



Sustainable Housing

About a quarter of a million Canadians live in 2,100 housing co-operatives, representing over 90,000 households. Co-ops cost almost 20 per cent less to operate than municipal or private non-profit housing, and 70 per cent less than public housing (owned by the federal or provincial governments). In a housing co-op, members are active in both governance and maintenance of properties. Community land trusts serve as another vehicle for sustainable home ownership. On an affordable rent-to-own basis, low-income families and individuals live in homes on land held in perpetuity by a community organization.

From the sustainable housing projects supported by CEDTAP:

- 4 are housing co-operatives
- 3 use community land trust models

Models have been successfully implemented in both small rural communities and downtown urban cores as part of larger community economic renewal projects.

Sustainable housing projects serve:

- low-income families and individuals
- mental health consumers
- new Canadians
- senior citizens



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Youth engagement and employment are the focus of two projects.

Financial support from all three levels of government remains a key factor in all of these CED approaches especially in raising up-front capital to purchase properties.

CEDTAP support ranges from :\$9,000 - \$20,000

CEDTAP offers a variety of technical services to organizations at different phases of development. The types of technical service accessed in this cluster include marketing and management skill development, communication strategies and plans, and support on legal aspects of organizational constitution.



“West Broadway’s CLT needed to create a long-term sustainable business plan for future financial stability of the model. This is where CEDTAP funding has been crucial to this end.”

Paul Chorney, Executive Director, West Broadway Development Corporation, 2001

Case Studies:

Low Income Family EmpowermentSole-support Information Network (LIFE*SPIN), London, Ontario***
LIFE*SPIN’s by-laws mandate that 60% of its Board of Directors must be low-income women.

In June 2000, a turn-of-the century building was purchased (with funding from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s Partnership Plan) and renovated to become the Margaret’s Community Housing Project. The community housing project takes women with psychiatric challenges off the streets and provides them with permanent housing that is safe, attractive, supportive and affordable.

Currently, 10-12 women and their children live in the home. Mental health support services are provided by the London East Community Mental Health Services.

Atkinson Housing Co-operative, Toronto, Ontario

A conversion of the public housing complex, Alexandra Park, into a resident-owned housing co-operative, the Atkinson Housing Co-operative is a first of its kind in Canada. The five-year process was the vision of Sonny Atkinson, a member of the Alexandra Park Resident’s Association and began in 1998 when the residents decided they wanted to convert their publicly-subsidized housing into a co-operative.



The CEDTAP Contribution

The Community housing project combines sustainable housing with CED activities to provide women not only with a safe haven but also opportunities for increased economic capacity.

CEDTAP provided technical assistance through three technical service providers to explore affordable housing issues, the development of the organization’s community kitchen business incubator, enterprise development, and organizational development and community loan funds.

CEDTAP technical assistance included: board governance and coaching, contract and property management training including “shadow management”, where co-op staff worked alongside staff of Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto two-months prior to takeover, and legal advice on the operating agreement between the co-op and the Metro Toronto Housing Corporation.

Now, the “Strong Communities” Campaign is underway where the Alexandra Park experience, will serve as a model for the conversion of public housing into co-operative communities across Canada.

Other Community Partners:

1997-2000:

Co-operative Housing Association of Eastern Ontario Inc., Ontario
French River Health and Housing Co-operative, Ontario
Club de l’age d’or de Lafontaine, Ontario
Granit Rural Development Solidarity Co-operative, Québec

2001-2003:

Greater Victoria Housing Trust, British Columbia
West Broadway Development Corporation, Prairies
Central Edmonton Community Land Trust, Prairies