



Strategic Plan 2019-2022

Progressing Toward Tomorrow



Message from Board Chair Karen Lynch and CEO Raymond Swonek

Providing affordable housing to seniors in Edmonton looks a lot different today than it did back in 1959, when GEF Seniors Housing first took on its mission. But for every change that has come about in the 60 years, one thing hasn't changed: the need to provide friendly, affordable, and secure housing to Edmonton's senior population.

During this year's strategic planning sessions with members of GEF's Board of Directors and GEF's Management, we kept this same mission in mind while we discussed all the creative and innovative ways to continue this mission in our ever-changing landscape. There were things discussed that I doubt GEF's founding members could ever imagine us considering. It's incredible to see how much Edmonton as a city has progressed over the years and how much GEF has progressed as well to keep meeting these changing needs.

We outlined five key strategic priorities:

- Engaging Seniors Meaningfully
- Investing in Our People
- Deploying Our Resources Effectively
- Meeting Seniors Housing Needs
- Creating Community Connections

This is the foundation that all of GEF's activities are going to build on to face the new opportunities are that much closer than any of us like to think.

When you think about some of the numbers around Alberta's current senior citizenship reality, like how more than 60 Albertans turn 65 every day and that in 15 years there will be 950,000 seniors living in Alberta, you quickly realize that there's going to be an even bigger need for affordable seniors housing than we have right now. Instead of waiting and being unprepared, GEF Seniors Housing is making sure it's ready for the future and ready to help as many seniors in need as we possibly can.

This is the next step to a brighter future for Edmonton's seniors and we are so happy to be part of the solution to an issue that affects so many people in our community. We are looking forward to seeing our creative and innovative ideas in action and helping so many Edmonton seniors.

Sincerely,



Karen Lynch
Board Chair
GEF Seniors Housing



Raymond Swonek, CA
Chief Executive Officer
GEF Seniors Housing

VISION MISSION VALUES



Our Vision

Positively influencing seniors' quality of life.



Our Mission

Leaders in friendly, affordable, secure housing and services for seniors.



Our Values

Our values define how we serve and build relationships with our seniors' community, as well as our workplace family.

Respect

Dignity | Appreciation | Courtesy

Integrity

Trustworthy | Honest | Ethical

Well Being

Happiness | Health | Balance

Accountability

Responsibility | Commitment | Ownership

SERVING SENIORS IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

The nature of our mission means that trends in the community, in the non-profit sector and in broader society all influence our ability to be successful. As we work to provide safe and affordable housing for seniors, these trends present some challenges and a range of exciting opportunities.

- ◆ **The demand for safe, affordable seniors housing will continue to grow.** Demographically, the number of seniors in Alberta (i.e., those 65 years of age and older) will markedly increase over the next few decades. Even if the proportion of seniors “in need” remains relatively unchanged, this will still translate into a growing demand for safe and affordable housing for seniors with lower incomes. GEF has the opportunity to respond to this demand in a planned and deliberate way, including the pursuit of new seniors housing developments.
- ◆ **Senior residents will be more diverse and have more complex needs.** As the economic landscape is evolving, so too is the social landscape. The seniors GEF serves will be increasingly diverse, with a range of cultures, languages, perspectives and family situations. As they live longer and receive more medical care in the community, the seniors we serve will also have increasingly complex health needs, including mental health issues and chronic conditions. GEF has the opportunity to further develop our caring and committed workforce, so that we are well positioned to meet the changing needs and realities of our residents.
- ◆ **Affordable housing for seniors will be one of many pressing policy issues.** The need for affordable seniors housing is an urgent issue - one of many urgent public policy issues facing governments today. With large amounts of experience and a demonstrated track record of success, GEF can help decision-makers, funders and the public understand the benefits of investing in affordable housing for seniors. Working with others, GEF can help elevate the priority level of this issue.
- ◆ **Changing workforces will influence how our work is done.** Demographic shifts are resulting in changing workforces including those of GEF, the provincial and municipal governments, and other organizations that work with GEF as partners. As employers experience turnovers in staff, they will be challenged to preserve institutional memory and maintain bodies of knowledge. Our continued ability to serve seniors effectively will depend on how well we, and others, navigate these issues. GEF has the opportunity to build on its reputation as a top employer and further enhance the development and wellness of our employees.

- ◆ **Community engagement will be more important than ever.** In today's increasingly interconnected world, it is vital that organizations have many connection points with their customers, stakeholders and supporters. As a provider of social housing for seniors, this has extra significance for GEF as we play an essential role in the community. GEF has the opportunity to reach out to many different parts of the community to engage in partnerships, contribute knowledge, deliver services and advocate for affordable seniors housing. Such efforts can help improve quality of life for our residents and for seniors in the community at large.
- ◆ **Limited public resources will spur a need to think differently.** Lower resource prices have contributed to an economic downturn in Alberta, impacting provincial and municipal government budgets. At a time when public needs are growing, governments will have limited fiscal capacity to assist. In a climate where public funding may be constrained for the foreseeable future, GEF can explore opportunities to develop alternative streams of revenue that reinforce our ability to serve seniors in need.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR POSITIVE IMPACT

Each day, across GEF Seniors Housing, all of our work is informed and inspired by three overarching touchstones:

- ◆ **Supporting the Quality of Life of Seniors**
While recognizing that each individual has unique needs and interests, we strive to help all of our residents feel meaningfully engaged in day-to-day living. Each GEF community is designed and managed to support the ability of seniors to live fulfilling lives. Through the programming we deliver, the creative partnerships we form with other organizations and the caring and professional approach we foster among staff, we aim to provide seniors with not just housing but a true sense of home.
- ◆ **Embracing Sustainability**
We are always thinking about and planning for the long term, because we know that people are counting on us for the long term. Sustainable thinking permeates our day-to-day decision making, from minimizing waste, to maximizing energy efficiency, to optimizing our resources so we're resilient in the face of change. All of this helps us sustain our communities, enabling residents to form long-term friendships and connections.
- ◆ **Fostering a Positive Culture**
Every GEF community should be a place that's positive, inclusive and dignified, with a spirit that's welcoming and kind. We understand that people lie at the heart of that spirit, including our hard-working staff. Our organization encourages learning, creativity, initiative and, most importantly, quality service. The people of GEF recognize we don't just provide housing; rather, we build community.

While offering guidance on particular aspects of GEF Seniors Housing, the strategic directions in this plan are inter-related. Each has roles to play in supporting all three overarching objectives.

ENGAGING SENIORS MEANINGFULLY

WHAT IT MEANS TO US

GEF is about more than providing safe and affordable places to live. Importantly, we're also about providing an excellent quality of life for our residents. Through our services and programming we give each senior a place that they can call home.

We not only meet seniors' core needs of safety, security and nutritious diets. Each day we go beyond that, working to engage the mind, body and spirit of every senior whom we serve. With a flexible, people-centered approach, we work within our resources to enrich seniors lives through efforts such as:

- Encouraging their social connections and sense of belonging;
- Promoting the well-being of the individual;
- Supporting cultural and recreational interests; and
- Enabling spiritual practices.

GEF housing options are homes where residents are empowered, engaged and enabled to meaningfully participate as full members of their communities.

WORKING TOWARDS SUCCESS

- ◆ **Improve engagement in programming.** Providing cultural, recreational and other programming that reflects our residents' interests helps enhance their quality of life. We will work in partnership with outside organizations and build our in-house expertise to produce an engaging environment and experiences. We will also implement a "cue card" system of research for our residents to decipher what's important for their individual qualities of life.
- ◆ **Work with other parties to improve resident transitions.** Responding to the changing needs of our residents means helping ensure they are in the best setting to support their quality of life. We will work with residents, the health system, families, other relevant parties to help improve smoothness of such transitions.

INVESTING IN OUR PEOPLE

WHAT IT MEANS TO US

GEF prides itself on being a progressive and innovative workplace that values its employees. We have been recognized as one of the Top 50 Best Small and Medium Employers in Canada by our employees. Since 2000, we have been recognized for workplace health and safety through the Partnerships in Injury Reduction Program.

We understand that people are at the centre of our organization's mission. We know it is essential that GEF benefits from talented people who feel valued and can see how they play meaningful roles in making a difference for seniors.

By maintaining our unique culture, GEF will be a place where our employees say positive things about working with us, stay with us for the longer term, and strive to do their best each day for the seniors we serve. Maintaining that culture means being an organization that:

- Places value on employee wellness and personal growth;
- Empowers our employees with the skills and resources they need to be successful in their roles;
- Respects diversity and different points of view;
- Encourages and celebrates employees who reach beyond the status quo.

WORKING TOWARDS SUCCESS

- ◆ **Empower our employees with the skills and knowledge they need to serve an increasingly diverse clientele.** By providing employees with relevant health, cultural and other professional development, and helping them incorporate this knowledge into their daily roles, we will better position our workforce to meet the changing needs of our tenants.
- ◆ **Explore opportunities to enhance employee wellness.** Recognizing the diverse makeup and needs of our workforce, we work to advance family-friendliness and personal well-being.
- ◆ **Grow and nurture our leaders of tomorrow.** Part of our succession planning is identifying and developing the next generation of innovative leaders in GEF. We will give our leaders of tomorrow opportunities to gain experience in different settings and build familiarity across the entire organization.
- ◆ **Develop an enhanced recruitment and onboarding strategy.** We will use data and other evidence to inform our hiring and onboarding practices. This will help ensure we attract the talent we need to advance our mission and better meet the needs of our senior residents.

DEPLOYING OUR RESOURCES EFFECTIVELY

WHAT IT MEANS TO US

GEF works with several other partners in providing safe, affordable housing to seniors, including the municipal government, provincial government and associated agencies. We are entrusted with public funds, and it is important that we operate as a good steward of those funds. In the eyes of our partners we are a stable and trustworthy organization that meets its obligations and delivers services efficiently and effectively.

As a longstanding organization in the City of Edmonton, we are mature about our financial outlook. We understand that people depend upon us for shelter and other essential needs, and we recognize the importance of being there for people over the long term. We strive to be a financially strong and sustainable organization that:

- Uses financing responsibly, and has serviceable levels of debt;
- Builds a strong balance sheet with diverse revenue sources;
- Has well maintained capital assets; and
- Budgets sensibly with a view to optimizing resources.

WORKING TOWARDS SUCCESS

- ◆ **Leverage our expertise to diversify our revenue sources.** GEF has expertise and know-how in a range of technical, professional and service areas. Bringing our expertise and know-how into the broader community creates opportunities for social enterprises that can strengthen our sustainability in responsible, measured ways.
- ◆ **Continue to identify opportunities to enhance value for money.** Ongoing efforts to get the “best bang for the buck” will help us optimize our resources for the betterment of residents. This includes investing strategically to keep our building portfolio up to current standards, and realizing sensible efficiencies in the way we run our operations.
- ◆ **Pursue long term funding arrangements.** Securing long-term funding agreements with our key public partners will help bring predictability to GEF and to the seniors we serve. It would enable better planning on both the operating and capital sides of the budget, helping foster service improvements and the development of more affordable housing for seniors in need.

MEETING SENIORS HOUSING NEEDS

WHAT IT MEANS TO US

GEF realizes that shelter is a basic need. We take our mission seriously and are always examining how to best respond to the housing needs of low- to moderate-income seniors. With a demonstrated record as a sustainable and quality provider of safe and affordable housing, we bring solutions forward to meet the growing housing needs of seniors in Edmonton.

Over time, GEF works to bring more housing units under operation. This includes the development of new affordable housing units where possible and practical. It can also include assuming responsibility for existing housing units, where GEF sees the potential to optimize their management for the betterment of seniors.

At all times, GEF ensures its housing portfolio is well managed. We recognize this is integral to our reputation and our long term success. Most importantly, it is essential for providing our senior residents with homes that offer a high quality of life.

WORKING TOWARDS SUCCESS

- ◆ **Respond to the growing need for safe, affordable housing for seniors.** GEF will undertake deliberate plans to develop new housing projects that create more affordable units for low- and moderate-income seniors. At any point in time we will have a stable of projects in the concept, planning and “shovel ready” stages so that we are prepared to move on opportunities.
- ◆ **Continue to develop a comprehensive facility management plan.** The plan will support optimal management of our housing portfolio. It will guide GEF in making investment decisions across the portfolio, with the goal of improving the facility condition index of the portfolio.
- ◆ **Explore opportunities to enhance existing GEF buildings.** Enhancing, retrofitting or redeveloping GEF housing developments could improve their sustainability and enable them to better meet the changing needs of tenants.

CREATING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

WHAT IT MEANS TO US

The mission and services of GEF are integral to the success of our community and our province as a whole. As such, we recognize the importance of being connected with many parts of the community and having excellent relationships with municipal and provincial decision-makers.

GEF strives to be recognized as a visible and energetic organization that works hard to support the quality of life for seniors. This means being known as:

- A stellar provider of safe, affordable housing for seniors;
- An organization with deep knowledge and experience about seniors housing;
- A voice that constructively contributes to policy discussions about seniors, their housing needs, and their connectedness with community;
- A trusted place that people can turn to for services, consultation and advice;
- An organization that welcomes and strategically engages volunteers and community partners to enrich the lives of senior residents; and
- An advocate for the housing needs of low- and moderate-income seniors in our community and province.

Through our outreach and community connection efforts, we help people understand the importance of safe and affordable housing for seniors.

WORKING TOWARDS SUCCESS

- ◆ **Develop and implement a comprehensive public engagement plan.** The plan will identify approaches at all levels of the organization to enhance GEF's community connectedness. It will be rooted in true, deliberate communications that reach target audiences in the community.
- ◆ **Work with others to raise awareness about seniors housing needs.** The need for affordable housing for seniors is pressing. GEF will work with peer and partner organizations to raise awareness and advocate for action on this important issue.
- ◆ **Pursue a volunteer engagement strategy.** Today's volunteers wish to contribute their unique talents, skills and wisdom in specific ways. Across GEF there are many opportunities where we can welcome the contributions of volunteers, and enhance our community connectedness in the process.

LEADING THE WAY IN SENIORS' HOUSING

GEF LEADERSHIP

- ◆ Close to 500 employees, hundreds of volunteers and more than 3,500 residents across every major area of the city.
- ◆ Recognized seven times as one of the Best Small and Medium Employers in Canada by *Canadian Business* magazine.
- ◆ Recognized for community contributions at the National Philanthropy Day by the *Association of Fundraising Professionals*.
- ◆ All GEF buildings certified through Edmonton Police Services' *Crime Free Multi-Housing Program*.
- ◆ All GEF lodges 100% compliant with the *Alberta Government Supportive Living Accommodation Standards*.

GEF Seniors Housing is the largest provider of affordable seniors housing in Alberta. Originally established in 1959, our organization stands today as an industry leader. With a skilled and dedicated workforce, we combine our deep knowledge and extensive experience with new and innovative thinking to provide friendly, affordable and secure housing for low to moderate income seniors in Edmonton.



Our Strategic Plan forms part of our overall 'quality cycle' approach. Driven by our mission, the Board of GEF guides the organization in line with its values and vision.

The Strategic Plan brings life to these, and provides the context for day-to-day operations. Through regular evaluation of our operations, we assess our success in fulfilling our mission, which in turn drives a cycle of quality improvement.

Through this approach GEF Seniors Housing will continue to lead the way, building on our strengths and record of success.



**Seniors
Housing**

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