HOUSING ACTION PLAN
THE THOMPSON ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION WORKING GROUP
FINAL REPORT  September 2012
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
1.1 The Thompson Economic Diversification Working Group 1
1.2 Purpose of this Document 1
1.3 Area of Study 1
1.4 Engagement Process 1

2.0 Baseline Study
2.1 Purpose of Baseline Study 7
2.2 Context 7
2.3 Current State of Housing 7
  2.3.1 Demographic Profile 7
  2.3.2 Housing Conditions 9
  2.3.3 Housing Starts and Vacancy 13
  2.3.4 Housing Costs 13
  2.3.5 Non-Market Housing 13
  2.3.6 Transitional and Emergency Housing 15
  2.3.7 Employee Housing 16
2.4 Possible Partnerships 17
2.5 Barriers and Strengths 17

3.0 Priority Evaluation Matrix 23

4.0 Implementation Strategy 29
4.1 Immediate-Term Actions (2012-2013) 29
  4.1.1 City of Thompson Housing Incentive Program 29
  4.1.2 City of Thompson Regulatory Changes 30
  4.1.3 Project Northern Doorway - Supportive Housing 30
  4.1.4 Affordable Family Rental Housing 31
  4.1.5 Marketing Plan 32
  4.1.6 THA & Continued Collaborative Planning 32
4.2 Medium-Term Actions 33

5.0 Conclusion 39
Figure 1.1 - The Thompson Region
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Thompson Economic Diversification Working Group

The need to broaden and diversify the economic base in Thompson and surrounding region is a long-standing priority. Economic volatility in recent years, coupled with the November 2010 announcement that Vale will transition its operations in Thompson to mining and milling by 2015, have underlined the need for the City, the region and community partners to tackle this issue head on.

The Thompson Economic Diversification Working Group (TEDWG) was formed to spearhead this effort. Launched on May 18, 2011, the TEDWG has a simple mission: to accelerate Thompson’s development as a regional service centre in Northern Manitoba with a strong mining pillar. The TEDWG is chaired by the City of Thompson, and enjoys broad and diverse stakeholder participation with representatives from the Province of Manitoba, Vale, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO), Keewatin Tribal Council (KTC), Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF), the Northern Association of Community Councils (NACC), Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN), Thompson Unlimited, and the Thompson Chamber of Commerce. The Government of Canada and USW Local 6166 have also been invited to participate. TEDWG is being support by rePlan, a Canadian planning organization that works with resource-based communities in Canada and internationally.

This group is responsible for identifying and pursuing the most promising opportunities to help Thompson and the surrounding region diversify its economy and strengthen its position as an economic contributor in Northern Manitoba. Priority areas identified by TEDWG stakeholders include:

- Restorative Justice
- Education and Training
- Housing
- Fostering a Local and Regional Identity
- Economic Development

Sub-committees, including representatives of the above mentioned organizations as well as other regional stakeholders, have been established to address these priority areas and prepare plans that support immediate action.

In addition, the TEDWG stakeholders are committed to strengthening the City of Thompson’s governance framework through an updated District Development Plan and Zoning By-Law. The dynamic relationship between the City of Thompson and regional communities will be better defined through another initiative of the TEDWG, the Thompson and Region Infrastructure Plan (TRIP). When taken together, the District Development Plan, Zoning By-Law and Thompson and Region Infrastructure Plan provide a 20-year strategy to stimulate and manage both economic and population growth through targeted infrastructure development and sustainable land use planning in Thompson and region.

The TEDWG process will provide immediate direction on specific priorities, such as Housing. It will also provide a framework for continued collaboration between regional stakeholders and continued action to support economic diversification and development over the long-term.

1.2 Purpose of this Document

The Thompson Economic Diversification Working Group has identified Housing as a priority area for action when addressing barriers to economic development and fostering new economic activities. This Action Plan provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of Housing in the region and documents the way forward, as identified by regional stakeholders, in the form of an immediate, implementable priority project(s) and subsequent actions.

1.3 Area of Study

The area of study for this project includes the City of Thompson and surrounding region. The boundaries of the surrounding region were defined by the Thompson Economic Diversification Working Group and are highlighted in Figure 1.1 seen at left.

1.4 Engagement Process

To ensure that this work represents the interests, needs and goals of regional stakeholders, a sub-committee for Housing was established as part of the TEDWG process.
This sub-committee is made up of a diverse group of organizations and individuals who have expertise, work in, or have an interest in this priority area. The goals of the sub-committee were to identify current challenges and existing strengths and ultimately to determine how to most directly address the priority of Housing through the elaboration of a Housing Action Plan and related priority projects.

Sub-Committee members represent a number of local and regional organizations as well as Provincial government departments including:

- Addictions Foundation of Manitoba
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- City of Thompson
- Community Futures North Central Development
- Futures/Marymound North
- Keewatin Tribal Council
- Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs
- Manitoba Housing
- Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak
- Nisichiwayasihk Cree Nation
- Northern Manitoba Sector Council
- Smook / KDS Development
- Royal Bank of Canada
- Thompson Chamber of Commerce
- Thompson Crisis Centre
- Thompson Homeless Shelter
- Thompson Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation
- Thompson Unlimited
- Vale
- YWCA

In total, six Housing Sub-Committee meetings were held with sub-committee members: 25 November 2011, 12 January 2012, 23 February 2012, 24 April 2012 (as a longer form workshop), 4 June 2012 and 12 September 2012.

An Expert Advisory Panel was also formed to provide additional analysis and an outside perspective, as a complement to the expertise within the sub-Committee.

The advisors – Angie Bignell, Opaskwayak Cree Nation (OCN) Housing Project Partnerships; Dr. Tom Carter, University of Winnipeg, Canada Research Chair in Urban Change and Adaptation; Dr. Evelyn Peters, University of Winnipeg, Canada Research Chair in Inner-City Issues, Community Learning and Engagement; Tim Welch, Tim Welch Consulting – have:

- Reviewed and provided comments on the Baseline Study;
- Participated in a Workshop on 24 April 2012 in Thompson, including brief presentations and participation in the workshop’s break-out sessions; and
- Reviewed and provided comments on the Action Plan.
2. BASELINE STUDY

2.1 Purpose of Baseline Study

This Baseline Study provides an overview of current housing conditions, construction and rental market trends, housing costs and housing programs in the Thompson Region.

The Baseline Study served to inform planning undertaken by the TEDWG Housing Sub-Committee as stakeholders evaluated possible areas of action, identified priority initiatives and elaborated the terms of reference for implementation.

In addition, the Baseline Study, by providing an up-to-date analysis of regional housing capacity and areas of greatest need, is intended to support the ongoing activities of regional stakeholder groups as they advance complementary projects and seek funding and partnerships.

2.2 Context

The quality of life and economic vitality in the City of Thompson and Manitoba's North are directly linked to current and future residents' ability to access a diverse range of housing options.

At present, the region and its residents face significant housing challenges:

- Vacancy rates in the City's rental market are notably low (0% in 2011).
- The City's rental market is relatively expensive compared to other Manitoba cities, including Winnipeg.
- The majority of the City's housing stock was built in the 1960s and 1970s and few new builds are occurring.
- Overcrowding and inadequate housing is the norm in regional communities.

The shortfall in quality housing is consequential in a region defined by overall high population growth and high levels of in- and out-migration. It affects all residents, regardless of economic means, as well as employers. The limited options – in terms of affordability, unit size, unit condition and tenure options – pose an especially great risk to the well-being of the region’s most vulnerable populations.

Economic opportunity – for both communities and individuals – is restricted by inflexibility in the housing market and a predominance of ageing and/or low quality housing. The region’s youth are unable to establish their own households in home communities or find affordable accommodation in Thompson’s competitive rental market when moving for employment or education. Potential migrants seeking employment in the region may be dissuaded from moving by the limited supply of new or modernized options for home ownership. Employers struggle to fill positions or take on the extra costs of providing employee housing.

2.3 Current State of Housing

2.3.1 Demographic Profile

Northern Manitoba is marked by distinct trends appearing in its First Nations communities, remote villages and industrial centres related to population growth and economic performance. However, the well-being of each community is tied into the broader evolution of the region as a whole.

Between 2006 and 2011, the region’s population grew to nearly 50,000 people, expanding by 6%, higher than the provincial rate. Exceptional growth – 15% – was recorded in the region’s First Nations communities whereas populations declined in Thompson (a decline of -4.6%) and at an even greater rate in Churchill, Leaf Rapids and Lynn Lake.

The regional population is remarkably young with a median age of 24, compared with the provincial median of 38 (Figure 2.2). Again, the growing populations of the region’s First Nations communities lead this trend. The median age is below 20 in such communities as Garden Hill and Split Lake.

The City of Thompson is itself notably young with a median age of 30.6, making it one of the youngest cities in Canada. The City has not only a large youth population but also a large cohort of residents in their 20s and 30s: 67% of the population is under 40, compared with 52% provincially.

These population dynamics may be shifting (see Figure 2.3 on the next page). Since the 1990s, the City has seen the greatest decline among 5-14 year old and 30-39 year old residents. Growth, in contrast, has been most pronounced in older cohorts over the age of 60.

In recent years, between 2006 and 2011, the City has also seen growth in residents in their 20s and late 40s / early 50s. The housing needs of these population groups will...
only become more of a priority as this trend continues and as the City seeks to accommodate single-person households and those seeking to age in place.

According to population projections prepared for the TEDWG, the regional growth trend is anticipated to continue, with the total regional population reaching nearly 70,000 people by 2041 (Figure 2.4). Although the decline in City population growth is projected to continue to 2016, the TEDWG project predicts gradual growth thereafter. (Complete population projections, including methodology, can be found in the Thompson and Region Infrastructure Plan report.)

These growth patterns may accelerate or take slightly different forms depending on the timing and scale of major resource sector investments in Thompson and elsewhere and the pace of economic diversification in the City.

Importantly, the availability of improved housing infrastructure in Thompson and/or nearby communities will also prompt population movement within or out of the region. In Thompson, population growth may arrive earlier if a broader offer of adequate housing, as recommended in this report, is available to better accommodate movement within the growing regional population.

Thompson and its region are defined, in part, by the coming and going of its people. In 2006, more than 26% of residents lived outside the City five years before – a rate much higher than the Provincial average of 14% or Winnipeg’s 12%. Although lower mobility rates are recorded in nearby communities, circular and short-term migration between First Nations communities and Thompson (and other centres further away) are common.

Indeed, mobility rates are highest among the City’s Aboriginal population, two-thirds of whom moved homes between 2001 and 2006. This mobility suggests, for some, inadequate, unsatisfactory housing conditions and/or insecure tenure and economic situations.

Given the high incidence of migration in the region – including individuals who cycle through the year between reserve communities and urban centres, short-term contractors, students, fly-in/fly-out workers and employees moving north for a few well-paid years – it should be noted that Census data may not fully capture short-term changes in population and residency.

As reflected in these migration patterns, the region is home to both economic opportunity and economic challenges. The City of Thompson had one of the highest employment rates in the Province. Both public and private sector employers report high job vacancy rates, as they struggle to fill positions. However, the City concurrently had the highest unemployment rate of Manitoba’s largest centres, as of 2006: 7%.

These discrepancies repeat in other indicators: although Thompson ranked among the top 10 in median income among Canadian cities, the City was also home to one of the largest low income cohorts: 15% of the population. The relative difference between City and Provincial low income rates is greatest for residents under 18 years of age.

Lone-parent families represent 33% of all families in the region, nearly double the Provincial average. The average size of lone-parent families in northern communities has grown in recent years whereas family sizes remain static in lone-parent families across the Province (Figure 2.5).

These larger families are often living with constrained financial resources. Median family incomes for married couples in Thompson exceeded $82,211, compared with $28,117 for lone-parent households and $25,406 for families headed by single women.
The mismatch between existing housing (total numbers, size, unit type, condition) and the young, growing populations has been a long-running problem in the region's First Nations communities. Housing shortfalls, overcrowding and the need for repairs all impact educational performance, health, access to employment and quality of life.

In parallel, Thompson’s demographic make-up has evolved since the City’s foundation. The traditional housing stock – family-oriented housing built for two-parent households and apartments for non-permanent workers, as profiled below – does not necessarily serve the needs of the City’s diverse contemporary population.

2.3.2 Housing Conditions

New housing construction in the City of Thompson has been limited in the past two decades. As of the 2006 Census, over 90% of dwelling units were over 20 years old, the majority of them over 40 years old (see Figures 2.8 and 2.9 on the following pages). Regionally, in communities outside Thompson, the housing stock includes a greater proportion of recent builds – 59% of dwelling units are less than 20 years old.

Despite the addition of newer housing units, housing in the region is typically of inadequate condition. As of 2006, 31% of dwelling units are reported to need major repairs. In the region’s First Nations communities, despite a higher incidence of new construction, the need for major repairs extends to 47% of units.
Figure 2.8 - Average Age of Dwellings (in years) in the City of Thompson

*As of 2012
Overcrowded housing (defined as having more than one person living in a room) is also dramatically higher in the North and in First Nations communities (Figure 2.11).

Regionally, 15% of dwellings are overcrowded, with rates exceeding 40% or higher in some communities (Figure 2.10). Although overcrowding in the City of Thompson is lower than the regional average, specific neighbourhoods are characterized by more crowded conditions (see Figure 2.12 on the following page).

![Figure 2.9 - Housing Age and Conditions, 2006](image)

![Figure 2.10 - Household Demographic Profiles](image)

![Figure 2.11 - Housing Level of Service Map: Percentage of Houses that Face an Overcrowding of Occupants](image)
Figure 2.12 - Average Number of Persons per Bedroom in the City of Thompson
2.3.3 Housing Starts and Vacancy

In Northern Manitoba’s First Nations communities, 438 new occupied dwelling units were created between 2006 and 2011. Despite this increase, the growth in the number of new units (7% growth) lagged behind population growth (15%) and, accordingly, has not addressed overcrowding or the occupation of inadequate housing.

In parallel, the City of Thompson has seen markedly few housing starts in recent years (Figure 2.13). The City recorded no detached or apartment housing starts in 2011. In total, 19 units were started in 2010-2011. Even recent highs – 22 singles in 2007, 21 apartments in 2005 – are small compared with construction activities in other major centres in Manitoba. When there has been greater activity, mobile homes have made up the majority of new housing starts in the past decade.

Figure 2.13 - Current State of Housing Across Most Populated Cities

2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>2010 starts</th>
<th>2011 singles</th>
<th>2011 semis / rows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thompson</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winnipeg</td>
<td>2,272</td>
<td>1,478</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steinbach</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.14 - Owned vs. Rented Houses in the City of Thompson

In 2010, according to the Thompson and Planning District Sustainable Community Plan, there was a shortfall of 568 dwelling units in Thompson.

In 2012, the City of Thompson adopted by-laws to bring 63 hectares of greenfield land into the City’s buildable land supply.

Although the overall size of the City’s housing stock is relatively static, its composition is gradually changing. The City retains a proportionally high number of rental units: 41% of all dwellings compared with 29% provincially. However, the total number of rental units has decreased in recent years, with 125 less rental units in 2006 than in 1996.

Figure 2.15 - Comparison of Average Rental Rates for Various Unit Types

In recent years, several large multi-unit properties in Thompson have shifted from the affordable rental market to a higher-end market. In such cases, some landlords have undertaken upgrades and renovations in an effort to remarket their units as high-end condos, rent-to-own units or rental units. The up-market conversions target employees from well-paying job sectors who are lacking viable alternatives to buying a detached home. However, these upgrades, coupled with stagnant housing starts, have also contributed to a reduction in the supply of affordable rental units.

Put more simply, demand for housing outpaces static supply. Competition is felt most strongly in the rental market. The rental vacancy rate was 0.0% in October 2011 and 1.1% in April 2012.

2.3.4 Housing Costs

Private sector housing costs have risen in recent years, with the average price of a home reaching $219,284 in November 2010. Although these prices remain viable for a household earning above the City’s high median income, the large proportion of low-income residents in the City struggles to pay such rates.

Market rental rates in the City are even higher relative to the provincial average (Figure 2.15). As of April 2012, bachelor units rented for $548 per month, 1-bedroom units for $699 and 2-bedroom units for $771. Such costs are higher than the comparably-sized cities in Manitoba and, in the case of 1-bedroom units, higher than average monthly rates in Winnipeg.

Again, as in the City’s real estate market, such prices may be manageable for professionals and high-paid workers. However, high rates for entry-level rental units can be restrictive for students moving to Thompson for higher education, migrants without certain employment or families, including those led by single mothers, looking for larger units.

Twenty-six percent of tenants and 8% of owners report spending 30% or more of their income on housing (see Figure 2.16 on the following page). Twenty-two percent of tenants lived in core housing need (defined as living in unacceptable housing – crowded or in need of repair – and being unable to financially access acceptable housing).

The cost of new construction remains high in the region. Transportation costs for imported materials play a role. The building season is short. There are also very few builder/contractor firms in the region overall, including the City of Thompson. Construction projects must also compete in a tight labour market with the resource sector and Hydro projects for skilled labour and trades people. The result is a high degree of reliance on temporary construction workers from outside the region as well as low-input modular housing.

2.3.5 Non-Market Housing

Manitoba Housing (MH) provides affordable non-market housing in the City of Thompson and other regional centres. Non-market housing is also provided in Thompson by Keewatin Tribal Council (Keewatin Housing Authority, KHA) and University College of the North (UCN) as well as by

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Bachelor</th>
<th>1 Bedroom</th>
<th>2 Bedroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thompson</td>
<td>$548</td>
<td>$699</td>
<td>$771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winnipeg</td>
<td>$552</td>
<td>$697</td>
<td>$901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon</td>
<td>$448</td>
<td>$566</td>
<td>$734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steinbach</td>
<td>$478</td>
<td>$551</td>
<td>$710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portage la Prairie</td>
<td>$329</td>
<td>$519</td>
<td>$659</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2.16 - Housing Costs and Incomes in the City of Thompson
respective First Nations governments in First Nations communities, including in partnership with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

At present, Manitoba Housing administers 832 units across the Thompson Region as defined by the TEDWG stakeholders. Manitoba Housing’s portfolio includes 65 units in Thompson (see Figures 2.17 and 2.21).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Dwellings</th>
<th>MB Housing Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thompson</td>
<td>12,829</td>
<td>4,738</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway House</td>
<td>4,758</td>
<td>1,133</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross Lake</td>
<td>4,384</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson House</td>
<td>2,399</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford House</td>
<td>1,864</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillam</td>
<td>1,281</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churchill</td>
<td>813</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Sucker Lake</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Indian Lake</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochet</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaf Rapids</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilford</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thicket Portage</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gods Lake Narrows</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pikwitonei</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granville Lake</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Pas 5,513 2,188 239
Fin Flon 5,363 2,340 90

Figure 2.17 - Number of Manitoba Housing Units Across Communities

In combination with KHA, 144 units of affordable non-market housing are provided to KTC members residing in Thompson. The majority of KHA and MH units in Thompson are 3-bedroom units or larger (Figure 2.18). Only 30 2-bedroom units and four 1-bedroom units are available. KHA’s waiting list is similarly composed of households seeking larger dwelling units.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keeewatin Housing Authority</th>
<th># of units</th>
<th>1 Bed</th>
<th>2 Bed</th>
<th>3 Bed</th>
<th>4+ Bed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba Housing</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.18 - Affordable Housing Units in the City of Thompson

The University College of the North has an expanding portfolio of student housing in Thompson. As of 2012, UCN provides 55 places in dormitory residences on the existing campus on a first-come, first-serve basis. UCN has also purchased 38 apartment units, which will be available in 2014. Twenty-four family-oriented units (3-4 bedrooms) are under construction on the new campus site.

Forty percent of UCN’s student population comes from outside Thompson, including many who will reside in Thompson for only part of the year, for the length of a semester or a course. The majority of students are women, most in their late 20s and 30s, many of whom have children.

The City’s high-cost, low-vacancy rental market is especially challenging for students with limited means and a temporary foothold in Thompson. Indeed, UCN reports that the cost of housing and the limited options for students with families are primary deterrents for students who are accepted but do not enroll in programs in Thompson.

UCN anticipates needing at least 100 family units and 100 single units in the immediate term and even more units by 2020 to accommodate an expanding student population and effectively serve the region as a whole.

Housing is an equally important issue for high school students who have come to Thompson to attend R.D. Parker Collegiate. Housing costs for students without a high school in their home community are borne by the Province. Without purpose-built student housing for this group, students either board with a family (for a fee) or reside with relatives in Thompson. Overcrowding and isolation are risks and can undermine educational performance in this context.

Our Home Kikinaw provides low-income families with an opportunity to attain affordable home ownership in Thompson. The program provides no-down-payment, no-interest mortgages, with payments geared to income, and has begun construction on its second home.

2.3.6 Transitional and Emergency Housing

Transitional and emergency housing is provided in the City of Thompson by agencies including the Thompson Homeless Shelter, Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre, Thompson Crisis Centre, Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM) and YWCA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFM Thompson</th>
<th>1 Bed</th>
<th>2 Bed</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>beds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson Crisis Centre</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson Homeless Shelter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.20 - Emergency Housing Capacities in the City of Thompson

The AFM’s Eaglewood Addictions Centre in Thompson provides 24 beds for clients participating in its 28-day residential treatment program, accommodating approximately 300 individuals per year. Eighty percent of program participants come from regional communities outside Thompson. Accommodation supports do not extend to an individual’s withdrawal phase, which typically has to occur at home.

The Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre, as part of its supports to those transitioning to urban life in Thompson, includes a 14-bedroom hostel with shared facilities and a 24-hour staff presence.

The Thompson Crisis Centre has 28 beds available for women and children requiring emergency shelter. Typical stays on the emergency floor last for 7-10 nights. In addition, the Crisis Centre has six transition program units, where women and their children may stay for up to six months.
The Thompson Homeless Shelter operates 24 hours a day and provides 24 beds. In the 10 months to January 2012, the Shelter recorded 277 individuals using its facilities. Occupancy averaged 19 people per night; however, given seasonal fluctuations in demand, there are many nights of the year when the shelter is full and people are turned away – an average of five people per night. The average Shelter client stays for more than 20 nights in a year. A group of 20 individuals, however, use the shelter much more frequently, staying for over 175 nights per year each and accounting for over half of all stays.

Individuals requiring emergency shelter also stay in RCMP Thompson Intoxicated Persons Detention Area (IPDA). In total, 744 individuals stayed in the IPDA in 2011, including individuals who may have stayed in the IPDA as it was the only warm, safe alternative. The IPDA averages 12 people staying per night. The average individual stays for six nights in a year, though a group of 20 individuals stay in the IPDA for over 50 nights in a year.

It should be noted that a consistent population resides semi-permanently in camps and cars near the Burntwood River or in forested areas around the City or sleeps rough inside the City. Although some of this population use the Shelter or accesses transitional housing, not all do.

### 2.3.7 Employee Housing

Corporate ownership and renting of housing provides accommodation for a significant number of employees, either temporarily or permanently, and occupies a prominent por-

---

**Figure 2.21 - Housing Level of Service Map: Number of Manitoba Housing Units Per Community**
tion of units in the City of Thompson.

The full reach of such initiatives are difficult to quantify, given different programs (e.g., direct provision of housing, rental stipends) and different types of housing occupied (including long-term stays in hotels or detached houses shared by many workers) and varying length of accommodation (from month-long contracts and fly-in/fly-out workers to indefinite housing supports). However, the tight housing market, high job vacancy rates and the nature of work necessitate action on the part of many employers in the region.

For example, Vale provides accommodation in 30 units across the City, principally in the form of multi-unit dwellings but also including townhouses. Many units are occupied by more than one employee. Accommodation is provided as part of Vale’s Relocation Policy, assisting new domestic hires transitioning to Thompson with housing for up to 60 days. Vale also coordinates site visits for prospective new hires and welcome services after arrival.

Transitional housing supports are provided by organizations such as the Northern Regional Health Authority and some private sector employers, for example by assisting recently arrived immigrants. Medium-term accommodation, such as for construction workers, occupies many hotel rooms in the City but is also provided in rented, furnished homes.

2.4 Possible Partnerships

Possible partnerships to support new and expanded initiatives in the housing sector include both public and private sector sources.

Manitoba Housing has demonstrated a dedicated interest in housing issues in the North, including through the creation of a new Thompson office to administer public housing, housing programs and capital delivery for the northern region. Manitoba Housing’s Affordable Family Rental, HomeWORKS!, Rural and Native Housing and Neighbourhoods Alive! Neighbourhood Housing Assistance initiatives are directly applicable to needs identified in this report and, in some cases, have already supported expanded access to affordable housing in the region.

Engaged and ambitious First Nations governments are working to address housing shortfalls in reserve communities, including through the implementation of new models of financing, construction and unit design. At the same time, First Nations government, both individually and together, are leading players in the planning and provision of affordable housing in non-reserve communities such as Thompson. The mutually-beneficial links between these communities, most directly represented by nation members residing in the urban centre, require continued expansion of this regional-level role.

Federal level housing agencies and programs (e.g., Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, the Homelessness Partner-

ing Strategy) and provincial and federal economic development agencies can provide expertise as well as financial and in-kind support to regional actors.

Major employers in the region, including Manitoba Hydro and the Northern Regional Health Authority as well as private sector employers such as Vale, are engaged in the provision of housing to their employees and are responsive to addressing current problems in the housing sector, as they affect corporate performance. Major investments in hydro, mining and other projects will necessitate new housing in some areas and support sustained demand in others. These investments should be designed to closely match the long-term needs of the region as a whole. In other words, the millions of dollars spent on temporary accommodations for a project workforce should retain its value after project completion as long-term accommodation in a housing-poor region.

Private sector banks and credit unions can also play an influential role in expanding access to project or mortgage financing. Private investors, such as the Capital for Aboriginal Prosperity and Entrepreneurship Fund, have identified growth opportunities within the issues discussed in this report.

Finally, significant action in the housing sector will require participation of an engaged group of developers, builders, contractors, trades people and building managers. At present, many new projects look outside the region for investment, know-how and skills. Engagement with committed outsiders will help local stakeholders to attain their housing-related goals.

At the same time, all energies must be dedicated to developing local capacity, local expertise, local employment and local economic development. For example, future construction, renovation and housing prototype projects will contribute additional value to the community if links are maximized to UCN, its Carpentry, Plumbing, Electrician, and Facilities Technician Programs and the emerging Industrial Skills and Trades Training Centre (developed with TEDWG’s Education and Training Sub-Committee).

2.5 Barriers and Strengths

The stasis witnessed in Northern Manitoba’s housing sector appears locked in place.

Finite public financing and little market-driven activity restricts new housing starts in First Nations communities. A housing model at the mercy of transportation costs and outside labour means what funds do exist cannot catch up with the needs of a growing population, overcrowding or inadequate housing.

At the same time, near-zero percent rental vacancy rates and high monthly rental costs undermine the entry into Thompson of students, low-wage earners and low-income families. A lack of equity or past landlord references undermines those moving from reserve communities.
For a City of Thompson’s size, relatively few rental alternatives (e.g. subsidised, rent-geared-to-income) exist outside the private sector market. Even fewer non-employment-related supports exist for individuals and families seeking a transitional place to stay – those searching for a job, accessing health services or fleeing a bad home situation. A competitive buyers’ market, with few truly modern houses, confines some wage earners to the even tighter rental market. Prospective hires are deterred from settling in the region long term or at all. Much of the labour force is sourced from contract workers residing elsewhere. The City’s population declines.

Uncertainty in the resource sector’s future prospects deters some potential developers and investors, as well as potential home buyers, from investing in the North, unsure about the value of their investment in 10 or 20 years’ time. Where demand is most pressing – in the purpose-built rental market – the margins are tightest on attaining an attractive return on investment. Not enough new housing is built.

The succession of barriers to new housing construction and improved living conditions in the region appears to compound problem upon problem. However, other trends in Northern Manitoba point to alternative outcomes. The region’s population is young, growing at a rapid rate and mobile. According to employers, there are several hundred unfilled positions in the City today, many outside the resource sector. There is evident pent-up demand in the Thompson housing market, both for new rental units and new owner-occupied homes. There is also demand for new or renovated units that match the region’s present-day demographics. New, well-located lands have been brought onboard by the City for potential new residential and mixed-use development.

The City will not grow and the region will not prosper unless the growing regional population can be connected with the economic wealth creation associated with resource development and Thompson’s role as a regional service centre. Housing today is a barrier to this connection. Improved housing – more accessible forms of tenure for those moving to the City; newer, more appealing housing for those looking to stay long-term – will be key to guaranteeing a higher standard of quality of life and economic vitality.

Strong local housing administrators are working to address the identified issues, with growing portfolios, enhanced regional mandates and an interest in new housing models. The recently-formed Thompson Housing Authority brings together experienced member organizations in a new mission.

Northern Manitoba’s employers and local governments, including First Nations governments and regional tribal councils, are more experienced and directly engaged in housing provision than in most jurisdictions in Canada.

Major public and private sector investments are underway or planned for the near term, including in the resource sector and with Hydro. These will entail sustained high-wage employment and investments in adequately accommodating workers.

Notably, the TEDWG process demonstrates the potential results of cooperation between public, private and non-profit groups.

The barriers to action in the housing sector are numerous and entrenched. The long-running need for action – for planning, investment and new construction – is experienced by all population groups in the region as well as by employers and government administrators. The TEDWG process aims to unite these stakeholders behind a clearly defined, practical plan for action in the near term and beyond.
UCN students complete the framing of a prototype house in their Carpentry coursework and Apprenticeship Programs.
3. PRIORITY EVALUATION MATRIX

In light of the issues and opportunities outlined in Section 2, the TEDWG partners recognize that new policies, new initiatives and new partnerships are needed to provide the Thompson region and its residents with more varied, more modern and more affordable housing options. Such a renewed, robust housing base will be an essential element in sustained economic growth and diversification over the long term. Action, on the part of all TEDWG partners, is required.

The Baseline Study and sub-committee discussions undertaken as part of this study point to multiple needs and various opportunities for action. The sub-committee, therefore, has identified key criteria that are to be used to evaluate the feasibility of a possible project and its alignment with the objectives and values of the TEDWG process.

The selected criteria prioritize projects that:

1. Benefit both the City of Thompson and the Region as a whole;
2. Achieve immediate-term results;
3. Broaden housing options in terms of cost, tenure and/or unit type (including new ownership options);
4. Create new rental units and improve quality of the existing rental stock;
5. Extend housing supports to address a broader set of needs;
6. Maximize and improve local skills, knowledge and resources;
7. Address housing issues through regional partnerships;
8. Enhance the organizational sustainability and capacity of housing providers to finance and implement projects; and
9. Market Thompson and the region and highlight their strengths.

The criteria have been used in the Evaluation Matrix presented in Figure 3.1 in order to evaluate the feasibility and suitability of possible project opportunities. Project concepts scored 1.0 or 0.5 points, depending on their alignment with the criteria.

Project concepts (listed in Figure 3.1) were identified through consultation with the sub-committee, including at the sub-committee's April 2012 workshop. The concepts respond to identified housing needs, barriers and areas for collaborative action and are supported by precedent research of successful programs undertaken in communities facing similar challenges.

These possible project opportunities include:

1. Purpose-built employee housing (in partnership with regional employers);
2. Incentives for multiple-unit housing (e.g. ownership apartments, seniors housing);
3. Incentives for purpose-built rental housing;
4. Student housing (including for trainees);
5. Transitional housing (e.g. recently-arrived residents, new employees);

![Figure 3.1 - Project Evaluation Matrix](image-url)
6. ‘Housing First’ (housing for frequent systems users);
7. Affordable ownership program;
8. Rent bank;
9. Trainee-based renovations initiative;
10. Marketing Plan (including an extended baseline); and
11. Housing panelization plant.
4. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

4.1 Immediate-Term Actions (2012-2013)

The initiatives outlined in this chapter seek to meet the objectives put forward by the TEDWG Housing Sub-Committee. These activities have been prioritized given their feasibility and the likelihood of near-term results in keeping with TEDWG objectives. Specifically, the identified actions are designed to stimulate new housing starts and renovations in Thompson, broaden the housing options available to residents and prospective residents of the region and enhance the capacity of local actors to foster and deliver affordable and market housing.

The identified immediate term actions include:
1. A City of Thompson housing incentive program;
2. City of Thompson regulatory changes;
3. Project Northern Doorway (supportive housing);
4. Affordable family rental housing;
5. Marketing plan; and
6. Thompson Housing Authority and continued collaborative planning for housing.

4.1.1 City of Thompson Housing Incentive Program

Context:

With few privately-financed housing starts recorded in recent years, the City of Thompson has a key role to play in improving the financial feasibility of preferred housing projects. The City cannot overextend itself beyond its finite means, both financially and human resource-wise. However, where projects align with City objectives, the City possesses several important tools that can support and stimulate housing development and redevelopment.

Concept:

The City of Thompson should formalize a housing incentive program tied to explicit policy goals. Specifically, the City should bring together – and market – an incentive package that leverages the City’s role in land supply, zoning, development control, taxation and financing.

The City’s land sale pricing mechanism, once aligned with present-day market rates, should be calibrated to permit low-cost sales or leases for housing projects in line with the City’s interests as defined in the Thompson and Planning District Sustainable Community Plan and the Thompson and Planning District Development Plan.

Low prices should be offered for projects that satisfy secondary objectives (e.g. new multi-unit construction, affordable ownership, new development in slow construction years). New housing starts, including new market housing, are an important indicator of the health of the local economy.

Lower prices or free transfers should be available for proposals that match primary objectives (e.g. affordable rental, supportive housing, student housing, seniors housing). The reduced cost of land should serve as a construction subsidy capable of lowering rents and sales prices. Pre-development agreements with developers and restrictive covenants may be necessary to ensure that cost savings are in fact transferred to purchasers and tenants.

Density, height or coverage bonuses and the fast-tracking of plan reviews and permits should also be available for proponents of priority projects.

Eligibility criteria should be established for the incentive program. Support for rental projects should guarantee that units remain rented for a minimum of 20 years unless sold to the unit’s tenant. ‘Affordable rental’ and ‘affordable ownership’ definitions will need to be elaborated in the Thompson and Planning District Development Plan (see Section 4.1.2).

Finally, the City may support development activities in a priority area of the City (e.g. the Downtown) through a tax increment financing model. Grants may be drawn from a Community Revitalization Fund to assist with financing of projects that meet the City’s objectives.

Incentives would be available to property owners and developers (including public agencies) investing in housing developments or redevelopments in Thompson that accord with the City’s stated goals.

It is essential that the incentive program be well-documented, not just for marketing purposes but also to ensure transparency and, moreover, predictability for investors. Incentives that are short-term or subject to change will be less effective in attracting investment.

Where possible, links to Provincial incentive programs should be made, including capital grants for projects that address provincial priorities as well as pre-construction agreements regarding rent supplements and other supports.

Action:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undertake valuation study of land pricing</td>
<td>City, consultant</td>
<td>Q4 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adopt new land sale pricing structure for different zones and neighborhoods of the City | City | Q4 2012

Include bonusing provisions in updated City Zoning By-Law and District Development Plan | City | Q4 2012

Identify and rank priority housing project types for the incentive program | City | Q1 2013

Define eligibility criteria and related terminology | City | Q1 2013

Adopt discounted pricing scale for priority projects | City | Q1 2013

Adopt protocols for the prioritized review and processing of development applications | City | Q2 2013

Formally adopt and market City of Thompson Housing Incentives Program | City | Q2 2013

Study suitability of Tax Increment Financing legislation for priority revitalization areas | City, Province | Q2 2013

4.1.2 City of Thompson Regulatory Changes

Context:

As a related TEDWG initiative, the 2012 update of City of Thompson and Planning District Development Plan and Zoning By-Law has been informed by the goals put forward by the TEDWG Housing Sub-Committee. Modification and modernization of the regulatory framework will be an important step in fostering more housing starts and broader housing choices.

Concept:

The renewal of the City’s land development regulatory framework should include a suite of updates that endeavour to enable the new housing development Thompson requires.

Special emphasis should be placed, first, on stimulating new housing starts of all housing types and, second, on enabling the development of multi-unit and/or affordable ownership options, seniors-oriented housing, new purpose-built rental starts and a broader mix of uses and greater activity in the downtown. The integration of student housing options and affordable rental in all the City’s neighbourhoods should also be considered (the recent recognition of secondary suites is a valuable precedent).

Clearer direction on trailer court development and redevelopment will be beneficial, both in the context of new development (repeating an affordable ownership model of earlier eras) and as the individual dwellings and overall public realm of existing mobile home neighbourhoods evolve.

Regulatory changes that address stringent minimums (e.g. parking, site width) will be key to making housing options more financially feasible for investors and occupants.

Action:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revise Zoning By-Law to expand dwelling type and density options in identified areas, reduce parking requirements and permit greater mix of uses</td>
<td>City, consultant</td>
<td>Q4 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revise District Development Plan to outline vision for the evolution of existing neighbourhoods and for areas of new residential development and infill</td>
<td>City, consultant</td>
<td>Q4 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include City definitions of ‘Affordable Rental’ and ‘Affordable Ownership’ in the DDP</td>
<td>City, consultant</td>
<td>Q4 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare area-specific guidelines for the Downtown and Yale-Newman area that encourage a broader mix of uses and residential unit types</td>
<td>City, consultant</td>
<td>Q4 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review by-law alternatives to limit loss of rental housing stock while encouraging reinvestment and replacement, where appropriate</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Q1 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain multi-year developable land inventory for all residential development types</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.3 Project Northern Doorway - Supportive Housing

Context:

Emergency housing is presently provided in Thompson by the Thompson Homeless Shelter, providing 24 beds, as well as the Thompson Crisis Centre with 28 beds available for women and children. Transitional housing is available at the Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre and YWCA, under 20 units in total. The City does not have any medium-term housing options for individuals or families requiring in-house support services or looking to transition away from homelessness and addiction.

In the 10 months to January 2012, occupancy at the Shelter averaged 19 people per night; however, given seasonal fluctuations in demand, there are many nights of the year when the shelter is full and people are turned away – an
average of five people per night.

The Shelter reports that a group of 20 individuals use the shelter much more frequently, staying for over 175 nights per year each and accounting for over half of all stays. Frequent users of RCMP Thompson’s Intoxicated Persons Detention Area are also reported: a group of 20 individuals stay in the IPDA for over 50 nights in a year. This core group of frequent users also use ambulance and emergency health services to a disproportionate degree.

The annual cost for services to support an average frequent user in Thompson includes $10,632 in shelter costs, $2,820 for IPDA services, $3,701 for emergency room health care (15+ visits per year), and $2,730 for ambulance services: $19,882 in total.

**Concept:**

Project Northern Doorway was initiated in 2011 to work with and improve supports for the vulnerable and high needs homeless population in Thompson. The Project brings together the City’s shelter, affordable housing, mental health, health, social service and emergency service providers.

The Project seeks to reduce risk and harm to individuals and the community through the provision of programs, services and supports that reduce dependence on public services by high system users, in turn, improving the overall health of project participants. To do so, the Project will combine the provision of supervised, affordable housing with individualized and coordinated health, counseling and employment services.

To date, Project Northern Doorway has identified 28 frequent users of the Thompson Homeless Shelter, transitional housing centres in Thompson and related emergency and social support services.

The Project, with a Homelessness Coordinator from Manitoba Housing and a staff of homelessness outreach mentors, will work with these individuals to coordinate their access to health, mental health, addictions and occupational services while also providing them with the foundation of a safe, stable housing unit. As a first step, Project Northern Doorway will arrange housing access for individuals in private sector rental units.

**Action:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confirm participants and compile available information/data</td>
<td>PND Steering Committee</td>
<td>Q4 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare case management protocol</td>
<td>PND Case Management Group</td>
<td>Q4 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.1.4 Affordable Family Rental Housing**

**Context:**

In November 2011, Manitoba Housing solicited expressions of interest related to the development of affordable family rental housing units. The needs and opportunities identified in this report demonstrate the benefits that the construction of new or renovated affordable family rental housing can deliver to the region.

**Concept:**

As an important new public investment in Thompson post-TEDWG, Manitoba Housing and its partners should work to
ensure that decisions made regarding the location, building designs, tenancy arrangements and property management responsibilities reflect the priorities identified in this process as well as the close collaboration that led to this plan’s development. Specifically, the site and scale of the rental housing development should accord with the objectives and vision of the Housing Action Plan and the emerging District Development Plan. The project proponents should also ensure that the new units offered match the contemporary demographic and needs profile of the region, as described in Section 2 of this report.

Wherever possible, TEDWG stakeholders, including Manitoba Housing, should endeavour to plan and implement through collaborative and transparent means, ensuring buy-in from a broad group of stakeholders in this ambitious project. Similarly, links with locally-oriented training and apprenticeship programs (see the TEDWG Education and Training Action Plan) will extend the benefits of public investment in Manitoba’s North.

**Action:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify a location and building form for affordable family rental housing that accords with City objectives and MH needs</td>
<td>Manitoba Housing, City, Thompson Housing Authority members</td>
<td>Q4 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertake property purchase or transfer, as well as necessary zoning amendments, to permit construction</td>
<td>Manitoba Housing, City, Thompson Housing Authority members</td>
<td>Q4 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.1.5 Marketing Plan**

**Context:**

In light of the issues identified in this report and the work done by the many TEDWG stakeholders, the push to attract greater investment in housing (including both new construction and home purchases by committed residents) requires continued coordination. Branding and the dissemination of housing opportunity information will be important activities in the fostering of expanded investment in Thompson, in housing and overall.

**Concept:**

A Marketing Plan should be organized to publicize the opportunities present in the region, including key market and demographic indicators (a refined version of the Baseline Study included in this report) as well as the City’s incentive programs.

The Marketing Plan should enable production and dissemination of attractive and concise marketing and informational materials, packaged in a variety of formats (e.g. online, pamphlet, etc.). Currently, available City land is advertised on the City’s website but lacks links to other City policies and informal conversations undertaken by City officials related to housing interest.

Importantly, the Marketing Plan should link with the Place Branding Strategy prepared by TEDWG’s Local and Regional Identity Sub-Committee.

The Marketing Plan activity can also serve as an important early-stage task for the Thompson Housing Authority as it takes on an expanded role as housing advocate and information centre for residents and investors.

**Action:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extend the housing baseline to include updated real estate market activity and all 2011 Census data</td>
<td>City, Thompson Housing Authority</td>
<td>Q1 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize baseline and City incentive programs in a marketing package (online and print material, at a minimum), in coordination with the TEDWG place branding strategy</td>
<td>City, Thompson Housing Authority</td>
<td>Q1 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertake semi-annual market analysis (e.g. rental list, median rates) and updates of the housing baseline</td>
<td>Thompson Housing Authority</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.1.6 Thompson Housing Authority and Continued Collaborative Planning**

**Context:**

The Thompson Housing Authority was established in November 2009. The Housing Authority brings together key stakeholders in the community, including the City of Thompson, Keewatin Tribal Council, Manitoba Metis Federation, Thompson Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation, Thompson Region of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre and Thompson Crisis Centre, as well as several ex-officio members, in a stated mission “to promote a healthy housing environment in the City of Thompson through research, advocacy, capacity building, coordination of services, housing policy development and property development initiatives.”

**Concept:**

Given its representative membership and acknowledged
mandate, the Thompson Housing Authority will continue to serve as an important facilitator of housing-related collaboration and advocacy in the City and, potentially, the region.

In the immediate term, the THA is well-placed to coordinate and support collaborative planning and implementation efforts building from the work of the TEDWG Housing Subcommittee. The implementation strategies identified in this Action Plan require continued collaboration between stakeholder groups as well as strategic oversight and reporting. Without a formal setting for this collaboration, momentum may be lost. In addition to the THA’s current monthly meetings, the THA may serve as the facilitator of initiative-specific meetings, responsible for maintaining both cooperation and progress on project ideas.

Also in its first stage of staffing, the THA should develop a role as a housing information centre, maintaining the housing profile (baseline) of the City and region for decision-makers, grant applications and interested investors and providing information on financing programs available to landlords and owners in the City. In this role, the THA can also inform the discussions and activities of the collaborative planning group.

Longer term, with secure funding and demonstrated expertise, the THA may be best placed to take on the administration of City-level affordable ownership and rent bank programs as well as how-to-be-a-homeowner workshops and similar programming. The THA, as a city-wide, multi-stakeholder organization, may also be well-placed to lead a renovation-and-resale, Housing Opportunity Partnership-style program to modernize and make the most of Thompson’s older housing stock.

**Action:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fill one full-time staff position at the Thompson Housing Authority to coordinate THA activities and act as housing information resource</td>
<td>Thompson Housing Authority</td>
<td>Q4 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify preferred format for continued collaborative project development, oversight meetings and reporting</td>
<td>TEDWG Housing Sub-Committee Members</td>
<td>Q4 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Medium-Term Actions

The activities identified in Section 4.1 represent initiatives that directly address objectives identified through the TEDWG process and are feasible for implementation in the near term.

Nonetheless, additional priorities across the housing continuum require attention and action on the part of TEDWG stakeholders in the medium term and beyond. To be fully realized, these initiatives may also require the development of greater organizational capacity, formation of new partnerships or access to additional funding sources not available at present.

**Employee Housing**

As outlined in Section 2, employee housing forms an influential part of the overall housing market. Short-term contractors occupy hotel spaces as well as company-leased rental units. Longer-term employees, when first arriving in Thompson, often require employer support in accessing housing, whether for the first six months or longer.

In turn, housing constitutes a key factor in employee recruitment and retention and, given Northern Manitoba’s distinct conditions, influences operational costs for major employers in the region. The investment that employers make in the rental market does not always guarantee that the existing housing stock fits the needs of employers and employees. In addition, such interventions potentially increase competition for small rental units, shown to be relatively high in cost in Thompson.

A partnership project by employers, the City and regional housing providers could create purpose-built employee housing and would introduce new units to a tight, static rental market. Such a project may also have the benefit of introducing new investment and new uses in a priority area of the City, if aligned with the City’s updated District Development Plan.

**Student Housing**

The University College of the North will continue to play a crucial role in the ongoing economic diversification of Thompson and the region. However, to properly serve students from both the City and nearby communities, UCN requires additional student housing, including housing that fits the unique profile of the student body – a fact recognized in UCN’s plans to have 100 dormitory units and 100 family units available in the near term.

Relocation to the new UCN campus in 2014 could enable conversion of existing buildings (classrooms and offices) to student residences. However, additional purpose-built student housing will be required to support students moving to Thompson for higher education. As with employee housing, student housing can be leveraged as an important investment and catalyst in identified priority areas of the City, bringing new construction and new street life to central areas of the City.

**Transitional Housing**

Thompson and the region both benefit from the City’s ability to accommodate individuals moving to Thompson for the long term or for a short stay. Unlike in some Manitoba communities, many of these moves are short-term but recurrent, as befits a regional hub. In all cases, a secure, affordable, healthy landing spot is fundamental to one’s
success in settling in the City and accessing employment, education and health services.

At present, only the Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre’s 14 bedrooms provide formal transitional housing for members of other Northern communities. Expanded transitional housing in the City would help many individuals on their move to and from Thompson and, in some cases, would lessen the reliance on emergency shelter options. A greater emphasis on transitional housing options on the part of housing providers would also strengthen regional links, acknowledging migration as a positive fact of life in the North.

**Modest Market Rental**

To properly serve the full continuum of tenant households in what is currently a competitive rental market, housing supports should also be directed towards key worker households and working-poor or modest income households.

Where appropriate, Manitoba Housing, Keewatin Housing Authority and Thompson Housing Authority should look at opportunities for developing and managing modest market rental units with different eligibility criteria than their existing stock, as both a means of expanding housing options in Thompson and a way of financing more affordable housing projects.
UCN students will frame a prototype house as part of the course work for the Carpentry/Woodworking Program.
THE THOMPSON ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION WORKING GROUP

ACTION PLAN #3: HOUSING

Province of Manitoba  |  Northern Association of Community Councils |  Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation | Thompson Chamber of Commerce |  Vale
UCN students will frame a prototype houses as part of the course work for the Carpentry/Woodworking Program.
5. CONCLUSION

As highlighted by the participants in the TEDWG process, economic diversification in the Thompson Region cannot fully take shape without a solid base of modern, diverse and affordable housing. The present housing on offer, both in Thompson and across the region, is inadequate to support these economic, educational and personal aspirations. This deficit is experienced by all population groups in the region as well as by employers and government administrators.

This Housing Action Plan, in conjunction with the other initiatives launched by the TEDWG, seeks to foster new and broader housing options for the region’s residents and prospective residents. In all cases, the priority action items identified in the Plan endeavour to build on the efforts of local service providers and enhance their capacity to control their own housing destiny.

As with economic diversification overall, the housing sector presents entrenched challenges but also significant opportunities for action: for investment, skills development, community renewal and the application of new housing models. Above all, the North’s housing issues demand collaborative action between stakeholder groups, united in the implementation and ownership of a targeted and clearly-defined program to build a stronger and healthier Thompson Region.