



# INSIGHTS FROM PROTOTYPE TESTING WITH STAKEHOLDERS





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### **SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK ON PHASE ONE PROTOTYPES: SCATTERED SITE & SHARED COMMUNITY TEAMS**

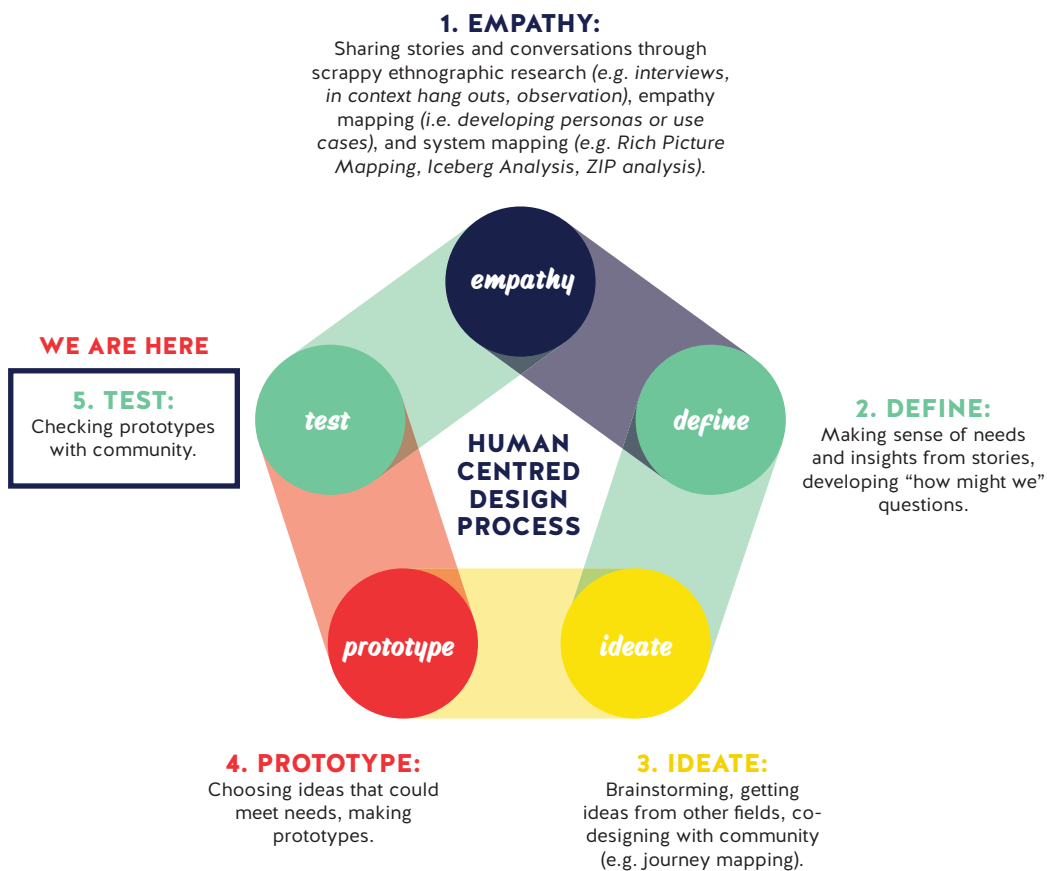
This summary was prepared by the project Developmental Evaluator, Mark Cabaj (Here To There Consulting Inc.), and Evaluation Assistant, Amanda Ebert, in collaboration with the Future of Home Stewardship Team.

The Future of Home Lab is about finding housing solutions that are affordable, accessible, and inclusive for people with developmental disabilities. This is one of several knowledge products generated during our lab process. To see our other knowledge products check out our website at:

<https://skillsociety.ca/projects/future-of-home-inclusive-housing-solutions-lab/>

## WHY GATHER INSIGHTS FROM STAKEHOLDERS?

Gathering insights from stakeholders, or ‘testing’ prototypes with people who have a stake in the challenge, is a key step in the human centred design process. Prototype testing is one of the ways people with lived experience of a challenge are involved in solution finding. During this step, prototype teams go out and share their prototype idea with a variety of community members asking for their feedback on the idea.



## HOW INSIGHTS WERE GATHERED

Throughout February 2021, both Future of Home core teams leveraged their networks and connected with people with disabilities and their families and allies, neighbors, developers, builders, funders, and representatives from PDD (Alberta Disability Services Government Funder). They used a variety of methods to connect with people including: individual and group interviews and online surveys.

For a more detailed breakdown of who we connected with and how see **Appendix A & B**

## A COUPLE THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

Testing as a part of this social innovation process was scrappy. This means it happened quickly and without the same rigor that happens as part of a robust community engagement process. We decided the scrappy nature of our testing was okay as it gave us what we needed at this time in the project. That is, a *general* sense of what different groups might think about the prototypes; *hints* as to where there might be gaps or things we missed to follow up on; and a *quick gut check* as to whether the prototype is directionally correct and is worth iterating further.

All that said, the insights shared in this document, should be taken with a grain of salt. They are not representative of what entire groups might think of the prototypes nor are they a comprehensive look at all that ‘works’ and ‘doesn’t work’.

## GENERAL COMMENTS BY THE EVALUATOR ON THE COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

1. The overall feedback on the two prototypes was largely positive, and the level of support for each idea tilts decidedly towards continuing, though this differs by stakeholders and prototype.
2. There appeared to be a general awareness on the part of respondents that they were reacting to a prototype – not a finished design – but unsurprisingly there were still a lot of questions about ‘details’.
3. The feedback is largely ‘divergent’ rather than ‘convergent’: it raises more things to think about for each prototype rather than resolve tensions or challenges.

## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PROTOTYPE GROUPS IN FEEDBACK

The feedback from each group of respondents was largely the same, except:

1. The respondents to the Shared Community Prototype were more focused on how to organize and manage different aspects of the building and community experience – including the ‘shadow side’ of intentional community living. This was primarily due to the larger number of parents of persons with disabilities offering input.
2. The respondents to the Shared Community Prototype also had more questions and opinions related to the role and design of PDD, with very little feedback emerging from Scattered Site respondents on this matter.
3. The respondents to the Scattered Site Prototype focused more on the design features of the building, including public and private spaces, and how to make them as engaging, accessible and inclusive as possible. This may have been a function of the ‘feedback rich’ session with developers.

## **SIMILARITIES IN FEEDBACK ACROSS PROTOTYPE GROUPS**

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The majority of feedback from respondents was more or less similar in the following areas:

- ▶ Support for Mixed Tenants
- ▶ Expanding the Product-Market Offering
- ▶ The ‘Social Features’ of Community, Inclusion and Access
- ▶ The ‘Business Features’ of Affordability, Viability & Sustainability
- ▶ The Need for Governance
- ▶ Development Options

### **SUPPORT FOR MIXED TENANTS**

**1.** There was strong support for the idea of a place for persons with and without disabilities to live in the same building – particularly from persons with disabilities and their families - with the Shared Community feedback focusing more on ‘intentional community living’ and the Scattered Site feedback emphasizing ‘inclusion’.

**2.** There were varying opinions about the ‘right’ ratio of persons without and with disabilities. Suggestions ranged from 70/30 to 80/20. The reasons for the different opinions appeared to be motivated by (1) ensuring a critical number of people were present within the community to create ample opportunities for natural support to be nurtured, (2) the urge to avoid an ‘institutional’ feel, and (3) trying to maximize the percentage of residents able to pay market or above-market rates to help make the model more financial feasible.

### **EXPANDING THE PRODUCT-MARKET OFFERING**

**1.** There was a strong sub-theme about the value of making the building attractive to multiple groups including people looking to age-in-place, families, couples, and singles.

**2.** A little discussion about the total number of units to be offered, with a few persons encouraging the team to ‘think big’ and consider options like the St. Laurence Market in Toronto or St. Andrews Center in Edmonton.

## THE SOCIAL FEATURES OF COMMUNITY, INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY

**1.** Strong all-around support for the role of the ‘concierge’ or ‘community connector’ in both models:

- ▶ The main reason was the need for someone to assume responsibility to ‘activate’ or ‘animate’ the shared space and help create a sense of community.
- ▶ A lot of ideas about what the key functions of the concierge should be, the skills required to fulfill those functions well, and how the role would be financed (e.g., paid for by fees, paid by a grant, shared volunteer role, or resident getting free rent).
- ▶ A helpful observation that the role and value of the ‘concierge’ is well known in some cities (NYC) but not as much in Edmonton, so that makes it a unique feature of the development to sell, but possibly to a smaller market niche.

**2.** Strong support for the ‘physical’ ways of creating inclusion and accessibility in the building through the strategic use of public or shared space. Suggestions included:

- ▶ how to design ‘shared spaces’ for increasing connections (e.g., shared entrances, walls to create smaller rooms, how to make a space feel like a home).
- ▶ how to improve access/inclusion for different residents, including those with disabilities (e.g., higher ceilings in underground parking to accommodate buses, more elevators), different cultural groups (e.g., protocols for smudging, rooms for ceremony), and those of different ages (e.g., work spaces for at-home workers, aging in place features, childcare).
- ▶ how to create spaces for introverts as well as extroverts (e.g., smaller, more private meeting rooms, nooks on a floor, etc.).
- ▶ a commitment to locate the building next to other community amenities (e.g., transportation, groceries, parks, etc.).

**3.** Different opinions on how to design the private space:

- ▶ some felt that in-suite laundry facilities were a ‘must’ while others felt that this reduced the opportunity for ‘natural interaction’ between residents.
- ▶ disagreement about whether storage should be in the apartments or another part of the building.
- ▶ the need for workspace and other work features for stay-at-home workers.
- ▶ the urge to have variably designed suites for different family models (e.g., the possibility of having adjoining apartments).

**4.** A variety of questions—rather than suggestions—about the organization, dependability and management of PDD supports primarily from PDD providers and parents.

## THE 'BUSINESS FEATURES' OF AFFORDABILITY, VIABILITY & SUSTAINABILITY

1. Knowledge that the 'ability to pay' of many people with developmental disabilities is constrained by the amount they receive from AISH - ideally an affordable rate is around \$500/month but recognizing many people pay more in the range of \$700-\$850/month due to a lack of affordable options.
2. A general awareness that (1) additional shared spaces, (2) variation in design, and (3) additional services add to the cost of building and maintaining both models.
3. A lot of suggestions that confirm the financial complexity of both models: this includes the (1) different market revenue streams (e.g., residential, commercial leases), (2) various ownership structures (e.g., rent, rent to own, coop), (3) variety non-market revenue sources (e.g., donated land, support workers getting rent in lieu of some salary, rental subsidies), and (4) the various combinations in which these three can all be combined into a viable and sustainable model.
4. A difference of opinion about residents' 'willingness to pay' (1) extra for some of the costs of the additional amenities and (2) the 'gap' between persons receiving disability support. There is a general sense that this would be a 'hard sell' to the residents without disabilities yet some feel there is a smaller niche market in the city that would be interested, either for social reasons or the urge to live in a more meaningful community.
5. A general concern about the overall financial viability of the model, with respondents confirming that additional amenities and programs 'cost' will eventually require significant non-market revenues to cover. Two respondents with deep experience in building and managing multiple supportive housing noted the following:
  - ▶ One reports: "The math is really important to think about: [we] have never had supports paid through rents, [nor] even modest program costs.
  - ▶ Another notes: "We have a lot of buildings, and have worked out different rental subsidy programs, but even then, we have to move money around from one building to another to make ends meet."

## THE NEED FOR GOVERNANCE

1. Several comments - particularly from parents - on the need for active governance of the facility (e.g., a condo board, a non-profit board, a committee) to oversee the building and services. This includes deciding who is invited to live in the building, monitoring services, repair and maintenance).

## THE OPTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- 1.** Several participants encouraged core teams to test out some or all of the ideas in existing developments before putting them together in a new building.
- 2.** One experienced developer noted that some existing building owners might be more open to testing these ideas now given the ‘softening’ in the rental market and unpredictable future of housing vacancy in the city post-Pandemic.
- 3.** One current development group with a building in Riverbend neighborhood with 248 units, a percentage of which are designed for persons with disabilities, expressed an interest in exploring this option.
- 4.** One experienced ‘socially oriented’ housing development cautioned that they have not been able to make a project with private developers and implied that it may require a non-profit developer to make the project work.





## APPENDIX A:

# SCATTERED SITE TEAM

Who We Connected With	How We Connected With Them
HOUSING DEVELOPERS	2 Interviews 1 Group Interview
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES	5 Interviews
HOUSING FUNDERS	3 Interviews 1 Group Interview
PDD & PDD FUNDED SERVICE PROVIDERS	4 Interviews
FAMILY MEMBERS & ALLIES	1 Interview
NATURAL SUPPORTS	3 Interviews

## APPENDIX B:

# SHARED COMMUNITY TEAM

Who We Connected With	How We Connected With Them
HOUSING DEVELOPERS	1 Interview
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES	1 Interview
FAMILY MEMBERS & ALLIES	1 Group Interview with six parents 2 Online Survey submissions
HOUSING FUNDERS	1 Group Interview
DEVELOPER	1 Interview
PDD & PDD FUNDED SERVICE PROVIDERS	2 Interviews
NATURAL SUPPORTS	1 Interview
GENERAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS	1 Interview 7 Online Surveys