Transitional and Supportive Housing for Youth

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Canadian Housing and Renewal Association
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BC HOUSING

Transitional and Supportive Housing for Youth

This is a summary of the webinar "Transitional and Supportive Housing for Youth", which took place virtually during the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association's Congress Webinar Series on June 2nd, 2020

THIS SUMMARY

This is a summary of a CHRA webinar that focuses on Transitional and Supportive Housing for Youth. Wood-Green and PARTISANS from Toronto presented how they conducted a CMHC-funded Solutions Lab project to develop a strategic playbook for designing supportive, transitional housing models for youth at risk of homelessness. This project focuses on youth transitioning out of the child welfare system. Also, we heard how the Quint Male Youth Lodge adapted to the changing needs of youth in Saskatoon and how they developed ideas on future initiatives by partnering with community groups.

THANKS TO

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BC Housing for their generous support to this initiative

Thanks to the work and information of
- Quint Development Corporation
- WoodGreen Community Services
- PARTISANS Architecture Studio

Why Housing for Youth Aging out of Care is Important

Through this virtual session WoodGreen Community Services and PARTISANS Architecture Studio presented the research and findings drawn from their Social Innovation Lab focusing on providing new models, policies, and solutions to address the homeless aging out of care crisis. These findings revolve around 8 major themes that guide the future for successful models. These themes run parallel with the development and operations of Quint Development Corporation's *Q Male Youth Lodge*, which was ahead of it's time being developed in 2003.

Social Innovation Lab

"Social innovation labs (also called design labs and change labs) are an approach to tackling complex societal challenges that require systems change."[1]

To understand and address the multifaceted concern of Youth Aging out of Care WoodGreen and PARTISANS are working together with their community in a Social Innovation Lab.

The use of a social innovation lab will help develop a strong understanding of Youth Aging out of Care, by working with the community on how they view the problem and how they are affected.

The goal is to have new solutions that become the new standard. This could be through proposing policy change or developing new models that can be scaled to solve a problem
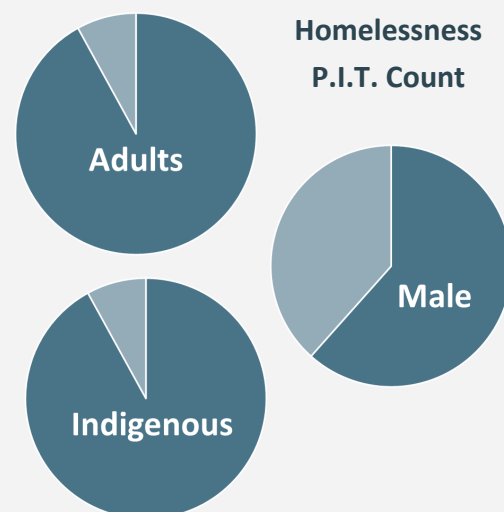
Goals of the Social Innovation Lab:

WoodGreen is working with PARTISANS to drive towards better access to resources and supports for youth aging out of care, pull from unique models that can inform the development of more affordable housing developments for youth, and create spaces designed for youth that are informed by the following key perspectives:

- **Trauma Informed** - **Anti-Oppressive** - **Not Euro-centric**

Youth Aging out of Care Information

A homelessness point in time count in Saskatoon, conducted on April 18, 2018 included 475 participants (including 26 youth and 11 children) experiencing homelessness. Of those 92% were adults, 61.6% were male, and 85.5% identified as Indigenous[2]

Homelessness P.I.T. Count

20% of the homeless population in Canada identify as youth between the ages of 13 and 24 every year. "Over the course of the year there are between 35,000-40,000 young people who experience homelessness, and on any given night between 6,000-7,000".[3]

57.8% of homeless youth indicated involvement of some kind with child protection services in the past.[4]

The correlation between these intersectionality leads to a misrepresented portion of homeless youth in Canada.

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[1] 2014 January 17, "Social Innovation Labs: Top Tips and Common Pitfalls," MaRS Discovery District, January 17, 2014, https://www.marsdd.com/news/social-innovation-labs-top-tips-common-pitfalls/

[2] Saskatoon Homelessness, *Point in Time Count of Homeless Individuals and Families in Saskatoon, SK,* (Report, https://www.saskatoonhomelessness.ca/pit-counts, 2018)

[3] Stephen Gaetz, Bill O'Grady, Sean Kidd, Kaitlin Schwan, *Without a home: The National Youth Homelessness Survey*, (Report, https://homelesshub.ca/, 2016), 6

[4] Gaetz, O'Grady, Kidd, Schwan, 47

Key Themes Identified in the Social Innovation Lab and Displayed in the Q Male Youth Lodge

Transitional Housing Definitions and Timeframes

Speed is a critical factor as the affordable housing sector already has more demand than supply, and there continue to be youth aging out of care. For this reason there needs to be a combination of short term and long term housing options that are built to support youth quickly.

Youth Centered Design at the Core

Research conducted in the Social Innovation Lab consistently emphasized that a housing project is an act of community building. It needs to address the immediate needs of youth and will also contribute to the community they are built in.

Successful designs have an emphasis on shared space with various levels of engagement. There is support services in common arrears and in addition to teaching and educational spaces there are well designed passive places (e.g. courtyards or common arrears). These spaces can be just as effective in creating a community through an informal setting.

Personal space is also important to consider for youth aging out of care that have had little opportunity to choose how or where they lived while in care. This is a chance for them to personalize their space as many youth have not had this opportunity.

A youth centric focus goes beyond design at the Q Youth Male Lodge as youth are surrounded by goal oriented supports. They work with case workers who understand their situation and together create goals specific to their needs. Then the entire staff at the lodge will help to facilitate the achievement of these goals.

Staff at the lodge are supports and mentors to the youth through the many programs offered, including those focus on education, community, sports, band programs at local schools, and cadets. These give healthy outlets that will engage youth and allow them to continue their participation even after they leave.

Place Matters—Finding the Right Site for Youth Housing

Perfect sites are extremely rare or unreasonably expensive, for this reason community partners and policy makers need to think laterally about creating a community approach. To help with the cost of a site a project can be paired with local amenities to split costs. In addition, housing initiatives can collaborate with municipalities, like in Stockholm, where temporary modular buildings were assembled in sites that were siting idle awaiting permanent use.[5]

The Q Male Youth Lodge is located in the downtown core as part of Quint's housing efforts to meet Quint's mission to enhance the economic and social well being of low income neighbourhoods. It was also the potential youth tenants who expressed they wanted to stay in the inner city of Saskatoon as it was the neighbourhood they knew and where they felt most comfortable.

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[5] Andreas Martin-Löf Arkitekter, "Västberga", Andreas Martin-Löf Arkitekter, Accessed June 22, 2020, http://martinlof.se/projects/vastberga/

Construction Constraints can Breed Innovation

WoodGreen and PARTISANS found developments that viewed budgets, schedules, and site constraints as an opportunity for research and development were more successful than those who viewed them as a hindrance for creativity. An example can be seen in Copenhagen where raw materials of rough wood and brick were highlighted on the exterior of the development, instead of hidden away.[6]

The Social Innovation Lab found retrofitting existing buildings with energy efficient systems, whenever possible, could streamline the construction process and save on operation costs. Organizations with multiple sites could consolidate standardized approaches in maintenance expenditures to save money (e.g. installing the same HVAC system, which could give bulk purchase discounts and allow the stock pile of resources).
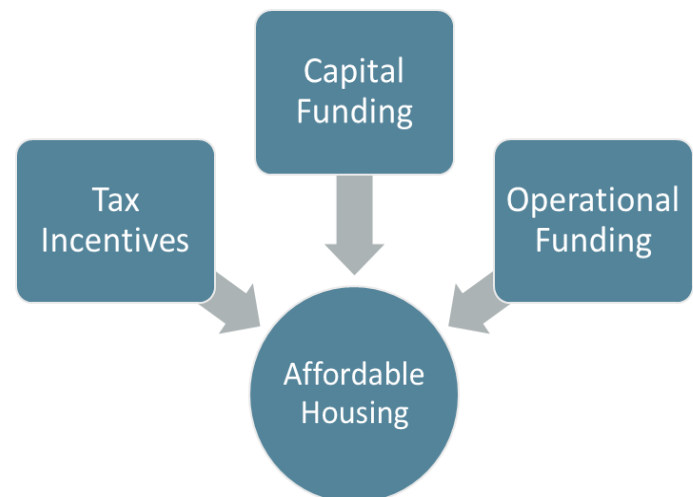
The Q Male Youth Lodge embraced construction constraints by renovating a 5,000 square foot building that was previously a boarding house. It is now staffed 24/7 for up to 10 occupants and came about because there was only 1 other male shelter in downtown Saskatoon.[7]

The development integrated energy retrofits with highly insulated radiant in-floor heating. This helped operational budges with lower utility costs and is comfortable for the occupants.

Innovative Financing is Required

Attracting the interest of developers is key to increasing the stock of affordable housing and available housing for youth. Municipalities could combine multiple sites that are too small for development and permit developers to phase their developments to reduce their overall risk, this would also make sites more manageable.

A change in policy could actively support developments. Tax incentives from municipalities and reduction in land charges or land costs where the government owns the land would incentivise more affordable youth housing. Allowing an increase in density would also help improve construction efficiencies.

The Q Male Youth Lodge displayed innovative financing by securing initial funding and operating funding with multiple levels of government.

Capital funding of $350,000 was secured through the Government of Canada's National Homelessness Initiative to buy and renovate the lodge.

Initially the operating funding was about $300,000 a year with three different Government of Saskatchewan ministries, but Quint has been flexible in negotiating funding and now has annual block operating funding of $540,000 through the Ministry of Social Services and Ministry of Corrections & Public Safety.[8]

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[6] Bjarke Ingels Group, "Dong", Bjarke Ingels Group, Accessed July 2, 2020, https://big.dk/#projects-dong

[7] Quint Development Corporation, *Supported Living Case Study: Transitional Home for Male Youth*, CHRA, June 2, 2020, Video, 1:21:38, https://chra-achru.ca/transitional-and-supportive-housing-for-youth/

[8] Quint Development Corporation, *Supported Living Case Study: Transitional Home for Male Youth*

Wrap Around Program Model can Support Youth to Thrive

Upon investigating successful models around the world the Social Innovation Lab found that wrap-around support program models can help youth thrive. In combination with effective physical structures there needs to be supportive program types.

Working with partners to make a sense of community and provide wrap-around supports is an integral component to Q Male Youth Lodge's operations. The lodge has partnerships with local services to keep youth residence engaged and develop community:

- YMCA allows the use of their services

- White Buffalo Youth Lodge offers use of gym and cultural programs

Social Innovation Lab Next Steps

WoodGreens and PARTISANS will start to refine, review, and validate new models to pilot.

Reacting to the obstacles of COVID-19 community engagements are going virtual, which will include more individuals than the initial plan.
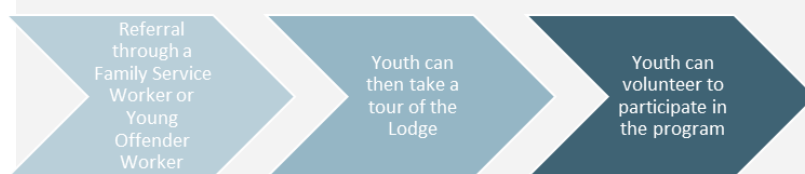
The final goal is to have a model that would be considered for scaling.

- **Scale Up:** Changing institutions at the level of policy, rules, and laws

- **Scale Out:** Replication and dissemination, increasing number of people or communities impacted

- **Scale Deep:** Change relationships, cultural values, and beliefs

The concept of wrap-around programming is used to describe any program that is flexible, family or person-oriented and comprehensive – that is, a number of organizations work together to provide a holistic program of supports[9]

Successes of the Q Male Youth Lodge

One key to success for Q Male Youth Lodge is the referral process for new tenants:

Referral through a Family Service Worker or Young Offender Worker → Youth can then take a tour of the Lodge → Youth can volunteer to participate in the program

Participation is proven to be a successful component of the lodge as youth are interested in setting goals and actively working to achieve them.

Success is a sense of community, therefore it is not a consistent quantifiable outcome:

The success of the Lodge can be seen with a youth who moved into the lodge. They attended high school regularly, participated in the school band, got a part time job and transitioned out of the lodge to live with their brother.

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[9] Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, "Systems Integration", Homeless Hub, Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2019, https://www.homelesshub.ca/solutions/systems-approach-homelessness/wrap-around-delivery-and-other-team-based-models