



CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

PROJECT PROFILE

YMCA Welcome Village

Edmonton, Alberta



Designed to be a home to live in, a place to play and a community to grow up in, the YMCA Welcome Village has transformed an inner city block in Edmonton into a vibrant urban centre. It is the first phase of the Boyle Renaissance, a major revitalization of Edmonton's downtown core. Components include the Melcor YMCA Village with 150 affordable apartments, the Shirley Stollery YMCA Child Care

Highlights

A full city block in Edmonton's inner city was transformed to create the YMCA Welcome Village as part of the Boyle Renaissance district renewal. Designed as a complete community, the site features 150 affordable rental apartments, a child care centre and a family resource centre. A public park and community league centre add to the area amenities.

Client group: Families and singles with moderate incomes

Developer: YMCA of Northern Alberta (Edmonton YMCA)

Number of units: 150 (a mix of bachelor, one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments, including 15 barrier-free units)

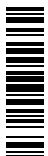
Tenure: Rental (with rents set at 10 to 20 per cent below market rates)

Who was involved? Government of Alberta, City of Edmonton, Capital Region Housing Corporation, and community contributions including one from Melcor Developments

Centre and the YMCA Family Resource Centre. The site also includes the Boyle Street Community League facilities and Boyle Street Park. The project was made possible through significant funding from the Government of Alberta and strong community support. The City of Edmonton, the YMCA of Northern Alberta and Capital Region Housing Corporation (CRHC) partnered on the development.

"We conceptualized a village with child care, family-oriented services and affordable housing," said Joan Baker, General Manager, Community Programs and Housing Initiatives for the YMCA of Northern Alberta in Edmonton. "We felt it was critical to provide tenant supports in addition to the affordable housing. Many tenants choose us for this reason."

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“Alberta is growing by about 100,000 people each year, primarily in the urban centres,” added Greg Dewling, Executive Director of CRHC, the largest provider of social and affordable housing in the Edmonton area. Many of the tenants are new Canadians who benefit from the community programs and supports offered at the YMCA Welcome Village.

The Affordable Housing Solution

In 2005, the YMCA began looking at options to renew its housing programs and services. Their downtown residence was last updated in 1957. When the City of Edmonton launched ambitious plans to revitalize the downtown core, the YMCA and CRHC were among the 35 organizations to serve on the Boyle Renaissance Advisory Council, which met from 2006 to 2007.

The Boyle Renaissance is at the northern edge of the historic Quarters Downtown area. Over the next decade, it will be redeveloped to meet the housing and service needs of current and future residents.

The site had a building owned by the Boyle Street Community League and a City-owned park. Since the 40-year-old building needed significant repairs, it was demolished, and the community group relocated to the new development.

The YMCA Welcome Village has two buildings. The six-storey east building, the Melcor YMCA Village, has 150 affordable apartments with a mix of bachelor, one-bedroom and two-bedroom suites, including 15 barrier-free units. The apartments rent at 80 to 90 per cent of market rates, including heat and water, three appliances and window coverings. The building includes indoor and outdoor play areas, bike lock-ups, a main-floor laundry and a staffed reception area.

The two-storey west building, called the Boyle Street Plaza, features the 90-space Shirley Stollery YMCA Child Care Centre, the YMCA Family Resource Centre, and multi-purpose programming and physical activity space for the Boyle Street Community League.

Keeping the public park in the heart of downtown Edmonton was a priority for the redevelopment. Boyle Street Park features landscaped green space, public art and an amphitheatre that becomes a skating rink in winter. A community garden is planned for the future. “Close to transit and pedestrian-friendly, the YMCA Welcome Village is designed to encourage people to get out and enjoy a safe and secure city,” Baker said.

In June 2008, the YMCA of Northern Alberta received \$25 million from the Government of Alberta, which represented approximately 70 per cent of the \$36.5 million cost for the YMCA Welcome Village. The YMCA raised \$4.2 million through a capital campaign (on a plan of \$3.3 million), including \$1.5 million from major sponsor Melcor Developments. CRHC contributed \$1.2 million, and the City of Edmonton invested \$6 million. The City of Edmonton invested an additional \$7 million for the community building and park space, bringing the total development costs for the collaborative project to \$42.5 million.

Construction began in 2010 and was completed in phases. The affordable apartments opened in December 2012, and the entire project was completed by January 2013.

Partnerships contributed to the success of this complex project. In addition to strong support from the Province of Alberta and the City of Edmonton, CRHC shared its expertise in affordable housing practices, including rental accounting systems, housing policies and tenant selection procedures. “Since the YMCA’s previous experience was with short-term housing, this input was very helpful,” Baker said.

The housing reception desk is staffed 24-7, and the Boyle Street Plaza uses a collaborative staffing model. Reception staff serves the entire building complex.

The Boyle Renaissance Condominium Corporation, with board representatives from all three partners, manages the two buildings and the park. The City and the YMCA each own a share of the condominium units, and CRHC has an irrevocable offer to purchase the apartments in 20 years when the affordable housing agreement ends.

“This is our commitment to preserve these units as affordable housing into the future,” Baker said.

Chrissy Moosewah and her two young daughters moved into a two-bedroom apartment in the Welcome Village in September 2013. The family had returned to Edmonton and lived for two months at the downtown YMCA until they found something permanent.

“My girls love it here,” Moosewah said. “The security is really important to me. I like the fact that they don’t let just anybody come up. It is much more affordable than the apartment we rented before. It’s comfortable and safe, with lots of light.”

CMHC Contact

Contact a representative of CMHC's Affordable Housing Centre
www.cmhc.ca/contactahc