



## The Power of Collaboration

In 2023, the Foothills region continued to face daunting challenges around the development of and access to quality, affordable housing.

Despite this, our community collectively demonstrated what can be achieved when residents, leaders, and industry organizations engage, collaborate and care.

As we all continue the journey towards a more affordable, supported community, let's remember that working together and taking action are the greatest tools we have for effecting positive change.

*We're in this together. At Westwinds, we care.*

### CONTENTS

- Our Piece Of The Puzzle
- Transformative Housing Projects Taking Shape
- New Developments & Long-Term Affordability Commitment
- Improvements to Housing Programs
- Navigating Challenges in Seniors Lodge Programs & Recommending a Comprehensive Review
- Partnerships & Collective Efforts
- Financial Overview
- By the Numbers



Drake Town, Okotoks

## OUR PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

As we bid farewell to 2023, we reflect on the power of collaboration and engagement within our community. Our communities in the Foothills region saw ongoing, significant challenges around the development and access to quality, affordable housing while waitlists grew, and resource constraints heightened. We also witnessed the power of partnerships, as our community members, organizations and leaders connected to help address these critical needs.

Westwinds remained dedicated to our mission of providing safe and affordable housing solutions. We welcomed tenants into a new affordable housing project, took great strides on near market future housing developments, engaged with government and industry leaders to help guide long-term solutions, and secured additional funding to help begin to address housing affordability in the Foothills region.

In welcoming families into Drake Towns, our latest project, we reached a significant milestone in our commitment to creating quality, affordable housing solutions for all. It was very satisfying to have new tenants settle into their new homes, the first in six years.

Through our Rental Assistance Program, we extended support to over 100 new households, providing essential relief for individuals and families facing untenable rent expenses. This initiative has been vital in addressing housing insecurity and expanding access to affordable housing options.

And finally, now post-pandemic, we were thrilled to revive community connections by hosting our annual Senior's Week BBQ with Medicine Tree Manor, High River, as our host. We were pleased to have record attendance of 175 seniors and guests in Millenium Park. The event allows our seniors from all our communities to connect and celebrate provincial Senior's Week.

Despite our success, 2023 proved to be a difficult year with significant resource constraints. We diligently continued our response to COVID as well as associated, ongoing human resource recruitment challenges which we prioritized to ensure we best supported our team. Our full suite of housing and community programs was well-managed by our team while we competed federally and provincially for additional limited resources with the aim to further our future affordable housing developments. Fortunately, our Board of Directors and extraordinary employees remained champions of our residents, tenants and community. We continued to persevere and excel in navigating the challenges in front of us.

Together, let's continue our efforts towards a more inclusive and equitable community.

Don Herring  
Board Chairperson

Lauren Ingalls  
Chief Administrative Officer



### Our Values

Customer Service  
Respect  
Safety  
Accountability  
Integrity  
Innovation

### Our Mission

Westwinds Communities is a not-for-profit housing organization, committed to providing safe and affordable housing opportunities and services, not provided by the marketplace, in urban and rural communities.



## TRANSFORMATIVE HOUSING PROJECTS TAKING SHAPE

Westwinds Communities made great progress in the development of 38 below-market rental units in two buildings in Okotoks. These units are designed to meet the housing needs of families, couples, singles, and seniors currently on our housing waitlists. Westwinds successfully secured the land in fall 2023 and has applied for national, federal and provincial grants.

## NEW DEVELOPMENTS & LONG-TERM AFFORDABILITY COMMITMENT

Beginning in June, we welcomed tenants to our newly developed Drakes Towns in Okotoks. This development provides ten new units of near market and affordable housing in the Drakes Landing community on the corner of Milligan Drive and 48 Street. We were pleased to secure a formal agreement with the Town of Okotoks, the Alberta Social Housing Corporation, and the Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation to ensure that rental rates for Westwinds' units will remain affordable for at least the next 40 years.

Westwinds Communities successfully obtained title to Valley Villa, four units in the Turner Valley subdivision of Diamond Valley. The purchase will ensure the housing remains affordable for at least twenty years.

## IMPROVEMENTS TO HOUSING PROGRAMS


Earlier in the year, we initiated a process to review and reinvigorate our affordable housing waitlist, aligning with the province's new requirement for reapplication. We have streamlined our processes, leading to a reduction in waitlists for seniors' independent living and family affordable housing as we shift focus to housing tenants who reside in our local community. We're now better positioned to serve our local communities and its residents.

A 40% increase in funding to the operating budget of the Rental Assistance Benefit has reenergized this program and allowed over 100 new households to access funding. The need in our region for rental accommodation is far greater than the program allows. We are aware of many qualified households that are eligible for funding though unable to secure quality, affordable rental accommodation as our local vacancy rates have remained at 0% for the past two years. We expect the trend to continue in 2024.


## NAVIGATING CHALLENGES IN SENIORS LODGE PROGRAMS & RECOMMENDING A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

Amid great progress, challenges in Alberta's Seniors Lodge Program have surfaced, demanding our attention and advocacy. These challenges include the impact of inflation, creating a financial strain on seniors' lodges. Additionally, there is an ongoing lack of capital funding, with deferred capital maintenance, highlighting the province's inadequate provision of capital funding. Westwinds recognizes the sustained issues with the Lodge Assistance Grant. Since 2018, the stagnant grant has not kept pace with inflation, impacting the seniors' retirement residences and the industry's ability to provide adequate services. This has resulted in increased rates for residents and a decrease in maintenance capital renewal.

Addressing these issues effectively is critical. We have communicated our recommendation for a comprehensive review of the Seniors Lodge Program and requested a short-term grant injection into the sector. An effective review along with actionable improvements reflecting today's challenges would improve the long-term well-being of seniors.



*"I am very thankful for Westwinds. They provide me and my children with affordable housing. Without them, I would be struggling. They have given me peace of mind about my children having a roof over their head."*



## PARTNERSHIPS & COLLECTIVE EFFORTS

### Municipal Leaders Unanimously Support Affordable Housing

As a testament to community support, the Town of Okotoks unanimously agreed to cover additional costs associated with our critical affordable housing project in the D'Arcy subdivision relating to land servicing. The decision reflects a collective commitment to addressing the pressing need for safe and affordable housing in our region.

### Community Based Support

The Outreach and Social Justice Team, comprising members from St. Andrews United Church (De Winton), United Church in the Valley (Diamond Valley), and Okotoks United Church, joined forces with Westwinds to help address the pressing issue of maintaining affordable housing in our region.

Recognizing the critical need for rent and utility security, the team collaborated to establish a \$5,000 Emergency Fund pilot for Westwinds clients. Eligible recipients are required to participate in a money management course. The program fund assisted four families in 2023.

Westwinds continued its community support through operating the Okotoks Meals on Wheels Program and providing Soup for Seniors in our High River community.

### Donations

Westwinds Communities is a charitable organization and received \$5,026 in donations in 2023. Thank you to the generosity of Bulletproof, Campbell Decorating, Colliers Project Leaders, Avail LLP, Oak Tree Carpets, Yardi and Countryside Garden Centre.

## 2023 TENANT/RESIDENT FEEDBACK

### Retirement Living

- **97%** agree that the staff is friendly, respectful, helpful, and approachable
- **96%** agree that maintenance repairs are responded to and completed in a timely manner
- **96%** feel safe and secure in their suite and the lodge
- **90%** would recommend our housing to others

### Coal Trail

- **96%** feel safe living in their own home
- **100%** would recommend Westwinds Communities programs and services to others

### Independent Living

- **92%** are satisfied with the staff
- **92%** responded that maintenance repairs are completed in a timely manner

### Near Market Housing

- **100%** of residents across all communities feel safe living in their homes
- **27%** of Tenants also access the rental assistance benefit program to further improve the affordability of their rent receiving an average subsidy of \$435

### Rental Assistance Benefit

- **100%** of respondents would recommend Westwinds Communities programs and services to others

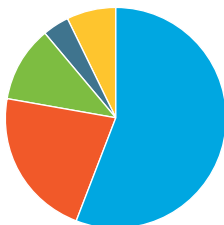


2023 Senior's Week BBQ

## FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

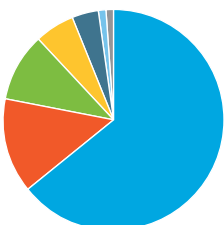
### 2023 Consolidated Operating Revenues

Rental Accommodation	56%	\$6,030,107
Municipal Requisition	22%	\$2,076,389
Provincial Grants	11%	\$1,069,251
Management Fees	4%	\$351,586
Other Income	7%	\$639,387



### 2023 Consolidated Operating Expenses

Direct Labour	65%	\$5,240,828
Food, Housekeeping, Operating	14%	\$1,288,035
Utilities	10%	\$921,229
Maintenance	6%	\$637,661
Office	4%	\$434,847
Property Tax	1%	\$65,016
Interest	1%	\$53,125



Westwinds Communities 2023 Consolidated Financial Statements were independently audited by Avail LLP. Financial statements in all material respects were in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.

Westwinds consolidated financial statements include three portfolios

- Retirement Living
- Affordable Housing
- Near Market Housing

**Retirement Living** portfolio provide seniors with quality meals, enriching activities, outstanding housekeeping and a safe environment.

**Affordable Housing** provides housing to singles, couples, families, and seniors who have low or modest income. Our tenants pay rent calculated as 30% of their income from all household members. Most of the Affordable housing properties are owned by the Province of Alberta with Westwinds as the operator.

Affordable Housing portfolio also includes the Rental Assistance Benefit program. The program provides long-term financial subsidy to low-income Albertans who need help affording their rent.

**Near Market Housing** program provides housing to singles, couples, families, and seniors who have a low or modest income, and helps lower housing costs by offering rental suites that are below market rental prices.

Surpluses from Westwinds Near Market Housing are reinvested to build and maintain our capital assets to provide affordable housing options to the community.

D'Arcy Proposed 28 Units, Okotoks

## BY THE NUMBERS

### Services Provided

- Provide monthly accommodation to **671** households
  - **3** Seniors Retirement Living Communities
  - **7** Seniors Independent Living Communities
  - **94** affordable housing units
  - **12** social housing units
  - **260** Rental Assistance Benefit supplements

### Tenant Support Services

- **249** client referrals with **70%** resolved within a few days.  
Top three requests:
  - **27%** financial/funding
  - **12%** government services assistance
  - **10%** technology support
- **168** referrals led to an improvement in knowledge or skills
- **110** referrals resulted in an essential need being met
- Hosted monthly in services for seniors independent living and retirement residences with the most popular sessions being Preparing for Tax Season, Important Phone Numbers that Keep you Independent and Advance Care Planning

### Employee Stats

- **96** employees, average length of service 3.5 years and average employee age is 48 years
- **92.8%** high satisfaction from Annual Employee Conference.
- Celebrated over **45** years of service for nine employees in our long service awards banquet
- Trevor Fish awarded Calgary Residential Apartment Association Maintenance Person of the Year
- Congratulations to Ted Mills, outgoing board Chairperson for over 18 years of service to Westwinds Communities
- Employee Appreciation Day – celebrated on December 17
- Mental wellness initiatives were held in January, May, and October to promote employee resilience, education and overall life balance
- Training programs conducted including first aid, manual materials handling, dementia training, NAOSH Week competition, Teams Week, H&S element training, and WHMIS

*“I have always found the level of service to be outstanding no matter whom I have dealt with. Someone always seems to be there.”*



## Operations by the Numbers

- All three lodges successfully reviewed for accommodation standards licensing certification
- We experienced unprecedented turnover with:
  - **36%** in the retirement living program,
  - **25%** in the affordable housing program and
  - **15%** in the near market housing programs
- Invested **\$127,208** in capital maintenance and renewal
- **67** minor unit renovations and **39** full unit renovations completed at a cost of **\$373,165**
- **175,706** meals served
- **10,024** suite cleans completed
- Residents participated **42,687** times in **178** different activities.
- Westwinds benefitted from **50** volunteers providing over **1,044** volunteer hours

## Health, Safety & Licensing

- Implemented new OH&S guidelines, primarily focusing on first aid kit changes
- **43%** increase in participation of employees reporting 'near-miss' incidents
- WCB Partners Injury Reduction Refund of **\$8,505** a real tribute to our employee Corporate Health and Safety Committee who oversee our workplace health and safety

*“I like the little extras the kitchen staff does to make the meals nicer—the little marshmallow bunny or chick on the dessert, or the cherry, etc.”*

D'Arcy Proposed 10 Units, Okotoks

## 2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ted Mills, Chairperson

Don Herring, Vice Chairperson

Cheryl Actemichuk (Jan. – Apr.)

Gary Adolphe

Alan Alger

Brendan Kelly

Rose Klassen

Gord Lang (May – Dec.)

Kathryn Robson

Kelly Smit (Nov. – Dec.)

Brenda Walsh (Jan. – Oct.)



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