

APRIL 2024



*Sheltering the Spirit:*  
SILOAM MISSION'S HOUSING STRATEGY

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Siloam Mission Staff, who, in a session in the spring of 2022, offered insights and feedback that informed and shaped this strategy.

# Executive Summary

At Siloam Mission, our mission is to share Christ's compassionate love with all who need support, healing, and recovery. Our vision is a Winnipeg without chronic homelessness.

As of April 2024, Siloam Mission owns and operates three separate housing programs.

- The Madison: With 85 units of long-term supportive housing.
- The Arlene Wilson Recovery Centre (The Nest): With 20 units of transitional housing supporting individuals leaving addiction treatment programs. These people have previously experienced homelessness and would have left addictions treatment back into homelessness without this program.
- And, since establishing the strategy, we have acquired 33 units dedicated to supportive housing for long-time shelter users

This is a total of 138 social housing units. Siloam regularly sees 300 unique individuals per day, most of whom need housing.

Regina has eight social housing units for every twenty people in need. In Calgary that number is nine — in Winnipeg, there are only three.

We need to address the inadequate housing supply to reach our vision.

Our goal is to create 700-1,000 new social housing units over the next ten years for people currently, or at risk of, experiencing homelessness.

This is ambitious — however, we desire to be changemakers and are committed to finding partnerships, providing leadership, and working collaboratively to achieve this target.

This strategy is built upon the following pillars:

1. Assess the Need
2. Build Community
3. Develop and Utilize Sustaining Methods

Our proposed goal of 700-1,000 new units would achieve housing for approximately 25% of people currently experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg.

We know it is a lofty goal. It is, however, the social housing our city needs. We believe that, with the right partnerships and government support, we can make it happen.

**Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act.**

*Proverbs 3:27*

# Context

## How we came to Housing and Homelessness in 2023-24<sup>1</sup>

Starting shortly after WWII the Canadian government invested heavily in building housing that, at the time, was considered “affordable.” Multiple overlapping systems made housing easier to get and maintain, even for folks with relatively low incomes.

In the 1960s the word “homeless” did not mean someone living directly on the street but rather someone in housing with inadequate social support.

For decades the government of Canada built 10,000-20,000 social housing units annually with rent geared to income. This worked effectively enough that no word described those living directly on the streets, as there were not enough people in that situation to warrant a term for it.

Moving into the 1980s the government began to cut funding to those programs and relied on the private market to provide housing. And, after 1993, the government built fewer than 2,000 units of social housing annually.

This, coupled with the deinstitutionalization of individuals experiencing mental illness (with inadequate support for follow-ups) and the financialization of housing led to the beginnings of a housing crisis.

This is when the word “homelessness” entered the Canadian lexicon as people began to lose housing and live directly on the street. The old word simply no longer described their situation. The housing situation after these cuts remained stable long enough that those who implemented these changes could claim their success. However, small changes in housing availability each year built up until it became a significant problem.

There has been a recent resurgence in the building of affordable housing — starting in 2012 the numbers began to increase. However, the definition of affordable housing is no longer the same. To receive tax grants, builders need to have 10% of units in a new build be affordable — but “affordable” in this case means the median market rent — as of 2023 that was \$828 for a studio, \$1,080 for a 1 bedroom, and \$1,387 for a 2 bedroom.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sources and further reading for this section:

[Why Can't We Build Like It's the 1970s? | The Tyee](#)

[What Does 'Affordable' Housing Even Mean Anymore? | The Tyee](#)

[5,000 affordable housing units lost, 10,000 on the line as non-profits lose subsidies | CBC News](#)

[The solution is more housing – Winnipeg Free Press](#)

[Housing in ruins](#)

[Updating analysis on erosion of lower rent stock from 2021 census | CHEC-CCRL](#)

[Why Wasn't Homelessness a Social Problem Until the 1980s?](#)

[2022-Winnipeg-Street-Census-Final-Report.pdf](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Manitoba — Historical Rental Market Statistics Summary](#)

None of these requirements of “affordability” are law. They are not always followed even to grant subsidies, and none are rent-geared-to-income.

“Affordable” is no longer affordable. The change in the definition has led to a new term: “deeply affordable.” This goes back to the normalized definition of affordability: 30% of someone’s income.

So now instead of “affordable,” there is a need for rent-geared-to-income deeply affordable housing units, where the rent is calculated based on 30% of that individual’s income. All of this provides the multi-decade backdrop to the situation we are in now.

In Manitoba:

- Since 2016
  - Manitoba has built 800 “affordable housing” units. But fewer than half of those are social housing units, where rent is geared to income.
  - The Provincial Government dropped annual Manitoba Housing funding from \$120 million to \$37 million.
  - Manitoba lost 9,885 units under \$750/month.
- According to the 2022 Street Census, fewer than 100 units were available for under \$750/month with a 5.3% vacancy rate in that price band.
  - If we reverse that math, that leaves us with 1,886 units under \$750 in the province. That means we’ve lost 83.9% of the units in that price band.
    - Part of this is to disrepair, but the other part is to rent price increases as we privatize what used to be social housing.

In Canada:

- Agreements on 5,000 units to offer government-subsidized rent-geared-to-income housing made in the 1980s have expired, and another 10,000 will expire soon.
- Since 2016 Canada has lost 46,000 units of housing renting for under \$750 annually, totalling 230,000 units (up until 2021). This is on top of 322,000 units lost in the 5 years prior.
- Under the National Housing Strategy, we are building under 20,000 units annually and losing 46,000 annually. This is a net loss of 26,000+ units every year.
- This is on top of an already present backlog, where the net loss was 60,000 annually. Put another way, from 2011-2016 we lost 16 affordable units for every 1 we built.

These losses add up to a crisis. And they create and exacerbate the necessity for shelters.

As of April 2024:

- Nearly 6,000 people are on the waitlist for Manitoba Housing<sup>3</sup>.
- Over 2,000 Manitoba Housing units are currently vacant, needing repair or renovation<sup>4</sup>.

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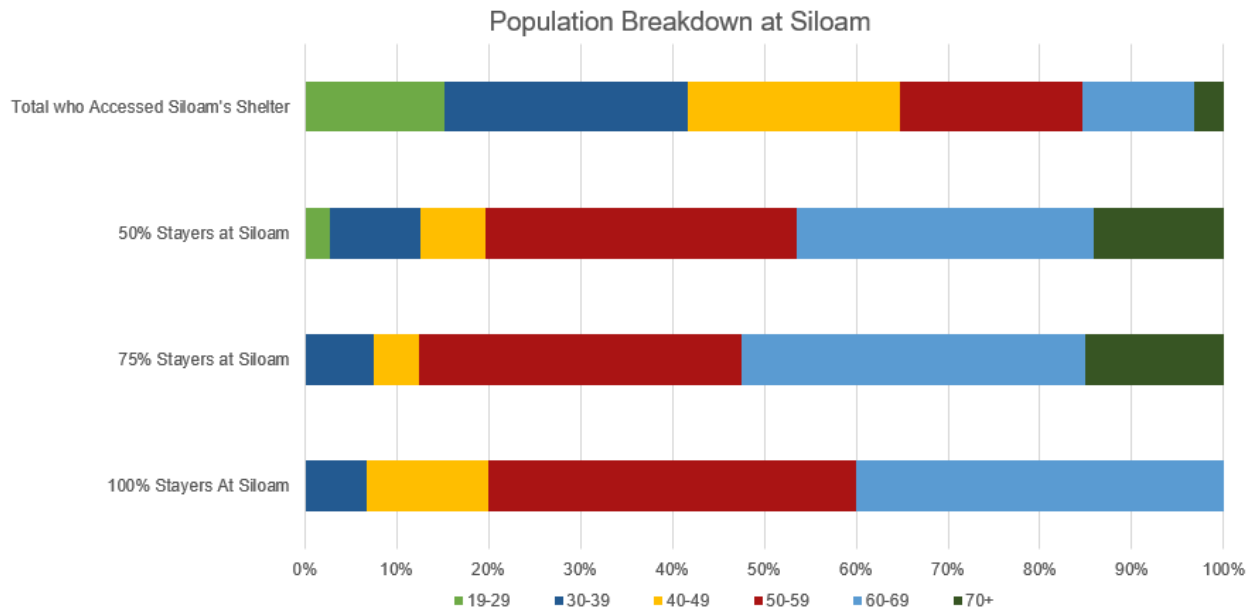
<sup>3</sup> [Manitoba has financial tools to fix housing crisis, needs political will: report | CBC News](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Two-thousand public rental suites vacant due to low repair budget – Winnipeg Free Press](#)

- About 1,256 people are experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg, according to the 2022 Street Census<sup>5</sup>. Based on our understanding of counts from other cities, it is likely that the methodology undercounts by around 4,000 people (put another way, we likely only counted 23.8% of the population).
- Throughout July and August 2023, Siloam’s Drop In saw roughly 2,500 unique individuals access services each month.
- From April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024, at least 994 unique individuals accessed Siloam’s shelter to stay the night.
- In that same period:
  - 71 Individuals have stayed in our shelter for more than 50% of the time.
  - 40 Individuals have stayed in our shelter for more than 75% of the time.
  - 15 Individuals have stayed in our shelter 100% of the time<sup>6</sup>.

Siloam’s shelter skews towards seniors. That is, though seniors make up 23.9% of those in the Street Census, they make up 34.9% of those who access our shelter, 80.3% of the 71 who stay more than 50% of the year, and 100% of those who stay 75% of the time or more of the year). This represents a 1.5x, 3.3x, and 4.2x overrepresentation (respectively) from the Street Census.

Below you can see a visualization of the age groups that access Siloam Regularly:

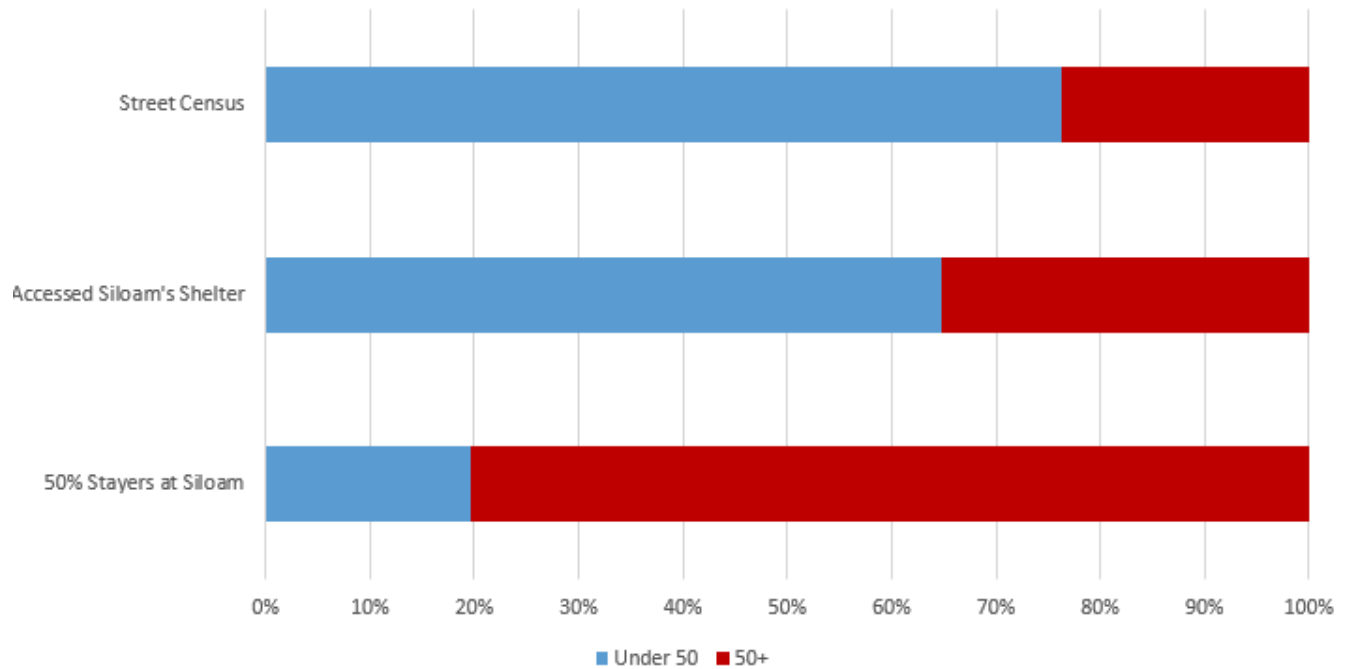


Here is a comparison using the Street Census data and Siloam’s, using only two categories, under 50 and 50+.

<sup>5</sup> [2022-Winnipeg-Street-Census-Final-Report.pdf](#)

<sup>6</sup> Based on a data pull every 6 days. They could have left between those pulls and come back.

## Population Breakdown: Siloam & Street Census



As you can see, Siloam sees a disproportionate amount of seniors accessing shelter and, especially, a disproportionate amount using shelter for an extended period of time.

The ultimate solution to homelessness is housing that meets the long-term needs of individuals experiencing homelessness as well as intervening where systems fail to adequately transition people into long-term housing such as: exits from incarceration, hospitals, Child Family Services (CFS), and more.

Many of our partners in the sector are also pivoting towards housing development as Winnipeg has too little housing stock to perform the core of work: housing people.

End Homelessness Winnipeg's plan will be renewed in 2025<sup>7</sup>, but its current goals include:

- A minimum of 1,340 new units constructed,
- Reducing inflow into homelessness from CFS,
- Housing 1,519 people experiencing homelessness
- Reducing Indigenous overrepresentation in emergency shelters by 50%
- Shortened stays in emergency shelters so that 92% are less than 10 days
- Prevent 90% of those housed by coordinated access from experiencing tenancy failure

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<sup>7</sup> [Progress on End Homelessness Winnipeg's 5-Year Plan \(2020-2025\) Quarter 1 and 2 Updates \(April 1, 2022\)](#)

Our partner in the sector Main Street Project is also building housing, focused on supporting folks to transition out of chronic homelessness into interdependent supportive housing.

The Manitoba Metis Federation has built housing recently and we are thrilled for more and more partners to be looking at this gap.

We want to work collaboratively so that all these initiatives can succeed.

# Assess The Need

Before we can start creating housing, we need to assess what is needed by those in the community. Our first steps include identifying who we can prioritize and what they want and need in their homes.

## Priority Populations:

We recognize that we want our prioritization of housing populations to be broad enough that very few people slip through the cracks. We will adapt based on any provincially led or city-level plans for our sector that help people determine priority populations.

We have five priority populations identified that best fit our criteria of folks currently, or at risk of, experiencing homelessness in the next decade.

- **Seniors (50+)**
- **Those in need of Emergency Housing**
- **Those in need of Sober Recovery Housing**

In addition to these three internal populations, we are also committing to populations identified in the MMIWG2S+ Calls for Justice<sup>8</sup>:

- **Youth Aging Out of Care**
- **Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2-Spirit Individuals**

Our priority populations of seniors, emergency housing, and people in recovery could all express themselves in one person. Embedded in all of our housing practices is the dignity and agency of the person receiving support to choose. So that person will select the appropriate housing for themselves based on availability at the time of intake.

We also know that two people who present in the same priority population could have vastly different needs and capacities for independent living — this is why all of this work needs to be person-centered enough to support the diversity of participants within programs.

## Priority Population: Seniors (50+)

The Madison is nearly a senior's building. Below are the age ranges of those living there as of April 2024:

- 19-29: 3 people
- 30-39: 7 people
- 40-49: 20 people
- 50-59: 19 people
- 60-69: 30 people
- 70+: 4 people

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<sup>8</sup> [https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Calls\\_for\\_Justice.pdf](https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Calls_for_Justice.pdf)

Currently, 63% of residents are seniors. Based on the Street Census statistics, this is an overrepresentation of 2.4x. This nearly matches the overrepresentation of the same demographic in the consistent base of shelter users.

### Priority Population: Those Needing Emergency Housing

In line with best practice, we understand that providing emergency housing — including a private room and the opportunity to maintain housing skills — is an effective way to prevent chronic homelessness. As such, emergency housing for populations needing it is another priority.

Part of our strategy is ensuring that our housing solutions are not so narrow as to let people slip through the cracks and yet not so broad that we are a catch-all.

When it comes to emergency housing, which is transitional in nature, being as close to a catch-all as possible will have the most significant prevention impact.

This population would include those in Winnipeg for medical treatment, women and children leaving relationships that are not abusive, folks transitioning out of systems like Child and Family Services, Incarceration, people coming to Winnipeg from rural/reserve communities etc., and more

### Priority Population: Those Needing Sober Recovery Housing

We know people in recovery need more opportunities to find supportive long-term sober housing. We are already engaged in supporting folks recovering from addictions in transitional housing.

Our current Nest Program in the Arlene Wilson Recovery Centre at 300 Princess needs a new location further from triggers but not so far as to disconnect folks from the services in the neighbourhood that they do use.

*This is a top priority for Siloam Mission as we must care for what we are already doing before growing our scope. This will mean that one of our next housing projects is a sober housing project.*

### Priority Population: Youth Aging Out of Care

In the 2022 Winnipeg Street Census, 64% of the 306 youth under the age of 29 counted had at some point been in the care of Child & Family Services (CFS).

For adults over 29, 46% of participants indicated having been involved with CFS at some point. We can tell by these statistics that CFS is an inflow into homelessness that must be addressed.

The Calls for Justice (12.11) directed at government and child welfare systems is a call to ensure aging-out systems ensure a complete network of support from childhood to adulthood. We believe housing is a key part of support for youth.

## Priority Population: Indigenous Women, Girls and 2-Spirit (IWG2S)

Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2-Spirit: In the 2022 Winnipeg Street Census 35.4% of those counted identified as female, and 75% of overall respondents identified as Indigenous. The street census had 2% of people identified as non-binary, most commonly 2-Spirit Indigenous people.

Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2-Spirit people experience intersectional oppression leading to a multitude of safety concerns. Women are 6% less likely to access shelters than men and non-binary people are 14% less likely to access shelters.

While in our MMIWG2S action plan, we are working to create a safer shelter environment for these populations, we also know that housing is ultimately the safest option for populations who are targeted for sexual violence or other forms of abuse.

We must work with Indigenous-led organizations and Indigenous Nations to create meaningful partnerships and housing solutions that support the safety, belonging and thriving of Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2-Spirit people.

## Visioning Housing: Community Consultation & Research

The mantra we are taught to follow for best practice when serving those experiencing homelessness is “Nothing About Us Without Us.” Many projects and housing placements fail because they do not adequately account for the wants and needs of the population being served. Therefore we want to ensure appropriate consultation with the internal priority populations utilizing Siloam services that we seek to support. Moreover, we want to ensure that the direct service staff engages community members in this consultation to support the development of meaningful therapeutic relationships.

Too often research of this nature is an extractive process. While this would help us understand the housing solutions needed for our community, we would lose the relationship-building that can come from visioning together.

As such, rather than adding a researcher to our staff team, or temporarily bringing in an external partner, we want to empower our Drop In team to allow these conversations, surveys, etc., to happen. We can then build this knowledge into corporate practice and have it inform the housing strategy. As of April 2024, training on these housing-focused conversations has been completed and these consultations are occurring.

A combination of formal research and these conversations will provide us with the best possible information.

More formal research includes:

- Best practice gaps now
- Best practice for housing by population priority
  - Seniors
  - Indigenous Women, Girls and 2-Spirit
  - Youth Aging Out of Care
  - Emergency Housing Needs
  - Recovery Housing

Information from the community consultations includes:

- What type of housing do priority populations want
- Where they would like the housing to be
- What has worked for people who match these populations

The process for information gathering from the community includes:

- Dotmocracy<sup>9</sup> questions in the Drop In
- Focus groups from residents at the Nest, the Madison, at Roblin and those housed successfully via casework
- Interviews with Drop In and Shelter community members

We plan to track responses so we can pull data from the consultations to inform future projects.

We know that initial learnings will change future data questions, so we anticipate this being an ongoing process with contrasting levels of focus and intensity based on project needs.

We also know that sharing their stories and housing goals is a gift from our community members. Therefore we've incorporated a model where we deliberately staff up in the Drop In to allow these conversations to happen with folks who'll have an ongoing relationship with those we're gathering data from. Rather than an extractive process with a stranger, we allow the development of deeper relationships. When housing comes online that is a fit for those community members we've spoken to we'll know who — and ensure they are provided the opportunities to move into said housing.

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<sup>9</sup> [What is Dotmocracy?](#)

# Build Community

Siloam Mission is a community hub for those experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg. We know that feeling like part of a community will lead to more success for both those in housing and those in the neighbourhood.

## Creating a YIMBY Environment

We understand and embrace the need to build a community and seek to create a YIMBY (Yes in my Backyard) environment for projects.

Part of our process is to reach out to communities where we hope to create housing and make connections before building. We want to build relationships with associations, churches, City Councillors, MLAs, and even businesses in the area so we can answer any questions and address concerns potential neighbours may have.

We are learning from strategies other organizations have used, including the Community Acceptance of Non-Market Housing tool Kit from BC Housing<sup>10</sup>. Communities need to be places for all people to be welcome with belonging being a key indicator of housing success. Folks we build housing for, need to feel “at home” in the community where the housing is situated. People living in the neighbourhood need to feel they are informed about changes to their community.

A robust communications plan, paired with community outreach, will include town halls, open houses, and conversations to ensure everyone is up to date on plans in a community.

## Partnerships

As outlined in the context section, Siloam is not the only organization in the sector moving towards housing.

Partnerships will be important to realizing our goal. They will provide more diverse donors, funding opportunities, and program specialties.

One current example of a partnership is with Raising the Roof<sup>11</sup>. We are partnering on a housing project to build 3 units focused on Indigenous family reunification, including youth aging out of foster care.

Siloam’s involvement via our Transition Services team as an in-kind contribution is akin to federal funding. This allows Raising the Roof to apply for capital grants that would otherwise not be accessible. We are looking forward to future projects with them.

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<sup>10</sup> [Community Acceptance of Non-Market Housing Toolkit - Introduction](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Reside Winnipeg - Raising the Roof | Preventing Homelessness](#)

## Develop and Utilize Sustaining Methods

Our initial goal of building housing over the next ten years is one we are happy to take on. To do so successfully we know we need to establish governance and oversight to support the growth and implementation of this strategy. While strategy oversight will stay with the Board of Siloam Mission, it will be supported by education, business case analysis, and expert advice through the Lived Experience Advisory Council (LEAC) and the Housing Advisory Committee (HAC). We will also need models that allow for the financial sustainability of these projects and ensure the overall health of Siloam Mission's current services are sustained during this period of growth.

### Lived Experience Advisory Council (LEAC)

We know that “nothing about us without us” is a crucial component of this work and having leadership from folks with Lived Experience in the development of the housing will be key. This committee will also have the capacity to support other projects at Siloam.

We are in contact with Good Shepherd Homes in Hamilton and Toronto where they have two different LEACs as well as Thompson, MB, where they have an active LEAC, to support the establishment of an LEAC here.

### Housing Advisory Committee (HAC)

We know that our vision of a Winnipeg without Chronic Homelessness will take many people working together and that many folks have expertise in housing development who would like to support Siloam's efforts and offer their skills (paid or unpaid).

The Housing Advisory Committee is a part of our strategy to ensure that we can maximize opportunities, expand the network of those brought into and supporting our housing strategy, and listen to expertise that can ensure the strategy's success.

## Property Management

We have heard from Winnipeg partners in the sector that adequate and supportive property management is needed, and this gap presents us with an opportunity. Good Shepherd in Ontario,<sup>12</sup> and Mustard Seed<sup>13</sup> and The Drop-In<sup>14</sup> in Alberta all operate their own property management arms. This allows them to work in concert with property management ensuring values alignment and maximizing supportive environments for folks. We believe we can follow in their footsteps.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://goodshepherdcentres.ca/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://theseed.ca/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://calgarydropin.ca/>

This opportunity allows us to improve supports and collaboration within the sector. If we at Siloam Mission take on creating a property management arm for the sector in Winnipeg we can also employ people with lived experience in maintenance work.

Siloam currently manages its own 138 units of social housing across three buildings and, since the addition of the last 33 units, has deliberately been engaging our Building Futures Program in that work. We hope to continue this pattern with future housing projects.

## Closing Summary

The solution to homelessness is housing, where needs can be met and supports can be accessed. Housing where seniors can have a safe, affordable place to live and those in recovery can access sober or abstinence-focused programming while adjusting to their new lifestyle. Where people can turn to for short-term support in emergencies. Where youth aging out of care are supported in their transition from childhood to adulthood. And where Indigenous women, girls, and 2-spirit people can feel safe and thrive.

A Winnipeg without Chronic Homelessness is possible. We're excited to collaborate and help make it a reality.

# Glossary

Chronic homelessness	As defined by the Government of Canada, it refers to individuals who are currently experiencing homelessness AND who meet at least 1 of the following criteria: they have a total of at least 6 months (180 days) of homelessness over the past year OR they have recurrent experiences of homelessness over the past 3 years, with a cumulative duration of at least 18 months (546 days).
Person-Centred Approach	Each person is seen as a person first and is met where they are at with their own unique strengths, challenges, preferences, and circumstances. There is no “one size fits all” approach.
People with Lived Experience	Lived experience, as described by Chandler and Munday, belongs to people who have gained knowledge through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events, rather than through assumptions and constructs from other people, research, or media.
Acuity	The Calgary Homeless Foundation defines acuity as an assessment of the level of complexity of a person’s experience. It is used to determine the appropriate level, intensity, duration and frequency of case-managed supports to sustainably end a person’s or family’s homelessness.” Acuity is also sometimes referred to as barriers. The higher the acuity, the higher the barriers for this person to obtain housing
Seniors	The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority refers to Older Adults as individuals over the age of 55 years. Our definition of Seniors experiencing homelessness could be lowered to include individuals who are 50 years and older as individuals living in poverty have a lower life expectancy and higher rates of illness across a wide spectrum of diseases. Those experiencing

homelessness often live in conditions that adversely affect their overall short and long-term health, therefore, the need to provide safe, affordable housing to individuals 50+ years is in response to the earlier onset of adverse health effects. Flexibility in the age of residents will exist based on fit for the housing.

#### Emergency Housing

Emergency housing is short-term accommodation for people who are homeless or in crisis. Emergency housing typically offers basic necessities, such as a place to sleep, shower, do laundry, get clothing, and eat or get money for food.

#### Recovery based housing

The Province of Manitoba defines Supportive Recovery Housing as providing accommodation in a stable, abstinence-focused and recovery-oriented environment for six months to two years. Activities focus on coaching for daily living, as individuals transition back to community living.

## Housing First Best Practices

- Everyone is seen as housing-ready
- Supports are individualized
- People are empowered to make decisions in their own life
- Recovery is possible
- Social and Community Integration is key
- Work with a small group intensely rather than a large group peripherally

## Types of Housing

### Homelessness Services:

Social services for people who lack stable, safe, or adequate housing. At Siloam, this includes essential services like Drop In access, meals, clothing and hygiene programs, and access to Saul Sair Health Centre. It also includes progressive programs like the Arts and Wellness program and our vocational rehabilitation program, Building Futures.

### Emergency Shelters:

Short-term lodging for people experiencing homelessness. At Siloam Mission, this is Hannah's Place Emergency Shelter, which has space for 143 people to sleep each night.

### Transitional Housing<sup>15</sup>:

Transitional housing refers to a supportive — yet temporary — type of accommodation that is meant to bridge the gap from leaving institutional settings (addiction treatment, incarceration, child welfare) to permanent housing by offering structure, supervision, support (for addictions and mental health, for instance), life skills, and in some cases, education and training.

### Permanent Supportive/Supported Housing<sup>16</sup>:

Permanent Supportive (or Supported) Housing (PSH) combines rental or housing assistance with individualized, flexible, and voluntary support services for people with high needs related to physical or mental health, developmental disabilities, or substance use.

It is one option to house chronically homeless individuals with high acuity.

### Community or Social Housing

Developed with public funding; owned/operated by government, non-profits, or co-operatives. These units have rent that is below market rates and often based on an individual's income.

### Below-Market Rental/Ownership

Private rental or ownership units subsidized by the government. The subsidy is the difference between the unit's market rent and the tenant's rent. The rent is based on a percentage of the tenant's income. This system is commonly called Rent Geared to Income (RGI).

### Private Rental

Units owned by individuals/firms charging market rents.

### Home Ownership

Housing purchased by individuals/households at market prices.

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<sup>15</sup> Definition from: [Transitional Housing - Red Road Lodge](#)

<sup>16</sup> Definition from: [Permanent Supportive/Supported Housing | The Homeless Hub](#).