

Surplus School Sites

NOVEMBER 2014



First Place homes on a surplus school site in Greenview neighbourhood sold out immediately.

When new neighbourhoods are planned, land is set in reserve to meet future needs for schools, parks, and recreation. This land is serviced and made ready for development. Later, if a school board determines that land originally set aside for a school is not needed, the board may declare it surplus.

Using surplus school sites

Using vacant school building sites for other purposes makes sense. Because the vacant sites are in existing neighbourhoods, new developments can use infrastructure already in place, like water lines, sewers and roads. They can also take advantage of existing services and neighbourhood amenities, like transit, libraries, and parks.

These new developments also advance the City's vision and long-term goal of creating a more compact, livable and sustainable community.

Since 2006, the City of Edmonton has acquired 40 surplus school sites. Of these, 20 are being developed to provide market-priced housing for first time homebuyers under the First Place program. Eight have been approved for

seniors' housing, and nine others will be used for some form of housing that is yet to be determined. Three are being retained for civic use.

First Place program

City Council approved the First Place program in November 2006, allowing for the construction of homes for first-time buyers on 20 vacant school sites. A provincial Order in Council the same year supported repurposing of these sites. The program addresses a recognized need for more entry-level housing in Edmonton.

The First Place program creates homes that are within reach of first-time buyers because the land cost is deferred on the mortgage for five years. Homes must be owner-occupied during that period (i.e. no rentals). The townhome developments tend to attract recent post-secondary graduates and young professionals.

More information on the program and eligibility is available on the City website under [First Place Program](#).



Seniors' housing

The City has approved eight vacant school building sites as suitable for future seniors' housing. The seniors' housing will include a mix of market and non-market (subsidized) units and provide a range of care, allowing seniors to "age in place" within a familiar community. The Government of Alberta is a major partner with the City in these projects.

Community groups interested in seniors' care are invited to contact the City with proposals for the sites. The City believes that community management is a key factor in the success of the program. More information is available on the City website under [Seniors' Housing Initiative](#).

Other housing

Other forms of housing will be considered on 10 additional vacant school building sites, in consultation with the neighbouring communities. Such forms could include secondary suites and townhouses, with the intent of ensuring Edmonton provides a wide range of housing choices in its communities.

Adjacent City lands

An attractive feature of the new homes developed on surplus school building sites is that they are adjacent to neighbourhood park space - sports fields, playgrounds and quiet areas for relaxation. These areas were assembled in accordance with the statutory plans approved for each neighbourhood.

The new development does not take away any of this community green space. New housing and associated parking is confined to the space that would originally have been occupied by school buildings and parking spaces.

Public involvement

Prior to administration recommending new land uses on remaining surplus school building sites to Council, a formal public engagement process for each site will allow the public to learn more about the new residential uses being considered, and provide input to help finalize recommendations to Council.

Community Liaison Groups comprising two volunteers from each community serve as liaisons between their neighbourhood and City administration. These volunteers receive and share communication updates from the City and ask questions about programs and progress. There are three liaison groups, one each for the First Place, seniors' housing and remaining sites with uses yet to be determined.

As well, prior to administration recommending new land uses to Council, a formal public engagement process will allow the public to learn more about the new uses being considered and provide input to help administration finalize recommendations to Council

First Place developments call for 6-8 community residents to participate in a design group that meets to ensure the development of new townhomes "fits" with each community. They discuss massing and orientation of the homes, site access, exterior design elements, landscaping and more. This engagement process occurs the year before construction and sales begin, and the results are reflected in the development permit application submitted before development begins.

More information

Residents can stay up to date on the development of surplus school sites by visiting the City website at www.edmonton.ca.