

# PROGRESS REPORT



## A Home For Everyone: A Housing Action Plan For Whitehorse

**June 2013**

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## Background

Two years ago, the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition (YAPC) released *A Home for Everyone: A Housing Action Plan* for Whitehorse. In it, Coalition members concluded that the housing crisis could be solved if leadership and collaboration led to action in five areas of the housing continuum:

- Emergency shelter
- Transitional housing
- Housing with long term supports
- Rental accommodation
- Affordable home ownership

This is YAPC's second progress report which details action in the areas above. Thank you to all who contributed information and clarification during the development of the report including the Yukon Housing Corporation, YG Health and Social Services, the City of Whitehorse, Kwanlin Dun First Nation and numerous service agencies.

## So where are we?

- The population of Whitehorse increased by 2.9% over the past year and as of December 2012, sits at 27,753.
- The median rent for Whitehorse in March 2013 was \$856; this is the highest median rent on record, and is 3.8% above the median rent price one year earlier.
- The average price of a single family dwelling is still over \$400,000 as of the 4th quarter of 2012.
- The rental vacancy rate sits at 1.5%.
- Grey Mountain Housing has 30 families and 7 individuals on their waiting list; Whitehorse Housing has 91 individuals on their waiting list. Many of those awaiting housing are considered homeless - camping, staying with family or couch surfing.

## What progress has been made?

- The City of Whitehorse has identified attainable housing as one of its top 5 priorities for its strategic plan. In February, Mayor and Council took a leadership role in supporting the call for a National Housing Strategy.
- Yukon Government has announced plans to develop a territory wide housing action plan and Yukon Housing Corporation has a new 5 year strategic plan with an expanded mandate.
- Kwanlin Dun First Nation continues its work on land and housing policies.
- Habitat for Humanity signed a landmark agreement with Champagne Aishihik to build a triplex at the Takhini River Subdivision.
- Council of Yukon First Nations has become the new community entity which will administer federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy funds in Yukon.
- New Whitehorse Yukon Safe Housing Society established.
- Interest is building to develop a 10 year plan to end homelessness in Whitehorse.
- The federal government has announced a focus on "Housing First" for Homelessness Partnering Strategy funds.
- The March 2013 Northern Housing Conference raised community and government awareness on housing challenges and solutions.
- YG is working with the Salvation Army to expand and enhance the Salvation Army's shelter and related services.

## What are the gaping holes?

- Supportive housing targeted for people exiting correctional facilities, drug and alcohol treatment, mental health facilities or youth care facilities is practically nonexistent.
- Supportive housing targeted for people with mental health issues or active addictions is practically nonexistent.
- Emergency shelter for women not fleeing abuse is almost nonexistent.
- Transitional shelter for women exiting the justice system is nonexistent.
- Emergency & transitional housing for families is practically nonexistent.
- Appropriate housing for adults with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder & their families is not sufficient.
- There is no significant movement on increasing the affordable rental housing stock in Whitehorse.
- Plans for increased emergency shelter space will not address the ongoing need for long term housing options.
- Low income and vulnerable Whitehorse residents, especially women, continue to suffer the impact of inadequate, inaccessible, unaffordable and insecure housing.

## What can we do?

Members of the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition are pleased that a Housing Action Plan for the territory is in the works and congratulate Yukon Government on that initiative. In the meantime, we need to roll up our sleeves and get appropriate housing built and support low income and the most vulnerable in our community. There is no need to wait!



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**Emergency Shelter** provides shelter of last resort for individuals who have no other options. A shelter may provide services, usually free, that help people meet their immediate survival and shelter needs. Shelters may be open to anyone or limit their clientele by gender or age. Some shelters expect clients to stay elsewhere during the day, returning only to sleep, or, if the shelter also provides meals, to eat.

GAPS/NEEDS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	PROGRESS
1. Salvation Army shelter often at capacity or over.	a. Create and increase transitional housing and housing with long term supports until Salvation Army shelter's original purpose as an emergency shelter is restored	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steve Cardiff House, which supports 1 person for a 6 to 12 month period, opened in summer of 2012</li> <li>• Agreement in principle signed between YG and Salvation Army to allow for development of transitional units in addition to emergency shelter. \$100,000 allocated in 2013/14 YG budget for planning</li> <li>• 10 mats added to Salvation Army emergency shelter services; funding provided by YG</li> </ul>
2. Youth shelter has service limitations and funding insecurities.	a. Commit funds to the operation of a permanent youth emergency shelter	• 6 bed Youth Emergency Shelter opened in January 2013 for youth aged 17 to 24
	b. Ensure youth emergency shelter is accessible to youth under 16 years of age	• No emergency shelter is available to youth under 17 as per Child and Family Services Act
	c. Ensure youth emergency shelter is barrier free in terms of location and admittance (ie. open entry, downtown, and not attached to an institution)	• Location is downtown in a discreet location. Service provided by Skookum Jim Friendship Centre through YG funding
3. Limited options for women and for families.	a. Create safe emergency shelter spaces for women and for families (couples and children)	• See above (1) re: Agreement in Principle

**Transitional Housing** is housing where people can remain for a limited period of time (from 30 days to 2 -3 years). Residents will usually move to permanent housing upon stabilizing their living situation. Support services are generally provided to help people move towards increased independence and self-sufficiency.

GAPS/NEEDS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	PROGRESS
1. Supply of low cost transient and short term accommodation insufficient to meet demand.	a. Revise the zoning by-law to allow hostels and boarding houses in more areas (zones) of the City as envisioned in 2010 City of Whitehorse's Official Community Plan (OCP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed by City of Whitehorse via Bylaw 2011-17; passed in 2012</li> </ul>
	b. Provide economic development programs (assistance and incentives) aimed at private and voluntary sectors to create more hostels, boarding houses and transient accommodations	No action
	c. Provide community support workers to residents of rooming hotels to decrease evictions and overuse of emergency shelter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>H&amp;SS enhancing client services by shifting the role of social assistance case managers to a more focused client service</li> </ul>
2. Transitional housing targeted to the following populations is insufficient or non-existent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>women fleeing violence</li> <li>people exiting institution (correctional facilities, drug and alcohol treatment, mental health facilities or youth in care facilities), and</li> <li>street involved youth</li> </ul>	a. Immediately implement Kaushee's new Second Stage housing project, Betty's Haven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construction underway with completion and occupancy expected in fall 2013. It will provide 10 transitional units of supportive, secure and affordable housing for 12 to 18 months to women and their children who are fleeing abuse. Approximately \$4.5 million provided by Yukon Government.</li> </ul>
	b. Use existing research to develop transitional housing for those exiting institutions	No action
	c. Extend emergency youth shelter stays for up to 6 months to ensure transition to stable, long term housing as recommended by More Than a Roof, (March 2007)	No action
	d. Improve discharge planning for those exiting the criminal justice system, those leaving a health facility after an extended stay and youth exiting the child welfare system, to ensure suitable housing in place prior to their discharge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blood Ties Housing Navigator continues to provide assistance with housing applications, rental and tenant guides and tenant education</li> <li>Alcohol and Drug Services has a transition unit</li> <li>Whitehorse Yukon Safe Housing Society is planning to provide safe, substance free housing for people who need support to maintain sobriety. Program was piloted in December 2012 and is based on the Oxford Housing model</li> <li>Recent YG Functional Program Request for Proposals suggests new transitional housing at Salvation Army but no specific reference to those exiting institutions</li> </ul>

**Housing with Long-term Support** includes: a) supportive housing for individuals and families that integrates supports and services into the housing with no restrictions on length of stay; b) community-based programs provided to individuals and families on an outreach basis living in their own home. In both cases, supports are needs-based and intended to promote social inclusion by maximizing independence and stability.

GAPS/NEEDS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	PROGRESS
<p>1. Supportive housing for the following vulnerable populations is insufficient or non-existent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People living with active addictions</li> <li>• People with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) and other cognitive disabilities</li> <li>• People with physical disabilities</li> <li>• People with mental health issues, and</li> <li>• Low income seniors</li> </ul>	<p>a. Identify opportunities for co-location of populations needing supportive housing and integration of service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No action</li> </ul>
	<p>b. Expand number of facilities where support services are provided by facility-based staff:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Options for Independence to expand from 6 units to 14 with \$3.05 million investment from Yukon Housing and the federal government. Construction is underway.</li> </ul>
	<p>i. Immediately proceed with Abbeyfield development for seniors and assess model for application to other populations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little progress</li> </ul>
	<p>ii. YG departments collaborate to ensure Northern City Supportive Housing Coalition (NCSHC) project is built and operational by 2012</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No action</li> </ul>
	<p>iii. Develop and implement a Managed Alcohol Program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not being considered</li> </ul>
	<p>iv. Investigate whether Approved Home model used by Adult Residential Services can be transferred to other vulnerable populations requiring supports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No action</li> </ul>
<p>v. Make land available for a token fee to NGO's involved in providing emergency, transitional housing and housing with long-term supports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No land has been made available</li> <li>• New bylaw adopted in July 2012 allows for "government funded or operated housing developments, including, but not limited to, group homes, social, seniors, or assisted living housing, may be permitted in any residential designation, subject to zoning regulations."</li> </ul>	
<p>2. Support to vulnerable populations living independently is insufficient.</p>	<p>a. Implement Assertive Community Team model for integrating case management by government and NGO support workers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each client is currently dealt with on a case by case basis if served by YG Health and Social Services or the NGO community.</li> <li>• It was strongly noted that it is difficult to provide appropriate supports without stable housing.</li> <li>• Establishment of downtown outreach clinic providing valuable support to vulnerable populations. Clinic is sponsored by YG and Kwanlin Dun First Nation</li> <li>• Residents of the Affordable Family Housing complex have support of .5 position through YHC and the Women's Directorate</li> </ul>

GAPS/NEEDS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	PROGRESS
2. Support to vulnerable populations living independently is insufficient, <i>continued...</i>	b. Review mandates of the Yukon Government’s Supported Independent Living (SIL), Home Care and Healthy Families programs to identify and meet service gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No action</li> </ul>
	c. Expand Healthy Families program to include families with school age children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No action but extension to rural Yukon might be possible</li> </ul>
	d. Increase funding for SIL and Home Care programs to increase number of workers where needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H&amp;SS reports that funding is demographically driven</li> </ul>
	e. Ensure appropriate training programs are regularly offered through Yukon College such as the Community Support Worker program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uptake necessary to sustain Community Support Worker program not evident since 2009</li> <li>• Northern Institute of Social Justice provides training such as Mental Health First Aid, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills, trauma training and FASD training for community workers</li> </ul>

**Rental housing** can be owned by the private or public sector. Some complexes may be for specific groups (e.g. seniors, single parent families). Rent may be subsidized through government programs. This includes social housing which is owned by government or the non profit sector with rent geared to income.

GAPS/NEEDS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	PROGRESS
1. Supply of affordable, accessible, adequate rental units insufficient to meet demand.	a. Develop a means for the City of Whitehorse and YG to reduce land costs where a builder commits to affordable, multi-unit rental housing	No known action
	b. Provide short term incentives to builders (eg.reducing tipping fees, reducing development permit fees, and increasing number and types of matching fund programs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is hoped that development of the YG Housing Action Plan will address some of these issues</li> </ul>
	c. Implement new <i>Landlord and Tenant Act</i> amendments that clarify damage protection provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Act expected to come into force in fall 2013</li> </ul>
	d. i) Streamline development processes to increase the stock of basement and garden suites, pocket housing and multi-unit buildings	No known action
	ii) Implement a campaign to encourage home owners to develop basement, garden/granny suites for rental.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Normal promotion. According to YHC, rental suite program advertising did not increase uptake of program</li> </ul>
2. Supply of social housing units insufficient.	a. Make social housing a key priority within Yukon Housing Corporation's mandate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The implementation of Yukon Housing's new Strategic plan may begin to address issues surrounding the supply of social housing units in Whitehorse, the recommendations of the Auditor General and the provision of collaborative solutions</li> <li>Seniors housing complex with 34 units to be built on Alexander Street. Construction anticipated to begin summer, 2013</li> </ul>
	b. Implement recommendations of Auditor General (Feb 2010) particularly the need for analysis, strategic planning and action regarding social housing needs in Whitehorse c. Provide leadership in development of collaborative solutions between NGO's, government and private sector	
	d. Set targets to ensure supply meets demand and monitor total supply annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to YHC, a comprehensive review and assessment of housing issues community by community is to be released late spring 2013</li> </ul>
	3. Quality of current rental housing supply needs improvement.	a. Adopt and act on <i>Landlord and Tenant Act</i> report by Yukon Legislative Assembly's Select Committee
b. Enforce current provisions in the <i>Landlord and Tenant Act</i> that address the issue of condition of rental units		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No change expected</li> </ul>
c. Include and enforce minimal rental standards either in the <i>Public Health and Safety Act</i> or the <i>Landlord and Tenant Act</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum Rental Standards will form part of regulations under the new <i>Residential Landlord and Tenant Act</i>.</li> </ul>

GAPS/NEEDS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	PROGRESS
	d. Promote information to prospective landlords on available sources of funding for renovations, improvements and energy efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normal promotion. No change expected</li> </ul>
4. Rent subsidy programs are insufficient.	a. Formalize <i>Portable Rent Subsidy Program</i> where subsidy follows the individual rather than the specific unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No changes made to the <i>Portable Rent Subsidy Program</i> although fewer are available as permanent rent subsidies provided to landlords have increased</li> </ul>
	b. Allocate additional resources to <i>Portable Rent Subsidy Program</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No additional resources allocated to the <i>Portable Rent Subsidy Program</i></li> </ul>
	c. Review application procedures to ensure proving eligibility for social housing is straightforward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YHC in process of developing new forms to better reflect tenant needs</li> <li>• New tenant relations officer brings Yukon closer to national standard of tenant relations officer/unit</li> </ul>
5. Some Social Assistance (SA) clients receive insufficient funds to obtain and maintain adequate housing.	a. Adjust shelter allowance to reflect market rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shelter rates based on Bureau of Statistics data. Territorial Supplementary Allowance can be used to increase shelter allowance.</li> </ul>
	b. Provide a mechanism (such as indexing) to ensure allowances reflect market rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No action expected</li> </ul>
	c. Review SA policies using a “Housing First” approach to assess systemic barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy review in progress. Policies and allowances assess need</li> </ul>
	d. Review SA policies and their application to ensure consistency, clarity and adequacy with regards to shelter and shelter providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy review in progress</li> <li>• New <i>Residential Landlord and Tenant Act</i> expected to provide clarity</li> </ul>
6. Rental units are not equally available to all socio-demographic groups due to discrimination.	a. Increase rental vacancy rate (to a range of 3 to 7%) to promote economic stability and options for tenants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Down Payment Plan may free up some rental stock</li> </ul>
	b. Educate and support landlords and tenants about their rights and responsibilities, and processes available to resolve conflicts and protect human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenant Wisdom Course delivered in May 2013 by Blood Ties Four Directions</li> </ul>
	c. Proactively prevent discrimination by promoting human rights, mediating disputes, educating landlords and investigating alleged discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yukon Human Rights Commission continues to advocate for legislative change to protect housing as a human right</li> </ul>
	d. Implement a <i>RentWell Program</i> including education for tenants and a guaranteed fund for landlords	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YAPC completed landlord collaboration project re: <i>RentWell</i> in May, 2013. Report &amp; recommendations to be assessed over summer 2013</li> </ul>
	e. Include housing as a human right in the Yukon Human Rights Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No action</li> </ul>



**Affordable Home Ownership** is the ability to buy a home because it costs less than 30% of the before-tax total household income. Housing costs include mortgage payments, property taxes and utilities.

GAPS/NEEDS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	PROGRESS
<p>1. Supply of affordable, accessible, adequate housing is insufficient to meet demand.</p>	<p>a. Identify community champions to combat NIMBYism and build public awareness of need for increased density</p>	<p>No specific action. Development of YG Housing Action Plan may have impact</p>
	<p>b. Release more land for housing development, increase density and modify zoning as articulated in 2010 City of Whitehorse Official Community Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council adopted new Zoning Bylaw 2012-20 on July 23rd, 2012 which allows for future densification through: garden suites, smaller lot sizes, more flexible subdivision rules, triplexes in Residential Single Detached zones, removal of minimum unit sizes, downtown height limits and neighbourhood mixed-use areas</li> </ul>
	<p>c. Further investigate other jurisdictions for possible incentives through the <i>Municipal Act</i> for the City of Whitehorse to encourage the development of privately owned land or derelict buildings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal Act currently under review by Department of Community Services with committee of YG and municipal representatives</li> </ul>
	<p>d. Change <i>Municipal Act</i> to encourage land development activities (such as waiving building development fees, tipping fees and land fees)</p>	<p>See above</p>
	<p>e. Sell 15% of housing lots below market value in any development</p>	<p>No action</p>
	<p>f. Investigate incentives to developers that result in construction of more affordable housing units.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YHC new strategic plan calls for collaboration with builders, developers, Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and others</li> </ul>
	<p>g. Continue to support Habitat for Humanity housing projects through providing land, waiving development fees, making donations of materials, funds and labour</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing and successful collaboration is reported</li> </ul>
<p>2. Ownership financing options are limited.</p>	<p>a. Explore financial alternatives used in other jurisdictions such as co-operatives, rent-to-own and saving circles for down payments</p> <p>b. Encourage Yukon Housing to investigate NWT home ownership programs such as PATH and HELP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YG introduced a new Down Payment Assistance Program(DPAP) in March 2013. The program is designed to assist eligible Yukon residents within a certain income range to purchase a home, condominium or townhouse</li> <li>• Home Ownership Preparedness &amp; Education program (HOPE) in development by YHC. To be implemented in summer 2013</li> </ul>



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The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition is working to eliminate poverty through awareness and action. Our members partner with other community members on issues involving food, shelter and access to services. By working together and building partnerships with individuals, governments, and the private and non profit sectors, we can take real action to directly and positively affect the lives of everyone in our community.

Become a member by calling (867) 334 9317 or e-mail  
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