



# Engaging Communities and Homeowners throughout the housing lifecycle

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## ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

From design to construction and maintenance, engagement with communities and occupants throughout the housing lifecycle will improve northern housing sustainability.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Start a dialogue:** Promote two-way information exchange in partnership with community organizations, housing owners and occupants.
- **Decide on an approach:** A community's preferences and context should determine the engagement approach. Consider the effectiveness of any engagement strategies previously used within the community, and leverage existing relevant information.
  - Collaborative sessions (like design charrettes) in which participants explore and draft design ideas, are a proven approach to seek input from community members and/or future occupants.
  - Other approaches could include community meals, surveys or other collaborative sessions. Consider language, culture and the state of readiness and engagement
- **Develop an engagement plan and strategy** that defines and helps communicate the details of the engagement to all stakeholders.
  - The plan could include engagement principles and objectives, key individuals/groups an engagement approach, timeline and a feedback plan.
  - Engage different stakeholders and individuals in the community, including elders and youth.
  - Ensure that the questions asked drive the type of answers needed to address the opportunity or solve the challenge presented.
- **Form partnerships with communities and northern organizations** to establish community-based initiatives, which can foster the development of homes that reflect the culture and environment of communities, contributing to increased wellbeing and improved home maintenance.
- **Monitor and evaluate program progress** to learn what works and what does not.
  - Establish the evaluation process at the beginning of each program with the community.
- **Take a long-term view:** Meaningful engagement processes to design and build homes can take a long time – and many sessions. Ensure relationship building is part of your project plan, and allocate sufficient time and funding.



## CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

- **Commitment to engagement:** Demonstrate commitment by developing and implementing an engagement strategy, with all partners. Establish systems to successfully manage and act on information gathered during engagement activities.
- **Partnerships/collaboration:** Housing authorities are important stakeholders in community projects. Partnerships with organizations that have common interests will lead to better coordinated engagements that meaningfully consider the community's preference for engagement frequency, timing, approach, and scale.
- **Engage early and take a long-term view:** Engaging early and taking a proactive and long-term approach to engagement signals to partners that the relationship is valued and that they are respected.
- **Follow-up and adapt:** Reporting back to participants what was heard and how the input was used in decision-making demonstrates respect for community members. Further, improving and adapting engagement approaches based on outcomes will lead to future success.



## SUCCESS STORIES

In Alaska, the Cold Climate Housing Research Center (CCHRC)'s, **Sustainable Northern Communities program**, ensures that designers engage with residents and housing authorities to develop homes that reflect the culture, environment, and local resources of individual communities.<sup>1</sup> Its approach, through design charrettes and other engagement methods, is to go to the community, bring food, listen first, and empower community members by asking first about strengths, then about needs.<sup>2</sup>

As part of the Nunatsiavut Government's SakKijânginnatuk Nunalik (Sustainable Communities) Initiative, the **Healthy Homes initiative** was created through collaboration with the Nain Research Centre and Memorial University. The idea was "a house built for Inuit by Inuit".<sup>3</sup>

Housing design charettes were central to the initiative. Residents spoke to issues related to housing quality, durability, environmental sustainability, and cultural applicability. This community-based initiative focusing on partnerships between researchers, practitioners, and communities, received an Arctic Inspiration Prize that financed the construction of a six-unit prototype in Nain, Newfoundland and Labrador, that was completed in 2018.<sup>3</sup>



Nain six-plex

<sup>1</sup> CCHRC. Programs. URL: <http://www.cchrc.org/programs>

<sup>2</sup> Grunau, B. 2018. Promoting and advancing the development of healthy, durable, and sustainable shelter for Alaskans and other Circumpolar people. 2018 Northern Housing Forum Presentation.

<sup>3</sup> IISD. 2016. Best Practices in Sustainable Housing Delivery in Inuit Nunangat. Prepared for Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. URL: <https://www.itk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Best-Practices-in-Sustainable-Housing-Delivery.pdf>