"YOU CAN'T CHOOSE YOUR NEIGHBOURS, YOU CHOOSE HOW TO ENGAGE WITH YOUR NEIGHBOURS:"

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF GOOD NEIGHBOUR PLANS IN EDMONTON, ALBERTA

Prepared by: Sydney Sheloff, Strategic Research Officer

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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◗ Background

A Good Neighbour Plan (GNP) is intended to integrate affordable or supportive housing within communities by offering a developer and/or operator-led plan to address potential community concerns and offers a communication mechanism for prospective neighbours to contact the developer/operator should issues related to the building's operations arise. GNPs have an important function of opening dialogue between affordable housing providers and the communities they are moving into. On the one hand, they allow developers to assuage any fears or concerns the community has and can act as a "starting point" to more intensive community engagement and relationship building. On the other hand, GNPs are structured in a way that exacerbate conflict, and in doing so reinforce stereotypes about people who live in affordable housing, and can embolden Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) beliefs and behaviours.

The Edmonton Social Planning Council (ESPC) interviewed experts working in the development and operation of affordable housing in order to learn how they understand GNPs within their own work. This report will describe what they understand the function of GNPs to be, as well as the impacts they have on their organizations, tenants of affordable housing, community building, and wider efforts towards equity, diversity, and anti-racism. Ultimately, this study will outline housing providers' perspectives on whether or not GNPs are actually needed when developing affordable housing in Edmonton, and if there are better ways of engaging with one's neighbours.

◗ Results
How do developers understand GNPs?

Affordable housing developers are committed to developing good neighbourly relationships, maintaining the physical space of their developments, and creating opportunities for community members to better understand their work. For some organizations then, Good Neighbour Plans are a statement of their philosophy and an outline for how they will demonstrate their commitment to being a good neighbour.

Participants discussed that GNPs were successful in "opening doors" to communication between the developer and the larger community – it allowed them to introduce themselves, the work they do, and why that work is important, as well as provide channels of communication.

However, oftentimes, GNPs become just a "checkbox" completed in the development phase. They are another hoop to jump through to get a development approved, a document that is signed and then never revisited.

Several respondents spoke to the lack of legacy within GNPs. At the time of development, developers will engage with community leaders and sign a Good Neighbour Plan. However, neighbourhoods are constantly changing. New community leaders were not involved in, nor have sufficient information on, the original engagement and the understandings or agreements that were made. Thus, the GNP becomes "null and void."

GNPs were seen as a mechanism to ensure affordable housing providers sufficiently engaged with community and offer protection against potential community backlash. GNPs may comfort existing residents and signal to the community that they do not need to be defensive against this new development

GNPs were described as a "supplementary tool that kind of steps outside the land use bylaw." Zoning bylaws already exist that dictate *what* can be built where. Participants argued that GNPs are used to dictate *who* can live where.

Affordable housing developers and operators have to play by different rules than market housing developers. Participants argued that these different rules are based in assumptions and stereotypes of affordable housing. There is an underlying assumption that affordable housing developments are inherently more likely to cause conflict than market housing ones, and thus need a complaint resolution mechanism.

Implications on organizations

Several respondents described how the process of creating a GNP is time and resource intensive, and as a result, imposes extra barriers into their work. GNPs pose a financial burden, several developers explained that they did not have the internal capacity, in terms of staff time, to complete a GNP. As such, many of them hire costly consultants to do the work.

Participants argued that GNPs takes work organizations have already been doing informally and turns them into more rigid and prescriptive processes. The rigidity can hamper the developers and operators ability to do the work they do.

Participants also talked about how GNPs can delay construction. GNPs are created before construction even begins, which means developers may have limited information about what the construction process will look like, yet still

need to make promises about it. When things change and the construction process differs from what was outlined in the GNP, "residents may think that we're not being transparent," which can impact trust in the developer. Additionally, organizations may have to update a GNP, which ends up delaying the development even more.

The principles of the City of Edmonton's Affordable Housing Investment Guidelines C601 emphasizes the principle of effectiveness, which includes supporting expeditious development of affordable housing projects. Yet, participants have made it clear that the extra steps affordable housing developers must go through to get developments approved slows down the development process.

Many of the participants and their organizations had a proven track record of successful community engagement and had a long-standing positive reputation in their communities. Some found these GNPs to be insulting to that reputation. Underlying GNPs is an assumption that affordable housing developers and their tenants cannot be trusted to be good neighbours unless there is a mechanism in place to hold them accountable.

Implications on tenants

Several participants argued that Good Neighbour Plans (GNP) infringe on their tenants' right to privacy. Through the process of creating GNPs, community residents come to believe they are entitled to the personal information about who would be moving into an affordable housing development. This is fundamentally an issue of equity – these same community members would not ask these questions to developers of a market rental development, nor homes meant to be sold.

The issues of privacy are intractably linked to Not in My Back Yard (NIMBY) sentiments. Underlying the desire to know who is moving into a development is the assumption that current residents and business owners have the right to determine who gets to move into their neighbourhood on what terms, and "nobody wants to have somebody that's considered affordable housing in their neighborhood."

In GNPs, responsibility for being a 'good neighbour' is put solely on the affordable housing provider, and communities do not have a reciprocal responsibility to be good neighbours to the folks who would be moving in. As a result, engagement turns into the affordable housing provider 'proving' how they will be good neighbours and conform to standards dictated by the existing residents, and the existing community defending themselves against a perceived threat.

Several respondents argued that GNPs reinforce stereotypes about tenants who would move into a development. All respondents agree that community engagement is an essential step in the development of affordable housing. The issue with GNPs is that the engagement process centers potential problems and how those problems will be mitigated, rather than centering how the different groups may come together and develop community. This centering of conflict reinforces the assumption that folks living in affordable housing will cause problems in the neighbourhood.

Having misunderstandings or challenges with one's neighbour is something that can happen to anyone, and the city already has mechanisms in place to help homeowners deal with these challenges. GNPs introduce a different mechanism to deal with challenges that occur with neighbours in affordable housing, it adds a layer of nuance – that these challenges are different, more extreme, require bigger interventions. There is an assumption inherent in GNPs that affordable housing tenants are more likely to cause problems and thus need to be controlled.

Implications on wider efforts towards equity, diverity, and inclusion

Some participants agreed that GNPs are generally successful in increasing diversity in a community. A core function of GNPs is to protect affordable housing developments from pushback that could shut a development down. Given that Indigenous and racialized people living in Edmonton are disproportionately in need of affordable housing, GNPs may help to ensure that developments that would house these communities will get built. However, while GNPs may be successful in increasing diversity in neighbourhoods, they do not necessarily increase inclusion of these diverse groups or support efforts towards anti-racism.

Previous research has found that people who agree with negative stereotypes about racial minorities also agree with negative stereotypes about affordable housing. This suggests that pushback against affordable housing is linked to racist attitudes. If GNPs are reinforcing stereotypes of those living in affordable housing, then by extension, they reinforce stereotypes of racialized people.

In 2022, the City of Edmonton implemented it's anti-racism strategy, which aims to "support the equity of racialized communities in Edmonton," and to challenge systemic racism within the City of Edmonton corporation. GNPs reinforce stereotypes about affordable housing and racialized communities, reinforce traditional power structures, and may serve to perpetuate racial inequity in terms of housing access. If the city is committed to it's anti-racism strategy, it follows that it should challenge this policy.

Community engagement done for affordable and supportive housing developments is deeply tied to community engagement in the sector overall. Challenging stereotypes about affordable housing, homelessness, poverty, addiction, and mental health all go hand-in-hand. As such, affordable housing developers often partner with other community groups and non-profits to engage in collaborative community building activities. This work is seen to not be connected to the GNP, but is all about leadership, organizational philosophies, and who is working in an organization.

This illustrates an inherent irony within GNPs. GNPs may reinforce class and racial stereotypes and uphold traditional power structures. In the beginning stages, affordable housing providers must prove that a) their tenants deserve housing, and b) their tenants will be good neighbours and conform to standards set out by community. However, once a development has actually been built and folks have moved in, there are opportunities for larger community development projects that bring together different social groups, create spaces for relationships building, and ultimately combat these inequitable power structures and the stereotypes that uphold them. Organizations are forced to solve problems that they created.

However, organizations often struggle with the capacity to actually do this community building work, limited resources are funneled into creating GNPs rather than activities that will actually bring communities together.

Are good neighbour plans needed

This report sought to evaluate whether or not Good Neighbour Plans are needed in the development of affordable housing in Edmonton. However, opinions on this issue are not so black and white.

Some participants held very strong opinions about whether or not Good Neighbour Plans should exist. Some believed that GNP are essential in the development of affordable housing. Others argued they should not exist as they have little value in the development of affordable housing, and add extra barriers that can prevent housing from getting developed.

The majority of participants held complicated feelings about GNPs and their usefulness. Some explained that, while they recognize the complications within Good Neighbour Plans, they more or less just accept that they have to do them. These participants are already doing the work that a GNP asks them to do, but the GNP adds in nuances that complicate their work.

These viewpoints reveal questions for further reflection: do the purported benefits of GNPs outweigh the harm the create? Does understanding and valuing the intention outweigh the harmful ways they are enacted in reality?

Recommendations

Participants gave suggestions for how GNPs could be reimagined to address some of the negative impacts they noticed. They also gave ideas for how the affordable housing space needs to change in general.

Participants argued that public engagement should not be about asking for permission to move into a neighbourhood, but rather, how different groups can come together to build community. In particular, some argued there should be more reciprocity in GNPs. The communities affordable housing developments are moving into need to be held accountable to be good neighbours as well.

Respondents discussed how affordable housing is integral to revitalizing older and/or homogenous communities, and play a critical role in their future. Communities may be concerned about the ways in which affordable housing will change the nature of their community, conversations need to shift and emphasize how change is good.

It is important to frame affordable housing not as a threat, but as something that is filling the needs of community. Oftentimes, affordable housing is thought of as something that brings outsiders into a community, but the truth is, there are people who need access to affordable housing in all neighbourhoods across Edmonton.

Several participants discussed that GNPs could be just a "check box" that ultimately have little value in the long run, or they can be the first step in ongoing and robust community engagement.. Community development efforts can help to bring together diverse groups of people to develop relationships and address the conditions that allow NIMBYism to occur. Several respondents argued that affordable housing developers should be held accountable to engage in larger community development efforts.

However, it is questionable wether GNPs are the correct mechanism to operationalize these reccomendations

▶Conclusion

As described throughout this report, GNPs are created on inherently discriminatory practices:

1 The fact that affordable housing providers need to fill these plans out, while market developers do not, perpetuates the belief that affordable housing, and the tenants who live in these developments, are untrustworthy and a source of conflict that needs to be controlled.

2 The city already has mechanisms in place to support Edmontonians in dealing with issues they may be having with their neighbours. The fact that there is a different mechanism to deal with challenges with an affordable housing neighbour implies these challenges are different, more extreme, and require bigger interventions.

3 GNPs create unequal power dynamics wherein pre-existing community members believe they get to determine who gets to move into their community and on what terms, and often make these decisions based on stereotypes.

4 GNPs create a situation in which affordable housing providers must prove their low-income, and often racialized tenants will conform to the behavioural standards of a white, middle-class community.

These discriminations are founded on stereotypes about affordable housing tenants. There is an assumption that affordable housing will reduce property values, cause social unrest and disturbances, or increase crime in a neighbourhood, despite the fact that there is no evidence to back these assumptions up. GNPs operate as a way to re-assure pre-existing community members that these issues will not happen in their community, and instate mechanisms to deal with any grievances that come up. In doing so, however, GNP end up reinforcing these stereotypes and harming the tenants who would move in to an affordable housing development.

Several contradictions emerge between the intentions of Good Neighbour Plans and how they operate in reality:

1. Good neighbour plans are intended to assuage fears a community may have about affordable housing moving into their community, but in doing so, they reinforce the belief that conflict will happen.

2. Affordable housing developers use GNPs as a starting off point for community development activities that bring diverse communities together. However, the development of a GNP reinforces negative stereotypes about affordable housing tenants and emboldens NIMBY behaviours. Thus, affordable housing providers are attempting to solve the very problems they created.

3. The act of filing out and doing engagement for GNPs is resource intensive, and thus diverts resources away from activities that would actually build positive and meaningful relationships.

City of Edmonton decision makers need to ask themselves: Can these discrimination and contradictions be amended in a satisfying and meaningful way? Or will these discriminations continue to underly the Good Neighbour Plan, no matter how many amendments are made?

As one participant articulated: "you have a right to have a home. That's a fundamental human right. You can't choose your neighbors. What you do, is choose how to engage with your neighbors." GNPs cannot operate as a de facto way to gain permission to move into a neighbourhood. Nor can they provide a platform to dissent to low-income and racialized Edmontonians access to housing. This violates the human rights of those who would live in affordable housing. Due to these reasons, GNPs should not be required to develop affordable housing in Edmonton.

Affordable housing developers and operators interviewed for this project clearly illustrated that there needs to be a fundamental shift in how we view and treat affordable housing within Edmonton. Current processes, including the Good Neighbour Plan, uphold traditional power structures and put barriers in place that harm low-income and racialized Edmontonians who are seeking affordable housing. There needs to be more conversation about how those living in affordable and market housing can come together to level power imbalances, build community, challenge stereotypes, and eradicate NIMBY beliefs and behaviours. This shift cannot be achieved through individual plans.

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▶ **Introduction**

A Good Neighbour Plan (GNP) is intended to integrate affordable or supportive housing within communities by offering a developer and/or operator-led plan to address potential community concerns and offer a communication mechanism for prospective neighbours to contact the developer/operator should issues related to the building's operations arise. GNPs are produced by developers with City input to detail how they will be "good neighbours" to the community and explain how they will deal with any issues that come up. However, there are concerns within Edmonton's affordable housing community that these GNPs may not be achieving their intended claims .

GNPs have an important function of opening dialogue between affordable housing providers and the communities they are moving into. On the one hand, they allow developers to assuage any fears or concerns the community has and can act as a "starting point" to more intensive community engagement and relationship building. On the other hand, GNPs are structured in a way that exacerbate conflict, and in doing so reinforce stereotypes about people who live in affordable housing, and can embolden Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) beliefs and behaviours.

The Edmonton Social Planning Council (ESPC) interviewed experts working in the development and operation of affordable housing in order to learn how they understand GNPs within their own work. This report will describe what developers and operators understand the function of GNPs to be, as well as the impacts they have on their organizations, tenants of affordable housing, community building, and wider efforts towards equity, diversity, and anti-racism. Ultimately, this study will outline housing providers' perspectives on whether or not GNPs are actually needed when developing affordable housing in Edmonton, and if there are better ways of engaging with one's neighbours.

⏵ BACKGROUND CONTEXT

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is, quite simply, housing that has rents or payments below average market cost. It is long-term housing targeted to households that earn less than the median income for their household size. It is often provided in multi-unit residential structures such as apartment buildings, row housing, and duplexes or triplexes. Affordable housing requires government money to build or operate (City of Edmonton, n.d.d.).

Rents or payments are tailored in a few different ways. In community (or social) housing, which is targeted for people with lower incomes, rent is geared to tenants' income, which means that rent is 30% of the tenants adjusted gross monthly household income. For those on income support from Alberta Works, rent is the core shelter rate (Civida, n.d.).

Near market housing is geared towards people with moderate incomes. It means that tenants pay rent that is 10 to 20% below current market rental rates (Civida, n.d.)

Mixed income housing provides housing to people of varying needs in the same building, and leases units at both affordable and market rates (Civida, n.d.). In mixed market housing, tenants have the ability to transition between different rent arrangements as their income changes while staying in the same unit.

Supportive housing is a type of affordable housing that comes with on-site wraparound support services (Homeward Trust, n.d.). This type of housing is intended for persons with disabilities, older adults, single adults, and those people at risk of or experiencing houselessness (City of Edmonton, 2022a).

Affordable Housing in the City of Edmonton

The City of Edmonton's 2016-2025 affordable housing strategy framed housing and access to affordable housing as a right and considered it fundamental to the physical, economic, and social well-being of individuals, families, and communities (City of Edmonton, n.d.c.; Populous Community Planning Inc., 2015). However, in it's 2023-2026 affordable housing strategy, this language has changed and the city now refers to housing as "fundamental to human dignity; the physical, economic and social well being of individuals, families and communities" (City of Edmonton, n.d.e., p. 27).

Housing is more than just the physical structure. The City of Edmonton's own policy statement asserts that affordable housing is "fundamental to the physical, economic, and social well-being of individuals and families and key to maintaining diverse and inclusive communities." (Citizen Services, 2019). Access to a 'home' can foster community, and in turn enhances well-being and feelings of belonging.

However, many Edmontonians continue to struggle to access affordable housing due to systemic barriers that continue to exist in our housing system. Edmonton's Affordable Housing Needs Assessment found that Edmonton has over 360,000 homes, but fewer than 15,000 affordable and social housing units (City of Edmonton, 2022a). There are approximately 46,000 Edmonton households experiencing core housing need (City of Edmonton, 2022a). This means that Edmonton does not have enough affordable housing stock to meet the needs of Edmontonians.
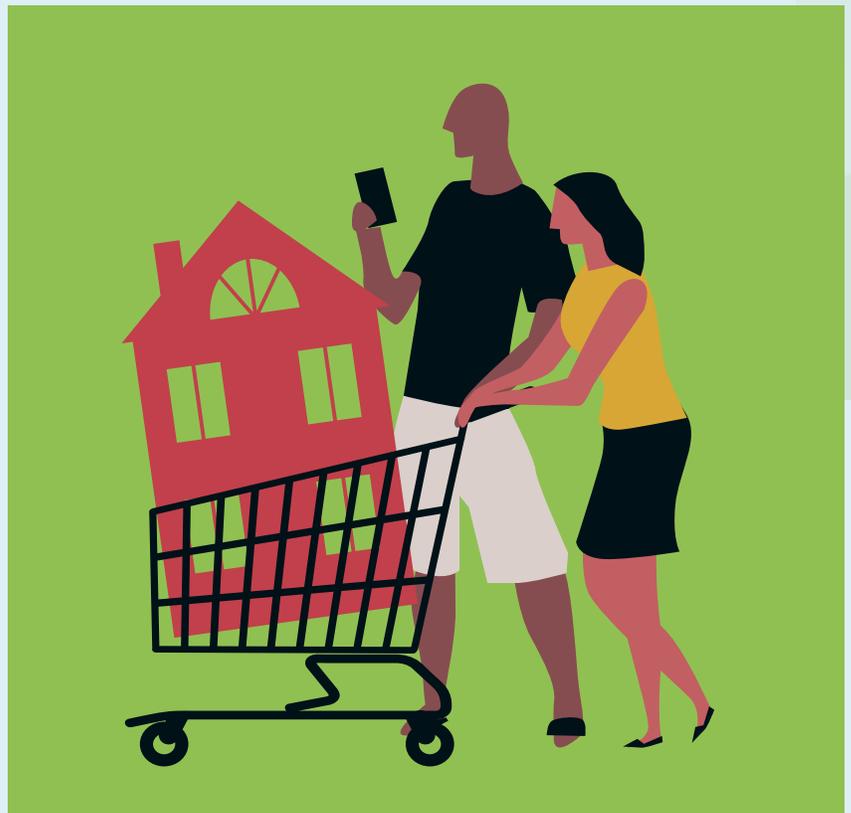
NIMBY and Barriers to Housing

Some of the biggest barriers to affordable housing developments are ideological. One of the most common forms of opposition to affordable housing developments is NIMBY (Not In My Backyard). While people may agree that affordable housing is important, they do not want it in their neighbourhoods. Developments that would expand affordable housing stock are seen to pose a risk to the dynamic and safety of a neighborhood. Reasons for this include fear, racism, safety, and concerns around decreased property values. These views are often rooted in stereotypes and biases rather than facts or data (Ngo, 2019).

One of the most common NIMBY sentiments is the perception that housing developments that bring in low-income individuals would also bring in an increase in crime. However, there are no discernible impacts from these types of developments on crime rates (Ngo, 2019). In fact, one study in Toronto showed that these housing developments did not negatively impact property values or crime rates in the area. Instead, crime rates decreased and property values increased. A wider Canadian study of 146 supportive housing

sites concluded there was no statistically significant evidence that supportive housing led to increased rates of reported crimes of any kind (Ontario Human Rights Commission, n.d.).

Previous research has found that the public differentiates between those who "deserve" access to affordable housing and those who do not. There are those who are situationally homeless, through means outside of their control such as a job loss, eviction, or mental health crisis, and those who seemingly choose to be homeless, or became homeless due to poor decision making. The public tends to be more accepting of affordable housing developments that support the situationally homeless who will take 'responsibility' to improve their lives, but do not support developments for those who "choose" to be homeless. There is a stigma that those who "choose" to be homeless will not make an effort to improve their situation and cause social disorder in the neighborhoods housing would be located (Adams, Carroll, & Gutierrex, 2022).

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These stigmas have consequences on community buy-in towards affordable housing developments in neighborhoods across the city. Negative perceptions of these groups serve to perpetuate discriminatory practices and in turn influences the community's ability to make decisions and form opinions about policies related to affordable housing. As a result, it centralizes political power to an already entitled group – the preexisting community – who prioritizes their own interests over the betterment of the community (Ngo, 2019).

As demonstrated above, stigma surrounding those living on low-income is persistent when it comes to the affordable housing landscape (Populus Community Planning Inc., 2015). However, stigma can quickly escalate from pushback against affordable housing in one's "back yard," to pushback against the development of affordable housing as a whole. Dissenting viewpoints range from concerns that affordable housing is not a productive use of tax dollars (especially municipal funds) and that it is not the government's job to subsidize someone's rent because of what is perceived to be someone's own "poor choices." Instead, they would prefer the free market to play itself out (Populus Community Planning Inc., 2015).

Racism and Housing

Low-income stigma is deeply tied to racism. Various studies have shown that people tend to associate poverty with racial minorities which ultimately influences the social policy positions and behaviors of those who hold these biases. (Ngo, 2019). When racialized people do experience poverty, they are more likely to be categorized as 'undeserving.' They are poor not because of systemic barriers and discrimination, but because of their personal choices (Bridges, 2017). Racism and discrimination act as hurdles to accessing suitable housing.

For Indigenous people living in Canada, a lack of housing is more than simply a lack of a structure in which to live, Indigenous homelessness:

> "is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships" (Thistle, 2017).

A lack of access to affordable and appropriate housing is a direct result of colonization and its enduring legacy today, cultural genocide, and contemporary discrimination. Colonial policies designed to erase Indigenous cultures – including residential schools and the sixties scoop – and attempted destruction of traditional forms of governance and ways of life have produced lasting trauma, and created the conditions that allow Indigenous homelessness to exist. These forces have produced stereotypes that Indigenous people are more likely to be homeless due to inherent character flaws. These stereotypes affect the way Indigenous people are treated when they try to access housing (Thistle, 2017).

Research has shown that Indigenous peoples are more likely to face issues of discrimination and racism, which in turn impacts their ability to access housing. For example, stories have been relayed of landlords not being responsive to issues of mold or other safety concerns with Indigenous renters (City of Edmonton, 2022a). In more extreme cases, landlords have refused to rent to Indigenous people due to stereotypes about them (Thistle, 2017). More than half (59%) of Indigenous peoples residing in Edmonton are renters. Among these renters, one-third (33%) are in core housing need and nearly one-quarter (23%) are spending more than half of their income on rent and utilities. About one-sixth (16%) live in overcrowded conditions (City of Edmonton, 2022a). Canada-wide, Indigenous peoples living off-reserve represented 9.4% of renters in social and affordable housing (Claveau, 2020).

Racialized people face disparities in terms of housing access. Over a quarter of racialized renter households are in core housing need in Edmonton (City of Edmonton, 2022a). Canada-wide, visible minorities represent 40% of renters in affordable housing (Claveau, 2020). Racialized people living in Canada face discrimination that limits their access to quality housing. For example, Black people living in Canada have reported racial discrimination from landlords who refuse to rent to certain ethnic groups due to stereotypes held about them (Springer, 2021).

Municipal policies, such as zoning bylaws, can have a direct impact on racialized Edmontonians access to housing. For example, narrow definitions of 'single-family homes' and restrictions on what is permitted to be built in residential areas have historically limited access to multi-generational homes that many newcomer and Indigenous families prefer to live in (Populus Community Planning Inc., 2015).

Since Indigenous and racialized people are in greater need of affordable housing, any pushback against new affordable housing developments will disproportionately impact them. Conversely, stereotypes and unconscious biases about Indigenous and Racialized people may influence push back against affordable housing (Bridges, 2017; Tighe, 2011). Previous research has found that people who agree with negative stereotypes about racial minorities also agree with negative stereotypes about affordable housing (Tighe, 2011). Multiple interlocking processes work together to limit Indigenous and Racialized people's access to affordable housing.
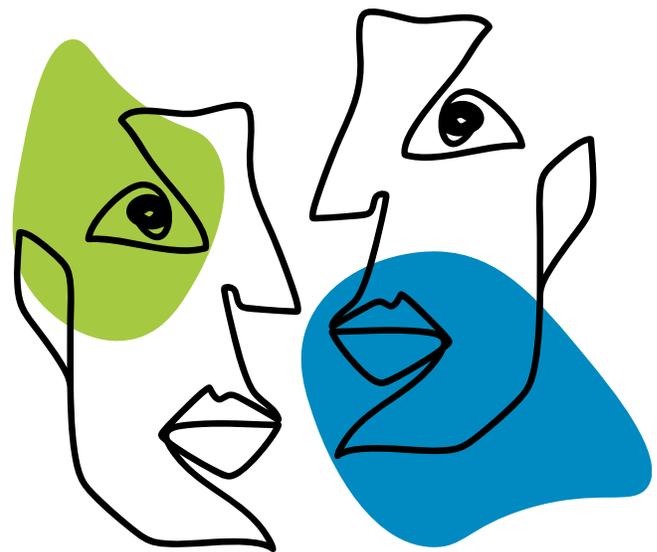
What is a "good" neighbour?

In the most simple of terms, a neighbour is "a person who lives next to you or near you" (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, 2023). However, definitions of what a "good" neighbour is can be very personal and context dependent. Most mentions of being a good neighbour include things like getting to know your neighbours and establishing communication, and when conflicts emerge, "respectfully make your neighbours aware of it, and allow them the opportunity to correct or change what they have been doing" (Strathcona County, 2023). Other qualities include being an active part of the community, and being respectful, trusting, and friendly, particularly to new residents (TownSQ, 2020). Good neighbourhoods are those where people know and trust each other and have mutual understanding.

THE GOOD NEIGHBOUR PLAN

Good Neighbour Plans are required by the City of Edmonton for affordable housing providers to complete to receive funding for an affordable housing development. They require affordable housing developers to detail their commitments to being a good neighbour and how they will resolve any issues that may come up. Developers also have the option to describe how they will engage in relationship-building activities with the community.

Homeward Trust Edmonton (n.d.) states that a Good Neighbour Plan is a method to 'strike a balance' between rights and responsibilities. Rights include the right to housing, community, security and privacy, while responsibilities, taken directly from Homeward Trust Edmonton, include:

"The provider to facilitate community integration and have a feedback and grievance process;

Individual residents of Supportive Housing facilities to commit to being good neighbours;

Community members recognize that a Supportive Housing site is a home and that the people that live there have the same rights to housing, safety, and security as all community members." (Homeward Trust, n.d.).

Homeward Trust further posits that "the residents, staff and neighbours of Supportive Housing sites all have a shared interest in maintaining a safe environment, and these plans can evolve and change over time as needed." (Homeward Trust, n.d.).

A central tenett of Good Neighbour Plans is establishing an issue resolution process. Affordable housing developers are expected to "Indicate who the community can contact for emergency and non-emergency situations.; provide specific contact information (email address and phone number) for your representative; outline timelines and how concerns will be responded to, including the process of escalating unresolved matters if applicable." (City of Edmonton, n.d.b.). Homeward trust further states: "If a tenant's actions put other tenants or the community at risk, the Supportive Housing site Operators will work to address and mitigate these actions." (Homeward Trust, n.d.).

A Good Neighbour Plan may also include property management standards.
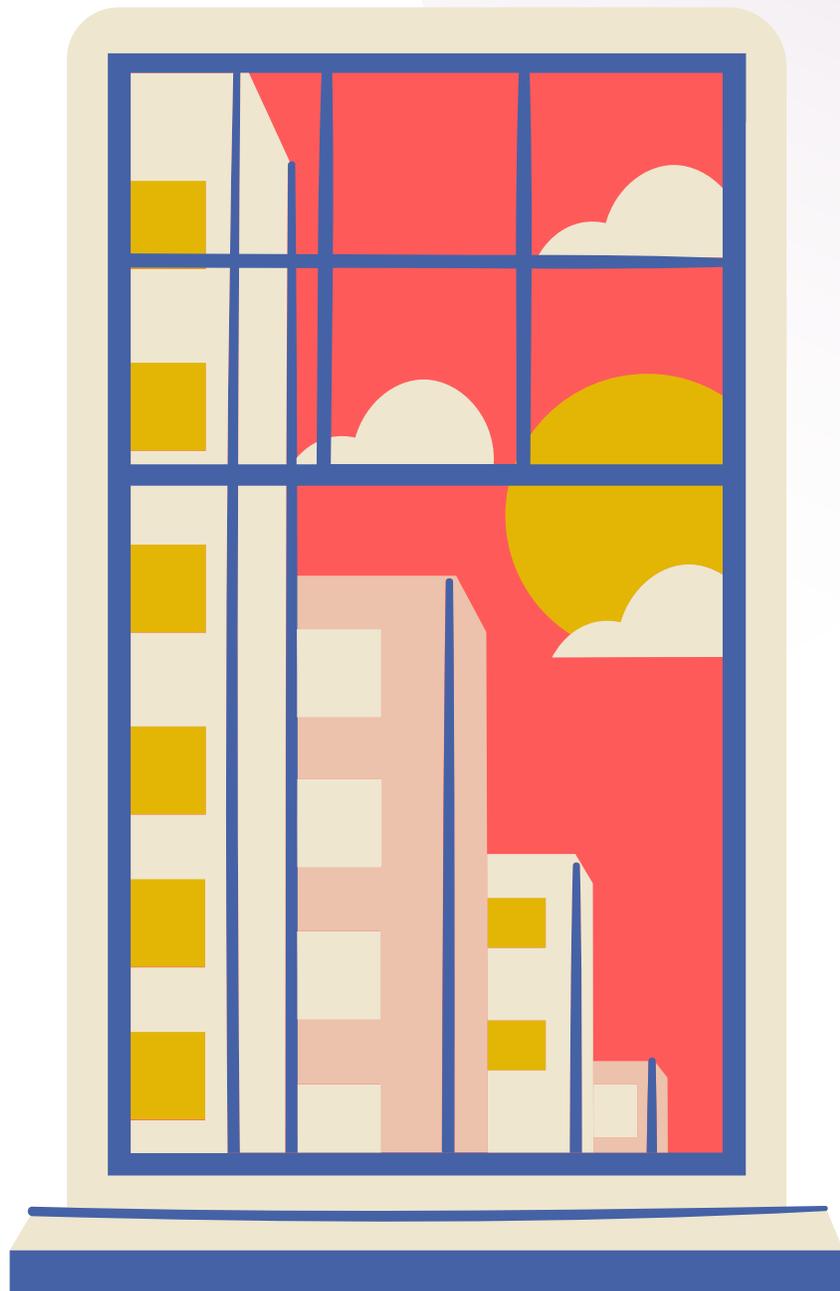
Community Engagement
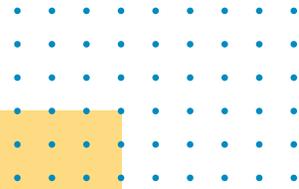
Community engagement is key in the development of Good Neighbour Plans. During early stages of development, area residents are invited to provide input for the development of a site's Good Neighbour Plan as part of the engagement process and to establish an ongoing relationship.

In an ideal setting, community engagement should authentically engage with and meet the needs of all participants in the process, such as implementers, decision makers, and the public (Public Engagement Framework, April 2021). In particular, public engagement needs to involve people who are affected by the decisions governments make (Populus Community Planning Inc., 2015), this includes the perspective of those with lived experience (City of Edmonton, 2021 July 7). It is important that decision makers hear diverse opinions, experiences, and information (Populus Community Planning Inc., 2015).

However, often in community engagement meetings, particularly for low-income, affordable or supportive housing, those people who would be moving into those establishments are often not provided the chance to have their lived experiences heard or voiced (Ngo, 2019).

.If they are provided the opportunity, they are the target of harmful and negative discourse from their would-be future neighbours (OHRC, n.d.). Lastly, these meetings often contribute to and reinforce the assumption that current residents or those who are home or business owners, have the right to determine who gets to move into their neighbourhood (OHRC, n.d.). Thereby reinforcing racist and classist ideologies and behaviours.

This gap between the intention and reality of community engagement is

largely based in how "community" is defined. Community engagement meetings are often structured to imply a bringing together of community or the neighbourhood to prevent resistance to projects. When discussing affordable housing, community" seems to mean the homeowners and business owners who already exist in a given geographical area. This language frames the affordable housing developer – and by extension the people who would move into the development – as outsiders.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission argues that community engagement should only include discussion on legitimate land use issues such as location, size, setback, and parking requirements. These meetings should not allow negative comments about the people who will eventually be living in the future affordable housing unit (OHRC, n.d.). Yet the way community engagement is structured allows these comments to come up again and again.

▶ Methods

The Edmonton Social Planning Council (ESPC) interviewed experts working in the development and operation of affordable housing in Edmonton. The purpose of these interviews was to learn how experts in the field understand Good Neighbour Plans, and how they may contribute to or detract from larger efforts towards community building, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism.

Targeting sampling was used in order to gather the viewpoints of a variety of experts working across the broad spectrum of affordable housing in Edmonton. Experts were identified through personal contacts who were then sent an invitation to participate. An invitation was sent out by the City of Edmonton as well. Nine experts were interviewed in total.

Participants were invited to participate in one-on-one interviews conducted either virtually or in-person, depending on their preference. The option for written responses was offered as well. Each interview was recorded and transcribed to ensure rigorous analysis. Results were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive framework.

Topics of questioning included:

1   What is it like to prepare and enact Good Neighbour Plans?

2   What is it like to create and go through issue resolution processes?

3   How do GNP affect relationships between pre-existing community members and residents coming into the neighbourhood, especially when these two groups have different social locations?

4   How do GNP contribute to larger efforts towards equity, inclusion, and antiracism?

How do developers understand Good Neighbour Plans?

A statement of values

Most participants understood being a "good neighbour" as a philosophy that is integrated into the work they do, "regardless if we had these good neighbour plans or not, we would still end up being good neighbours." Affordable housing developers are committed to developing good neighbourly relationships, maintaining the physical space of their developments, and creating opportunities for community members to better understand their work. For some organizations then, Good Neighbour Plans are a statement of their philosophy and an outline for how they will demonstrate their commitment to being a good neighbour.

In this way, a GNP is a vehicle by which organizations can publicly share how they do their work. "The Good Neighbour Agreement[1], I find has utility in terms of setting your game plan for engagement on paper. It's a good place to document the list of people that you need to engage with and how you've engaged with them, the reception you've received. But ultimately, yeah, it has to be lived out."

However, GNPs are only useful insofar as developers follow through with their commitments. "If you're a good neighbor, you demonstrate that through your actions, not by just saying you're a good neighbor, and the agreement is really a statement that I'm going to be a good neighbor, but what does that actually look like? And can you actually talk more about what it looks like, than a piece of paper that says, check, I got a Good Neighbor Agreement? Which, quite often parties can't even find right after the fact. So a document is only as good as it's demonstrating what the behaviors look like, and that it's actionable, and people know that it exists."

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1. Good Neighbour Plan and Good Neighbour Agreement will be used interchangeably, based on the word choice of the participant.

Opens doors to communication

Respondents discussed that GNPs were successful in "opening doors" to communication between the developer and the larger community – it allowed them to introduce themselves, the work they do, and why that work is important, as well as provide channels of communication if anyone in the community has questions or concerns.

> "Quite possibly the good neighbor agreement as a distributed document could open doors for me or open doors to conversation, especially if, at the bottom, it's like, "For more information, contact me. My website QR code. My email address. Text any questions to me." So, I'm all about trying to communicate with the neighbors and my community. So, yeah, to answer your question, I'll use it as a tool to open doors."

Just a checkbox

While the project participants and the organizations they represented were committed to ongoing community engagement, oftentimes, GNPs become just a "checkbox" completed in the development phase. They are another hoop to jump through to get a development approved, a document that is signed and then never revisited.

"Yes. So, for me, it just becomes one more item in a long checklist of things that I do. And I do understand for other developers, maybe it's the first and only thing in the public engagement box."

"I have seen it work sometimes in places where it's a box checked. Where you fill all the information that's being asked of you, you talk to your beat cops, you get their phone numbers, you get some phone numbers of local businesses, and then you never look at it again."

This can lead to negative relationships with the community, especially if the engagement associated with the GNP was contentious. A building could hold a reputation for being the building nobody wanted.

As one participant explained, "I would go to the neighbors with my concept plan. And whether I had support or not, I would be able to say, 'I did engagement here.'" This process sets up an "antagonistic" relationship with the community.

"That's why they're so problematic, that they become this checkbox that, "Oh, we've engaged with the community, we've talked with the community." And so that's why you will always get, "that building there," because it was a problematic development because the community hated it. And it will always be that building that people don't like."

Lack of legacy and continuity
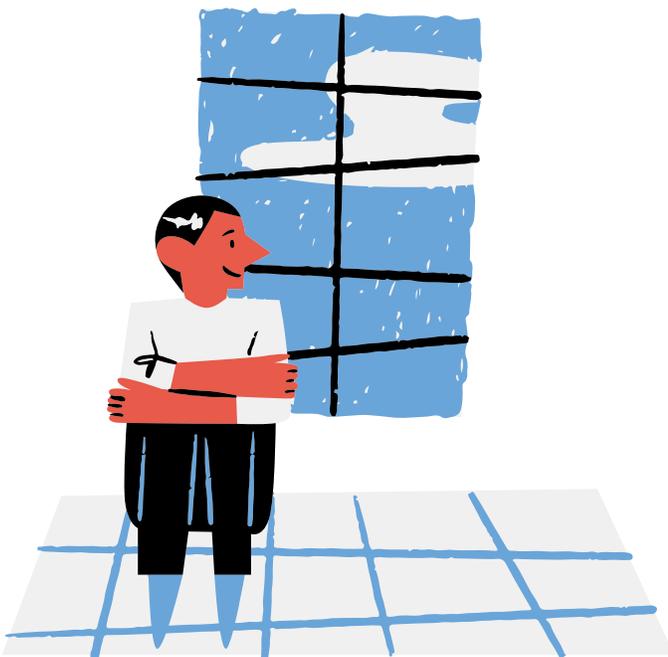
Another issue identified is that there is a lack of legacy to GNPs. At the time of development, developers will engage with community leaders and sign a Good Neighbour Plan. However, neighbourhoods are constantly changing as people move in and out and different residents take on or leave leadership positions. Once leadership changes, the context around the GNP disappears. New community leaders were not involved in, nor have sufficient information on, the original engagement and the understandings or agreements that were made. Thus, the GNP becomes "null and void."

> "The interesting challenge, with Community Leagues being the vehicle by which we've created most of our Good Neighbor Agreements, Community League players change, and not necessarily does the thread of those agreements, and the understanding that informed those written agreements, continue to have legacy once some of those critical players have moved off the League, so that's been a bit of an interesting journey. We have understanding and then players change, and then they don't have any context around that understanding. We have to provide them with the Good Neighbor Agreement again, because they're not aware of it, and so some of the things that are in the Good Neighbor Agreement, they have no context around."

Many organizations use Good Neighbour Plans and the associated community engagement as an opportunity to educate the public on what the organization is doing and what neighbourhoods can expect from having an affordable housing development in their neighbourhood. They may also use it as an opportunity to explain the importance of their work, and to challenge the stereotypes made about their tenants. However, when community leadership changes, "if there is no legacy within whoever you've done the Good Neighbor Agreement with, if there's no legacy around that, then assumptions are made." In other words, if there are no ongoing mechanisms to educate new people moving into the neighbourhood who may hold stereotypes about affordable housing developments, discriminatory beliefs and behaviours may emerge.

Protection

Respondents perceived a primary function of GNPs was to "protect" housing investments.

One participant described past examples of organizations or individuals trying to develop affordable housing without sufficiently engaging the community, and those developments ultimately got shut down. This can have a lasting impact on the affordable housing sector, as these experiences created a bad perception of affordable housing and has made it hard for those communities to accept affordable housing developments well into the future. This participant posited that GNPs were created as a mechanism to ensure affordable housing providers sufficiently engaged with community so that projects actually get built.

"What you build and deliver in the community, it's a legacy, it's a long-term commitment, and you have to do it right as best as you can. And if you're not going to communicate to the neighbors, well, then there should be something there that says you have to do that because it's more likely than that you'll be engaged in the community."

Others argued that, in a time with a lot of pushback against affordable housing, GNPs act as a buffer so complaints do not get out of hand.

"If somebody complains... we have this document that says we have done our due diligence to engage with our stakeholders. We've done X, Y, Z, there are X, Y, Z processes in place. And it creates a shield against frivolous complaints, and it creates pathways that prevent those sorts of complaints from escalating. And in that way, I think that it's worth the effort that goes into them."

Furthermore, by writing down their promises, GNPs may comfort existing residents and signal to the community that they do not need to be defensive against this new development.

"I'm also quite aware that it's more of the affordable housing with possibly higher-priority populations, or higher-acuity, or higher-needs groups that the neighbors want to protect themselves against. So, they would turn to this document and say, 'Hey, this is what you have to do, to abide by.' ... They're looking at this good neighbor agreement as the first gesture of a code of conduct for how the building fits into the neighborhood."

"So we're having operators drive forward the understanding that reintegration and community presence is value, not as something that they need to be defensive against... And I think as a result of that presence and that understanding, we see neighbors that are more responsive, that they feel that there's an open door for them to approach. There's more curiosity around how these services are impacting people's lives"

While protection is important so that new developments do not get shut down, GNPs end up focusing on proving an affordable housing development is not a threat. "We've done Good Neighbor Agreements, and I think the city looks sometimes it's things as being tactical and transactional, rather than what would actually help to create community associated with those people who just want an affordable home."

Zoning and land use

One respondent described that GNPs are a "supplementary tool that kind of steps outside the land use bylaw." Zoning bylaws already exist that dictate *what* can be built where. Participants argued that GNPs are used to dictate *who* can live where.

"Whether or not you can build things has nothing to do with who is in them. It's all got to do about whether or not the land is zoned for residential or for group homes or for recovery centers, halfway houses, supportive housing, these sorts of things. And the land use bylaw has always been about land use. And so through the back door, people always end up talking about who are your housing, how do you manage people, who are they, why are they like that?"

"So, when it comes to how the Good Neighbor Agreement works or the city saying, "Well, you have to have a Good Neighbor Agreement" I kind of object to that because I know that zoning is supposed to be about the building and the form, and not the person that lives there. And throughout the years of public engagement, I come up against neighbors who don't want that kind of people in the neighborhood. They support affordable housing, but they don't support it in their neighborhood. That's heard everywhere."

Residents may further try to bypass GNPs altogether and try to get a development shut down through bylaws. As one participant described: "we would often find ourselves in front of the development appeal board because a lot of our housing needed variances in it under the zoning bylaws and objectors to our project would use that as a means to try and stop the project going forward."
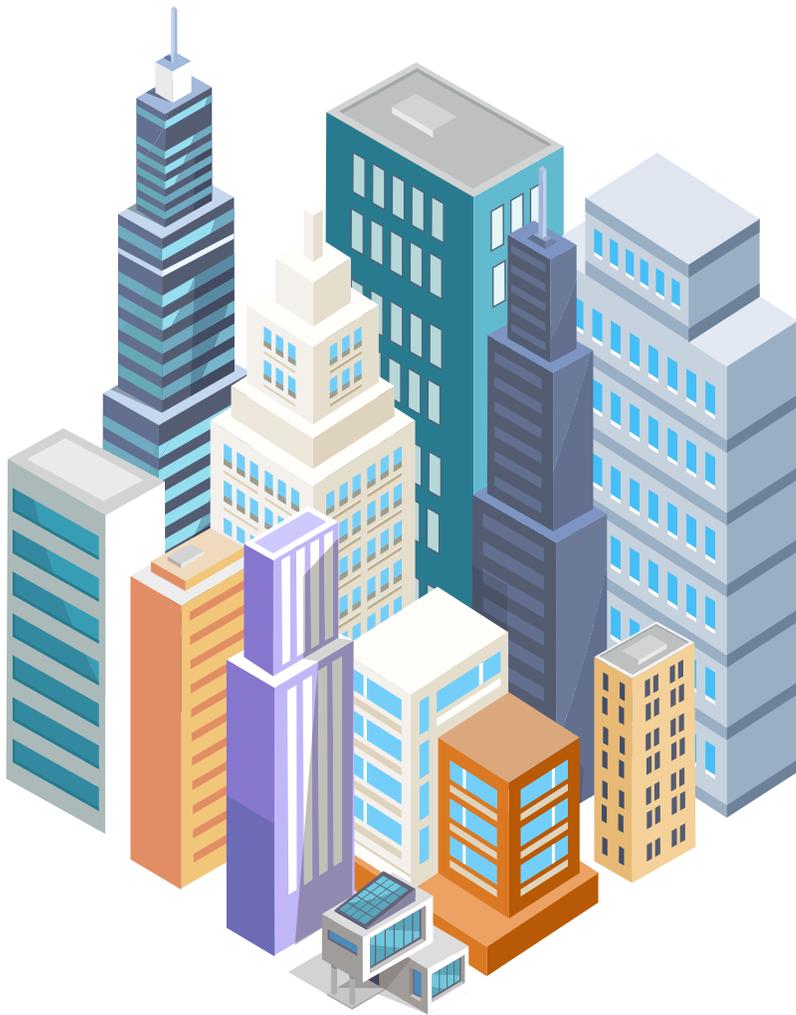
Several respondents discussed that a large complaint they received, particularly in more central neighbourhoods, is that the neighbourhood already has a lot of affordable housing and/or social services, and they do not want anymore. Others object increasing density. These are ultimately bylaw issues that have little to do with being a "good neighbour."

Different standards for different developers

Affordable housing developers and operators argue that they have to play by different rules than market housing developers. "Within the good neighbor plan, what you have to do then is set out a whole bunch of terms and conditions that a private sector developer wouldn't have to do. So, the private sector developer has, I would say, more latitude, more freedom, less accountability, more advantage than the not-for-profit housing developer."

Participants argued that these different rules are based in assumptions and stereotypes of affordable housing. There is an underlying assumption that affordable housing developments are inherently more likely to cause conflict than market housing ones.

"The community engagement plan is generally not required of private developers. And so, there's a presumption inherent in the community engagement plan, including the way the template itself is worded, that there will be issues. That affordable housing simply because it exists in the neighborhood will be a source of issues and that a complaint resolution mechanism is required."

"So, the common denominator is barriers are going to exist, because that's who we are, I guess as human beings, as a community, but the Good Neighbor Agreement, maybe just accentuates that more. You should be concerned because this development's coming in and you have to have a Good Neighbor Agreement. I'm not sure that a hotel has to have a Good Neighbor Agreement with whoever's around them, or an infill. Obviously they have, 'We're going to change the zoning on this,' but if I went to do an infill, I wouldn't have to have a Good Neighbor Agreement with my neighbors. So, what is it that the Good Neighbor Agreement is trying to address? Maybe it's perpetuating that sense that you should be concerned, because these are lower income folks."

According to Michael Shapcott of the Wellesley Institute (as cited by the Ontario Human Rights Commission, n.d.):

If a municipality imposes different or extra requirements for public meetings, consultations, hearings, design charettes or other processes on affordable and/or supportive housing that are not placed on ownership housing, then this could amount   to discriminatory behaviour. Using excessive or extra requirements for consultation for certain types of housing delays the development process, increases the uncertainty and costs associated with the project and could, if the delays and extra requirements add up, ultimately jeopardize the project itself. Developers of affordable and/or supportive housing should face the same regulatory processes as other forms of housing, and not face additional or excessive requirements for meetings and consultations.

Implications for organizations

Impacts on organizational resources

Several respondents described how the process of creating a GNP is resource intensive, and as a result, imposes extra barriers into their work.

"It does certainly impact our staff resources, because depending on the type of project that we're doing, there's a lot of hours that go into creating it. And obviously we want to do our very best and put a good product forward. So, it's just the back and forth between our consultants and our contractors. And again, it's a lot of uncertainties, which then results in us having to update the plan several times."

"Programs that receive funding from multiple funders, say if you're working under a program that's funded by AHS [Alberta Health Services], Homeward Trust, and the city, you'll have to really blend the needs and sometimes fill out multiple Good Neighbour Agreement documents. Which can be irritating, but definitely needs to get done to make everybody feel comfortable with the program."

GNPs also impose a financial burden. Several developers explained that they did not have the internal capacity, in terms of staff time, to complete a GNP. As such, many of them hire consultants to do the work. While this saves staff time, it is costly.

"Maybe it's expedience or maybe it's just as extra backup, to go to consultants and pay them to help facilitate certain processes demanded by the city to document those outcomes and to document everything and then send it back in because I find it a complete waste of money and time."

"Yeah, we don't have the capacity to deal with it internally or to produce them internally. So, we have to hire a consultant to do that for us. That comes at a cost. Consultants aren't inexpensive."

Developers discussed that this money could be used better. "I'd rather have that money available to support tenants and to have a bit of a buffer for extra landscaping and mature landscaping to keep neighbors happier that they'll like what they see that's living across the street from them. That sort of thing."

Rigidity

Participants argued that GNPs takes work organizations have already been doing informally and turns them into more rigid and prescriptive processes. "It's always good for a developer to be a good neighbor and to communicate that they'll be a good neighbor. I don't know why you prescribe it, why you put all of these additional terms and conditions and processes."

The rigidity can hamper the developers and operators ability to do the work they do. For example, having rigid issue resolution mechanisms can actually make it harder to resolve issues.

"I would also highlight though that the manager needs flexibility. They need to be able to address problems creatively as they arise. No two issues are alike. No two person who's bringing an issue forward is alike. The manager needs to be able to be dynamic in that space. Having too rigid of a policy around resolution can hamper the way that a leader engages. I would say that the most important thing is that there are pathways for the problem to come to the surface, and for the problem to come to the surface to the right person is the most important part of resolving issues as they arise."

Sharing internal policy

Participants also explained that the requirement to explain how organizations may rectify any issues that come up presumes that the organization would share their internal information, policies, and processes with the community. While GNPs are created at a point in time, internal policies and practices change often, community members may then expect developers to honour a policy that no longer exists or has changed in some form.

Delays to construction

Participants also talked about how GNPs can delay construction. GNPs are created before construction even begins, which means developers may have limited information about what the construction process will look like, yet still need to make promises about it. "Because if there is a two to three year construction project in their area, we want to provide them with as much information as possible. But predicting that two years to three years out is challenging."

This has two large impacts on the development and overall reputation of the developer. First, when things change and the construction process differs from what was outlined in the GNP, "residents may think that we're not being transparent," which can impact trust in the developer. Second, when construction process change – which happens often due to long Edmonton winters – organizations may have to update a GNP, which ends up delaying the development even more. In a time when waitlists for affordable housing are in the thousands, delays make it even harder to house people. Delayed developments may also fracture relationships with the neighbourhood they are moving into. Extended periods of noise, traffic delays, and green spaces being cut off, may start to create negative perceptions of the development.

The principles of the City of Edmonton's Affordable Housing Investment Guidelines C601 emphasizes the principle of effectiveness, which includes supporting expeditious development of affordable housing projects (Citizen Services, 2019). Yet, participants have made it clear that the extra steps affordable housing developers must go through to get developments approved slows down the development process.

Developer reputation

Many of the participants and their organizations had a proven track record of successful community engagement and had a long-standing positive reputation in their communities. Several stated that their organizations were currently running affordable and supportive housing developments that were considered a part of the communities in which they were located. Tenants were involved in neighbourhood life, were accepted into their communities, and the communities experienced few issues.

Some found these GNPs to be insulting to their long-standing reputation. As one participant explained, underlying GNPs is an "informal statement that they don't trust us to deliver on this affordable housing unless we do this good neighbor plan." Furthermore, "it's also kind of demeaning because the city's telling us that we don't know what we're doing. You need to do this because you might not be a good neighbor."

Underlying GNPs is an assumption that affordable housing developers and their tenants cannot be trusted to be good neighbours unless there is a mechanism in place to hold them accountable. This assumption is founded on stereotypes that affordable housing invites disorder and crime into a neighbourhood, despite the fact research has proven these assumptions are untrue (Ngo, 2019). Affordable housing providers within Edmonton have demonstrated that their developments and tenants are "good neighbours," yet they are continually expected to fill out these plans.

Furthermore, GNPs may separate developers from communities they are already a part of. "We've been neighbors in the McCauley-Boyle area. We have facilities there. We've been there longer than some of the neighbors have been. It's our community. But when you say to us as a community, 'We need to set that [GNP] up,' well, I'm a member of the community. We've been there for 30-plus years. And so all of a sudden you're saying as an operator of a permanent supportive housing lodge, you no longer have the voice of a community member. You have this voice that has to be external voice, even though we have been in the community, with huge staffing numbers for 30-plus years."

Implications for tenants

Infringing rights to privacy

Several participants argued that Good Neighbour Plans (GNP) infringe on their tenants' right to privacy. As discussed above, while zoning bylaws exist to dictate what gets to be built where, GNP open the conversation to who gets to live where.

> "What you've really done through these good neighbor plans is that you've had to open up to the community who you're housing, who are they, how many of them are there, what have they done in the past? Do you do criminal record checks? How do you know they're not going to hurt my kids? All of this stuff."

> "Why do you need to know who's in there if we're conforming to the development permit and the zone, so the building's structure fits with whatever the city planning for that area deems is suitable?" So, why, when it comes to housing affordability, is there the big question, 'Who's moving in here?'"

In other words, through the process of creating GNPs, community residents come to believe they are entitled to the personal information about who would be moving into an affordable housing development. Even more alarming, people may become "overly emboldened to try and keep people out or stop projects from going forward." There are assumptions made that folks who live in affordable housing will pose a threat to the community, reduce property values, and cause social unrest or disturbances.

This is fundamentally an issue of equity – these same community members would not ask these questions to developers of a market rental development, nor homes meant to be sold.

"Because the truth is, do we worry if our neighbor across the road has schizophrenia? No, we don't. Like they're living in their own house, but they come out, you go out. So do we worry when someone is buying the house next door?"

"But I like to turn that around and say, 'Well...' and this is a classic example developers use, 'nobody asked whether you could buy the house there. You were able to move in with no analysis of who you are or what your income is. So, why is that any different from a development that I'm proposing?'"

Several affordable housing providers outright said they will not divulge information about who would be moving into the units – their tenants have a right to privacy. They will not make a commitment to the community about who can and cannot live in their development, nor share information of the internal policies that guide tenant eligibility.

For example: "From our perspective, we will not, absolutely will make a commitment to the community about who can and cannot live inside our buildings and town home sites. And that that's a matter of our responsibility to our shareholder and to the broader community at large to make sure that diverse people have opportunities for housing... that's simply not something that we negotiate on, it is not something that we will engage the community on, but it is a Good Neighbor Plan requirement."

Supporters of GNPs argue that GNPs are intended to respect tenants and their rights to privacy. Yet, this intent does not match reality. The process of creating GNPs open the floor for, and may even encourage community members to ask these questions, even if they do not get answered.

NIMBY

The issues of privacy are intractably linked to Not in My Back Yard (NIMBY) sentiments. Underlying the desire to know who is moving into a development is the assumption that current residents (market renters or homeowners) and business owners have the right to determine who gets to move into their neighbourhood on what terms (OHRC, n.d.), and "nobody wants to have somebody that's considered affordable housing in their neighborhood."

Problem-focused community engagement practices serve to give pre-existing community residents the power to make decisions about affordable housing that deeply affect people living in low income, decisions that are often informed by stereotypes and misinformation. Often, these decisions end up prioritizing the interests of an already privileged group of home and business owners, rather than trying to better the community and improve the well-being of its marginalized members (Ngo, 2019).

"It was an uneven playing field and it gave community leagues really a right to potentially veto any kind of project. A lot of the information that the community leagues were using in my opinion was false."

"People just have to be reasonable neighbors as any neighbors are in any community with these good neighbor agreements or good neighbor plans. We just have to make sure that neighbors don't get overly emboldened to try and keep people out or stop projects from going forward."

Supporters of GNPs argue "regardless of their history, their complexity, their care needs, they have just as much right to be in the neighborhood as any other tenant. So, the Good Neighbor commitment is a commitment by the site operator to hold

that as a core pillar of the work that they do." The operators and developers interviewed did commit to this as a pillar – and would regardless of if they had to sign a GNP or not. A larger issue demonstrated throughout the interviews is that pre-existing community members often do not believe in this right.

In addition, in GNPs, responsibility for being a 'good neighbour' is put solely on the affordable housing provider, and communities do not have a reciprocal responsibility to be good neighbours to the folks who would be moving in. As a result, engagement turns into the affordable housing provider 'proving' how they will be good neighbours and conform to standards dictated by the existing residents, and the existing community defending themselves against a perceived threat, rather than these entities working together.

> "And I'm conflicted in regards to Good Neighbor Agreements, because you should be a good neighbor. Do we need a piece of paper to say how both parties are going to be good neighbors?"

Reinforcing stereotypes and othering

Several respondents argued that GNPs reinforce stereotypes about tenants who would move into a development. All respondents agree that community engagement is an essential step in the development of affordable housing. The issue with GNPs is that the engagement process centers potential problems and how those problems will be mitigated, rather than centering how the different groups may come together and develop community. This centering of conflict reinforces the assumption that folks living in affordable housing will cause problems in the neighbourhood.

> "And I also believe that in some respects, everybody wants to be good neighbors, but by setting that up, that a Good Neighbor Agreement is required in regards to your development, the interesting thing about that, it automatically sets the community in a situation of believing that there's going to be some sort of confrontation. It inherently sets it up."

"The community engagement plan is generally not required of private developers. And so, there's a presumption inherent in the community engagement plan, including the way the template itself is worded, that there will be issues. That affordable housing simply because it exists in the neighborhood will be a source of issues and that a complaint resolution mechanism is required. And so, it sets up the conversation with the community, not about how we're going to integrate into the community with a new development, but instead how to deal with presumed problems that the new development is expected to cause."

Low-income people are stigmatized. Several respondents discussed common stereotypes they have seen reflected through community engagement processes, such as low-income people posing threats to the community, that they will reduce property values, that they will cause social unrest and disturbances, or commit crimes. However, there is no evidence to back up these stereotypes. Previous research has found no impacts from affordable housing developments on crime rates (Ngo, 2019). GNPs may "reinforce and deepen existing stigmas and the assumptions that people may have about how affordable housing can or cannot integrate into their neighborhood."

As a result of this stigmatization, affordable housing neighbours are constructed to be categorically different than any other neighbour. "It's more about, again, the NIMBYism of people who don't understand the individuals that are moving and when people feel that because it's affordable housing it's suddenly a different individual that's going to move in and devalue the value of my home." As such, they are subject to different treatment than other neighbours.

"Most usually, it's like, 'We don't want drug addicts in our neighborhood and drug activity and gang activity and convicts.' So, there's this whole clump of preconceived tenants that is being objected to that comes into the conversation."

"It stigmatizes the people moving in, and they don't have half a chance, even as they come in... I feel like these agreements open the door to that kind of conversation. And it pre-stigmatizes people and it's a rougher start."

While not directly addressed by project participants, previous research has found that people who agree with negative stereotypes about racial minorities also agree with negative stereotypes about affordable housing (Tighe, 2011), and that people tend to associate poverty with racialized communities (Ngo, 2019). This research suggests that these fears and stigmatizing language may be linked to unconscious biases and racial stereotypes.

Participants discussed issues where community members would conflate any social problems happening in their neighbourhood with affordable housing and the residents who lived in them. They discussed issues of having "absentee" (market) landlords who had no responsibility to the development or to the neighbourhood at large. These developments would become spaces where social disorder could happen. Yet any social disorder was blamed on affordable housing tenants. Participants gave examples in which community members would call them to voice a complaint about anyone causing an issue in the neighbourhood, and oftentimes it turned out that person was not a tenant of the development. These examples show that people inherently link affordable housing and social disorder together, and GNPs may reinforce these linkages.

Different rules

Ngo (2019) explains that people housed in affordable housing developments are under more scrutiny that their market-housed counterparts, and as such, any behaviour that may be deemed "non-compliant" or any slight complaint against them are used to punish them.

Having misunderstandings or challenges with one's neighbour is something that can happen to anyone, and the city already has mechanisms in place to help homeowners deal with these challenges. For example, "when you have a neighbor who is not taking care of their garbage, the city has a certain process they encourage you to do, and one of those processes is to reach out to your neighbor and have that conversation. But certainly, I don't have an agreement with my neighbor about the garbage that continues to pile up outside their detached garage. I think they have you reach out a couple of times and then if that's not resolved, then the city through its own process, informed by bylaw, helps to sort of resolve that."

GNPs introduce a different mechanism to deal with challenges that occur with neighbours in affordable housing, it adds a layer of nuance – that these challenges are different, more extreme, require bigger interventions. There is an assumption inherent in GNPs that affordable housing tenants are more likely to cause problems and thus need to be controlled.

> "I don't have a Good Neighbor Agreement with my neighbor. I may run into some challenges in regards to perceptions, but my neighbor and I have a responsibility to resolve it. The Good Neighbor Agreement puts added nuance in there, that says to the community, the city's telling you 'you should be concerned.' So it heightens this element of concern, rather than strengthens the level of understanding. And no matter if you've got a Good Neighbor Agreement or not, you still, if there's some misunderstandings, you still have to navigate that, because you're neighbors."

Despite having alternative rules to deal with conflict, the actual issues that come up after development are relatively simple. As one participant explained, "Oftentimes, most issues are resolved by a simple phone call to the manager, or whoever the point person responsible for neighborhood engagement is. It's like, oh, you're parked in my space, or I found this needle on the playground. And a simple conversation can resolve it very quickly before it escalates out of hand, and heaven forbid, ends up with a complaint to City Council or something. Oftentimes, it really is as simple as being available to engage in conversation." This may imply that GNPs are based on an assumption that issues with an affordable housing development will be larger than they actually are.

Breaking barriers

Good Neighbour Plans set up an interesting irony – affordable housing developers must dedicate a lot of work into breaking down the very barriers that were reinforced in the GNP they must fill out

"I think it puts up a perception barrier for those people that are coming in, and I think it probably is one of those systemic barriers that people in the affordable housing have to really work hard to break down within the community. I'm not sure that that's what the Good Neighbor Agreement was ever intended to be, but I do think it puts up a barrier. And I hear it, the sense that housing isn't a right, and the sense that having affordable housing is somehow going to destroy your community, the fabric of your community. So I think it sets up a barrier that they have to work really hard, and I think they need whoever's providing the affordable housing to journey with them, to break down those barriers of perception."

"And so anything that is a barrier to their finding housing, which we see Good Neighbor Plans as being a barrier to that, is certainly something that we would prefer not to have to deal with. And the way the current Good Neighbor Plan template is set up, because it presumes that there will be issues, I think it reinforces for community members who may already be inclined to struggle with the integration of affordable housing and different demographics into their neighborhood, that there's an opportunity for it to reinforce those perceptions, which makes it harder to break down over the long term."

Participants identified a need to humanize this population. "So, when it comes to housing affordability, I often talk about your parents, so seniors, or your children, so students, or cultures that you come from, so that's new immigrants or new Canadians as they say now, or refugees even. So, I appeal to the sympathetic side of people." In other words, finding points of connection between those in affordable and supportive housing with those in market housing.

"That's the only way we're going to get rid of this not-in-my-backyard kind of crap, is to have people have opportunities to convene and be present and create space for people to be present with each other, so they did discover, as that older gentleman said, 'He's just like my grandson.'"

Isolation

This process of othering may reinforce the isolation of people living in low-income. If the community holds negative perceptions of people living in affordable housing, it makes it hard for them to form connections and develop positive relationships with one another.

"One of the things we've seen over and over again is people who are housed, people who are newly housed, whether it's market housing or some form of supportive housing, often experience a decline in their sense of social health because they're moving away from the communities that they've lived with, sometimes for decades. The people they know, their friends, their loved ones, people that come to call family. And out of that sense of alienation, of disconnection, of loneliness, we see over and over again folks experience terrible side effects. Whether that's relapse or trouble with guest management issues, declines in mental health. That eventually culminate in eviction."

"And so investing in this kind of community engagement work where people have an opportunity to build new relationships, to participate in new bonds of kinship are essential to maintaining healthy housing over time, to maintaining that sense of wellbeing."

As one participant described, just because you are a "good neighbour" does not mean you are part of the community. An affordable housing development may turn into a "bubble" that exists alongside the existing community. While these communities may be nice to one another, they are not integrated.

"So I think we historically have thought about congregate buildings or multi-unit buildings as communities in and of themselves. I don't think enough has been done to create that reach to say that these are still households within the community, either within those buildings, or within the broader community. And I think that is problematic and has to change. So that's kind of where my head space is on that, where we need to rethink how we position congregate settings."

Implications on wider efforts towards equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

Good Neighbour Plans do not exist in a vacuum, they are deeply connected to wider issues around housing access, and the inclusion of marginalized communities. "This is around human rights and what is happening in some of the community conversations and the NIMBYism and how it's really infringing on the rights of the disadvantaged folks trying to secure housing."

Increasing diversity

Some participants agreed that GNPs are generally successful in increasing diversity in a community. Several respondents described that a core function of GNPs is to protect affordable housing developments from pushback that could shut a development down, and to act as a buffer so that any complaints do not get out of hand. Given that Indigenous and Racialized people living in Edmonton are disproportionately in need of affordable housing (City of Edmonton, 2022a), GNPs may help to ensure that developments that would house these communities will get built.

"Well, if there's proof that the good neighbor plans help successfully develop new affordable housing units, then I think in my mind what that says is that you are creating more diversity and acceptance in any community across the city. Knowing that

"inside these [affordable housing] projects there are going to be all kinds of people who have disadvantages. They come from minority groups, they have mental health issues, for example, and they're in these communities now living in a home in a community."

"Again, speaking from just our role is just bringing all people together regardless of their backgrounds, their cultures, their religion, whatever it may be, is creating a vibrant, diverse Edmonton and just ensuring that in all areas of the city there is opportunity for anyone. And so that's what I like about the Good Neighbour Plan. I think that's what it serves. So not all commercial, not all residential. There's a good mix there to ensure that amenities are in place for everyone around the city."

Not effective in addressing anti-racism or inclusion

While GNPs may be successful in increasing diversity in neighbourhoods, they do not necessarily increase inclusion of these diverse groups or support efforts towards anti-racism. While they do lead to more builds that house diverse communities in neighbourhoods across Edmonton, they do little to actually support the inclusion of these diverse communities coming in.

"Well, I think the city, in their very policy-driven perspective, is that the agreement itself, the hope is that it would lessen behaviors that are associated with racism, and that it would make a more even playing field. I'm not so sure that that's actually what's happened. At very best, I think it's neutral."

"We're all in this community, and we have different resources in the community, but we're all vested in the community. It needs to be repositioned. And so I don't know that as they're currently positioned, it is going to do anything to move equity and anti-racist. I can't see that, because of how it's now positioned."

Reinforcing Racism

Not only are GNP ineffective in increasing inclusion, they may actually reinforce exclusion along racial lines. Good Neighbour Plans are founded on inherently discriminatory principles. As demonstrated in both interviews for this project and previous studies, GNPs, despite their intention not too, embolden pre-existing residents to believe they have a say on who gets to move into their community and on what terms (Goetz, 2018; OHRC, n.d). These decisions are often based on negative stereotypes of those living in low income (Ngo, 2019), which are further reinforced through the GNP. What this results in is an already privileged group of people making decisions that affect low-income Edmontonians access to affordable housing.

"Yeah, I think it doesn't achieve those goals at all. It basically simplifies and objectifies the tenant group attempting to move in. But it's less about the developer, more about the people coming in. And again, the predetermination of what the people's actions might be in the neighborhood. And, 'Ooh, we must control that through an agreement,' seems   rather Draconian, or dividing. It's us and them. It's us who we were here and we've got the right to control who's coming in."
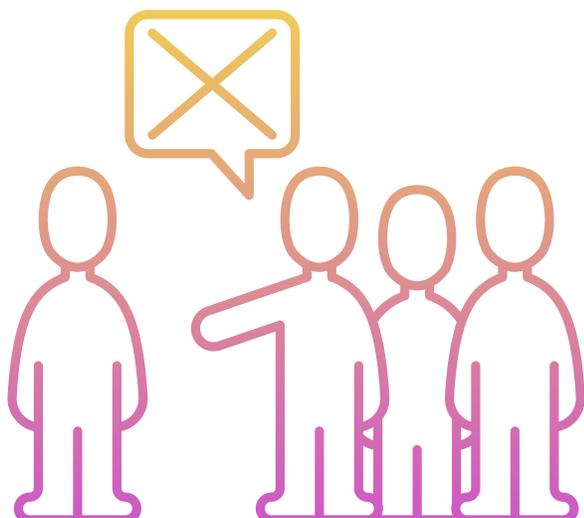
Previous research has found that people who agree with negative stereotypes about racial minorities also agree with negative stereotypes about affordable housing (Tighe, 2011), and that racialized people are undeserving of government support (Bridges, 2017). This suggests that pushback against affordable housing is linked to racist attitudes. If GNPs are reinforcing stereotypes of those living in affordable housing, then by extension, they reinforce stereotypes of racialized people.

Racialized Edmontonians are more likely to be living in core housing need than their white counterparts (City of Edmonton, 2022a), and therefore they are more in need of affordable housing Thus, these discriminatory practices disproportionately affect racialized Edmontonians. While GNPs may be successful in increasing diversity in Edmonton neighbourhoods, they are doing so on the terms and conditions of an already privileged group of people.
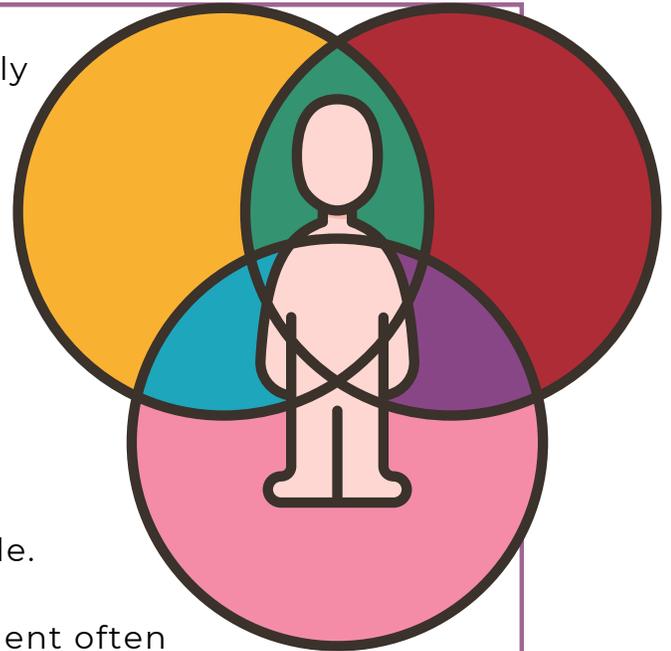
As argued above, community engagement often centers around affordable housing providers "proving" they and their tenants will be good neighbours, and that they deserve to move into the neighbourhood. In some communities, this means affordable housing providers must prove their low-income, racialized tenants will conform to the behavioural standards of a white, middle-class community. Thus, GNPs reinforce traditional, racialized power structures.

In 2022, the City of Edmonton implemented it's anti-racism strategy. The city defines antiracism as an "active, ongoing strategy and process that seeks to identify and eliminate racism by changing systems, institutions, policies, and attitudes that perpetuate racism." The strategy itself aims to "support the equity of racialized communities in Edmonton," and to to challenge systemic racism within the City of Edmonton corporation (City of Edmonton, 2022b).). As demonstrated above, GNPs reinforce stereotypes about affordable housing and racialized communities, reinforce traditional power structures, and may serve to perpetuate racial inequity in terms of housing access. If the city is committed to it's anti-racism strategy, it follows that it should challenge this policy.

Education

GNPs do have the potential to open conversations to educate people about biases/assumptions they may hold. "In some instances, we have community members who are uncomfortable with the service as a result of just their understanding of what's happening within the buildings. There's opportunity for us to create awareness and to share some understanding of the impact of the work or the scope of the work."

Moreover, developers can explain the importance of having affordable housing in the community, both for the tenants themselves and the larger community they are moving into.

> "And so our role in that is to have confident, concise language around why [affordable housing is] important   and why we are needing to protect that. And then, highlighting how supportive housing sites bring value to the community and reintegrate vulnerable individuals back into a healthy, meaningful neighborhood."

Education seems to be linked to stereotypes of those who are "deserving" and "undeserving" of affordable housing (Adams, Carroll, & Gutierrez, 2022), developers must prove to existing communities that the people they serve deserve housing. These beliefs are incredibly persistent in Edmonton, and developers felt like they are educating on the same things over and over. They may be successful in educating a particular neighbourhood about the importance of affordable housing and overcoming biases, but the wider society continues to hold those stereotypes.

> "I've been at this a long, long time now over 20 years or more. And these things, these attitudes still continue to persist.   And we find ourselves justifying what we do, why we do, and trying to support people and explaining why we support them. So we don't let conversations around basically reducing the conversation around we don't want them, they're no good, they're just not what we want here."

Given that racialized people are both more likely to be in need of affordable housing (City of Edmonton, 2022a) and more likely to be categorized as 'undeserving' (Bridges, 2017), education often hinges on proving that racialized Edmontonians deserve housing. However, as Tighe (2011) argues, these racial stereotypes are often not vocalized, and instead masked behind oppositions regarding property values and crimes. If education only focuses on the value of affordable housing and ignores racial stereotypes, then education will have a minimal affect on changing the attitudes of the public..

Connections to the larger sector

All affordable housing providers are connected together. The success or failure of an affordable housing development will have an impact on communities' acceptance of future developments for years to come.

"And so every building we build and manage, it's not just [our] building, it represents the whole sector. And so if we're not good neighbors, everyone's going to lose in the end because people will just point to it and say, 'See what happened there? You're not building that here. See what happened there? You're not building in our neighborhood.' So it's incumbent on the developers to do what they need to do to create relations with that community they're going to build in."

Concerns surrounding affordable housing developments are often connected to larger concerns about homelessness, mental health and addiction, social disorder, and crime. The more visible these social issues are, the more communities will push back against affordable housing. Adams, Carroll, and Guttierrez (2022) illustrate that there are commonly held beliefs that the chronically homeless and people experiencing severe mental health and additions issues choose their situation, and if they were to be housed, they would squander that support. Housing the chronically homeless is seen as a waste of resources because these people will continue to make "bad decisions" and end up on the street again.

Community engagement done for affordable and supportive housing developments is deeply tied to community engagement in the sector overall. Challenging stereotypes about affordable housing, homelessness, poverty, addiction, and mental health all go hand-in-hand. As such, affordable housing developers often partner with other community groups and non-profits to engage in collaborative community building activities.

"And so we've had to have a lot of conversation with our partners in Chinatown to really engage in education and help build a perspective that we are in this together. Nobody wants for there to be people experiencing houselessness, and together we can build a safe, healthy, and thriving community. But that's been a part of a multi-year-long campaign to build partnership and provide some education, and do a lot of careful listening to the needs and concerns. I would say that our Chinatown strategy is separate from our Good Neighbour work, just because it's so large and particular, it's specific to what's being done in this particular place and what economic and political forces are coming to bear on this space right now."

EDI is about the team

Developers seemed to agree that community development and efforts toward equity, diversity, and inclusion have little to do with the GNPs itself, but is all about leadership, organizational philosophies, and who is working in an organization.

"I'm not sure that the agreement itself has much of an impact around effective anti-racist practices. I think that a good leader, a good manager, a good community engager, will be able to do anti-racist work and engage in anti-racist practices with or without a Good Neighbour Agreement or Good Neighbour Plan. Especially the templates that I've worked with in the past, I haven't seen how anti-racist action could be brought to bear on the program through those plans."

Respondents described activities their organizations do to bring diverse communities together and facilitate community building in the neighbourhoods they are moving into. Activities such as community clean ups, community gardens, and recreational activities "have been transformational for building anti-racist bridges of understanding, for building new solidarities that never existed before. I think it's lived out in the way that a manager or a community development worker can bring disparate communities together and recognize themselves in one another. For me, that's the essence of successful anti-racism."

This all illustrates an inherent irony within GNPs. GNPs may reinforce class and racial stereotypes and uphold traditional power structures. In the beginning stages, affordable housing providers must prove that a) their tenants deserve housing, and b) their tenants will be good neighbours and conform to standards set out by community. However, once a development has actually been built and folks have moved in, there are opportunities for larger community development projects that bring together different social groups, create spaces for relationships building, and ultimately combat these inequitable power structures and the stereotypes that uphold them. Organizations are forced to solve problems that they created.

Organizations often struggle with the capacity to actually do this community building work, which then limits opportunities for communities to come together and break down stereotypes and unequal power dynamics.

"That's how healthy communities are built is having diverse communities engage with another and build relationships with one another, live in relationship with one another. And those kinds of activities, those kinds of spaces, like deliberately

created spaces of joyful engagement are, yes, essential to a healthy community, an essential piece of anti-racist activity, but also sorely underfunded. It feels like, in our contemporary housing world, we structure our programs so that these Good Neighbour Agreements, these Good Neighbour Plans exist as box checking devices, because actually engaging with our neighbors and building good relations requires capacity, requires hours, requires time, requires specialty, requires skills. And those and skills and time are not funded, so it's a manager doing it off the side of their desks so often within a housing setting, rather than a dedicated community development worker whose whole job is to pull the neighborhood and the people living in the space together."

GNPs may actually act as a barrier to community development and the breaking down of harmful stereotypes. The act of filling out GNPs and engaging with community in a way that centers conflict reinforces stereotypes about affordable housing tenants, and emboldens communities to believe they have a say over who gets to move into their community, and on what terms. While participants argued that GNPs can also act as a roadmap to then engage in community development activities and break down these stereotypes, they often do not have the resources to do so. Limited resources are funneled into creating GNPs rather than activities that will actually bring communities together.

ARE GOOD NEIGHBOUR PLANS NEEDED?

This report sought to evaluate whether or not Good Neighbour Plans are needed in the development of affordable housing in Edmonton. However, opinions on this issue are not so black and white. While some participants held very strong opinions about whether or not Good Neighbour Plans should exist, the majority held complicated and conflictual feelings.

GNP are essential

Some participants argue GNPs are essential in the development of affordable housing. As one participant described, "I think it very much is critical. it's expected that there's going to be hiccups, that there's going to be behavioral things that come up, and ensuring that we have adequate response mechanisms in place if there is concerns from community members, that we have the philosophical alignment on those really core principles of the work that we're doing around housing access and right to privacy, and just really ensuring that it's not an us versus them mentality, that we're meant to be supporting reintegration, supporting housing sustainability, modeling that quality presence in community. And then, just upkeeping the standard of really external-facing buildings that add value, that add aesthetic, that add just a general positive presence in the community. So yeah, I think it's critical."

GNP should not be in place

Others say GNPs shouldn't be done at all. "Don't do them. I don't see a benefit. I don't see a benefit to the ultimate tenants in the short or long term. I don't see a benefit to the affordable housing provider or developer. I don't see a benefit to the community at large, because I don't see anything that they will tangibly or meaningfully get as an outcome from this Good Neighbor Plan that actually helps them."

They are seen to stigmatize clients, reinforce inequity, and add extra barriers that can prevent housing from getting developed.

Conflicting opinions

The majority of participants held complicated feelings about GNPs and their usefulness. Some explained that, while they recognize the complications within Good Neighbour Plans, they more or less just accept that they have to do them. These participants are already doing the work that a GNP asks them to do, but the GNP adds in nuances that complicate their work.

> "I don't fuss too much about adhering to them and engaging in them and being part of them. It's just extra hoop jumping and expenses. And we've always done them just informally. And I know we're in the age of documenting and measuring and standardizing, so I get it."

> "I'm not sure that the Good Neighbor Agreement needs to be in place. I'm fine with it, because it's who we are as an organization, but I can tell you there's nuances."

Several respondents pointed out that, while they agreed with the intention of GNPs, they were dissatisfied with the ways they played out in reality.

> "Yeah, and I know it's meant to be something that doesn't. That it's meant to have people understand, to seek to understand and have the context of what the affordable housing is doing, but it automatically places the people that are residents within that affordable housing in a position of inequity, because people already have them labeled. And so I understand why it would be done, but I have this thing that well-meaning thoughts can come sometimes be counterproductive to what you're trying to accomplish."

> "On one hand, it's well-meaning, and it's an attempt at a code of conduct. But on the other hand, it seems to fan the flames of resisting affordable housing coming in… So, long answer shortened, I don't object to the good neighbor agreement, but I object to the conversations that come out of having that signed and passed around."

"So how you square all that up and make it all work so it all works fairly for everybody and it's not a detriment to new development then I don't see why they can't continue. It's just how they're shaped and how we communicate what the power is of them. It's an act of good intent and nothing more really. That's all it should be. Nothing binding."

These viewpoints reveal questions for further reflection: do the purported benefits of GNPs outweigh the harm the create? Does understanding and valuing the intention outweigh the harmful ways they are enacted in reality?

◗ Recomendations

As demonstrated throughout this report, affordable housing developers and operators held complicated feelings about Good Neighbour Plans and whether or not they should continue to exist. Many recognized both the intended utility of GNPs and the negative impacts they may have.

Participants gave suggestions for how GNPs could be reimagined to address some of the negative impacts they noticed. They also gave ideas for how the affordable housing space needs to change in general.

Reciprocity

Participants argued that conversations surrounding GNPs should change, public engagement should not be about asking for permission to move into a neighbourhood (Ngo, 2019), but rather, how different groups can come together to build community. In particular, some argued there should be more reciprocity in GNPs. The communities affordable housing developments are moving into need to be held accountable to be good neighbours as well.

> "But the language that I like to use is how do existing residents welcome new residents? That's fundamentally the question. And what the good neighbor agreement or plan does is it codifies one side of the equation. It says, 'The people who were here originally, that's the rule maker. And when you come in, you have to abide by those rules.' And that goes to colonialism and how Indigenous people are treated, as well as veterans. Fundamentally, the question [we are] trying to answer is how do existing neighbours welcome new neighbors?"

> "So, you know what, let's turn it around. I want a good neighborhood agreement coming to me that you're not going to hassle my tenants, or you're going to give them every opportunity to participate in your community, which ultimately, happens because once you get to know your perceived enemy, they might turn out to be great people... So, I guess to sum it up, I would say just give people who want housing options a chance in the neighborhood. And I feel like the Good Neighbor Agreement, it puts them one rung below in their already difficult fight. So, yeah, that's it."

Increased city involvement

Respondents indicated wanting more support from the city. If they insist on organizations filling out Good Neighbour Plans, they should have a role in creating and supporting them.
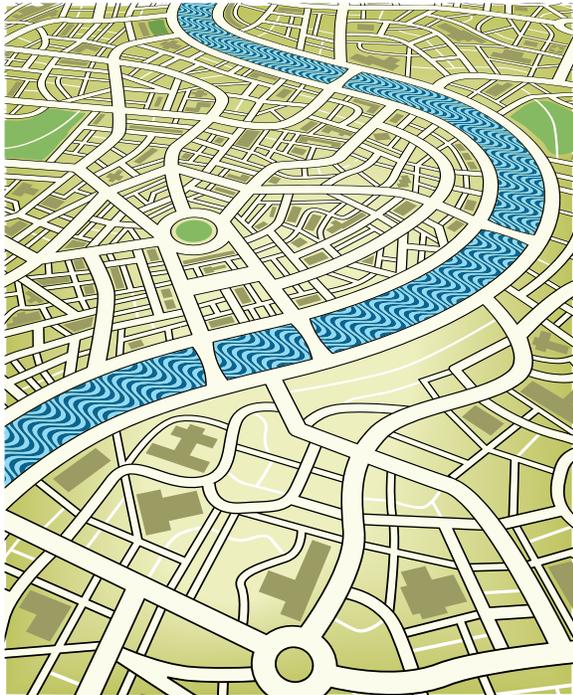
"The city should be a bit more clear on what it's going to do to actually support the non-profits, get through the Good Neighbor Plans, and not just dictate what needs to be done. So I think there's a bit more active mutual engagement there and support in the community. We do know that the politicians will come out to these open houses sometimes, unless it's a zoning change application that then there's really no city bureaucrats coming out in support."

"I think other people need to come to the table beyond the developer and the community. I think the city needs to be at the table with different city departments, so fire and police, and to help residents understand. So this may be happening. The city has approved, because it's not in getting a development permit that we're facing this issue. The city is approving it. So philosophically, what is the city saying about how these neighborhoods are changing? And the why needs to come out more than just the developers going, 'We need to do this because putting in 20 units on a two-acre of land is not the way forward to be sustainable.'"

Future of communities

Respondents discussed how affordable housing is integral to revitalizing older and/or homogenous communities, and play a critical role in their future. Communities may be concerned about the ways in which affordable housing will change the nature of their community, conversations need to shift and emphasize how change is good.

"In areas that have already mature neighborhoods with schools that are in the neighborhood, school systems are struggling because the age group has... A lot of the residents are so much older, which means the school systems, they don't have the population to even support keeping the school open anymore. School systems are looking at having to shut down schools because there isn't enough students, and when you have organizations like us or even other organizations that are doing near market rentals and they're putting them into these areas, you're revitalizing a whole new generation again and creating vibrancy in a community that has been pretty stagnant. And getting a younger generation in that is looking to be part of a community and keeping the upkeep of their home and where they live and wanting to be involved in the community because they have the time and the energy."

"I mean, again, that seems to set the bar really high for entering a neighborhood and really low for the expectation of what those community members are. And these community members might very well be the backbone for neighborhood revitalization. They could be the people that have the businesses that nobody else wants to run, or the ones that take multiple jobs."

"But what is the next phase of [the neighbourhood]? That's the question. Where are the young people who work at the coffee shops that they so love? Where are the dog walkers, the babysitters? Where are your children going to live or your grandchildren?"

It is important to frame affordable housing not as a threat, but as something that is filling the needs of community. Oftentimes, affordable housing is thought of as something that brings outsiders into a community, but the truth is, there are people who need access to affordable housing in all neighbourhoods across Edmonton.

"I don't say, 'I am an outside developer.' I say, 'I'm one of you. I'm just Responding to the needs. Does this community need affordable housing for seniors?' Generally, the answer is yes. And I help shape what that would look like and how the community would be able to access units within it."

"So I do think that we need to go back to looking at community. I wouldn't use the term good neighbor. There's a lot of value even in the term good neighbor. "So if you're not doing certain things, you're not a good neighbor. And so I think we need to go back to community, and start talking about what are investments in community, and what do we want to see, and why is this important? Why is my community important to me? What am I getting from my community? … if we don't start moving towards community, we're going to go back to this. We're going to always be in this bubble, and we're always going to be kind of fighting with, "My property value and you're putting social housing in here." because it's not about as a community how we're changing. That kind of a language, right?"

Community development

Several participants discussed that GNPs could be just a "check box" that ultimately have little value in the long run, or they can be the first step in ongoing and robust community engagement. GNPs can be a place for settings one's "game plan" for engagement on paper.

"The purpose of a Good Neighbour document, in my opinion, should function as a starting off point. It should be the beginning of an ongoing process of engagement. It's nice to have a record of it in the form of the Good Neighbour Agreement, but it is not a stopping point. It's so, so important to maintain a healthy set of healthy relations with the community that your program operates within. It's so important to be available to take questions, to address concerns, and to build community. And that's not done with a single document once, that's dedicated work, that's dedicated capacity, that's man-hours."

Affordable housing developers and operators have an essential role to play in community development. Respondents illustrated that a lot of push back to affordable housing is deeply connected to concerns with larger social issues in the city – homelessness, social disorder, and crime, as well as to larger systems of oppression including racism and classism. Community development efforts can help to bring together diverse groups of people to address the conditions that allow NIMBYism to occur. Several participants argued that affordable housing developers should be held accountable to engage in larger community development efforts.

One participant reframed being a "good neighbour" as someone who engages in community development. "I think it's about community development work, and as affordable housing providers, that may be the essence. Let's have the city tell them you need to do community development work, and you need to demonstrate how you're doing that, and that's called Good Neighbors, because as people convene together and people start to get to know the people."

"As you start to see that community development work happen, you see less inequity, and racism, and not-in-my-backyard."

Participants discussed the importance of the providers and tenants getting involved in community life, so that pre-existing community members can get to know affordable housing tenants and see them as more than the stereotypes in their heads.

"When we opened up [this one development] not only did we partner with [another community organization] to do the safety walks, but we also built relationships with the schools, the church groups, the community leagues, the beat officers, social workers, and certain neighbors. And we have started participating in ongoing activities that the neighborhood itself is putting on. We are leaning into being a part of the existing life and flow of the community rather than trying to have as little an impact as possible. We are jumping in wholeheartedly and participating actively."

"So our Good Neighbour Agreement, yes, there's this element of if you have any concerns, here's to call, that kind of stuff, but really I think it's a philosophy of how do you demonstrate you're a good neighbour? And so if the city says these are ways that you demonstrate you're a good neighbor, because you're participating and these people, our residents, are becoming part of the community, then you're convening events and activities, and participating in and activities, that bring a community together, rather than separate the community."

"Yeah, because we believe that it's about community development and having people who have been marginalized and vulnerable, other people see them. They actually see them and understand what gifts and talents they have, that can contribute really in meaningful ways, to the fabric of the look and feel of their community."

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▶ Conclusion

The question remains if GNPs have a place in the development of affordable housing. Participants offered very conflictual perspectives on GNPs, many recognized and appreciated the intended value and utility of GNPs, but also recognized some of the harms they created in practice. In light of these harms, participants gave several recommendations for how the affordable housing space, and the ways affordable housing developers engage with existing community, needs to change to be more equitable.

However, it is arguable that GNPs are not the correct mechanism to operationalize these recommendations.

As described throughout this report, GNPs are created on inherently discriminatory practices:

1 The fact that affordable housing providers need to fill these plans out, while market developers do not, perpetuates the belief that affordable housing, and the tenants who live in these developments, are untrustworthy and a source of conflict that needs to be controlled.

2 The city already has mechanisms in place to support Edmontonians in dealing with issues they may be having with their neighbours. The fact that there is a different mechanism to deal with challenges with an affordable housing neighbour implies these challenges are different, more extreme, and require bigger interventions.

3 GNPs create unequal power dynamics wherein pre-existing community members believe they get to determine who gets to move into their community and on what terms, and often make these decisions based on stereotypes.

4 GNPs create a situation in which affordable housing providers must prove their low-income, and often racialized tenants will conform to the behavioural standards of a white, middle-class community.

These discriminations are founded on stereotypes about affordable housing tenants. There is an assumption that affordable housing will reduce property values, cause social unrest and disturbances, or increase crime in a neighbourhood, despite the fact that there is no evidence to back these assumptions up (Ngo, 2019). GNPs operate as a way to re-assure pre-existing community members that these issues will not happen in their community, and instate mechanisms to deal with any grievances that come up. In doing so, however, GNP end up reinforcing these stereotypes and harming the tenants who would move in to an affordable housing development.

Several contradictions emerge between the intentions of Good Neighbour Plans and how they operate in reality:

1. Good neighbour plans are intended to assuage fears a community may have about affordable housing moving into their community, but in doing so, they reinforce the belief that conflict will happen.

2. Affordable housing developers use GNPs as a starting off point for community development activities that bring diverse communities together. However, the development of a GNP reinforces negative stereotypes about affordable housing tenants and emboldens NIMBY behaviours. Thus, affordable housing providers are attempting to solve the very problems they created.

3. The act of filing out and doing engagement for GNPs is resource intensive, and thus diverts resources away from activities that would actually build positive and meaningful relationships.

City of Edmonton decision makers need to ask themselves: Can these discrimination and contradictions be amended in a satisfying and meaningful way? Or will these discriminations continue to underly the Good Neighbour Plan, no matter how many amendments are made?

As one participant articulated: "you have a right to have a home. That's a fundamental human right. You can't choose your neighbors. What you do, is choose how to engage with your neighbors." GNPs cannot operate as a de facto way to gain permission to move into a neighbourhood. Nor can they provide a platform to dissent to low-income and racialized Edmontonians access to housing. This violates the human rights of those who would live in affordable housing (OHRC, n.d.). Due to these reasons, GNPs should not be required to develop affordable housing in Edmonton.

Edmonton can learn from international examples. Affordable housing varies greatly across the world in terms of how it is developed, operated, and ultimately perceived. Singapore, for example, encourages both mixed-income neighbourhoods and mixed-used developments, along with providing government support so families can purchase flats at subsidized rates (Falk & Rudin, 2018). In Vienna, Austria, the city owns most of the land, and over 50% of the population lives in social housing. Associations are put in place that ensure profits from housing are invested back into the community (Falk & Rudin, 2018). Copenhagen requires 25% of developments to contain social housing, and has popularized the use of cooperative housing, both of which bring diverse groups together to form community (Falk & Rudin, 2018). Within all these communities, affordable housing seems to be more normalized, and as such does not hold the same stigma it does here in Canada (See appendix B).

Affordable housing developers and operators interviewed for this project clearly illustrated that there needs to be a fundamental shift in how we view and treat affordable housing within Edmonton. Current processes, including the Good Neighbour Plan, uphold traditional power structures and put barriers in place that harm low-income and racialized Edmontonians who are seeking affordable housing. There needs to be more conversation about how those living in affordable and market housing can come together to level power imbalances, build community, challenge stereotypes, and eradicate NIMBY beliefs and behaviours. This shift cannot be achieved through individual plans.
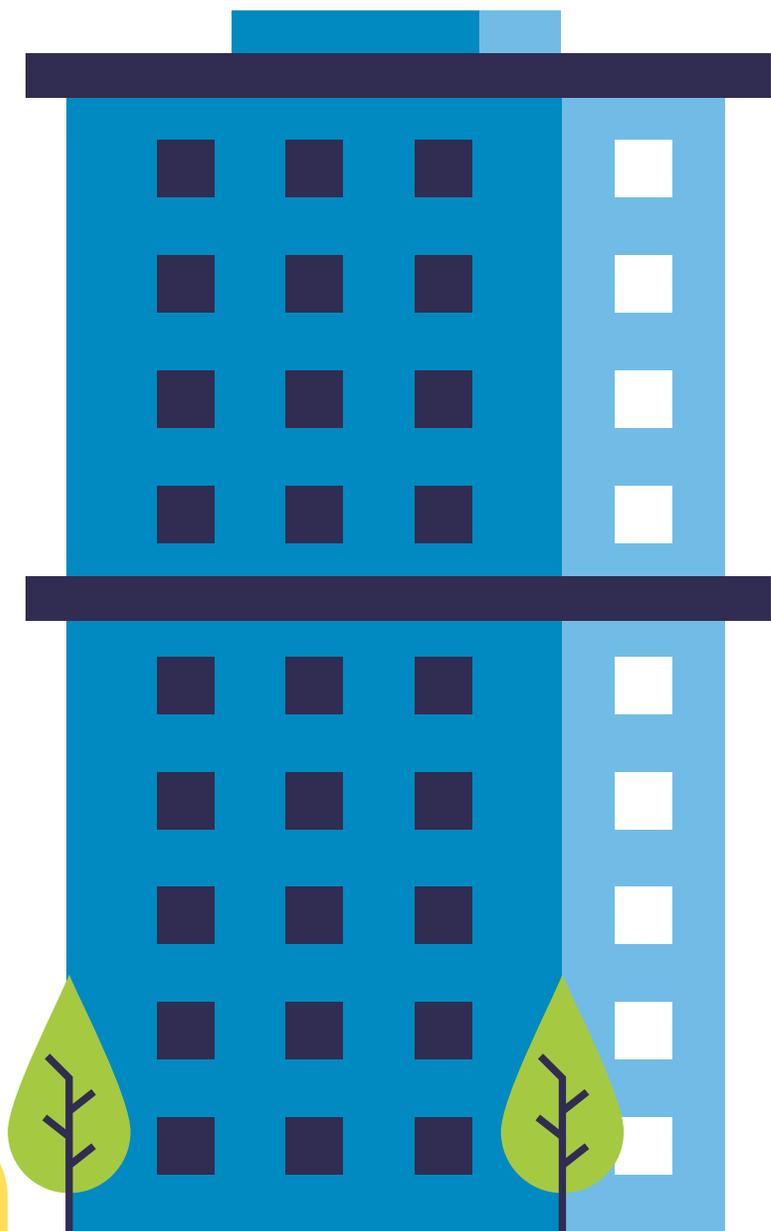
▶ APPENDIX 1: GOOD NEIGHBOUR PLANS IN OTHER CANADIAN CITIES

Name of City and Province	What is the Scope of their Good Neighbour Agreements?
Abbotsford, British Columbia	Abbotsford's Good Neighbour Agreement Policy (C001-11) is designed to ensure activities are provided in a manner that mitigates nuisance and disruptive behaviour within their vicinity and promotes positive behaviour in the community. The Good Neighbour Agreement is encouraged for organizations providing needle exchanges services. In addition, Good Neighbour Agreements may also be used at the discretion of City Council for other uses, including but not limited to liquor establishments and drug and alcohol treatment centres. Good Neighbour Agreements are meant to demonstrate all parties' desire to be responsible corporate citizens ensure Abbotsford remains a safe, healthy, and inclusive community for the enjoyment of everyone. Good Neighbour Agreements can establish reasonable behaviour and responsibilities of all parties relevant to the service being provided. This can include sections on guiding principles; location and hours of service; noise, disorder, and cleanliness; criminal activity; complaint mechanisms; and enforcement. Non-compliance with the terms of a signed Good Neighbour Agreement may be brough to the attention of City Council.

Name of City and Province	What is the Scope of their Good Neighbour Agreements?
Kamloops, British Columbia	Good Neighbour Agreements were implemented in 2020 between the city and social agencies involved with future housing projects. In signing the agreement, agencies agree to comply with city bylaws, including the good neighbour bylaw, monitor the activity of patrons outside the premise, not tolerate criminal activity on the property, actively monitor and prevent littering and vandalism outside and conduct exterior cleanups. Agencies must also agree to work with RCMP and neighbours, including all staff and volunteers. The idea behind the agreement is a partnership rather than authority (legally binding). Good neighbour agreements are required to operate a cannabis store, but the city does not issue a business license to housing agencies and cannot tie permitting to the agreement. The template for the good neighbour agreement is already used by social agencies to hold residents of supportive-housing projects accountable and the new measure would see agencies accountable to the city.
Victoria, British Columbia	Victoria's approach to GNAs is a way to manage community concerns and provide clarifying information. GNAs are generally not used when it comes to low-income housing -- only with developments that include social services and low barrier housing that tends to create impacts in the public realm.
Calgary, Alberta	Good Neighbour Agreement is a proactive community engagement approach when a new Care facility opens. It is designed to promote integration and mitigate community concerns. Existing Care Facilities can also enter into Good Neighbour Agreements with their community to help maintain

Name of City and Province	What is the Scope of their Good Neighbour Agreements?
	relationships and provide awareness. Agreements can be formally negotiated though they remain voluntary and without legally binding language. Good Neighbour Agreements intend to increase understanding by supplying basic information about the facility and its operation, identifies a process for regular communication with the wider community, and provide a method of resolving compatibility problems. City of Calgary does not enforce the agreements, but will help to work with the community and facility operator if issues arise.
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan	Saskatoon has a <u>Good Neighbour Guide</u> which is part of a public education initiative on common bylaw issues so that residents can be courteous neighbours to one another. It is designed to promote positive, proactive community relations and practices to help ensure quality of life and safety of all residents. Good Neighbour Agreements are a tool to provide an opportunity for community stakeholders to mutually acknowledge the need to build a relationship responsive to the needs of each group for a case-specific situation. These agreements are voluntary, not legally binding, and are intended to encourage socially responsible behaviour and accountability between stakeholders involved. No Good Neighbour Agreement has been established (as of 2020) in which the Planning and Development Division of Community Standards Division have been directly involved. When Administration facilitated meetings with the intent to establish an agreement, the opportunity for individuals or groups to discuss concerns was determined to be sufficient from those involved.

Name of City and Province	What is the Scope of their Good Neighbour Agreements?
Regina, Saskatchewan	There doesn't appear to be a Good Neighbour Agreement required for social agencies, but Regina does have a Good Neighbour Guide which is a guide to understanding municipal bylaws for residents of the city.
Winnipeg, Manitoba	None
Ottawa, Ontario	The Good Neighbours Infill Construction Guide provides resources on how to avoid common complaints and concerns and how to resolve issues that come up when infill construction happens and disruptions are occurring within an established neighbourhood.
Toronto, Ontario	The Good Neighbour Guide for Residential Infill Construction provides resources on communicating with neighbours, permits, how to avoid common complaints and concerns and how to resolve issues that come up when infill construction happens and disruptions are occurring within an established neighbourhood.

APPENDIX 2: AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Geography	Key lessons about affordable housing
Vienna, Austria	• Vienna has kept housing affordable because the city owns most of the land. • Roughly 80% of Vienna's population rents. • As of 2018, There are 220,000 municipal housing units, and well as further 200,000 subsidized housing units. • As of 2018, the city aimed to build 11,000 new units annually to keep up with population growth. • Austria has a strong tradition of supply-side housing subsidies through the effective Limited-Profit Housing Associations (LPHA), which requires non-social housing to reinvest the profit they make through rental income, and stipulating that they can only charge cost-based rents. • Social units are charged at cost-rent, but additional subsidies can reduce rent to 20-25% of family income • Over 50% of Vienna's housing stock is socially rented. While this caters primarily for low-income residents, 80-90% of the population are technically eligible. • (Falk & Rudin, 2018)
Singapure	• ·As of 2018, 80% of the population lived in publicly governed and developed housing, • ·Singapore encourages mixed-income neighbourhoods as well as mixed-used developments. High rise public flats are "immaculately maintained" and developments of all ages benefit from landscape upgrading projects.

Geography	Key lessons about affordable housing
	• There is limited stigma associated with living in high-rise public flats. • 95% of Singapore's public housing is owner-occupied. Residents who satisfy certain criteria for income and asset ownership are able to buy flats under a 99-year non-renewable lease at a subsidized price. • Residents of Singapore have a compulsory savings account linked to their jobs, which residents can borrow from to help purchase these subsidized flats. • (Falk & Rudin, 2018).
Copenhagen, Denmark	• 20% of the population lives in affordable housing • Any new housing development is expected to provide 25% affordable units, a third of which is allocated to the most vulnerable and run as social housing • Cooperative housing is very popular in Copenhagen, reaching 40% of housing in some areas. Cooperative housing contains shared spaces which bring diverse people together in places of "calm and beauty." • (Falk & Rudin, 2018)
The Netherlands	• There are about 2.4 million social rental units in the Netherlands, making up 31% of the total housing stock. • In some bigger cities, such as Amsterdam, social housing makes up over 50%. • Social housing is owned by housing associations: private organizations with a public obligation. • Rents are significantly below market price, with additional rent benefits for families who cannot afford social rents.

Geography	Key lessons about affordable housing
	• The revolving fund principle means that income gained from renting and selling homes is sufficient to cover reinvestment in new affordable housing, housing refurbishment, and neighbourhood regeneration. • Housing association do not get direct subsides, but can access government backed loans with low interest rates. • There are inequities in terms of accessibility as social housing has strict income limits. • (Falk & Rudin, 2018).

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