

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Accelerating renovations
and enhancing well-being

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“

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Mark Robertson
Project Manager
Chandos Construction

Research has shown there is a critical link between housing and health. Suitable housing is needed to meet the needs of all Canadians. Fortunately, most Canadians can meet their housing needs through the marketplace, but not everyone has the means to do so. That's why it's critical to have affordable housing—where tenants receive rent subsidization below the market rates based on their income.

HomeEd has been providing families with safe, affordable homes in Edmonton for more than 40 years. The organization owns and rents more than 1,000 townhome and apartment units with rents ranging between 30 percent below market, to market levels. Yet the organization has a broader vision of better homes and brighter futures for those it serves.

“Our core purpose is to build for belonging” says Nick Lilley, executive director, HomeEd. “That means delivering quality affordable homes while fostering a sense of belonging for those we serve in the community. To do this we need to be responsible stewards of our properties, while striving to enhance inclusion and quality of life within the neighborhoods we operate in.”

HomeEd received a \$4.1-million grant through the Province's Municipal Stimulus Program to do necessary upgrades on 16 of


its properties in different areas of the city. The work had to be done by December 30, 2021—a challenge given that it wouldn't start until August, meaning the project had five months for completion. This was made even more time sensitive since a major portion of this project was exterior, and had to be completed before winter set in. And interior improvements would also have to be done while the homes were inhabited by tenants.

In August of 2020, Chandos Construction was chosen to partner with HomeEd on this major rehabilitation program. HomeEd chose us after a rigorous competitive process because of the team's qualifications, our methodology, and our competitive price. Supporting affordable housing aligns with Chandos's values, as do the concepts of building for belonging and being purpose driven. Although we knew it would be a challenge, we were eager to meet the client's needs.

The team used a phased approach to estimating and scoping that would allow us to start the work on a unit-by-unit basis in order to hit the crucial timeline. “Normally, the scope would be developed for us over about six months. In this case, Ken Parker, our estimator, started with one site and we were able to start working in six weeks,” says Mark Robertson, a project manager with Chandos' Special Services Group.



8,923
kilometres
driven



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HomeEd

The work included replacing the roofs for two six-plexes, two four-plexes, one eight-plex, and 12 townhomes. We also removed exterior wooden siding, soffit, and eaves and replaced them with vinyl siding and aluminum soffit and eaves on 14 townhomes. Not to mention asphalt repairs, trim replacement and painting, landscaping, furnace and hot water tank replacement, and interior apartment renovations. This was no small task to complete in such a short period.

We started in September with one property and four workers. As the scopes of work were approved for the other properties, they were added until there were nine active sites with 15 to 20 Chandos workers and seven subtrades. To keep the schedule on track, communication between all parties was crucial.

Lucas Kotowich, general foreman, oversaw the project. Normally, he's working on one site, so making sure everything was going as smoothly as possible on multiple sites, each with two to 10 different work areas, was a unique challenge.

“We had a group of craft workers that stepped up above their normal realm and took on a management piece, overseeing subtrades. They were also supporting the coordination of entry into each of the units,” says Kotowich, explaining how we were able to get the job done.

The project required a lot of coordination between Chandos, subtrades, HomeEd property managers, and tenants. Managing multiple scopes of work and related changes made it important for Chandos and HomeEd to have weekly meetings and maintain consistent communication.

Supply chain issues were an unexpected challenge. Our mechanical contractors put significant effort into procuring the 179 furnaces and 160 water tanks so they could be installed according to schedule, minimizing disruption for residents.

“I’m really proud of the teamwork on this job—how everyone came together, stepped up and worked together to reach our goal,” says Robertson.

From HomeEd’s point of view, the ability to give quick approvals in a rapidly changing environment came down to having the right people in place. Mark Nixdorf, director of property management, is a senior leader in the organization who worked closely with Chandos throughout the project.

“What made the project successful is that both organizations saw the need to have a few key people on the project empowered to make timely decisions and have the expertise to get the job done,” says Nixdorf. “In terms of being in people’s homes, our property managers did an excellent job

of communicating with our residents. The cooperation and urgency from our collective teams was excellent.”

Through this project, HomeEd and Chandos showcased how funding for affordable housing can be put to good use in short order. With the right motivation, collaboration and expertise, projects like this can be delivered cost effectively with speed and quality for the betterment of the community.

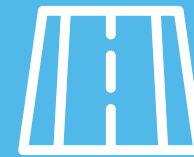
This project was successfully completed, with experiences and insights that will serve all parties well on future projects. The team strengthened its ability to complete projects under tight time constraints thanks to lessons learned on the project, including the importance of partnering with trusted trades and collaborating with clients. We’ve also reinforced effective strategies for getting work done while residences are occupied, with minimal disruption to the tenants. These learnings will make a difference on future affordable housing projects as well as those that have to be completed on a tight timeline.



13
subtrades



20
new roofs

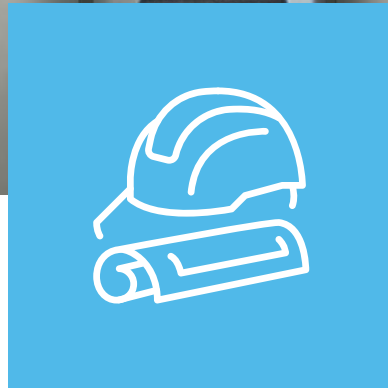


19,386 *ft²*
asphalt removed



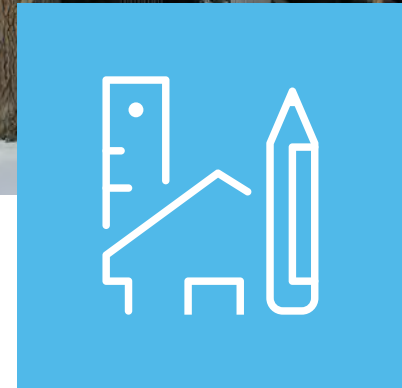
SHARING THE LOAD

When projects have to get done on a tight timeline, working with multiple subcontractors helps ensure they do. We chose two contractors to do the asphalt repairs, which had to be done before the weather turned, and two contractors to replace the 179 furnaces and 160 hot water tanks, which also had to be done in a timely manner while causing the least inconvenience to tenants and property managers as possible.



FORGING NEW RELATIONSHIPS

HomeEd had pre-existing relationships with trades who specialized in residential work that they wanted to use. Chandos worked closely with them to ensure they were meeting commercial construction standards and expectations in terms of quality and safety. As a result, we now have strong relationships with new subtrades who are interested in working with us in the future.



STAYING ON SCHEDULE

On any renovation project, you never know what you're going to find behind the walls or under the floors that might cause you to fall behind schedule. While demolishing a parking lot to replace the asphalt, our subtrade found a catch basin that was cracked from top to bottom. Thanks to their proactive approach and HomeEd's quick approval process, we were able to replace the catch basin and complete the work on time. Tenants had been told they would have to park elsewhere for three days and we were pleased to be able to let them back in the parking lot when we said we would.



16
properties



160
new water tanks



179
new furnaces