



# Guide to Developing Affordable Housing

A step-by-step analysis of best practices for developing affordable, sustainable housing in Canada

## INTRODUCTION

In communities across Canada, there is a clear and growing need for rental housing that is both affordable and sustainable. But for many non-profit groups, community organizations and other smaller housing providers, there is often a lack of practical knowledge on how to navigate the complex maze of consultants, regulations, approvals, funders and contractors needed to develop sustainable, affordable housing without long-term government funding.

To help fill this gap, the Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN)<sup>1</sup> created a comprehensive Step-by-Step Guide to Developing Affordable Housing.

## THE PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

Funded in part by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) Affordable Housing Innovation Fund, the Guide was developed for not-for-profit organizations and other stakeholders who:

- want to develop affordable housing but don't know where to start
- have land or an idea for a project but aren't sure what steps to take
- are looking for ways to utilize their available land inventory
- want to help families who can't afford the cost of housing
- are trying to respond to market pressures or meet specific housing needs

<sup>1</sup> The Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) is a not-for-profit partnership of nine Alberta colleges and universities with extensive experience developing dozens of affordable housing projects. The goal of the ARDN is to help rural communities grow through research and learning, by enhancing the well-being of individuals and the vibrancy of communities.

*Photos taken prior to COVID-19 physical distancing safety measures*

The purpose of the Guide is to help individuals and groups who want to develop, build and operate affordable rental housing to gain a basic understanding of the processes

and legal and regulatory frameworks that surround land development, affordable housing and sustainable development in their communities.

## THE FOUR STEPS OF DEVELOPMENT

The Guide is organized around four key steps in the development of affordable housing:

### Step 1: Initiating the Project

The phase where you assess your organization's capacity, explore your ideas, evaluate the feasibility of your project and secure financing.

### Step 2: Planning

Developing a plan and schedule for the project, and putting together your team of architects, engineers, consultants and other specialists.

### Step 3: Execution

Building your housing project and seeing your vision take shape.

### Step 4: Closure

Transitioning from development to operating, maintaining and managing a completed affordable housing project.

## The Key Steps in Developing an Affordable Housing Project

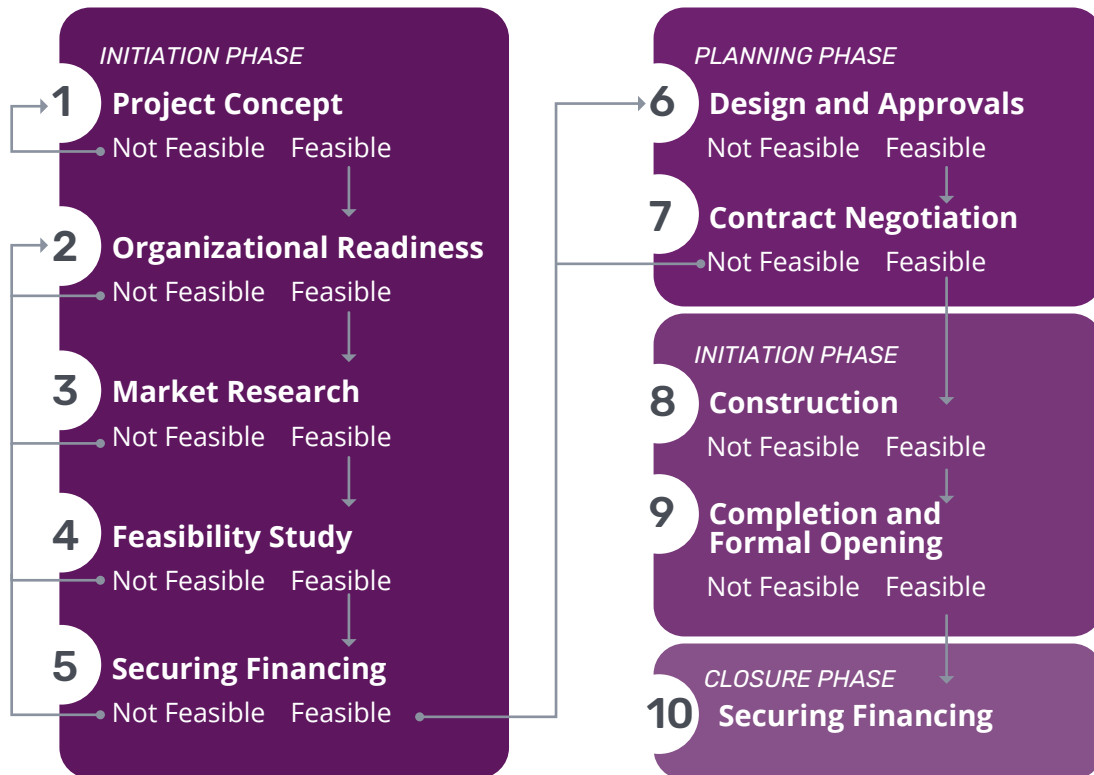


Image source: Alberta Rural Development Network

The Guide also includes a **Worksheet Booklet** to help you identify and track the *who, what, where, when* and *why* of your project. This includes templates for such key elements as:

- **Organizational Readiness Assessment**
- **Project Charter**
- **Needs and Demand Assessment**
- **Community Consultations**
- **Business Case**
- **Request For Proposals**
- **Request For Qualifications**

## FURTHER READING

For more information about the Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) and how to develop sustainable, affordable housing, download or order a copy of the following guides:

**Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) – Sustainable Housing Initiative (SHI): A Step-by-Step Guide to Developing Affordable Housing.**

[https://eppdscrmssa01.blob.core.windows.net/cmhcprodcontainer/sf/project/archive/publications\\_2/ardn-shi-guide-final.pdf](https://eppdscrmssa01.blob.core.windows.net/cmhcprodcontainer/sf/project/archive/publications_2/ardn-shi-guide-final.pdf)

**Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) – Sustainable Housing Initiative (SHI): Worksheet Booklet Accompanying the “Step-by-Step Guide to Developing Affordable Housing.”**

[https://eppdscrmssa01.blob.core.windows.net/cmhcprodcontainer/sf/project/archive/publications\\_2/shi-worksheets-final.pdf](https://eppdscrmssa01.blob.core.windows.net/cmhcprodcontainer/sf/project/archive/publications_2/shi-worksheets-final.pdf)

## About NHS Case Studies

The research presented in this series explore topics in the National Housing Strategy priority areas of: Housing for those in Greatest Need, Community Housing Sustainability, Indigenous Housing, Northern Housing, Sustainable Housing and Communities, Balanced Supply of Housing.



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