year. That's up from 67 deaths in 2021 and nearly double the 41 fatal overdoses in 2020. In February 2022 alone, 20 people reportedly died.

New data from the Alberta Substance Use Surveillance System shows 18 people died from drug poisoning in Lethbridge between December 2022 and January 2023. Ten of them died in December and the other eight in January, according to the online tracking tool.

All the deaths are categorized under non-pharmaceutical opioids.

In the same time period across the province, there were 249 drug poisoning deaths reported, 139 in December and 110 in January.

The fourth quarter of 2022 shows more than half the deaths in Lethbridge happened in private residences. 73% of these happened behind closed doors with 36% of these deaths occurring in residences owned by the victim. 27% of the deaths in Lethbridge happened in public.

These numbers speak volumes to the need for a recovery-focused housing solution for the individual.

Mental Health

The mental health crisis in Lethbridge is a pressing issue that requires a recovery-oriented approach to ensure that individuals are supported in their journey towards wellness and full participation in society.

A recovery-oriented approach emphasizes the importance of empowerment, hope, and person-centered care in mental health services. Ensuring that individuals have access to a comprehensive range of mental health services that are tailored to their unique needs and preferences, will aid the individual in maintaining their path forward. This approach recognizes that recovery is a journey, and individuals need to be supported in their journey towards wellness, regardless of where they are on that path.

Community-based care, support and access to therapists to assist residents to heal while ensuring housing stability, is essential to long-term success. This is done through collaboration with community partners providing individuals access to a range of support services that promote recovery and resiliency for the individual and the community.

The Fresh Start Recovery Centre will add an additional 50 beds for the treatment of those with addictions. We plan on working closely with recovery centers to ensure that discharge from treatment is managed well and does not return individuals to their previous homeless state. This will include providing a safe and sustainable housing model with long-term, onsite, supports focusing on the individual and their recovery. Resident choice also plays a role in the placement process. Coordinated efforts involving organizations like Lethbridge Housing Authority, Alberta Health Services, and supportive housing operators ensure the right support and community fit for each individual.

The focus needs to be on matching the right person to the right housing at the right time, based on income and current circumstances, while providing the supports to ensure continued success.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a lifelong condition caused by prenatal exposure to alcohol and results in a range of physical, cognitive, and behavioral challenges. Unfortunately, individuals with FASD are at a higher risk of experiencing homelessness due to the complex and often debilitating effects of the disorder. Addressing the unique needs of this population through comprehensive services, structure and supports are essential to reduce homelessness and improve their overall well-being. There are currently over forty (40) individuals that are diagnosed or suspected of having FASD unhoused in Lethbridge. This accounts for over 10% of the unhoused numbers reported in Lethbridge.

Caring for the Community

What does supportive housing in your community look like? Supportive housing is not a shelter, drop-in, bridge housing, halfway house or any other type of temporary accommodation. It is long term housing.

Who works in supportive housing?

The staffing of supportive housing varies depending on the resident's needs and its operator's mandate. Skilled and well-trained staff, including medical professionals, social workers, support personnel, and property managers, work together to provide necessary assistance and services.

Who is responsible for operations?

Lethbridge Housing Authority is responsible for overseeing the operations of supportive housing and selects operators for each site through a competitive process. Operators establish standards of behavior for residents within supportive housing, funded through the Government of Alberta.

How was the site selected?

The selection of the Senator Buchanan site for supportive housing involves adherence to city policies and guidelines, focusing on factors like readiness for development, integration with surrounding land uses, proximity to amenities, and rezoning suitability.

What if the community has concerns?

The residents, staff and neighbours of supportive housing all have a shared interest in maintaining a safe environment. If a tenant's actions put other tenants or the community at risk, the operator will respond quickly. Concerns about safety, crime, and property values are addressed by emphasizing that supportive housing has shown no evidence of increasing crime or negatively affecting property values in surrounding areas. Properly designed and managed supportive housing has demonstrated positive effects and community integration.

In cases where concerns arise, the site is equipped with a Good Neighbour Plan to foster positive relationships between the supportive housing community and its neighbors. This plan outlines shared commitments, and issue resolution processes.

Supportive Housing in the Community

- 1 Invest in the Community**
Every dollar invested in supportive housing puts \$4-\$5 back into the local economy
- 2 Job Creation**
An Ontario study found for every new residential unit built, 2-2.5 jobs are created
- 3 Long Term Solutions**
95% of residents in BC Housing-funded SH, had been housed for 6+ months
- 4 Building Community**
83% of supportive housing survey respondents reported positive interactions with neighbours
- 5 Cleaning Up**
Supportive Housing programs often involve volunteering to help keep neighbourhoods clean



Lethbridge Housing



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