

UDESIGN JUSTICE INITIATIVE

HOUSING JUSTICE IN ACTION REPORT

2026





DESIGN JUSTICE INITIATIVE



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE,
PLANNING AND LANDSCAPE

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We also acknowledge our partners – **the City of Calgary – Chief Housing Office, Calgary Public Library, Calgary Foundation, Bridge to Oasis, and Calgary’s QBE – Quality in Canada’s Built Environment** – for their collaboration and support in convening this work.



Finally, we recognize that this work takes place on the traditional territories of the Treaty 7 Nations and the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3. We honour Indigenous Peoples and reaffirm the importance of advancing housing justice in ways that respect Indigenous knowledge, sovereignty, and self-determination.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report synthesizes the shared knowledge, lived-experience insights, and practice-based perspectives raised by collaborators at the **Housing Justice in Action event held in Calgary on December 11, 2025**. The event was convened by the UDesign Justice Initiative in partnership with the City of Calgary – Chief Housing Office, Calgary Public Library, Calgary Foundation, Bridge to Oasis, and Calgary’s QBE – Quality in Canada’s Built Environment: Roadmaps to Equity, Social Value + Sustainability. It brought together a diverse cross-section of participants, including representatives from housing and homelessness-serving agencies, community organizations, design, architecture, and planning professions, policy and government, development, education, and lived-experience advocacy.

The event focused on three themes: community, design, and policy. Together, these themes provided a comprehensive framework for understanding how housing challenges are produced and how they can be addressed. This report follows the structure of the Housing Collaborators Guidebook (See Appendix 1) used during the action-dialogue workshop, which supported collaborators in moving from identifying barriers and gaps to co-developing potential pilot solutions. It presents a synthesis of key insights across Calgary’s housing ecosystem, including the identification of systemic barriers, service and policy gaps, and emerging “bright spots” – promising practices that can be scaled or replicated.

Collaborators described a housing system shaped by structural affordability pressures, limited and misaligned housing supply (including gaps in “missing middle” and culturally appropriate housing), fragmented service delivery, and policy and eligibility requirements that do not reflect the lived realities of diverse populations. Across discussions, there was a consistent call for stronger collaboration, more flexible and culturally responsive approaches, and clearer, more coordinated pathways for accessing housing supports.

Alongside these challenges, collaborators identified a range of promising practices already underway in Calgary that reframe housing from a purely physical product into a form of integrated social infrastructure. These include community-led and culturally grounded housing models, integrated wrap-around supports, emerging co-housing and shared housing approaches, and growing momentum toward cross-sector collaboration. These “bright spots” demonstrate that alternative and more equitable approaches to housing are already being developed and implemented.

Four key themes emerged from the workshop:

1. **Structural and economic pressures** continue to reduce access to stable and affordable housing.
2. **Mismatch between housing systems and population needs**, particularly in relation to cultural, demographic, and household diversity.
3. **Fragmentation across systems and services**, creating barriers to navigation and access.
4. **Stigma and discrimination**, which continue to shape housing experiences and outcomes for many groups.



The workshop was structured around three interconnected lenses, Community, Policy, and Design, to examine housing inequities and identify actionable pathways forward. These lenses guided collaborators to explore frontline realities and grassroots responses (Community), systemic and regulatory barriers (Policy), and the role of the built environment and planning practices (Design).

Building on these insights, the workshop identified four priority opportunity areas for coordinated action:

1. **Prevention and diversion pathways to reduce housing loss upstream**
2. **Capacity building and mentorship ecosystems to strengthen navigation**, leadership, and transdisciplinary cross-sector practice
3. **Coordinated housing navigation infrastructure** (“front door” systems) to reduce fragmentation and duplication
4. **Equity-centred housing design innovation**, including participatory approaches, flexible and scalable construction methods, and housing models that better align built form with diverse and evolving ways Calgarians live.

To advance this work, a **Housing Working Group** will be established to guide the development of pilot projects, support collaborative research, strengthen partnerships, and inform policy change. This report provides a foundation for that next phase – outlining key insights, identifying opportunities, and setting a direction for coordinated action to advance housing justice in Calgary.



ABOUT THE UDESIGN JUSTICE INITIATIVE

The **UDesign Justice Initiative (UDJI)** is a transdisciplinary platform based in the School of Architecture, Planning, and Landscape at the University of Calgary. It was established to address a persistent gap in how decisions about the built environment are made – where those most affected by housing, infrastructure, and spatial inequities are often the least involved in shaping them.

UDJI works to transform planning and design processes by centring community knowledge, lived and living experience, and equity in decision-making. Rather than treating engagement as a one-time consultation, the initiative advances ongoing, collaborative approaches that redistribute power and support more inclusive and equitable outcomes.

Operating at the intersection of community, policy, research, and design, **UDJI connects community organizations, governments, practitioners, researchers, people with lived and living experience, and industry partners.** Through this model, the initiative facilitates co-design processes, applied research, and action-oriented collaborations that move beyond dialogue toward implementation.

The Housing Justice in Action event reflects this approach in practice. Convened by UDJI in partnership with organizations across Calgary, the event brought together diverse stakeholders to identify barriers, surface opportunities, and co-develop actionable pathways toward housing justice.

Through initiatives like this, UDJI continues to build the infrastructure, relationships, and shared knowledge needed to support long-term systems change in the built environment.



INTRODUCTION

Housing inequity in Calgary is shaped by more than the availability of units. It is produced through the interaction of affordability pressures, service fragmentation, exclusionary eligibility requirements, stigma and discrimination, and built forms that do not reflect the realities of diverse households and communities. Addressing these issues requires approaches that move beyond isolated interventions toward more coordinated, equity-centred systems of planning, housing delivery, and support.

The Housing Justice in Action event was convened to create space for this kind of cross-sector dialogue and action. Grounded in the interconnected lenses of Community, Policy, and Design, the event brought together collaborators from across sectors to reflect on the housing landscape in Calgary, identify barriers and strengths, and begin to frame practical pathways forward.

This report presents an applied synthesis of those discussions. It is intended to support action, partnership development, and pilot planning by documenting the key themes, opportunities, and directions that emerged through the workshop process. It does not constitute a comprehensive statistical needs assessment of Calgary's housing system. Rather, it is a qualitative, action-oriented document designed to inform next steps and support more coordinated responses to housing inequity.



EVENT OVERVIEW AND WORKSHOP APPROACH

The **Housing Justice in Action event** brought together keynote presentations, a cross-sector panel discussion, and a structured action-dialogue workshop. The event was designed to:

- Build relational networks and shared understanding
- Identify systemic barriers affecting racialized and marginalized communities
- Surface gaps in housing pathways and service ecosystems
- Highlight promising practices (“bright spots”)
- Co-design actionable pilots and collaborative projects

The event opened with keynote presentations from **Dr. Marie Cecile Kotyk**, founding director of the UDesign Justice Initiative, and **Reid Hendry**, Chief Housing Officer for the City of Calgary, who established the context and urgency for advancing housing justice in Calgary.

This was followed by a panel discussion featuring leaders from community organizations and the private sector, including **Srimal Ranasinghe**, Managing Partner at Hive Developments and Sustainable Calgary, **Bukola Ojemakinde**, Founder and Executive Director of Bridge to Oasis Foundation, **Dee Adekugbe**, Founder and Executive Director at Ruth’s House, **Nataliia Shen**, Housing Manager at the Centre for Newcomers, and **Magdalene Woo** from Calgary Chinatown Ambassador. The panel explored three interconnected areas: understanding the problem through lived realities and systemic barriers; bridging the gap through systems, partnerships, and pathways for change; and designing the future through priority actions and opportunities for innovation. These discussions provided a foundation for the subsequent workshop.



Dr. Marie Cecile Kotyk, Assistant Professor, SAPL, U of C, Founding Director of UDJI



Reid Hendry, City of Calgary Chief Housing Officer



From left to right: Dr. Marie Cecile Kotyk, Assistant Professor, Design Justice Research Chair and Founding Director of UDJI at the School of Architecture, Planning, and Landscape, U of C, Srimal Ranasinghe, Managing Partner at Hive Developments and Sustainable Calgary, Magdalene Woo, Calgary Chinatown Ambassador, Nataliia Shen, Housing Manager at the Centre for Newcomers, Dee Adekugbe, Founder and Executive Director at Ruth's House, and Bukola Ojemakinde, Founder and Executive Director of Bridge to Oasis Foundation.



The workshop component was guided by the **Housing Justice in Action Collaborator Guidebook** and organized through three interconnected lenses – Community, Policy, and Design.



Collaborators then worked through two facilitated sprints:

Sprint 1: Problems → Opportunities

Mapping barriers, gaps, and bright spots across the housing system

Sprint 2: Ideas → Pilots

Translating identified opportunities into actionable pilot concepts, including goals, beneficiaries, partners, timelines, resources, risks, success indicators, and equity considerations

This report is derived from the insights generated through these discussions and workshop activities. The sections that follow synthesize what collaborators identified, beginning with the structural barriers and systems gaps shaping housing inequity in Calgary.

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on a qualitative synthesis of insights generated through the *Housing Justice in Action* event. The methodology reflects the structured, participatory approach outlined in the *Housing Justice in Action Collaborator Guidebook* and is grounded in principles of co-design and applied practice-based research.

Data for this report were drawn from multiple sources, including:

- Keynote presentations and panel discussions, which provided contextual framing, sectoral perspectives, and expert insights
- Facilitated workshop discussions, where collaborators identified barriers, gaps, bright spots, and opportunities across the housing system
- Completed collaborator guidebooks, which captured structured inputs across the Community, Policy, and Design lenses
- Anonymized verbatim contributions, which were used to preserve the integrity of collaborator perspectives and highlight lived and practice-based experiences



The workshop was designed as an action-dialogue process, emphasizing both collective sense-making and the co-development of practical, equity-focused responses. Insights were synthesized thematically to identify recurring patterns, system dynamics, and areas of convergence across collaborators.

This report is not intended to serve as a comprehensive needs assessment or statistical analysis. Rather, it represents a curated synthesis of cross-sector knowledge and lived experience, intended to inform action, support pilot development, and guide ongoing collaboration toward housing justice in Calgary.

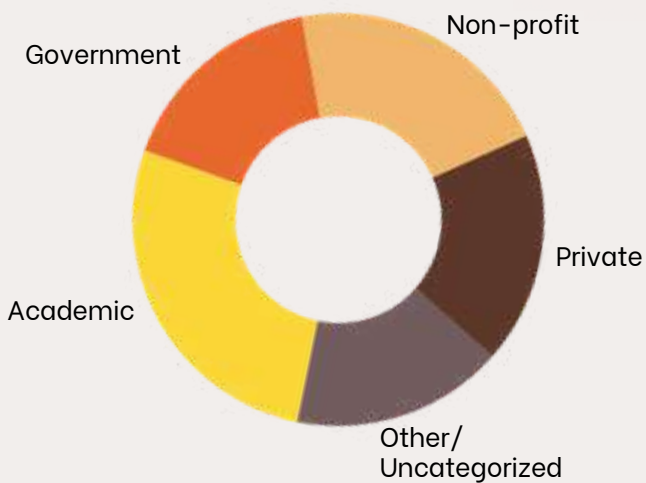
WORKSHOP COLLABORATOR PROFILE

The Housing Justice in Action event brought together a diverse, cross-sector group of collaborators representing community organizations, housing and homelessness-serving agencies, government and policy institutions, design, architecture, and planning professionals, developers, researchers, and individuals with lived and living experience. Collaborators spanned frontline practitioners, organizational leaders, and advocates, contributing a wide range of perspectives on housing challenges and opportunities in Calgary. This diversity was critical to developing a systems-level understanding of housing inequities, ensuring that insights reflected both practice-based expertise and lived realities. The distribution of collaborators across sectors is illustrated in the figures below.

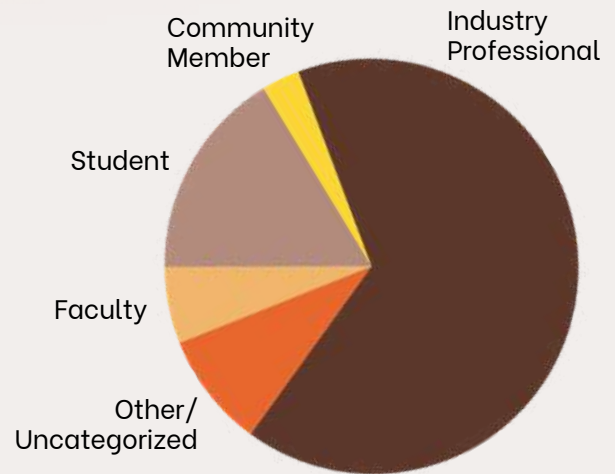


PROFILE OF WORKSHOP COLLABORATORS

DEMOGRAPHICS: ORGANIZATION



DEMOGRAPHICS: PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND



HOW PARTICIPANTS HEARD ABOUT THE INITIATIVE



WHAT WE HEARD

BARRIERS AND SYSTEM GAPS

Workshop insights clustered into a coherent systems picture: ***housing inequity is not only a question of supply, but also of how economic conditions, policy requirements, service pathways, social narratives, and built form interact to shape access and stability.***

The key barriers and systems gaps are identified below:

1. STRUCTURAL AND ECONOMIC PRESSURES

Collaborators consistently emphasized that housing affordability in Calgary cannot be understood solely as a question of rent levels. Instead, collaborators described a **structural affordability crisis, where housing costs, income structures, credit systems, and wealth accumulation pathways interact to systematically exclude racialized and marginalized populations.**

Several collaborators pointed to **profit-driven development** logics that prioritize return on investment over social good. As one collaborator noted, *“We operate within a heavily capitalist framework, prioritizing profit over community need.”* This market-driven approach was seen as producing housing that maximizes return on investment rather than addressing actual community needs. Several collaborators referenced the industry practice of optimizing “dollars per door,” which incentivizes smaller units at higher prices rather than larger units appropriate for families.

Collaborators further highlighted the **erosion of homeownership** as a critical dimension of the affordability challenge. They noted shrinking pathways to homeownership and long-term wealth building, with housing supply increasingly concentrated in the rental market and limited opportunities for affordable ownership. As one collaborator stated, *“all housing being built now is rental – not creating any generational wealth.”* This issue was seen as particularly significant for newcomers and racialized households, who may already face limited access to credit, capital, and financial systems.

They also pointed to the **widening gap between wages and housing costs.** As one collaborator noted, *“people cannot afford housing – increase our salary or income.”* These insights demonstrate that affordability challenges are embedded in broader economic systems, including wage stagnation, credit access, migration dynamics, challenges related to the recognition and transferability of income and credentials, and the concentration of capital within the housing sector.



2. POLICY AND REGULATORY CONSTRAINTS

Collaborators identified policy frameworks and administrative requirements, particularly documentation, income verification, and credit history expectations, as significant barriers that disproportionately affect newcomers, international students, and individuals in precarious or non-traditional employment arrangements.

A recurring challenge was the difficulty of **accessing rental housing without established financial documentation**. As one collaborator noted, *“there is a list of requirements you have to meet before you find your first apartment in Canada.”* Requirements such as proof of income, credit history, and employment records were described as unrealistic for many newly arrived residents, effectively limiting access to housing at the point of entry.

Collaborators also highlighted how **institutional definitions of income can reinforce exclusion**. For example, certain forms of income, such as academic funding, are not recognized within traditional financial systems, restricting access to both rental housing and homeownership. As one collaborator explained, *“PhD funding is treated as scholarship, not income, leading to mortgage qualification barriers.”*

Short-term assistance programs were also identified as misaligned with the realities of housing insecurity. While these programs provide immediate relief, they were described as insufficient in duration and scope relative to long-term, structurally produced housing challenges. As one collaborator stated, *“shelters only offering 21 days – not comprehensive assistance.”*

Collaborators highlighted that broader geopolitical and financial policies can indirectly impact housing stability for newcomers. International sanctions and restrictions on financial transfers can hinder new arrivals’ ability to access or move funds from their home countries, making it challenging to establish financial stability during the settlement process. As one collaborator noted, *“sanctions create barriers to transferring money and settlement logistics.”* These challenges are often exacerbated by wage inequities and barriers to employment, which further limit newcomers’ capacity to secure and maintain housing. Additionally, they pointed out the lack of effective mechanisms to foster strong community-level connections and partnerships.

Overall, these insights demonstrate that policy and regulatory frameworks can unintentionally reproduce exclusion when they are based on standardized assumptions about income, documentation, and settlement trajectories.



3. FRAGMENTED GOVERNANCE AND SYSTEMS COORDINATION

Collaborators consistently described Calgary's housing ecosystem as fragmented and difficult to navigate, particularly for newcomers and individuals experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness. Fragmentation across entry points, programs, and service providers was described as creating confusion for those seeking housing and inefficiencies for practitioners.

Collaborators emphasized the absence of a clear system "front door," noting that *"too many entry points: newcomers encounter ~4 different arrival services with no clear 'front door.'"* This fragmentation results in both duplication and gaps. As one collaborator stated, *"service fragmentation and duplication: multiple providers offering the same support,"* while critical needs remain unmet. **These conditions disproportionately impact newcomers, racialized communities, and individuals with limited system familiarity, who must navigate complex and often opaque pathways without coordinated support.**

They also identified communication challenges across sectors, including government, non-profits, developers, and service organizations. Weak coordination is further compounded by **misaligned incentives and institutional logics**, described as *"different priorities (productivity vs. social value) and communication styles across sectors."*

From a systems perspective, the workshop reframed navigation not as an individual responsibility, but as missing infrastructure. In the absence of coordinated pathways, even well-intentioned services remain difficult to access, hard to align, and limited in their ability to produce coherent and equitable housing outcomes. This fragmentation contributes to delays in housing access, increased system cycling, and missed opportunities for early intervention.



4. SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND EQUITY BARRIERS

4.1 STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION

Collaborators emphasized the persistence of stigma and discrimination within housing markets, which disproportionately affects racialized communities, Indigenous Peoples, individuals with criminal records, and people who have interacted with social services.



Several collaborators described **discriminatory screening practices** by landlords as a recurring barrier to accessing housing. One collaborator noted that some landlords selectively exclude tenants based on perceived risk or social stigma, particularly targeting Indigenous individuals or those who have accessed community support services: *“Private landlords show discriminatory tendencies... don’t rent to Indigenous or those who have a history in drop-in centres.”*

Credit score requirements were also identified as a mechanism through which discrimination can occur. Collaborators explained that strict credit screening often disadvantages newcomers, students, and individuals with limited financial history. One collaborator stated that there are *“discriminatory practices when it comes to credit scores.”*

Beyond formal screening mechanisms, collaborators discussed how **broader racial biases influence housing access**. They noted that racialized individuals often face additional scrutiny or skepticism when attempting to rent or purchase housing. A collaborator stated, *“stigma around anyone who isn’t white... the difficulties they face when wanting to rent or purchase a home.”*

Stigma also operates at the neighbourhood level, where community resistance can influence whether supportive or affordable housing developments are accepted. A collaborator shared their experience and stated that there is “*resistance from neighbors... ‘doesn’t make sense’ for housing support to be in their neighborhoods.*” In this context, **zoning and public approval processes were described as sites where stigma becomes institutionalized**, allowing exclusionary narratives to shape land-use decisions and delay or block supportive and affordable housing.

Collaborators emphasized that housing inequities are reinforced not only through economic and policy structures, but also through social narratives, implicit biases, and public perceptions that shape housing markets, neighbourhood dynamics, and who gets access to affordable and stable housing.



4.2 LANGUAGE AND INFORMATION BARRIERS

Language and information barriers were described as compounding inequity by limiting self-advocacy and informed decision-making. Collaborators emphasized that **non-English speaking newcomers often encounter significant challenges when attempting to navigate the housing system**, from understanding rental listings and lease agreements to communicating with landlords, service providers, and financial institutions.

A collaborator stated, “(if) English is not the first language... (there are) difficulties with how to ask questions and how to interpret answers,” highlighting how **language gaps can lead to misunderstandings, missed opportunities, or acceptance of unfavourable housing conditions**. Without access to clear, culturally and linguistically appropriate information, individuals may be unable to fully assess their rights, negotiate lease terms, or identify discriminatory practices.

These barriers are further intensified by the complexity of housing systems, which often rely on technical language, fragmented information sources, and digital platforms that are not designed with accessibility in mind. Collaborators noted that many newcomers rely heavily on informal networks or community organizations to interpret information and navigate processes, which can result in uneven access to accurate and timely support.

Language barriers also intersect with other systemic constraints, including documentation requirements, credit systems, and unfamiliar legal framework and housing rights awareness, increasing vulnerability to exploitation, misinformation, or housing instability. As a result, **language is not only a communication issue but a structural barrier that shapes who can effectively access, secure, and sustain housing.**

4.3 SOCIAL ISOLATION

Collaborators identified **social isolation as a critical and often overlooked dimension of housing inequity**. Beyond providing physical shelter, housing plays a central role in shaping social connection, belonging, and access to support networks. When housing systems fail to foster these connections, they can produce isolation rather than stability.

A significant issue discussed was the relational impact of housing precarity. Individuals facing unstable or unsuitable housing situations often experience disconnection from their communities, essential services, and informal support systems. This disconnection is particularly pronounced among newcomers, youth, seniors, individuals with disabilities, and those experiencing homelessness, who may already have limited social networks during periods of transition.

Collaborators highlighted that **system design plays a role in this isolation**. As noted in other sections of this report, **fragmented service pathways, unclear access points, and insufficient coordination among providers leave individuals to navigate complex processes on their own, often without consistent relational support**. In such circumstances, **housing insecurity becomes not just a material challenge but a social one**, where individuals are left to manage instability in isolation.



Social isolation is further exacerbated by public narratives and perceptions that dehumanize those experiencing housing insecurity, particularly individuals facing homelessness. As one collaborator observed, “*people often see homeless individuals as just ‘homeless,’ rather than as individuals.*” These narratives influence how individuals are treated within communities and can lead to their exclusion from neighborhood life, services, and opportunities for connection.

Collaborators also pointed out that **isolation affects multiple levels**—not only individuals, but also the connections between communities, organizations, and systems. This disconnect weakens the collective ability to address housing challenges in coordinated and inclusive ways.

The collaborators stressed that social isolation is not a mere coincidence; it is structurally produced by housing and service systems that fail to prioritize connection, inclusion, and belonging. Consequently, they emphasized the need for approaches that intentionally integrate social infrastructure, community-building, and relational supports into housing strategies. This way, housing can serve not only as shelter, but also as a foundation for stability, integration, and community belonging.

5. DESIGN AND TYPOLOGY LIMITATIONS

Collaborators emphasized that housing inequity is not only a function of affordability or access, but also of design. Built form decisions, planning frameworks, and dominant housing typologies actively shape who can live where, under what conditions, and with what level of stability and belonging.

A consistent theme across discussions was the **mismatch between existing housing typologies and the lived realities of Calgary's increasingly diverse population**. Current housing supply is largely structured around a limited spectrum, typically small apartment units or single-family homes, reflecting narrow assumptions about household composition. These models often fail to accommodate multigenerational living, larger family sizes, shared housing arrangements, culturally specific ways of living, and accessibility needs across different abilities and life stages. As one collaborator noted, *"cities are not catching up to changing populations... different cultures with different needs."* Another emphasized the need to expand the housing continuum, *"[We] need housing between apartments and single-family... what about multigenerational housing? Row/townhouses, co-housing, accessible units?"*



Collaborators identified a critical gap in **"missing middle" housing forms, including rowhouses, townhouses, co-housing models, and flexible multi-unit configurations**. These typologies have the potential to support affordability, social connection, and adaptability over time, yet remain underdeveloped due to zoning constraints, financing structures, and development norms that prioritize standardized, market-driven products.

From a design and planning perspective, these limitations point to a broader issue: **housing systems are often designed for efficiency and profitability rather than for diversity, adaptability, or inclusion**. As a result, the built environment can unintentionally exclude households whose needs do not align with conventional housing models.

Ultimately, collaborators underscored that addressing design and typology limitations is not simply a matter of increasing supply, but of rethinking the relationship between built form, equity, and lived experience, ensuring that housing supports not only shelter, but also dignity, stability, and belonging.

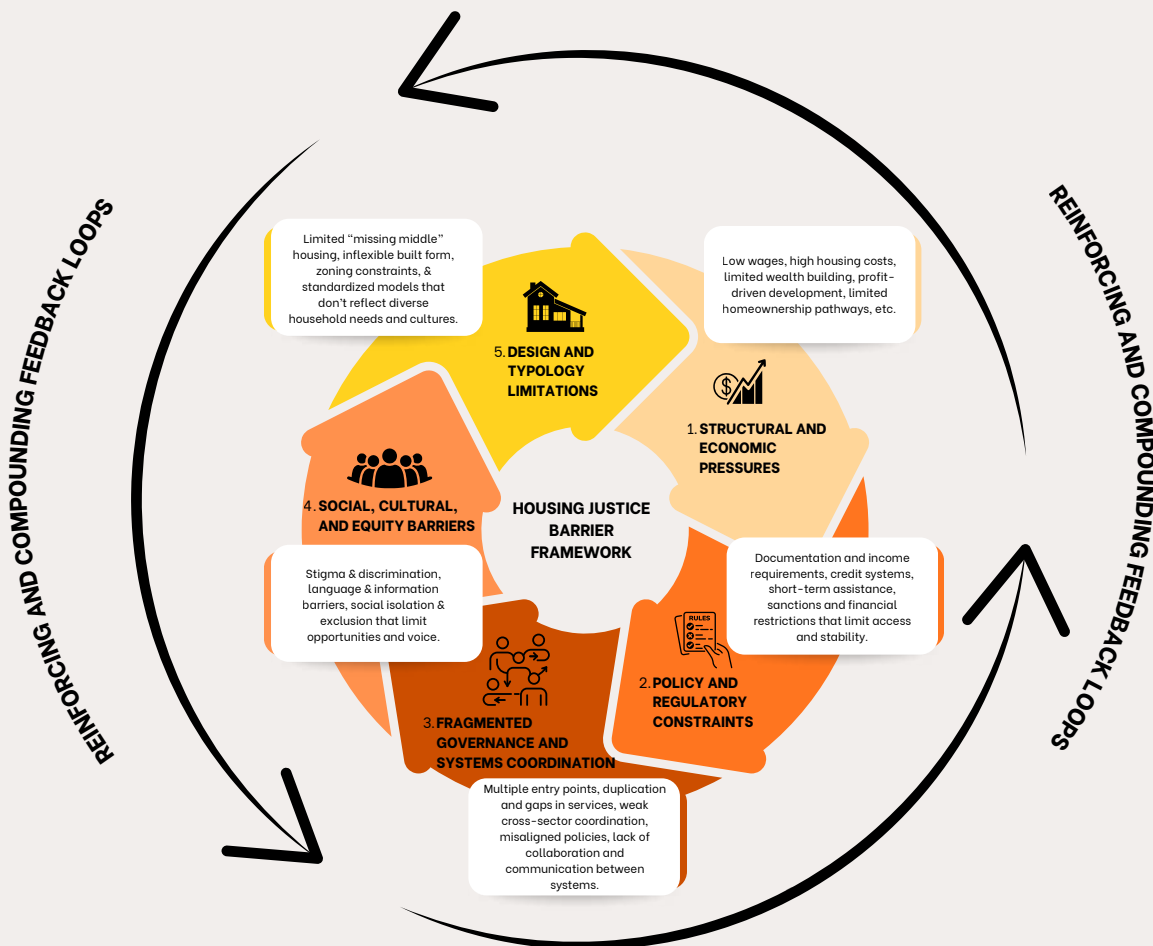


Source: City of Vancouver (2025).

HOUSING JUSTICE BARRIER FRAMEWORK

Based on insights from the event, a **Housing Justice Barrier Framework** was developed to highlight the interconnected and compounding nature of systemic housing barriers. **This framework illustrates that housing inequities arise from the interaction of multiple, interrelated barriers rather than from a single factor.** Structural and economic pressures, policy and regulatory constraints, fragmented governance, social and cultural inequities, and limitations in design and typology all work together as a reinforcing system that influences housing access, stability, and a sense of belonging. **These barriers are cumulative and compounding: economic precarity can limit access to documentation and credit requirements; policy constraints can intensify exclusion experienced through discrimination and language barriers; fragmented service systems can deepen social isolation; and housing forms that fail to reflect diverse household needs can further restrict available options.**

Taken together, these dynamics create feedback loops that disproportionately impact racialized communities, newcomers, Indigenous Peoples, low-income households, and other equity-deserving groups. Understanding housing inequity as a systems issue highlights the need for coordinated, cross-sector responses that address root causes rather than isolated symptoms.



Source: Illustrated by Kotyk, M.C. (2026)

These barriers interact in complex ways, creating cumulative disadvantage and making it difficult for individuals and communities to access and maintain just and equitable housing.

While these barriers are significant, collaborators also identified existing strengths and promising practices already taking shape in Calgary. The next section highlights these bright spots and the assets that can be built upon.



WHAT WE HEARD

BRIGHT SPOTS AND ASSETS TO BUILD ON

While the action-dialogue workshop surfaced significant and systemic challenges, collaborators also identified a range of “bright spots” – small successes, promising practices, and moments of effectiveness within Calgary’s housing ecosystem. These examples reflect existing strengths and provide tangible starting points that can be learned from, strengthened, and scaled.

Importantly, bright spots were not understood as complete or comprehensive solutions. Rather, they represent emerging practices and approaches that demonstrate what is possible, offering insight into how more equitable and inclusive housing systems can be advanced over time.

These bright spots, clustered around several key areas of strength within Calgary’s housing ecosystem, are outlined below:

1. GROWING COLLABORATIVE MOMENTUM

Collaborators consistently identified cross-sector collaboration as a critical and emerging strength. The Housing Justice in Action event itself was cited as a meaningful intervention – demonstrating the value of convening diverse actors, including community organizations, people with lived experience, developers, policymakers, designers, researchers, and service providers, in a shared space. As one collaborator noted, “*conversations like this are starting to happen*,” signaling a shift toward more open, cross-sector dialogue. Importantly, collaborators framed these convenings not as one-off events, but as foundational infrastructure for systems change. There was a clear call to scale and sustain this momentum – expanding participation, deepening partnerships, and moving from dialogue to coordinated action.

This approach directly reflects the work of the UDesign Justice Initiative, which is intentionally designed to convene, connect, and mobilize diverse stakeholders to co-design equitable solutions. The event itself demonstrates the impact of this model in practice – highlighting both the demand for and the value of structured spaces where community knowledge, professional expertise, and institutional actors can work together. Collaborators emphasized the need for more of these convenings to occur at a greater scale and frequency, positioning this type of cross-sector engagement as essential infrastructure for advancing housing justice in Calgary.



2. POLICY AND ADVOCACY MOMENTUM

Collaborators identified growing momentum in **public education, advocacy, and policy engagement as an important foundation for systems change**. There was a strong emphasis on expanding public understanding of housing issues, homelessness, and creating accessible entry points for community members to engage in housing conversations.

As one collaborator noted, “*public education that is open to anybody who wants to come*” is essential for building broader awareness and shifting narratives around housing and homelessness. This reflects a broader recognition that **housing challenges are not solely technical issues, but also political and social ones that require sustained public engagement**.

Collaborators also emphasized the importance of engaging more directly with formal policy processes, including public hearings, planning consultations, and municipal housing strategies. These efforts signal a growing capacity to move beyond awareness toward coordinated advocacy and structural change.



3. CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE AND INNOVATIVE HOUSING MODELS

Collaborators identified a range of emerging housing approaches that collectively point toward more equitable, inclusive, and effective housing systems. These models demonstrate that **addressing housing inequity requires not only increasing supply, but rethinking how housing is designed, delivered, and supported**. Across discussions, a clear emphasis emerged on integrating cultural relevance, community-based approaches, and innovative housing forms that respond to both affordability pressures and social isolation.

3.1 CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE AND COMMUNITY-LED APPROACHES

Collaborators highlighted culturally responsive and community-led housing initiatives as critical examples of success, particularly those that integrate housing provision with culturally grounded supports and wrap-around services. **Indigenous-led housing models were emphasized as especially impactful, reflecting the importance of designing housing that is relational, supportive, and grounded in cultural context**. As one collaborator noted, “*housing for Indigenous families should be very connected and supportive... supportive housing opportunities must reflect the cultural needs of different communities.*”

Youth-focused initiatives also emerged as key areas of innovation. Programs such as those led by the Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth (USAY) demonstrate how housing can be integrated with mentorship, cultural programming, and life skills development. USAY provides culturally relevant, youth-led supports for Indigenous youth aged 12 to 29, helping them strengthen cultural identity while navigating barriers related to housing, employment, and wellbeing (USAY, no date). As one collaborator noted, “USAY’s Indigenous housing program is led by and catered to the youth,” underscoring the importance of centering youth voice and lived experience in program design.

Mentorship-based housing models were also identified as effective approaches for supporting vulnerable populations. **Ruth’s House was highlighted as a strong example of a Black-led, culturally responsive organization providing shelter, transitional housing, and wrap-around supports for individuals, particularly those of African descent, who are experiencing family violence.** The organization combines emergency housing with counseling, advocacy, mentorship, and community-based programs to facilitate healing, restore dignity, and assist individuals in rebuilding stable, violence-free lives (Ruth’s House Society, no date). A collaborator emphasized that “Ruth’s House provides mentorship and access to support, housing, and resources,” illustrating how housing can be embedded within broader systems of care that support healing, dignity, and long-term stability.

Similarly, **McMan Calgary’s James House** was mentioned as an example that demonstrates the importance of integrating housing with sustained, relationship-based supports. Developed as a 27-unit transitional bridge housing program for individuals exiting homelessness, James House combines safe and stable housing with individualized supports, life-skills development, community connections, and access to professional services (McMan Calgary, no date). Operating from Housing First, trauma-informed, and recovery-oriented approaches, the program is designed not only to provide shelter, but also to foster wellbeing, belonging, and long-term housing stability (Simon Fraser University, 2025). Importantly, the design of James House incorporates both private living spaces and shared communal areas that support social connection, recognizing that housing stability is strengthened when residents have opportunities to build relationships, access supports, and participate in community life. This model demonstrates how housing can function as both a physical and social foundation for successful transitions to permanent housing.



USAY. Photo by Stephen Strand (2025)



Dee Adekunle, Founder and Executive Director at Ruth’s House



The James House. Source: McMan Calgary (2020).

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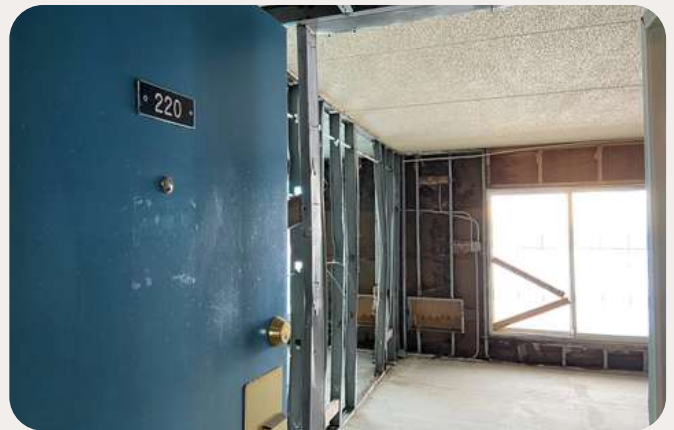
Community-based initiatives that blend affordability with integrated supports were emphasized in the discussions. A notable example is the **Victory Foundation's redevelopment** of the former Town & Country Motor Hotel in Forest Lawn. This ongoing project is transforming a historically stigmatized site into 48 safe, affordable housing units for vulnerable women, women with children, and seniors (Croteau, 2022). The initiative works with HER Victory to provide targeted support, including for those exiting the sex trade and experiencing exploitation (Victory Foundation, no date).

Additionally, the design incorporates a mixed-use model, with commercial space on the ground floor that generates revenue to help subsidize affordable rents, showcasing an innovative approach to financial sustainability (Victory Foundation, no date). Funded by private donations, the City of Calgary, and the Province of Alberta (Kury de Castillo, 2020, & Nagai, 2024), **this initiative illustrates how adaptive reuse, integrated support services, and community investment can work together to create both housing and social impact.**

Across these examples, collaborators emphasized that these models extend beyond viewing housing as a physical structure. Instead, they position housing as part of a broader ecosystem of belonging, cultural safety, and long-term stability - where housing supports not only shelter, but identity, connection, and wellbeing.



Town and Country Motor Hotel Source: Croteau (2022)



The old hotel rooms at the Town & Country will house women and seniors. Source: Croteau (2022).

3.2 INNOVATIVE HOUSING FORMS AND SYSTEM APPROACHES

In addition to culturally grounded models, collaborators identified emerging housing typologies and system innovations that respond to both affordability constraints and social isolation. Co-housing, co-operative housing, and shared housing models were frequently highlighted as promising alternatives to conventional housing systems. As one collaborator noted, “*co-housing... shared spaces, kitchens, washrooms, and rooms,*” illustrating how design can support both affordability and community connection.

Among these, co-operative housing was identified as a particularly promising yet underutilized model within Calgary's housing system. Co-operatives operate as non-profit, member-run communities in which residents collectively own and manage their housing, removing the traditional landlord-tenant dynamic and fostering shared responsibility and governance. Unlike market housing, co-ops are designed to provide long-term, stable, and affordable homes rather than functioning primarily as financial assets. Despite these advantages, collaborators noted that co-operative housing remains underdeveloped locally, representing a clear opportunity to expand the housing continuum while strengthening community-based living and long-term affordability.

Croteau, J. (2022, December 8). *Calgary hotel with dark past transformed into affordable housing for women and seniors*. Global News. Retrieved from <https://globalnews.ca/news/9336110/calgary-town-and-country-hotel-transformation/>
Victory Foundation (n.d.). *Victory Foundation*. Retrieved from <https://www.victoryfoundation.ca/new-page>
Kury de Castillo, C. (2020, December 28). *Plans revealed for notorious Calgary hotel to be transformed into affordable housing*. Global News. Retrieved from <https://globalnews.ca/news/7543892/calgary-town-country-hotel-affordable-housing-plan/>
Nagai, T. (2024, June 26). *Town and Country affordable housing conversion makes push to finish line*. Global News. Retrieved from <https://globalnews.ca/news/10590050/town-and-country-affordable-housing-conversion-fundraiser/>

Beyond specific housing forms, **collaborators emphasized the importance of designing housing that reflects diverse life stages and household structures**, including multigenerational families, youth, seniors, and shared living arrangements. These approaches challenge conventional assumptions about how housing is designed and occupied, opening pathways for more flexible, inclusive, and adaptive housing solutions.

Importantly, discussions extended beyond built form to the systems that support housing access and stability. Collaborators highlighted the need for more coordinated and integrated service delivery, identifying practical interventions, such as pooled funding mechanisms for damage deposits and shared intake and navigation systems, as effective ways to prevent individuals and families from entering crisis pathways.

FROM ISOLATED INNOVATIONS TO SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

Across these examples, a clear pattern emerges: although systemic barriers remain significant, **Calgary already has a strong foundation of innovation, collaboration, and community-led practice**. These models show that alternative approaches to housing, grounded in cultural relevance, design innovation, and coordinated supports, are already taking shape in practice.

The opportunity moving forward lies in scaling, connecting, and sustaining these efforts. Moving from isolated successes to a more integrated and equitable housing system will require greater alignment across policy, design, funding, and community leadership.



Importantly, these bright spots helped collaborators reframe the challenge - not simply as a question of housing supply, but as an opportunity to redesign housing systems around equity, coordination, and belonging. This reframing informed the priority action areas outlined in the next section.

OPPORTUNITY FRAMING AND PRIORITY ACTION AREAS

Building on the barriers, gaps, and bright spots identified through the action-dialogue workshop, collaborators were asked to reframe these insights into concrete, equity-focused opportunities for action. These opportunities were framed not as abstract recommendations, but as actionable directions that could be advanced within collaborators' respective roles, organizations, and sectors.

Across discussions, a clear and consistent reframing emerged: **housing must be understood and delivered as social infrastructure**. This framing moves beyond viewing housing as a standalone physical asset and instead positions it as an integrated system – where built form, services, policy, and community supports work together to enable stability, wellbeing, and belonging.

As one collaborator articulated, *“there is an opportunity to design purposeful building initiatives that extend beyond physical structures into wrap-around social supports and community-driven engagement.”* This **“housing-plus”** approach reflects a shift toward more holistic, coordinated, and equity-centred housing systems.

Collaborators also highlighted the importance of learning from international precedents and strengthening coordination across local, regional, and national scales to address systemic gaps. Within this shared framing, four priority opportunity areas emerged as the most critical leverage points for advancing housing justice in Calgary. These areas cut across multiple barriers and systems challenges, while also building on existing strengths and momentum.

1. PREVENTION AND DIVERSION PATHWAYS

Collaborators emphasized the urgent need to shift from reactive, crisis-driven responses toward proactive, upstream interventions. Prevention and diversion were consistently identified as high-impact opportunities to reduce housing instability before it escalates into homelessness.

As one collaborator noted, *“focus on prevention and diversion – prevent people from becoming homeless.”* This includes strengthening early intervention mechanisms such as tenancy supports, eviction prevention strategies, and targeted financial assistance (e.g., rental arrears, damage deposits, and short-term stabilization funding). These approaches were framed not only as cost-effective, but also as critical to reducing system strain and improving long-term housing outcomes.

Prevention was understood as both a service and a systems function, requiring coordination across housing providers, social services, and policy frameworks to identify risk early and respond effectively.



2. CAPACITY BUILDING AND MENTORSHIP ECOSYSTEMS

Collaborators identified significant gaps in both individual and institutional capacity across the housing system. At the community level, individuals often lack access to the knowledge, networks, and resources needed to navigate housing pathways. At the systems level, organizations face challenges in coordination, alignment, and sustained engagement.

In response, collaborators emphasized the importance of building mentorship and capacity-building ecosystems that support both individuals and organizations. These include peer mentorship models, leadership development pathways, and knowledge-sharing platforms that strengthen navigation, advocacy, and decision-making.

A key emphasis was the need to center lived and living experience within these systems. Rather than being treated as an add-on, lived experience was identified as essential expertise that should be embedded in program design, governance, and implementation. This opportunity area positions capacity-building not as a supplementary activity, but as foundational infrastructure for a more responsive, inclusive, and effective housing system.



3. COORDINATED HOUSING NAVIGATION SYSTEMS (“FRONT DOOR” INFRASTRUCTURE)

One of the most consistent findings across the workshop was the absence of a clear, coordinated entry point into the housing system. Collaborators described a fragmented landscape of services, where individuals must navigate multiple disconnected pathways to access support.

In response, collaborators identified the need for a coordinated housing navigation system – a shared “front door” that simplifies access and improves system integration.

Such a system would:

- Reduce duplication and confusion across services
- Improve timely access to prevention, diversion, and stabilization supports
- Enable more effective coordination across organizations and sectors
- Support data sharing and system-level alignment

Rather than placing the burden of navigation on individuals, this approach reframes navigation as essential infrastructure. It recognizes that even well-designed services are ineffective if they remain difficult to access or poorly connected.



4. EQUITY-CENTRED HOUSING DESIGN INNOVATION

Collaborators emphasized the need to expand and diversify housing forms to better reflect the realities of Calgary's population. This includes advancing models such as multigenerational housing, co-housing, cooperative housing, shared housing, and housing integrated with culturally-appropriate support services. This opportunity area highlights the intersection of design, policy, and delivery systems. Collaborators noted that innovation in housing design must be supported by corresponding changes in zoning, financing, and program eligibility to ensure these models are viable and scalable.

Equity-centred design was framed as both a technical and social process – one that requires engaging communities in shaping housing solutions that reflect their needs, preferences, and lived experiences.

Equity-Centered design includes:

- Designing for diverse household structures, cultural practices, and dwelling sizes
- Integrating social and support spaces within housing environments
- Aligning built form with service delivery and community infrastructure

Ultimately, this opportunity area calls for a shift from standardized, market-driven housing models toward more flexible, inclusive, and context-responsive approaches.

To turn these priorities into action, collaborators developed pilot concepts that follow the workshop template and address the barriers, gaps, and opportunities identified during the event.



PILOT CONCEPTS

The Housing Justice in Action Collaborator Guidebook asked collaborators to move from identifying barriers, gaps, and bright spots toward developing practical pilot concepts. In Sprint 2, collaborators were prompted to translate opportunities into actionable ideas by identifying a project goal, beneficiaries, partners, timeline, required resources, risks, success indicators, and an equity check. This section builds on that structure and refines the pilot concepts that emerged through the workshop process.

Collectively, these pilot concepts respond directly to the major issues raised throughout this report: fragmented navigation, inadequate prevention pathways, lack of culturally responsive and flexible housing options, exclusionary screening practices, and the absence of coordinated systems that reflect the lived realities of diverse communities. They are not presented as final or exhaustive solutions. Rather, they are proposed as strategic starting points for collaborative testing, learning, and scaling.



PILOT CONCEPT 1: COORDINATED HOUSING NAVIGATION HUB

This pilot directly addresses one of the clearest findings from the workshop: that navigation is currently treated as an individual burden rather than a shared system responsibility. A coordinated navigation hub would begin to reposition navigation as essential infrastructure.

FIELD	DESCRIPTION
GOAL (What is this project trying to achieve?)	Establish a centralized, user-centred “front door” that integrates intake, information, and navigation to reduce fragmentation and duplication.
PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES (Who directly benefits?)	Newcomers, refugees, youth, seniors, and households experiencing housing precarity, and practitioners supporting navigation.
POTENTIAL LEAD AND PARTNERS (Who leads or collaborates?)	Settlement providers, housing providers, non-profit organizations, municipal services, government agencies, community organizations, and cultural intermediaries.
TIMELINE	• Now (0-6 months): Map current entry points; co-design pathways and multilingual information standards; define shared governance and referral protocols. • Soon (6 - 12 months): Launch a minimum viable hub (digital + in-person navigation); implement feedback loops. • Later (1-3 years): Expand populations and geographic reach; integrate with broader housing and social-support systems.
RESOURCES NEEDED (Funding, expertise, space, data, etc.)	Navigation staffing, interpretation/translation, community-facing communications, shared referral infrastructure, and sustainable operating funds.

KEY RISKS/CHALLENGES

(What barriers could arise?)

Data sharing and privacy constraints; duplication with existing services if roles are unclear; sustainability beyond pilot funding.

SUCCESS INDICATORS

(What does success look like?)

Reduced time to appropriate supports; fewer repeated intakes; improved user-reported ease of navigation; increased stabilization outcomes.

EQUITY CHECKS

(Who might be excluded, and how can we include them?)

Avoid digital-only access; design with lived/living experience leadership; monitor who is not being reached (language, disability, immigration status, gender, age).



PILOT CONCEPT 2: EQUITY - CENTERED CO-HOUSING DEMONSTRATION

This pilot responds directly to the report's findings on design and typology limitations. It also builds on the bright spots identified in shared, cooperative, and community-led housing, translating those ideas into a tangible demonstration project.

FIELD	DESCRIPTION
GOAL (What is this project trying to achieve?)	Co-design and test a community-led co-housing model that supports affordability, cultural fit, and social connection, including for multigenerational households.
PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES (Who directly benefits?)	Multigenerational newcomer and racialized households, seniors seeking community connection, and households pursuing shared-cost housing options.
POTENTIAL LEAD AND PARTNERS (Who leads or collaborates?)	Resident cohorts, community organizations, housing providers, developers, designers, architects, and mission-aligned funders.
TIMELINE	• Now (0-6 months): Identify a site or delivery pathway, whether through retrofit or new build; establish resident governance structures; and define the affordability and tenure model. • Soon (6 - 12 months): Complete design development and approvals, secure financing, and begin development or retrofit. • Later (1-3 years): Support occupancy, evaluate outcomes, and develop a replication toolkit for future sites.
RESOURCES NEEDED (Funding, expertise, space, data, etc.)	Capital financing, facilitation for resident-led governance, legal and technical support for co-operative or shared structures, and long-term operating partnerships.
KEY RISKS/CHALLENGES (What barriers could arise?)	Zoning and approval barriers, financing complexity, difficulty protecting long-term affordability, and governance sustainability over time.

SUCCESS INDICATORS

(What does success look like?)

Housing stability, resident-reported belonging, reduced social isolation, affordability outcomes, and replicability of the model.

EQUITY CHECKS

(Who might be excluded, and how can we include them?)

- Governance and eligibility criteria must not reproduce exclusion through conventional credit or income screening.
- Cultural safety, accessibility, and fit for larger or multigenerational households must be built into the model from the start.



PILOT CONCEPT 3: LANDLORD EQUITY INCENTIVE PROGRAM

This pilot addresses one of the most persistent barriers identified in the workshop: discrimination in screening and rental access. It seeks to shift practice at the market interface while reducing the burden placed on tenants to navigate exclusion on their own.

FIELD	DESCRIPTION
GOAL (What is this project trying to achieve?)	Increase access to rental housing for marginalized tenants by pairing landlord incentives with tenant supports, mediation, and rights education.
PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES (Who directly benefits?)	Households facing discriminatory screening practices, including newcomers, Indigenous households, and people with limited or non-traditional credit histories.
POTENTIAL LEAD AND PARTNERS (Who leads or collaborates?)	Landlord associations, community legal education providers, mediation services, non-profits, and municipal partners.
TIMELINE	• Now (0-6 months): Co-design landlord incentives and tenant protections, establish accountability and complaint pathways, and develop mediation supports. • Soon (6 - 12 months): Launch a small landlord cohort, provide deposit assistance and mediation, and begin tracking tenancy outcomes. • Later (1-3 years): Refine and expand the program and integrate it with coordinated housing navigation pathways.
RESOURCES NEEDED (Funding, expertise, space, data, etc.)	An incentive and risk-mitigation fund, staffing for landlord engagement and mediation, multilingual tenant education materials, and evaluation capacity.
KEY RISKS/CHALLENGES (What barriers could arise?)	Low landlord uptake, potential harm without strong tenant protections, and the possibility that the program could unintentionally stigmatize participants if poorly designed.

SUCCESS INDICATORS

(What does success look like?)

Number of participating landlords and units, sustained tenancies, reduced disputes and evictions, and improved tenant perceptions of fairness and safety.

EQUITY CHECKS

(Who might be excluded, and how can we include them?)

Tenant protections must be central, not secondary. Program design should include Indigenous and racialized leadership, and results should be monitored for differential impacts across race, gender, age, and immigration status.

PILOT CONCEPT 4: YOUTH HOUSING INNOVATION LAB

This pilot connects directly to barriers related to social isolation, fragmented pathways, and the lack of housing models tailored to youth realities. It also builds on bright spots identified in youth-centred, mentorship-based, and culturally responsive housing supports.

FIELD	DESCRIPTION
GOAL (What is this project trying to achieve?)	Develop a youth-focused pathway that combines housing supports, mentorship, and skills development to reduce precarity and strengthen transitions to independent living.
PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES (Who directly benefits?)	Youth experiencing housing precarity, including Indigenous youth and youth navigating complex transitions out of care, family instability, or crisis systems.
POTENTIAL LEAD AND PARTNERS (Who leads or collaborates?)	Youth-serving organizations, Indigenous-led organizations, educators, employers and skills programs, housing providers, healthcare organizations, and government agencies.
TIMELINE	• Now (0-6 months): Establish youth governance and mentorship structures, identify major transition points, and co-design supports with youth. • Soon (6 - 12 months): Launch a pilot cohort and evaluate housing retention, wellbeing, and participation outcomes. • Later (1-3 years): Expand cohorts, strengthen partnerships, and explore dedicated youth housing supply and longer-term supports.
RESOURCES NEEDED (Funding, expertise, space, data, etc.)	Program staff, mentors, supportive housing units or rental subsidies, training and employment partnerships, and an evaluation framework.
KEY RISKS/CHALLENGES (What barriers could arise?)	Housing supply constraints, complexity of cross-sector coordination, and ensuring the approach remains culturally safe and trauma-informed.

SUCCESS INDICATORS

(What does success look like?)

Housing stability over 6 to 12 months, participant engagement in education or employment, participant-reported belonging, and reduced cycling through crisis systems.

EQUITY CHECKS

(Who might be excluded, and how can we include them?)

- The model should be youth-led, culturally grounded, and administratively accessible.
- It must intentionally include LGBTQ2S+ youth, youth with disabilities, and those facing multiple forms of exclusion.

PILOT CONCEPT 5: MULTIGENERATIONAL HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAM

This pilot responds directly to collaborators' concerns about typology limitations, cultural mismatch, and the lack of support for diverse household structures. It links design, policy, and housing stability in a practical and targeted way.

FIELD	DESCRIPTION
GOAL (What is this project trying to achieve?)	Support multigenerational households through flexible financial assistance, design guidance, and stabilization supports that recognize diverse family structures and living arrangements.
PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES (Who directly benefits?)	Immigrant and newcomer households, Indigenous families, racialized families, and families supporting seniors or relatives through shared living.
POTENTIAL LEAD AND PARTNERS (Who leads or collaborates?)	Settlement agencies, community organizations, design professionals, housing providers, and municipal or regional partners.
TIMELINE	• Now (0-6 months): Define eligibility criteria that reflect family diversity and develop a toolkit for safe, legal, and accessible multigenerational housing. • Soon (6 - 12 months): Pilot targeted supports such as modification grants or loans, accessibility upgrades, and secondary suite or legal guidance paired with navigation supports. • Later (1-3 years): Scale the program and align it with planning, housing, and regulatory improvements.
RESOURCES NEEDED (Funding, expertise, space, data, etc.)	Flexible funding, design and technical expertise, language-accessible materials, and inspection and safety guidance where relevant.
KEY RISKS/CHALLENGES (What barriers could arise?)	Regulatory barriers, safety and habitability concerns, and the risk of overcrowding if adequate supports are not provided.

SUCCESS INDICATORS

(What does success look like?)

Reduced forced moves, improved accessibility and habitability, stronger family-reported stability, and reduced reliance on crisis services.

EQUITY CHECKS

(Who might be excluded, and how can we include them?)

The program must avoid penalizing cultural living patterns, should not rely on traditional credit histories as a gatekeeping mechanism, and must embed language access and safety monitoring.

IMPLEMENTATION AND GOVERNANCE

The workshop and guidebook were intentionally designed to move beyond dialogue and toward action. The event concluded with a clear call to carry this work forward through a more structured implementation process, including working groups that can steward pilot development, partnerships, and next steps.

To do this effectively, a Housing Working Group should be established as the primary vehicle for implementation. Its role would be to translate workshop insights into coordinated action by guiding:

- Pilot scoping and staged implementation
- Partnership development across sectors
- Shared learning, evaluation, and adaptation
- Coordinated policy influence grounded in pilot evidence and community knowledge

For this Working Group to be credible and effective, it will require more than informal coordination. At a minimum, it should operate with a clear mandate, transparent decision-making processes, defined roles and contributions, and meaningful lived and living experience participation embedded in governance rather than limited to consultation. Given the cross-sector nature of the issues identified in this report, the Working Group should also be designed to bridge community, policy, and design perspectives in a sustained and accountable way.

Implementation should be understood as iterative. Not all pilots need to be launched at once, and not all will move at the same pace. A phased approach will allow collaborators to test ideas, learn from early outcomes, refine delivery models, and build the case for longer-term scaling and policy integration.



NEXT STEPS

NOW (0–6 MONTHS)

The immediate priority is to **establish the implementation foundation**. This includes forming the **Housing Working Group**, confirming priority populations and desired outcomes, selecting one or two pilots for initial scoping, and clarifying partner roles. During this phase, collaborators should also identify seed funding opportunities, develop a shared evaluation approach, and ensure governance structures are in place to support accountability and inclusion.

SOON (6–12 MONTHS)

The next phase should focus on launching initial pilots and embedding learning cycles. This means moving from **concept development to implementation through small-scale testing, ongoing feedback, and iterative adjustment**. Partnerships should be expanded as needed, and early findings should begin informing targeted policy engagement, particularly in areas related to navigation infrastructure, discrimination, design flexibility, and culturally responsive housing delivery.

LATER (1–3 YEARS)

Over the longer term, the goal should be to **scale successful pilots, integrate effective components into permanent programs or institutional practices, and pursue policy and funding reforms that address the structural barriers identified in the workshop**. This includes strengthening prevention pathways, formalizing coordinated navigation systems, and expanding culturally responsive and flexible housing options across Calgary's housing ecosystem.



CONCLUSION

Housing Justice in Action surfaced a clear and practical message: housing inequity in Calgary is not only a question of supply. It is a systems issue produced through the interaction of structural affordability pressures, exclusionary policy and eligibility rules, fragmented navigation pathways, cultural and typological mismatch, and persistent stigma and discrimination.

At the same time, the workshop revealed real momentum, existing assets, and a strong foundation of community knowledge and innovation already present in Calgary. Collaborators identified promising practices that can be built on and, importantly, articulated a shared direction for moving from insight to implementation.



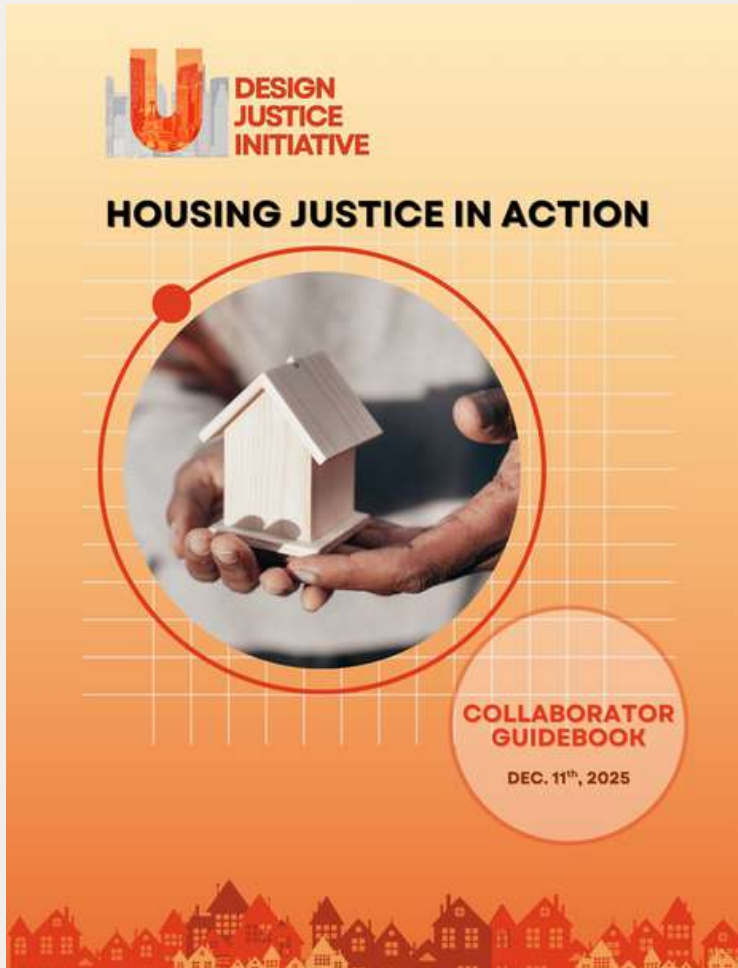
The pilot concepts outlined in this report are one way to begin that transition. They provide concrete, equity-focused entry points for testing new approaches to prevention, navigation, mentorship, housing design, and culturally responsive support. Their value lies not only in the individual projects themselves, but in their potential to generate shared learning, strengthen partnerships, and inform broader systems change.

Advancing this work will require sustained leadership, clear governance, resourcing, and a willingness to align policy, design, and community action over time. Through a well-structured Housing Working Group and a focused pilot portfolio, Calgary has an opportunity to move beyond fragmented responses and toward a more coordinated, inclusive, and justice-oriented housing system.

APPENDIX I

Housing Justice in Action - Collaborator Guidebook

The Collaborator Guidebook was developed to support collaborator engagement during the Housing Justice in Action event. It provided a structured space for collaborators to reflect on housing challenges, identify opportunities, and co-design pilot concepts, while capturing valuable insights and recommendations that informed the findings and future directions presented in this report.





AGENDA



Thursday, Dec. 11th, 2025
5:00 PM - 8:00 PM

5:00 PM - 5:15 PM: Registration, refreshments, & Gallery Walk

5:15 PM - 5:30 PM: Welcome & Framing the Evening - Dr. Marie Cecile Kotyk

5:30 PM - 5:45 PM: Keynote - Reid Hendry - Chief Housing Officer at the City of Calgary

5:45 PM - 6:30 PM: Housing Panel Discussion: Community-Policy-Design Partnerships
HVE Development + Bridge to Oasis Non-Profit + Ruth's House + Calgary Chinatown Community Association + Centre for Newcomers Q & A with the Audience

6:30 PM - 6:40 PM: SAPL Student Video Screening, Break, Exhibition & Networking

6:40 PM - 6:45 PM: Action Dialogue Workshop Instructions

6:45 PM - 7:15 PM: Action Dialogue Workshop - Sprint 1 (Problems → Opportunities)

7:15 PM - 7:45 PM: Action Dialogue Workshop - Sprint 2 (Ideas → Pilots)

7:45 PM - 7:55 PM: Report-Backs & Commitments

7:55 PM - 8:00 PM: What's Next & Close
Announce the Working Groups' purpose and call

UDESIGN JUSTICE INITIATIVE | HOUSING JUSTICE ACTION DIALOGUE WORKSHOP

Themes for Discussion

Theme	Focus	Intended Connection to Workshop
COMMUNITY	Frontline engagement, advocacy, and grassroots responses to housing inequities.	Identify community-level barriers or bright spots to shape <i>opportunity</i> statements.
POLICY	Systemic and institutional barriers, legislation, and municipal frameworks.	Pinpoint policy gaps or misalignments to inform <i>pilot opportunities</i> .
DESIGN	Built form, systems design, cultural safety, and inclusive planning practices.	Inspire <i>pilot prototypes</i> or co-design initiatives.

UDESIGN JUSTICE INITIATIVE | HOUSING JUSTICE ACTION DIALOGUE WORKSHOP

1. PROBLEMS → OPPORTUNITIES

Time: 30 minutes

- Identify the most pressing challenges and promising practices.
- Map barriers, gaps, and "bright spots" (Bright Spot: A small success, a promising practice, or a moment of effectiveness that can be learned from, scaled, or replicated.)
- Connect your insights from what you heard during the panel to your own experiences.

1.1. Mapping

Barriers

Gaps

Bright Spots

UDESIGN JUSTICE INITIATIVE | HOUSING JUSTICE ACTION DIALOGUE WORKSHOP

1.2. Opportunity Statement

This workshop is an opportunity for collaborators to identify concrete, equity-focused changes they can implement within their own organizations to better address housing precarity and support housing justice.
(e.g., "Limited culturally safe transitional housing for newcomer women could become an opportunity to co-design community-led shelter models.")



UDESIGN JUSTICE INITIATIVE | HOUSING JUSTICE ACTION DIALOGUE WORKSHOP

2. IDEAS → PILOTS

Time: 30 minutes

- Turn the most promising opportunity into a concrete pilot concept.
- Identifying who, how, and when it could be implemented.



Field	Description	Project: [_____]
Goal	What is this project trying to achieve?	
Beneficiaries	Who directly benefits?	



UDESIGN JUSTICE INITIATIVE | HOUSING JUSTICE ACTION DIALOGUE WORKSHOP

Partners/ Owner	Who leads or collaborates?	
Timeline	Now (0–6 mo)	•
	Soon (6–12 mo)	•
	Later (1–3 yrs)	•
Resources Needed	Funding, expertise, space, data, etc.	

UDESIGN JUSTICE INITIATIVE | HOUSING JUSTICE ACTION DIALOGUE WORKSHOP

Risks/ Challenges	What barriers could arise?	
Success Indicators	What does success look like?	
Equity Check	Who might be excluded, and how can we include them?	



APPENDIX 2

UDesign Justice Initiative (UDJI) Housing Working Group – Terms of Reference

The Housing Justice Working Group represents the next phase of the Housing Justice in Action initiative. Building on the insights, priorities, and pilot concepts identified through the Housing Justice in Action event, the Working Group will provide strategic leadership to advance this work from community dialogue to collaborative action.

The Working Group will bring together community organizations, government, researchers, practitioners, industry partners, students, and people with lived and living experience to guide the implementation of the Housing Justice in Action recommendations. Its responsibilities will include developing a Housing Justice Research Agenda, selecting and advancing two priority pilot initiatives, strengthening partnerships, supporting policy and systems change, and positioning the UDesign Justice Initiative (UDJI) for future research and implementation funding.

The attached Draft Terms of Reference have been developed to guide the formation and operation of the Working Group. They are intended as a living document and will be refined through feedback from collaborators as the Working Group is established. The Terms of Reference outline the Working Group’s purpose, membership, governance structure, guiding principles, roles and responsibilities, decision-making framework, and expected outcomes, providing a shared foundation for collaborative leadership and collective action.

Housing Working Group – Terms of Reference

Draft v2.0 – July, 2026 | Prepared by Dr. Marie Cecile Kotyk

1) Background

The Housing Justice Working Group (HWG) is established by the UDesign Justice Initiative (UDJI) to implement the recommendations arising from the Housing Justice in Action event (December 11, 2025) and the Housing Justice in Action Report. Supported through the University of Calgary Vice-President (Research) Catalyst Grant, the HWG serves as the governance body guiding implementation, research development, partnerships, pilot projects, policy translation, and external funding.

2) Purpose

Implement the Housing Justice in Action recommendations; develop a Housing Justice Research Agenda; select and advance two priority pilot initiatives; strengthen cross-sector partnerships; support policy translation; guide grant development; centre community leadership.

3) Scope

Focus on the four priority opportunity areas: Prevention & Diversion, Capacity Building & Mentorship, Coordinated Housing Navigation, and Equity-Centred Housing Design Innovation. Evaluate the five pilot concepts and select two priority pilots using agreed decision criteria.

4) Guiding Principles

- Co-design Over Consultation: Those most impacted co-author solutions.
- Inclusion, equity, accessibility, reciprocity, accountability, with visible feedback loops.
- Targeted inclusion of under-represented voices (disability, unhoused residents, newcomers with language barriers, youth, 2SLGBTQIA+).
- Evidence and Storytelling: Pair lived/living experience with data when making decisions.



5) Objectives

Develop implementation-ready pilot projects; build partnerships; mentor students; generate evidence; influence policy; position UDJI for SSHRC, CIHR, CMHC, Alberta Real Estate Foundation, Calgary Foundation and related grants.

6) Membership

Lived experience representatives; community organizations; Indigenous, Black and newcomer organizations; housing providers; government; developers; philanthropy; researchers; students; planners; architects; public health; social services.

7) Governance

Chair (UDJI Director), Vice-Chair, Secretariat, Student Research Team, Advisory Circle, and Pilot Working Groups.

8) Meetings

Monthly meetings; quarterly strategic sessions; annual Housing Justice Summit.

9) Decision-Making

Consensus where possible; minimum 70% support if voting is required; decisions assessed through equity, evidence, community impact and feasibility.

10) Deliverables

Housing Justice Research Agenda; Partnership Strategy; Two Pilot Frameworks; Policy Briefs; Knowledge Mobilization Plan; Quarterly Reports; External Grant Applications; Annual Summit.

11) Pilot Selection

Assess pilot concepts using community priority, equity impact, innovation, scalability, feasibility, research readiness, funding potential, partnership readiness, policy alignment, and expected outcomes.

12) Research & Funding

Support collaborative research, student mentorship, publications, conference presentations, and grant development.

13) Success Indicators

Partnerships established, two pilot projects selected, grants submitted, students mentored, policy influence, knowledge mobilization outputs, funding leveraged, etc.

14) Review

Review annually and revise as required.





DESIGN JUSTICE INITIATIVE

Equitable city with
city leadership

INITIATIVE (UJI) at the
University of Calgary
School of Architecture
Design Architecture (UJI)
community-led
design and
research
to address
social and
environmental
justice issues

WHAT WE DO

CONVENE Host inclusive co-design workshops, action dialogues, and working groups that move from ideas to plans.		EDUCATION + CAPACITY-BUILDING Training, short courses/credentials development, curriculum development, mentorship, partner incubation/light support for community projects.
RESEARCH + EVIDENCE Community-led research, community engagement, virtuality culture data analysis, "what we heard" reporting, and practical toolkit.	DESIGN + PROTOTYPING Small pilots, design builds, pop-ups, storytelling/visual synthesis.	POLICY + PRACTICE TRANSLATION Turn inputs into policy-ready recommendations, data layers, and implementation guides.

For More Information:



udesignjusticeinitiative.com



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Full Report Available for view on our website.