

GEF Seniors Housing Strategic Plan

Charting Our Future |
Measuring our
Progress

2024-2028



Seniors
Housing

Land Acknowledgment

GEF Seniors Housing acknowledges that our communities are located on the traditional territories of the people of Treaty 6, which includes the Nêhiyaw (Cree), Denesuliné (Dene), Nakota Sioux (Stoney), Anishinaabe (Saulteaux), Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Métis, and Inuit peoples. We recognize all nations, genders, and spirits who make their homes here and help us steward this land.



Quality of Life Philosophy

“To provide seniors with accessible, affordable, and safe housing in comfortable and supportive environments that promote opportunities for them to successfully age in place.”

Vision

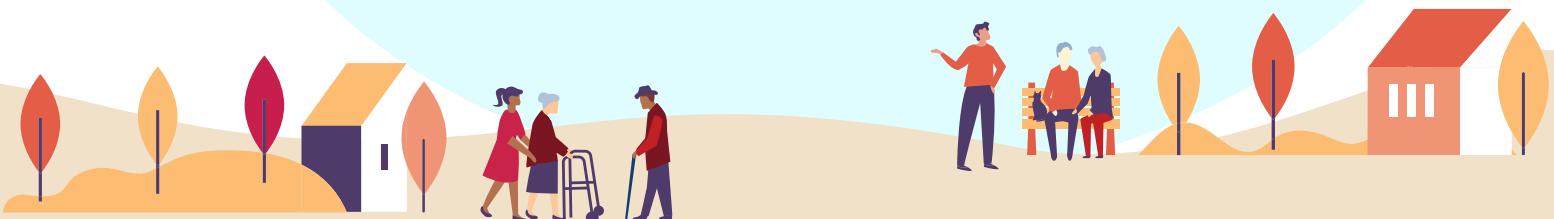
To create vibrant, affordable communities for seniors.

Mission

As Alberta’s largest non-profit social housing operator for seniors, we focus on providing affordable, well-maintained, and secure buildings, where our clients can live with dignity and thrive in their communities with the support of friendly and caring staff and volunteers.

Values

- We encourage relationships based on **RESPECT** and believe in treating everyone with dignity, kindness, and compassion.
- We want to put **PEOPLE** at the centre of everything we do, where our aim is to positively contribute to everyone’s life journey.
- We believe in promoting interactions built on **TRUST**, where we act with integrity, honesty, and fairness.
- We promote **ACCOUNTABILITY** by accepting responsibility for one’s own words, actions and the choices that are made.
- We proudly acknowledge and enthusiastically pursue **EQUITY, DIVERSITY, and INCLUSION** in our work.



Message From The Board Chair

On behalf of the GEF Seniors Housing's Board of Directors and Senior Management, it is my pleasure and privilege to present GEF Seniors Housing's 2024-2028 Strategic Plan.

This Strategic Plan, informed by our Quality of Life Philosophy and guided by our Mission, Vision, and Values, has been developed with the input of employees, clients, and partners. The Plan reflects the voices and lived experiences of our employees, clients, and community partners. The candor and feedback from our team members, partners, and those we serve reinforced the need for us to focus on what is most important in our stewardship of social housing for lower income seniors. It is a guiding document that sets out the Board's strategic vision and outlines the targeted commitments for the organization over the next five years through four strategic areas of focus: Quality Housing, Vibrant Communities, Employees and Partners, and Finance and Resource Management. Further, it maps out a clear direction for GEF Seniors Housing, which will enable us to effectively and compassionately support some of Edmonton's most vulnerable citizens needing safe, affordable, and quality social housing.

The Plan will also serve as a communication and advocacy tool in the work that the Board and the organization does with our clients, partners, and the various orders of government in ensuring that there are appropriate affordable housing options and the necessary supports available to seniors who are living with limited financial resources, thereby ensuring they have access to the housing supports they need. As the world changes, so do the needs of our seniors and the aging population.

We are proud of the long history we have in providing safe, welcoming, affordable, and quality social housing for seniors, and look forward to continuing to grow our services to seniors and the community in the coming years.

Don Gnatiuk,
GEF Board Chair



Introduction

At GEF Seniors Housing, we strive to be forward thinking and approach the work we do with compassion and creativity in delivering social housing that is safe, affordable, and supportive. By doing so, we hope to bring innovation and value to our clients—tenants and residents—staff, volunteers, partners, and the community. We believe social housing that is safe, affordable, accessible, of a high quality, and that is integrated into the communities in which the buildings exist, is a basic right for our seniors. Fundamentally, a person’s income should not limit their access to quality housing.

GEF Seniors Housing is a public, not-for-profit registered charitable organization providing social housing and support services for seniors in 3,777 affordable housing units across 41 buildings located in the City of Edmonton as of January 2024. The organization is a Housing Management Body (HMB) established by Ministerial Order under the Alberta Social Housing Act, with a mandate to serve low to moderate income seniors in support of their housing needs.

Our History with the City of Edmonton and Alberta

In 1959, our organization was established under provincial legislation as the Greater Edmonton Foundation (GEF). Since the 1960s, the City of Edmonton and the Government of Alberta have worked collaboratively to build retirement homes (Lodges) for low-income seniors. The City provided land and the provincial government built and owned the homes.

Foundations and other Housing Management Bodies (HMBs) were established to manage social housing properties in one or more municipal districts or counties across the province. The Greater Edmonton Foundation was one of these foundations that now operates as an HMB. In 2012, we changed our name to GEF Seniors Housing and remain a registered charity.

Social Housing is an umbrella term for rental housing, which may be owned and managed by government, non-profit organizations, or a combination of both, with the aim of providing housing for those in need.



The major source of funding for our three seniors housing programs—Municipal Lodge, Seniors Self-Contained (SSC), and Affordable—is derived from our tenants’ rent, particularly for the SSC and Affordable programs. For the Lodge program, our funding is comprised of residents’ rent and a monthly service fee, the Government of Alberta Lodge Assistance Program (LAP) grant, and an annual operating contribution from the City of Edmonton known as the municipal requisition that is specific to our Lodges only.

As a not-for-profit organization, all funding is used to support and enhance the quality of life for the seniors living in our communities. This is further supported by any of the donations we receive from generous individuals and companies who contribute to GEF Seniors Housing and our Mission.

Over the next five years, GEF Seniors Housing’s Strategic Plan will provide us with the guidance to allow us to take clear and decisive action to strengthen and grow our affordable social housing for seniors in buildings and communities that allow them the ability to live with dignity and a sense of well-being. We will do so by using informed decision-making and following good governance practices to improve our overall organizational performance, always guided by our Mission, Vision, and Values and our Quality of Life Philosophy.

Lodge Accommodation Program

Provides supportive living for functionally independent seniors, as well as support services: meals, housekeeping, and activity and wellness programming. Non-medical staff are on-site 24 hours a day. Rent is calculated at 30% of annual income plus a monthly fee for support services.

SSC Apartment Accommodation Program

Provides independent living for functionally independent seniors. Rent is calculated at 30% of annual income (income threshold applies).

Eligibility for Social Housing in Alberta

- **Age:** At least 65 years of age or if a couple, one is at least 60 and the other is at least 65.
- **Citizenship:** A Canadian Citizen, Permanent Resident, or have completed sponsorship process.
- **Income Threshold:** For subsidized apartment housing, annual income line (line 15000 on the most recent Notice of Assessment) must meet Alberta government household income limits that are reviewed annually.
- To prioritize households with less wealth and thus greater need for allocation, GEF follows the Alberta government’s **Social Housing Accommodation Regulation (SHAR) Point System** to determine priority of need.

Affordable Accommodation Program

Provides apartment housing for seniors. Rent is a flat rate set at approximately 10-15% below the average market rates.

Strategy Context

Planning for the Future

GEF's Past Strategic Plan (2020-2023)

GEF's previous three-year strategic plan focused on two strategic priorities:

1. Transforming how we work to best serve our seniors.
2. Growing our organization in sustainable ways.

GEF actively promoted transformational leadership as the means to enrich the client experience and developed and committed to an organizational sustainability framework.

Under the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan, GEF:

- Implemented a number of initiatives that considered the changing needs of the seniors served and ensure we had practices and processes that were transparent and effective in serving our clients needs.
- Made purposeful and targeted organizational improvements in our commitment to staff to foster a work environment demonstrating our recognition and appreciation of them and the work they do and that reflected our ongoing investment in their skills development.
- Received over \$10 million in external government funding to complete multiple building projects.
- Developed and implemented a [Sustainability Framework](#) to guide GEF in achieving advances in sustainability that are intended to be inspirational yet pragmatic, with clear transparent goals to drive action and key performance indicators to measure and report on our progress.



Seniors Living with GEF (2023)

- Nearly 3,800 low to moderate-income seniors lived in a GEF community.
- Average annual income for GEF Apartment tenants was \$24,619.
- About 95% of GEF seniors were paying 30% of their gross monthly income for rent. The average monthly rent was about \$648.
- 82% of GEF seniors were between 71 and 100 years of age.
- Almost 2,000 seniors applied for housing.



City of Edmonton's Affordable Housing Strategy

A Home for Everyone

The Strategy's Mission is to improve the quality of life for individuals and families by increasing, maintaining, and supporting safe, adequate, and affordable housing in all areas of the city. It has set practical, yet ambitious, goals and objectives to meet the identified demand for housing:

- **Goal 1:** Edmontonians have access to affordable housing in all areas of the city.
 - Enable the development of affordable housing to increase supply and housing choice.
 - Diversify the affordable housing supply.
 - Support the sustainability of new and existing social and affordable housing.
- **Goal 2:** Edmontonians have the housing supports they need.
 - Improve and expand homelessness prevention programs and services.
 - Enable partnerships that improve housing supports
- **Goal 3:** Edmontonians have increased awareness of housing needs and the importance of affordable housing.
 - Collect and share insights from research and engagement.
 - Coordinate with partners to identify shared objectives, improve information sharing, and convene to enhance the functioning of the affordable housing ecosystem.

GEF understands that the projected and known changes in the demographics of seniors will directly impact housing and support services needs for seniors over the next five plus years. The increases seen in housing waitlists attest to the growing housing needs of seniors in Edmonton.



Government of Alberta's Housing Strategy

Stronger Foundations

Alberta plans to reduce waiting lists and assist an additional 25,000 households by 2032, while also maintaining support for the more than 57,000 households currently relying on government-subsidized housing. The Strategy identifies five Key Action areas to help achieve their target:

- **Action 1:** Support Albertans most in need.
 - Continue to protect the most vulnerable and ensure housing eligibility is fair, clear, and equitable.
- **Action 2:** Improve access.
 - Make it simpler for Albertans to access affordable housing supports and easier for housing providers to deliver those supports.
- **Action 3:** Increase capacity, planning, and governance.
 - Enable more collaboration and local decision-making and provide more flexibility and capacity to meet local housing needs.
- **Action 4:** Enhance sustainability and efficiency.
 - Make the affordable housing system more sustainable by enabling innovative operating models.
- **Action 5:** Enable growth and investment.
 - Use innovative approaches for partnerships with the private and non-profit sectors to grow the supply of affordable housing.

Seniors Living in Alberta (2023)

- Average annual income for all Alberta seniors was \$26,120.
- 14% of Albertans were seniors.
- From the 2021 Census of Population, there were a total of 629,220 seniors living in Alberta:
 - 295,155 male; and
 - 334,070 female.



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Strategic Priority 1: Quality Housing

Our goal is to deliver quality, well-maintained housing in a manner that is operationally sound and environmentally sustainable.

Objectives:

1. Develop a comprehensive and coordinated program that maintains and optimizes our infrastructure to ensure fresh and up-to-date surroundings, purposeful use of spaces, and a meaningful 'community-like' atmosphere.
2. Implement a Capital Renewal Program for all Lodges and GEF-owned, non-Lodge buildings.
3. Identify and submit annual Capital Maintenance Renewal requests to the Alberta Seniors Housing Corporation (ASHC) for all government-owned Seniors Self-Contained (SSC) Apartments.
4. Identify and action opportunities to increase the number of affordable housing units owned and/or managed by GEF that supports Stronger Foundations: Alberta's 10-year strategy to improve and expand affordable housing.
5. Commit to environmental stewardship through actions identified in GEF's Sustainability Framework.



Measurable Outcomes:

By the end of 2028, we expect to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Increase in the number of mobility-accessible housing units that support clients with reduced mobility or a disability (e.g., tub to shower conversions and improvements to buildings where accessibility may be compromised).
2. Building infrastructure improvements that positively contribute to clients' quality of life, comfort, and safety (e.g., increasing the number of buildings with common area cooling capabilities; increasing the number of camera security systems; window replacements; elevator modernizations; etc.).
3. Invest a minimum of \$35 million on prioritized capital refurbishment/renovation projects for the Lodges (excluding Ottewell Manor).
4. Redevelopment of Ottewell Manor with an increase in the number of Lodge units to fully optimize the site based on the relevant Zoning Bylaw.
5. Increase the total number of housing units by 1,000 to have a total of 4,777 (with a minimum of 500 of those units designated as part of the Affordable program – rental rates that are minimally 10% below market rates).
6. Demonstrate and report measurable progress on GEF's Sustainability Framework.
7. Proactively inform clients about capital work being done in GEF communities in a timely and effective manner and maintain regular updates.



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Strategic Priority 2: Vibrant Communities

Our goal is to provide housing programs and services that nurture healthy relationships, are socially responsible, and impact clients' overall level of satisfaction and quality of life positively.

Objectives:

1. Create opportunities that support equity, diversity, and inclusion and that drive greater client choice, involvement, and accountability in their daily living activities.
2. Identify opportunities to participate in and apply research and innovation to support the work we do in delivering quality and affordable housing for seniors.
3. Implement new initiatives that positively contribute to improving key quality of life indicators for seniors.
4. Commit to socially responsible investments and activities that contribute to and support client satisfaction through GEF's Sustainability Framework.
5. Strengthen partnerships with community stakeholders and agencies to serve our current and future clients better.
6. Enhance volunteer potential in supporting and expanding the activities that contribute to our clients' quality of life positively.
7. Support the rights of every client to have reasonable enjoyment of their homes, to live as they choose, and to experience life on their terms while respecting the rights of others.
8. Support vulnerable clients to have successful tenancies.



Measurable Outcomes:

By the end of 2028, we expect to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Client Experience Surveys that expressed high satisfaction and positive feedback to GEF's activities aimed at equity, diversity, and inclusion for all seniors.
2. Documented/published research projects (whether GEF lead or in partnership with other organizations) that contribute to furthering enhancements in the provision of affordable housing and supports for seniors with limited financial resources.
3. A robust Volunteer Program and a highly engaged volunteer base of more than 500 volunteers (excluding volunteers who live in a GEF community).
4. Expansion of formal partnerships with community-based agencies and organizations that augment and strengthen services for seniors living in social housing.
5. Client-focused education modules that support them being able to successfully remain in their homes (e.g., financial support, healthy living, personal safety, access to and use of technology, etc.).



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Strategic Priority 3: Employees and Partners

Our goal is to promote a respectful, healthy, and safe environment that supports learning and development, quality improvement, and customer service.

Objectives:

1. Enhance the capabilities, knowledge, and skills of staff through effective education, training, and development.
2. Promote a workplace committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion through staff recruitment, engagement, recognition, celebration, and well-being.
3. Create and promote organizational processes and practices that enable staff, volunteers, clients, students, and partners to participate in quality and safety improvement initiatives.
4. Enhance processes that integrate quality improvement and a client-focus into daily practices (e.g., Partnerships in Injury Reduction (PIR), Supportive Living Accommodation Standards, Residential Tenancies Act, etc.)
5. Empower and support front-line leadership and staff to engage with and resolve issues and challenges in supporting clients' needs.
6. Align individual and team performance expectations with a culture of client-focused service.

Measurable Outcomes:

By the end of 2028, we expect to achieve the following outcomes:

1. An increase in staff engagement, as evidenced through staff expressed overall job satisfaction of not less than 85% in GEF's Employee Engagement Surveys.
2. An annual turnover rate for Full-Time and Part-Time staff of not more than 10%.
3. Individualized Employee Learning and Development Passports that tailor the training, learning, and development requirements for each staff member.
4. A culture that understands, accepts, and values the differences brought forward by our clients, staff, and community and that has mechanisms in place for acknowledging and celebrating equity, diversity, and inclusion.



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Strategic Priority 4: Finance and Resource Management

Our goal is to optimize revenue generation and effectively manage finances to ensure responsible and economically sustainable use of our resources.

Objectives:

1. Utilize and enhance infrastructure, information, and financial resources to their fullest benefit.
2. Support the government's Affordable Housing Asset Management Framework related to the transfer of government-owned assets.
3. Review, revise or implement processes to improve operational efficiencies and ensure adherence to all legislative standards and requirements.
4. Enhance our brand awareness and culture of philanthropy by stewarding donor potential.
5. Develop an Enterprise Risk Management Strategy that reflects and supports the organization's needs.

Measurable Outcomes:

By the end of 2028, we expect to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Achieve annual occupancy rates of 97.5 percent.
2. Maintain Certificate of Recognition and qualify for the maximum Partnerships in Injury Reduction rebates available through the Workers Compensation Board.
3. Reserve funds' investments that protect investment principle and provide for a positive return on investments, reinvested in sustaining the Reserve Funds for future Board-approved initiatives.
4. Increased community awareness and reputation stemming from the successful implementation of a comprehensive brand awareness strategy.
5. Achieve an active donor base of at least 500 donors (individual and corporate) generating \$500,000 in annual donations in support of clients' quality of life initiatives.
6. Successfully transfer ownership of a minimum of ten (10) Alberta Seniors Housing Corporation properties to GEF.
7. A governance model that demonstrates leadership in effective governance and advocacy for social housing bodies.





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