

**RENTAL HOUSING IN CAPE BRETON REGIONAL
MUNICIPALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF HOMELESSNESS AND
HOUSING FIRST: A RESEARCH REPORT**

November, 2016

Authors:

Catherine Leviten-Reid, Ph.D., Cape Breton University
Bridget Horel, MBA in Community Economic Development

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to extend our appreciation to the landlords who contributed to this study. We would also like to acknowledge the members of this project's steering committee, including Janet Bickerton, Natalie Oake, Erin Neville, Billy Hill, Rene MacCandless, Judy Kelly, Jennifer Kendrick, Erin Forsey and Monika Dutt. In addition, we would like to thank the Community Advisory Board on Homelessness for providing funding (made available through the Homelessness Partnering Strategy), Abby Goodwin and Tanya Duffy for their excellent assistance collecting data, Gerry Marsh for sharing his knowledge of rooming houses in the CBRM, Laura Syms for her help with software, and Jamie Whitters, Paul Burt and Karen Neville from the Cape Breton Regional Municipality's Planning and Development Department for the invaluable help they provided as we were conducting fieldwork. Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to Fred Deveaux and Peggy Vassallo from Cape Breton Community Housing Association for their patience, research assistance, insight and good nature as they worked with us throughout data collection and the preparation of this report.

HOW TO CITE THIS REPORT

Leviten-Reid, C. & Horel, B. (2016). *Rental Housing in Cape Breton Regional Municipality in the Context of Homelessness and Housing First: A Research Report*. Sydney, N.S.: Cape Breton Community Housing Association.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION _____	1
RESEARCH QUESTIONS _____	2
WHAT WE KNEW WHEN WE STARTED _____	2
HOW WE DID THIS STUDY _____	5
DESIGN, SAMPLING AND METHOD _____	5
GENERALIZABILITY _____	7
FINDINGS: THE NATURE OF THE RENTAL MARKET IN THE CBRM _____	7
COMPOSITION OF THE RENTAL HOUSING MARKET BY PROVIDER TYPE _____	7
PRIMARY VERSUS SECONDARY MARKET _____	8
LANDLORDS _____	9
UNIT SIZES _____	9
ROOMING HOUSES _____	10
FINDINGS: RENTAL HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS _____	10
TARGET GROUPS FOR RENTAL HOUSING _____	10
ACCESSIBILITY _____	13
LEASE TYPES _____	14
HOUSING QUALITY _____	16
VACANCIES _____	18
SHELTER COSTS _____	19
Utilities _____	19
Cost of Shelter (Rent and Utilities) _____	21
FINDINGS: PRACTICAL COMPONENTS AND INTEREST IN HOUSING FIRST _____	23
AMENITIES AND FURNISHINGS _____	23
INTEREST IN HOUSING FIRST _____	24
RECOMMENDATIONS _____	24
APPENDIX A: GOODNESS OF FIT RESULTS _____	26
REFERENCES _____	28

INTRODUCTION

Between the summers of 2015 and 2016, we conducted a large research project on rental housing in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM). This research looks at the characteristics of the stock, compares different types of rental housing, and reports on the composition of the rental market. Our objectives were reviewed and approved by the region's Community Advisory Board on Homelessness in the spring of 2015. Funding for this research came from the Homelessness Partnering Strategy.

We did this study because of the local implementation of Housing First. Housing First means that individuals living on the margins, like those experiencing chronic homelessness and those who have addictions or mental illness, are helped in finding affordable and appropriate places to live. They are also aided in accessing services that support their daily living, their health and their personal goals. The effectiveness of this approach has been well documented, and it has been found to be cost-effective and lead to many positive outcomes, including that it supports recovery and housing stability (for example, Cheng, Lin, Kaspro, & Rosenheck, 2007; Goering et al., 2014; Henwood, Stanhope, & Padgett, 2011; Polvere, Macnaughton, & Piat, 2013; Tsemberis, Gulcur, & Nakae, 2004). As a result, Housing First has been mandated by the federal government and is being implemented in communities across Canada. The successful roll-out of Housing First requires many pieces to fall into place. This includes having landlords who are interested in partnering in this approach, and having adequate and affordable rental stock available.

Other contextual factors precipitating this study included anecdotal and documented reports of poor quality rental housing (Leviten-Reid, Johnson, & Miller, 2014), and reports from staff, working in the local planning department, that new rental construction in the CBRM focused on units (duplexes) in the secondary market (Jamie Whitters, personal communication, June 22 2015). Cape Breton Community Housing Association (CBCHA), a major player in the co-ordination of Housing First locally, indicated that it had also experienced long-term challenges in helping low-income men who use their shelter to secure affordable and adequate rental housing (Fred Deveaux, personal communication, March 10 2015).

This specific research project is part of a larger, multi-organizational effort within the community to understand housing and homelessness in the CBRM. Other projects include the Point in Time count and the service-based count, which were conducted in April of 2016 as a way to enumerate the number of people experiencing homelessness in the municipality.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This project has a number of research questions. First, we ask about the composition of the rental housing market in the CBRM. This means we explore the relative size of the primary rental market versus the secondary market. The primary market consists of buildings owned by for-profit and non-profit landlords with three or more units in them, as long as the units are not subsidized, and the secondary market consists of dwellings owned by for-profit and non-profit landlords with fewer than three units as well as single family homes and company houses¹, again, as long as the units are not subsidized. We also explore the amount of rental stock operated by different kinds of providers (for-profit landlords², non-profit landlords and government), and the proportion of units of different sizes available in the local rental market. Finally, we report on the number of rooming houses in the CBRM.

Second, we ask about basic and key characteristics of this rental housing. These include monthly rents, utility costs, accessibility of the units, the types of lease arrangements most commonly available, the condition of the housing, the extent to which there are vacancies, and whether or not landlords target specific kinds of renters. Whenever possible, we disaggregate our data based on unit size³, since Housing First staff will work with many single individuals who require studio or one bedroom apartments.

Third, we ask practical questions of interest to those implementing Housing First. These include whether or not: units are furnished and have washers and driers available; the landlords are interested in learning more about Housing First; and whether or not they would like to make the information on their units available in a directory to be accessed by housing organizations working in the CBRM.

Finally, we also ask comparative questions: we ask if the rental housing located in the largest community in the municipality (Sydney) is different from periphery locations (including, and grouped together, North Sydney, Sydney Mines, New Waterford, Glace Bay and outlying areas). We ask if there are differences in the primary and secondary rental markets, and we ask if there are differences between non-profit, public and for-profit landlords with respect to characteristics such as rent, quality, accessibility and vacancies.

WHAT WE KNEW WHEN WE STARTED

The most regular and important resource available about rental stock in the CBRM is produced by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) twice a year. These data consist of

¹ In the context of Cape Breton, a company house refers to a house which was built by steel and coal companies to house workers. They were built between 1850 and 1920 (National Trust for Canada, n.d.).

² In this report, we refer to private rental units that are *not* non-profit or public as ‘for-profit’. Often, for-profit rentals are referred to simply as ‘market rentals’, but we decided not to use this term since it can also be used in the literature to mean both for-profit rentals *and* non-profit units which are not subsidized.

³ In this report, unit size refers to the number of bedrooms in a unit.

rental costs and vacancy rates, by unit size in the primary rental market specifically, and are disaggregated into Sydney and non-Sydney units.

The most recent rental market report available, from fall 2015, reported a 4% vacancy rate overall, which ranged from 7.4% for one bedroom apartments, to 3.1% and 4.5% respectively for units with two and three or more bedrooms (CMHC, 2016g). Data on vacancies for studio apartments were not available. They also reported average rents, which may or may not include utilities⁴, and which were high given the prevalence of low-income households in the CBRM: based on fall 2015 data, they showed that a studio apartment was \$553, a one bedroom apartment was \$601, a two bedroom apartment was \$750, and a unit with three bedrooms or more was \$1,074 (CMHC, 2016c). The data collected from CMHC do not include rooming houses, regardless of how many rooms might be rented in a dwelling, and despite the fact that rooming houses are a more affordable source of housing for single households in the community.

Some data from the National Household Survey (NHS) are on housing stock as well⁵. These include the proportion of renters versus owners in the community, and indicators of housing suitability. Based on these 2011 figures, we know that about one quarter of the 41,120 households in the CBRM rented rather than owned their homes (Statistics Canada, 2011c), that 11.2% of rental housing was in need of major repairs⁶, and that the average shelter cost (meaning rent and utilities) for those who rented was \$624.00 per month (Statistics Canada, 2011c). Crowding was also experienced by 6.3% of renter households in the CBRM (Statistics Canada, 2011c).

NHS data also reveal that 45% of households renting in the CBRM struggled with housing affordability, meaning that over 30% of their total income before taxes was spent on shelter (Statistics Canada, 2011c). This percentage was higher than the provincial (42.9%) and national (40.1%) figures (Statistics Canada, 2011c), and was about the same for renters living in subsidized versus non-subsidized units in the municipality (at 46% versus 44%) (Statistics Canada, 2011b).

NHS data from 2011 also indicate that of those households which had a shelter to income ratio (STIR) of 30% or higher, 10.4% spent 100% or more of their household income on housing. Here a difference can be seen between renters in subsidized and non-subsidized units (Statistics Canada, 2011b). For individuals living in subsidized housing struggling with housing affordability, 5.4% spent 100% or more of their household income on housing. For individuals

⁴ When the CMHC provides information on rental costs in their rental market report, what they are reporting may or may not include utilities. Specifically, they write that “The rent refers to the actual amount tenants pay for their unit. No adjustments are made for the inclusion or exclusion of amenities and services such as heat, hydro, parking, and hot water. Utilities such as heating, electricity and hot water may or may not be included in the rent.” (2014)

⁵ NHS data do not include households living on reserve, meaning that Eskasoni and Membertou are not reflected in these results.

⁶ Nationally, 9.1% of rental housing requires major repairs. Provincially, 10.5% of rental housing requires major repairs and 26.4% requires minor repairs (Statistics Canada, 2011c).

living in non-subsidized housing struggling with housing affordability, 12.2% spent 100% or more (Statistics Canada, 2011b).

NHS data reported by the CMHC also show that a significant percentage of renter households in the CBRM are in core housing need, at 32.7%⁷ (CMHC, 2016f). Core housing need means that they are living in housing that is not suitable (that is, it requires major repairs, it is crowded, and/or the shelter to income ratio is at 30% or more). Additionally, to be considered in core housing need, the local median shelter cost of a unit in good repair and of adequate size for that renter household would be more expensive than they could afford (that is, the median rent of such a unit would be 30% or more of that household's before-tax income). In comparison, 26.4% of renters nationally are in core housing need, while 28.1% of renters in Nova Scotia fall in this category (CMHC, 2016a & 2016h).

Of the different types of renter households in core housing need in the CBRM, one-person and single-parent households have the highest rates: 41.5% of one-person households and 41% of single-parent households experience this hardship (CMHC, 2016f). Additionally, 21.5%⁸ of non-family renter households experience core housing need (CMHC, 2016f). Available data also show that about half of the one-person households experiencing core housing need in the CBRM are younger than age 65 (CMHC, 2016d).

Overall, these data indicate that of the significant portion of the population that rents, many struggle with affordability and are in core housing need, and indeed more so than is the case provincially and nationally. While single-parent families in other communities stand out as much as in the CBRM, with respect to being a type of household that disproportionately experiences core housing need, people living alone in the CBRM are much more likely to be in core housing need than they are in the province and country as a whole, as are people who are sharing a rental unit with other people to whom they are not related.

This current research report builds on these available data by providing information on a much broader range of characteristics, by including the secondary rental market, and by doing a comparative analysis of rental units based on their location in the primary versus secondary rental market, their organizational type, and their location in Sydney versus other communities in the municipality. It also builds on available data by reporting on rooming houses.

⁷ This figure is actually an underestimate because it does not include those 505 households in the CBRM spending 100% or more of their incomes on shelter.

⁸ Nationally, 41.5% of lone-parent families who rent are in core housing need, while 30.5% of one-person households and 15.4% of non-family households who rent experience the same (CMHC, 2016a). Provincially, these percentages are 43.9, 36.7, and 10.6, respectively (CMHC, 2016h).

HOW WE DID THIS STUDY

Design, Sampling and Method

This project uses a flexible design (Robson, 2011), which allowed us to adjust our data collection strategy as fieldwork progressed and as our understanding of the local rental housing market evolved.

When data collection began in the summer of 2015, we adopted a convenience sampling strategy. This consisted of calling landlords with units for rent who were advertising in the local newspaper, in on-line sources, and in a rental housing directory compiled by Cape Breton University. We also contacted non-profit and for-profit landlords across the CBRM who were known by staff at the CBCHA. When we collected our data, we asked participants to specify whether they rented units or rooms.

Because of the relatively small number of non-profit providers in the community, and because of their willingness to share information on their housing stock, we were able to collect data on all of the units owned and operated by the non-profit sector. In addition, we asked the local public housing agency, called the Cape Breton Island Housing Authority, to provide data on their units.

After data collection began, we learned that the CBRM planning department had conducted an inventory of rental properties in the municipality earlier in the decade. This inventory consisted of properties which staff felt were rentals based on the number of utility meters at dwellings, or other observed characteristics including the presence of multiple entrances or mailboxes. The document the CBRM staff compiled included property addresses and the estimated number of units within each dwelling. To obtain the names of owners of these properties, we purchased a database of land owners from the province of Nova Scotia, and these data were merged with the CBRM inventory. We then searched for phone numbers for landlords using web-based directories. However, we also knew that this list obtained from the municipality was incomplete in that it did not include single-family homes (including company houses) for rent. It also included properties which we discovered during our data collection had never had rental housing, or which had rental housing that had been converted by home owners into personal living space, for example. This inventory also did not differentiate between buildings which appeared to have rental units versus rooms (in other words, no properties were specifically identified as rooming houses).

In securing both the inventory of rental housing from the planning department and the property owner information from the province, we learned that the number of landlords in the CBRM was much larger than anticipated. As a result, and in order to make the research project more manageable but still meet all our research objectives, a decision was made to contact all landlords included in the dataset renting units in Sydney and the surrounding area (including Sydney River, Prime Brook, Mira Road, Grand Lake Road, Lingan Road, Coxheath, Westmount and Whitney Pier) and to sample owners of rental housing in other CBRM communities.

In communities outside of the Sydney area, we proceeded with a convenience sampling strategy which was stratified by type of rental market (that is, primary versus secondary). We used this sampling strategy given that we had already collected some data in these communities prior to obtaining the directory from the CBRM, and because of the imperfections with that source of information on rental housing (such as the exclusion of company houses). In proceeding outside of Sydney, then, we used contacts from the CBRM inventory of rental properties and also approached people known by the research team and staff at the CBCHA to be landlords. We collected data in these communities with the goal of having a sample size that was large enough to speak to the primary and secondary rental markets outside of the Sydney area, including Glace Bay, New Waterford, North Sydney, Sydney Mines and the smaller communities surrounding those centres.

The survey tool used in this research was developed by the researchers in partnership with the CBCHA. The survey was pre-tested with two landlords and one property manager. Questions on building type and the condition of the housing were taken verbatim from Statistics Canada, and one question on housing quality was taken from the American Housing Survey. Our definition of “livable” and “visitable” housing, as two types of accessible housing, were also adopted from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Other survey questions were drafted and revised by the researchers based on input from the CBCHA, other members of the steering committee, and the authors’ review of the literature on rental housing.

Data were collected from landlords between April 2015 and June 2016. Landlords were primarily contacted by phone, although several were met in person if that was felt to be more convenient or preferred by the research participants. Additionally, three landlords (ones with significant numbers of units that they owned or managed) completed the survey themselves using an excel spreadsheet. When this occurred, the survey questions were reviewed with the landlords first to ensure comprehension. Once the spreadsheets were submitted, they were reviewed immediately for completeness and accuracy. Our response rate for this study was 63%.

Survey data were collected from a total of 292 landlords with rental units (including entire homes for rent). One is public, 10 are non-profit, and the remainder are for-profit. This study reports data we collected on 5,627 units of rental housing in the CBRM. Of these, 590 are non-profit (operated by community development corporations, co-operatives or non-profits), 2,308 are for-profit rentals, and 2,729 are public units.

Survey data were also collected from a total of 19 landlords owning 22 rooming houses, representing data on 84 rooms in the CBRM. All rooming houses in our sample are for-profit. Rooming houses are defined as buildings in which renters are provided with single rooms, and in which shared laundry, kitchen and common rooms may or may not be included. Rooming houses may or may not be owner-occupied, and meals may or may not be provided.

This study excludes assisted housing and owner-occupied homes that rent rooms to students and athletes through exchange or billeting programs (such as the Homestay program).

Generalizability

When we ask about generalizability of the findings, we are looking at how well our sample actually reflects all of the rental housing stock in the community. For example, if a study were done on rental housing in the CBRM but it only included data on large apartment buildings, the findings would not reflect the local rental market. The same would be true, for example, if the study only included single family homes for rent.

The data on non-profit housing is generalizable because we were able to collect information on every unit. The same is true for the data we have on public housing.

To assess the generalizability of the for-profit data we collected, we conducted a goodness of fit analysis, meaning we compared key characteristics of these data to information available through the CBRM inventory and the NHS. Looking at three characteristics – type of building, whether the units are in the primary or the secondary rental housing market, and geography (Sydney versus periphery), we do not find statistical differences between our data and what we know about the population of rental housing from existing sources.

However, when comparing the state of repair of the units in our dataset to what is reported through the NHS, a statistically significant difference is found between our sample and the population ($\chi^2=35.9$, $p<.001$), with a higher percentage of units in the NHS data requiring repairs. This is an imperfect comparison because NHS data were reported by tenants, not landlords. However, because of the considerable difference between our dataset and NHS results, we consider our data to underrepresent lower quality rental housing in the CBRM. More information on goodness of fit may be found in Appendix A.

Finally, with respect to our data on rooming houses, we believe we have captured many which are located in the CBRM. For example, of the nine owners of rooming houses with whom Cape Breton Community Housing Association has contact, seven are in our sample. However, of the 15 buildings that Cape Breton Community Housing Association has identified as being rooming houses, nine are in our sample.

FINDINGS: THE NATURE OF THE RENTAL MARKET IN THE CBRM

Composition of the Rental Housing Market by Provider Type

For this section of the report, we draw on the rental housing inventory compiled by the CBRM to show the relative size of each type of housing provider (for-profit, public and non-profit). We do this because in our study, we collected data from only a sample of for-profit landlords, rather than the full population. However, it is important to note that we were able to draw upon our fieldwork to remove, from the CBRM inventory, landlords we discovered were either no longer

renting or had never rented. During our fieldwork we also learned that a significant percentage of two-unit, owner-occupied properties listed in the CBRM inventory were either no longer being rented or had never been rented. As a result, we removed 90% of these units from the population of secondary market housing⁹. Based on our fieldwork, we considered over half of the remaining two-unit, owner-occupied properties in our tally as only having one unit on the rental market¹⁰. We were also able to add, to our total, single family homes and company houses, which we identified during data collection.

For information we provide on the number of rooming houses in the CBRM, we report numbers based on our fieldwork, as well as information obtained by a staff person at Cape Breton Community Housing Association who often secures rooms in these houses for men experiencing homelessness.

Results are presented in Table 1. For staff working to house individuals through Housing First, data show that for-profit units are the major provider of rental housing in the CBRM (66.5% of the stock) but that public housing is a significant provider as well, at 27.5% of the stock. The proportion of rental stock provided through public housing increases to 33.1% in communities outside of Sydney, which demonstrates that public housing becomes an even more important partner in the implementation of Housing First outside of the CBRM's largest centre. Data also show that only a small percentage of rental units are provided through the non-profit sector, although the number of actual units is not trivial given the small number of individuals Housing First staff will help to house during the early phases of implementation.

Table 1: Total Rental Units in the CBRM by Housing Provider

	Sydney	Non-Sydney	Total
Non-profit	5.5% (280)	6.5% (312)	6.0% (592)
For-profit	72.1% (3670)	60.5% (2919)	66.5% (6589)
Public	22.4% (1137)	33.1% (1592)	27.5% (2729)
Total	100% (5087)	100% (4823)	100% (9910)

Primary versus Secondary Market

Table 2 reports on for-profit rentals, the largest provider of rental housing in the CBRM, based on whether or not the units are in the primary or secondary markets. The data presented in the table includes information gathered from the CBRM rental housing inventory and have been adjusted based on our fieldwork, as described earlier.

⁹ Based on the 240 landlords we reached with this type of property in Sydney, for example, 88.75% did not have rentals. In the periphery, based on the 355 landlords we contacted with this type of property, 91% did not.

¹⁰ For those landlords who participated in this project with a 2-unit property that was listed as being owner-occupied, 65% had one unit on the market, and 35% had both units on the market.

Table 2: Proportion of For-Profit Units in the Primary and Secondary Rental Markets by Location

	Sydney	Non-Sydney	Total
Primary	59.9% (2200)	40.8% (1190)	51.4% (3390)
Secondary	40.1% (1470)	59.2% (1729)	48.6% (3199)
Total	100% (3670)	100% (2919)	100% (6589)

These data above show that the secondary rental market provides a significant number of units to residents living in the CBRM, especially to those living outside Sydney. As a result, it is likely that staff working for Housing First will be helping to place individuals in units situated in the secondary market. What this also means is that the most regular resource available on rental housing in this community – the CMHC rental market report - does not capture a significant portion of units in the CBRM, particularly outside the Sydney area, because it collects data only on rental housing in the primary market. As a result, Housing First workers, and other organizations working in the field of affordable housing, do not have a regular and updated resource that captures a full picture of rental costs and vacancies in the CBRM. This is also problematic given that the CBRM planning staff has reported that current rental housing construction in the municipality is occurring in the secondary market specifically.

Landlords

The data we collected from non-profit and for-profit landlords show that many own one building in which there is rental housing. More specifically, 50% of these landlords own one structure only, while 17% own two, 6% own three, 9% own four and the remainder own five or more. Although the number of buildings owned does not have to reflect landlord ‘size’ (indeed, one building can contain dozens of units), our data show that for those for-profit landlords who own one building, 38% of them are renting one unit only, while 34% are renting two units, 13% are renting three units, and 7% are renting four units. Overall, this means that there are a large number of small landlords in the CBRM, and that further, Housing First staff could potentially partner as much with small rental housing providers as larger ones.

Unit Sizes

Given that Housing First staff will be working with many single individuals, we examined the data we collected on rental units by size, measured by the number of bedrooms in a unit. The data presented in Table 3 show that while the size of units is fairly evenly distributed among one, two and three bedroom rentals overall, public housing has a much greater percentage of one bedroom units compared to both non-profit and for-profit rentals. In turn, two bedroom rentals are found to a significant degree in the for-profit market, followed by the non-profit sector. This means that Housing First workers placing single individuals in these rentals have much fewer appropriately sized units available compared to when they are placing couples and families.

However, it also means that, at least based on unit size, public housing has a high proportion of appropriate dwellings for Housing First participants.

Table 3: Size of Rental Units in the CBRM by Housing Provider

	Non-profit	For-profit^a	Public	Total^a
Studio	0%	3%	0% ^b	1%
One Bedroom	16%	19%	59%	38%
Two Bedrooms	41%	62%	6%	32%
Three or More Bedrooms	43%	15%	35%	28%

^a Percentages in these columns do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

^b There are a small number of studio apartments available through public housing. The percentage of studio apartments available through public housing is actually 0.29%, which was rounded to 0%.

Rooming Houses

Based on the data we collected as well as information obtained from Cape Breton Community Housing Association on rooming houses in the community, there are 29 of these in the CBRM providing 121 rooms for rent. All are for-profit.

Our sample consists of 22 rooming houses providing 84 rooms for rent. Most landlords in our sample report owning one rooming house only. Based on our survey work, the average number of rooms in each rooming house is 4, with the range being from 1 to 7. Sixteen rooming houses are located in Sydney, representing 59 rooms, while six are in Glace Bay, representing 25 rooms. No rooming houses were identified in other communities in the CBRM.

FINDINGS: RENTAL HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

Target Groups for Rental Housing

In our survey, we asked landlords if there were specific kinds of people to whom they rented. This question was initially designed with non-profit and public housing providers in mind since we knew at the beginning of the research project that there were housing units in the community for specific populations; for example, for Aboriginal people living off reserve and for seniors. However, we learned that for-profit landlords often had specific segments of the population in mind for their housing as well.

Of all the rental units in the CBRM – public, for-profit and non-profit – only 23% do not target specific types of tenants (see Table 4). With public housing removed from the calculation, 45% of units do not target specific types of tenants.

In public housing, and according to the data provided by the housing authority, 100% of their units are rented to specific segments of the population: 60% are rented to seniors, and 40% are rented to families. In the non-profit sector, 62% of units are targeted to specific segments of the population: 32% of the units are targeted to families, while 28% are targeted to seniors. A small number of units are targeted to First Nations tenants living off reserve (2%). In the for-profit

rental market, 54% of units have target renters: 36% are targeted to seniors, with the next highest category being professionals (8%).

Table 4: Units Targeted to Specific Renters by Type of Housing Provider

	For-profit Housing^a	Non-profit Housing	Public Housing	Units Per Target Group^a
Seniors	36%	28%	60%	47%
Families	6%	32%	40%	25%
Students	4%	0%	0%	2%
Singles/Couples^b	2%	0%	0%	2%
Professionals	8%	0%	0%	4%
First Nations Living Off Reserve	0%	2%	0%	0 ^c %
None	46%	38%	0%	23%

^a Percentages do not add up to 100 because a small number of units are targeted to more than one group, and due to rounding.

^b Research participants were typically meaning that the housing was not suitable for children, and that they were wanting mature individuals or couples as tenants.

^c The percentage is actually 0.2, but is presented as 0 due to rounding.

What this means in the context of Housing First is that if staff are working with individuals outside of these target groups, the size of the rental market becomes considerably smaller. For example, in trying to place a young, single individual in housing, no public housing units would be available as an option, 60% of the non-profit housing would not be available, and 54% of the for-profit rental stock would not be available (unless the landlord considered the individual to be a mature single, in which case, 52% of the private rental housing would not be available to him or her). In other words, the rental market for this segment of the population is much smaller than it is for others, such as seniors and families; a senior looking for rental housing would potentially have access to 60% of the public housing stock, 66% of the non-profit stock (given that 38% of this stock targets seniors specifically and 28% of the stock is available to all types of renters) and 82% of for-profit rentals.

This also means that renters may be facing discrimination in the housing market in the CBRM. This is difficult to establish unequivocally given how we collected our data; for example, we did not ask landlords if they actually denied units to different kinds of renters, nor did we test, through fieldwork, to whom they rented or showed units. Landlords are generally not allowed to target their units to renters based on variables including age, gender, source of income, disability, family status and marital status, with exceptions including serving a disadvantaged population (such as would be the case with public housing for seniors, or non-profit housing for single-parent families or First Nations individuals living off reserve) and renting a room in an owner-occupied home, as long as the rental is not advertised (Law Reform Commission of Nova Scotia, 2011; Province of Nova Scotia, 2013). It is noteworthy, too, that the Law Reform Commission of Nova Scotia recently examined amending the province's Human Rights Act in order to

accommodate housing exclusively for seniors, and concluded that the change should not be made: “we cannot escape the conclusion that the interests served by housing which is exclusive to those over a certain age are not as significant as those which stand to be affected on the part of those excluded - namely, denial of housing opportunities that may be suitable - or even ideal - for the affected individual” (Law Reform Commission of Nova Scotia, 2011).

From a policy perspective, this also means that there is a mismatch between public housing stock and need, given that, as reported earlier, about half of single-person households in the CBRM who experience core housing need are younger than age 65. However, no units of public housing are available to non-seniors living alone¹¹.

We also examined the occurrence of renting to specific target groups and the size of rental units available. For units with no target renter (again, meaning 45% of the rental stock in the CBRM which is not public), 3% are studios, 22% are one bedroom, 55% are two bedroom and 19% are three or more bedrooms in size. In the context of Housing First, this makes the proportion of units potentially available for certain types of households even smaller. In other words, in the already shrunken rental housing market available for a young, single individual, for example, only about one quarter of the units (25%) are appropriately sized.

Finally, many rooms in rooming houses are also targeted to specific renters. It is noteworthy that these differ from whom is targeted by non-profit, for-profit and public providers, with the main two groups being students and those who landlords identified as being low-income individuals or those who are homeless. Specifically, 61% of the rooms (51/84) available are targeted to students, 24% are targeted to people with low-incomes or who are homeless (20/84), and 15% have no target renter¹² (13/84). It is important to note that 10 rooms targeted to individuals with low-incomes or who had experienced homelessness were specifically targeted to low-income men, while the owner of another, larger rooming house explained that only men were currently renting rooms at his location. These data on targeting suggest that rooming houses in the CBRM are addressing a gap in the rental housing market in the community, at least with respect to providing housing for single individuals. However, data also indicate that single, low-income women may be left out of the rooming house market *and* the rental housing market.

¹¹ Individuals 58 years of age and older are eligible for seniors’ public housing (Province of Nova Scotia, 2016a).

¹² These percentages do not add up to 100% because a small number of units are targeted to both students and single individuals.

Accessibility

Looking at all types of rentals (non-profit, for-profit and public), 88% of units are not accessible. In turn, 10% are visitable, meaning that someone in a wheelchair could visit a tenant in the unit, while 3% are liveable. This means an individual in a wheelchair could live in the unit; it has wide doorways, accessible washrooms, and lower countertops and outlets¹³.

Broken down by geography, the amount of livable rental housing in Sydney is slightly higher overall than in peripheral areas. Specifically, in the Sydney area, 3% of units are livable, 9% are visitable and 87% are not accessible, while in the periphery, 2% are livable, 10% are visitable and 88% are not accessible ($\chi^2=6.23$, $p<.05$).

More non-profit rental housing is accessible than for-profit and public rental housing ($\chi^2=297.88$, $p<.001$): 6% of non-profit units are livable, while 3% of for-profit units and 2% of public units are livable. Meanwhile, 18% of non-profit units are visitable, while 15% of for-profit units and 3% of public units are visitable.

Accessible units are also often targeted to specific types of renters. Based on our data, 86% of fully accessible units are targeted to seniors, while 4% are targeted to families. Looking at the data another way, only 11% of units that are livable have no target renter intended.

Because Housing First will involve placing many single people in housing, we also looked at the data we collected by size of the rental unit. About half of fully accessible units in the CBRM are two bedroom units (49%), while 47% are one bedroom units. The remainder (4%) are three bedroom units. However, if one excludes public housing units, most fully accessible non-profit and for-profit units in the CBRM are two bedroom (78%). Seventeen percent are one bedroom, and the remainder (5%) are three bedroom units.

Considering both non-profit and for-profit units, the cost of shelter is higher for accessible units. When comparing rent and utilities for an accessible versus non-accessible two-bedroom unit, the median cost is \$1100.00 versus \$815.00 per month ($z=-8.34$; $p<.001$). Non-profit and for-profit accessible units also had lower vacancies: only 4% of fully accessible units experienced a vacancy in the year leading up to data collection, while 10% of non-accessible units experienced a vacancy ($\chi^2=9.35$, $p<.001$).

Finally, with respect to rooming houses, only one room was identified as visitable, and none were identified as livable.

Several important conclusions arise from these findings. First, the supply of accessible housing is extremely limited: the proportion of livable units is very small, most accessible units are targeted to seniors, and among non-profit and for-profit rentals, most are two bedroom units, very few

¹³ We recognize that accessibility encompasses more dimensions than what was captured in our study. For example, a fully accessible unit could be located on a street with an impassable sidewalk (Soles, 2003).

experience vacancies, and they are more expensive. As a result, it will be extremely challenging to place Housing First participants with mobility limitations in accessible units, and challenging for all Housing First participants to age in place.

Data also suggest that opportunities to live in rental housing for anyone with mobility challenges are extremely limited in the CBRM, and that older renters will experience challenges to aging in place. It is noteworthy that 2011 NHS data show that 48% of renter households in the CBRM consisted of at least one tenant with ‘activity limitations,’ (CMHC, 2016b) which is defined as “difficulties that people have in carrying out daily activities such as hearing, seeing, communicating, or walking¹⁴. Difficulties could arise from physical or mental conditions or health problems” (CMHC, 2016b). While this definition includes individuals who do not require accessible housing, the significant percentage of renter households which experience activity limitations indicates demand for accessible housing. A study exploring the experiences of seniors living in recently constructed, affordable rental housing in rural Nova Scotia also found that demand for these units is greater than supply, and that tenants experience barriers to aging in place (Leviten-Reid & Lake, 2016)¹⁵.

Lease Types

The public housing authority offers month-to-month leases to all of its tenants.

Month-to-month leases are the most common type available in the non-profit and for-profit rental market in the municipality, with 52% of units offering this type of lease arrangement to tenants. Year-long leases are the second most common type, at 35%. Only 6% of units do not have leases, and 8% have ‘other’ arrangements, which usually means that the lease arrangements vary depending on the needs of landlords and tenants. This flexibility could mean, for example, that an individual moving to the CBRM for a short-term work contract or to study could possibly request a six month or a year-long lease. It could also mean that a landlord may offer different lease types based on concerns about a tenant’s ability to pay.

There are differences in lease types based on whether or not the housing falls in the primary or secondary markets ($\chi^2=156.32, p<.001$). Thirty nine percent of units in the secondary market have year-long leases versus 34% in the primary market, while 46% of units in the secondary market have month-to-month leases versus 50% for the primary market. Interestingly, 11% of the units in the secondary market have no lease versus only 3% in the primary market, which contributes to the notion that the secondary market is less formalized than the primary market. Housing First staff working with landlords in the secondary market should be aware of this difference as they discuss the program and the importance of having a lease in place.

¹⁴ Provincially, this figure is 40.0%, and nationally, it is 34.0%.

¹⁵ Soles (2003) reports on a lack of accessible housing in Saskatchewan. No other studies were located that document the extent to which housing of any kind is accessible in Canadian communities.

There are also differences in lease arrangements offered within non-profit and for-profit units ($\chi^2=604.50, p<.001$). While 43% of units in the for-profit market offer twelve month leases, only 3% of non-profit units do the same. The remainder of the non-profit units (97%) offer month-to-month leases, compared to 40% of for-profit units. Conversely, no unit in the non-profit sector is made available without entering into some kind of lease arrangement with tenants, versus 8% for for-profit units.

Lease arrangements are associated with having a vacancy in the past year. For example, while 8% of units with year-long leases and 9% of units with month-to-month leases experienced a vacancy in the past year, 14% of units without leases had a vacancy ($\chi^2=30.33, p<.001$). This result indicates that leases contribute to some degree of housing stability, or alternatively, that not having a lease in place allows a tenant to move more quickly out of a housing unit¹⁶.

The type of lease available also depends on whether or not landlords have particular target renters¹⁷. For example, when there is no target renter, 35% of units have year-long leases, 53% have month-to-month leases, 8% have no leases and 3% of units have ‘other’ arrangements available. When seniors are the target renter, 41% of units have year-long leases, 50% have month-to-month leases, 5% have no leases and 3% of units have ‘other’ arrangements available. With units targeted to students, 30% of units have year-long leases, 51% have month-to-month leases, 9% have no leases and 11% of units have ‘other’ arrangements available. With units targeted to professionals, 68% of units have year-long leases, 16% have month-to-month leases, 3% have no leases and 15% of units have ‘other’ arrangements available. If the availability and length of leases are measures of housing stability, then the greatest opportunity for rental stability in the CBRM lies in units for professionals, and the least lies in units intended for students and for ones for which there are no target renters. Again, Housing First staff should be prepared to meet landlords who may not be used to entering into lease arrangements with their tenants.

Finally, with respect to rooms in rooming houses, 7% have year-long leases, 41% have month-to-month leases, 28% of rooms have no leases, and 24% have ‘other’ arrangements. These data suggest that individuals living in rooming houses have less housing stability in the CBRM than those who are renting units, which may be related to a lack of awareness on the part of renters and landlords that the Residential Tenancies Act is applicable to this type of housing.

¹⁶ Note that in Nova Scotia, even without a signed lease, there is an implicit contract between a landlord and a tenant, and the obligations set out in the standard form of lease apply. These include obligations of the tenant to not damage the property, and requirements for the landlord concerning the state of repair of the rental unit, among other things (Province of Nova Scotia, 2016b). However, without a written lease, the specific details of the agreement may be misunderstood, forgotten by one of the parties, or incomplete, leading to a landlord who provides a tenant with a two week notice to quit the rental agreement (Access Nova Scotia, 2016; Desmond, 2016).

¹⁷ Percentages in this section do not always add up to 100 due to rounding.

Housing Quality

Quality was measured in two ways. First, in keeping with Statistic Canada, we asked landlords to report whether their units require general maintenance only, or if they require minor repairs or major repairs. Second, based on the American Housing Survey, we also asked landlords to subjectively rate their units as places to live from a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the worst and 10 being the best¹⁸.

For public housing, all units are reported to require general maintenance, and all are rated 10 on the quality scale. This lack of variability in the data on housing quality provided by the Cape Breton Island Housing Authority is important to note; in other words, they reported using the logic that if a unit is currently in disrepair or is subjectively of lower quality, it will be fixed before new tenants move in. Other respondents, however, reported on the current state of their rental housing.

In the CBRM, most non-profit and for-profit units require general maintenance (82%). However, about 11% of units require minor repairs, while 7% of units require major repairs. The average quality rating for units was high overall, at 8.29 (SD 1.59).

Whether or not non-profit and for-profit units are in need of repair varies based on place¹⁹: in the Sydney area, 8% of units require major repairs, 9% require minor repairs and 83% are general maintenance only. In communities outside of Sydney, 4% of units require major repairs, 14% require minor repairs and 81% are general maintenance only. However, no difference was found in the quality rating landlords gave to their units in Sydney versus non-Sydney. One possible reason for this discrepancy in findings is that units were given higher subjective scores by landlords due to their location. In other words, units in Sydney were assessed by landlords as better places to live because they are in the community in the municipality with the greatest amount of services and employment opportunities.

Data on repairs also suggest that, in the CBRM, rental housing in the secondary market is of higher quality than the primary market ($\chi^2=40.81$, $p<.001$). Eighty six percent of rental housing in the secondary market requires general maintenance only, versus 80% for the primary market, and 3% of the units in the secondary market are in need of major repairs, versus 9% of the units in the primary market. Conversely, the average quality rating given to units in the primary market was higher than the secondary market, at 8.62 versus 8.20 ($p<.001$). Location may again be the reason for this discrepancy in findings, given that much more rental housing in Sydney is located in the primary rental market.

¹⁸ In order to gauge whether the questions about state of repairs and subjective housing quality scores were related, we compared the average quality score for each repair category and found they were statistically different with respect to general maintenance versus more repairs being required ($p<.001$). We found that units requiring general maintenance were given an average score of 8.55 (SD 1.40), units in need of minor repairs were given an average score of 7.08 (SD 1.62) and units in need of major repairs were given an average score of 7.12 (SD 2.24).

¹⁹ Percentages in this section on housing quality do not always add up to 100 due to rounding.

Data show that public housing is the highest quality rental housing in the municipality. Data also indicate that non-profit housing is generally of higher quality than for-profit rental housing, although those non-profit units needing work require major repairs ($\chi^2=81.90$, $p<.001$). Specifically, 90% of units in the non-profit sector were said to require general maintenance only, versus 80% for private rentals. However, 1% of non-profit units versus 13% of for-profit units were reported to require minor repairs, while 9% of non-profit units versus 6% of for-profit units were reported to require major repairs. A difference was found in the quality rating of units within these two sectors (8.62 versus 8.20, $p<.001$), with non-profit units reporting a higher average score.

Data also demonstrate that the condition of the housing is related to vacancies ($\chi^2=35.63$, $p<.001$): among non-profit and for-profit units, 18% of units requiring minor repairs experienced a vacancy, while 10% of units needing major repairs and 8% of units requiring general maintenance had at least one day vacant in the past year. Mean quality ratings are also lower for units with vacancies in the past year (7.89 versus 8.33, $p<.001$).

Housing in greater need of repair is vacant for longer periods of time ($p<.001$). Among units experiencing a vacancy in the past year, units were vacant for an average of 51 days if they required general maintenance only (SD 44), for 65 days if they required minor repairs (SD 81), and 154 days if they required major repairs (SD 126). It is important to note that when asked about days vacant, landlords did not include days that units were off the market in order to do repairs.

There is also an association between whether or not a unit is in need of repair and having particular target renters in mind. For non-profit and for-profit units where there is no target renter, housing is in need of greater repair than for units for which there are target renters intended ($\chi^2=86.78$, $p<.001$). Specifically, 76% of units with no target renters are general maintenance only, versus 88% for units with target renters. This difference also appears when comparing mean quality scores, with units with no target renter being rated, on average, a 7.90 (SD .03) and housing with target renters being rated 8.62 (SD .05) ($p<.001$). In the context of Housing First, this suggests that the stock available to house many individuals living on the margins in the CBRM is of lower quality.

In some instances, non-profit and for-profit housing in need of repair differed with respect to shelter costs. In one bedroom units, there is no statistically significant difference found with respect to shelter costs: housing that required only general maintenance has a median shelter cost of \$650.00, versus \$675.00 for housing that required major repairs and \$650.00 for housing that required minor repairs. In two bedroom units, housing that required only general maintenance has a median shelter cost of \$850.00, versus \$795.00 for housing that required major repairs and \$775.00 for housing that required minor repairs ($\chi^2=122.44$, $p<.001$). In three bedroom units, housing that requires only general maintenance has a median shelter cost of \$925.00, versus

\$975.00 for housing that required major repairs and \$940.75 for housing that required minor repairs ($\chi^2=8.50$, $p<.001$).

It is worth noting that, in the context of Housing First, an individual being placed in a one bedroom rental unit will face the same shelter costs regardless of whether the unit requires general maintenance or major repairs. It is also worth noting that the difference between the median shelter costs of a two bedroom apartment requiring general maintenance and major repairs is \$65.00.

With respect to rooming houses, 7% of rooms require major repairs, 29% of rooms require minor repairs, and the rest are general maintenance. Quality scores range from 6 to 10, with the average being 8.27.

Vacancies

Vacancies are captured in two different ways in our research. We look at whether each unit experienced any days vacant in the past year (captured by the answers “yes” or “no”), as well as the number of days a unit was vacant while on the rental market over the one-year period.

According to the data we obtained from the Cape Breton Island Housing Authority, public housing units experienced no vacancies in the past year. Overall, 9% of the non-profit and for-profit units in our sample experienced a vacancy in the past year. For those units which experienced at least one day vacant, the median number of days units were on the market was 30, while the mean was 61 (SD 68) days. There is no difference between Sydney and other parts of the CBRM with respect to the likelihood of being vacant or the average number of days on the market. There is also no difference between primary and secondary rental markets.

Non-profit units were less likely to experience a vacancy in the past year compared to for-profit rentals (5% versus 10%, $\chi^2=13.53$, $p<.001$). However, for non-profit units which were vacant, they were on the market longer (121.53 days on average versus 53.38, $p<.001$), which could reflect the approval process that is used by some non-profits as they review tenant applications (such as in the case of housing co-operatives).

As demonstrated earlier, units in need of repair are more likely to report a vacancy and to be vacant for a greater number of days. Accessible units are less likely to report a vacancy versus non-accessible units.

Studio and one bedroom units in the CBRM are more likely to experience a vacancy ($\chi^2=14.49$, $p<.001$), and this is consistent with the CMHC data which demonstrate a higher vacancy rate for one bedroom apartments in the CBRM (CMHC, 2016g). Once vacant, our data show that there is no difference based on unit size with respect to how many days vacant units were on the market.

Table 5: Vacancies by Unit Size

Vacant in the Past Year	Studio	One Bedroom	Two Bedrooms	Three or More Bedrooms
No	86%	88%	91%	94%
Yes	15%	12%	9%	6%

Units with no target renter were more likely to experience a vacancy in the past year (12% versus 7%, $\chi^2=24.88$, $p<.001$), but no differences were found in the average number of days it took to fill vacant units on the market whether they target certain kinds of renters or not.

Finally, looking at rooming houses, 29% of rooms did not experience a vacancy over the one-year period reflected in the data collection. Only two rooms targeted to low-income individuals or those experiencing homelessness had a vacancy (with days vacant being 60), while one room with no target renter experienced a vacancy (with days vacant being 60 as well). In turn, all but two rooms targeted to students reported experiencing a vacancy in the past year, with the average number of days vacant being 129, which is about equivalent to the summer period when classes are not in session.

With respect to housing and homelessness in the CBRM, that units with no target renter are more likely to experience a vacancy is surprising at first. Given the limited number of units that may be available to certain segments of the population due to targeting of housing stock, we expected units with no target renter to experience vacancies less often overall. There are several possible explanations for this finding. Based on data already presented in this report, we know that renters living in this housing may not have a lease, and that this housing is in greater need of repair. NHS data also show that the household types that might live in this particular housing (that is, single individuals and non-family households) struggle with housing affordability in the CBRM. As a result, they may have had to give up their units for less expensive options (such as rooming houses, or family and friends) or may have received eviction notices from their landlords because of inability to pay their rent. In turn, that rooming houses targeting low-income or homeless individuals reported few vacancies also indicates that this housing option is more affordable for single individuals than the units in the primary or secondary rental markets.

Shelter Costs

Utilities

Partial data on utilities were provided by the public housing authority. Specifically, the Cape Breton Island Housing Authority identified that renters who are families are responsible for paying for part of their utilities (lights only). We imputed a value for the cost of this utility based on data we collected from non-profit and for-profit landlords, by size of the rental unit (McKnight et al., 2007).

Looking at all the rental housing stock in the CBRM, 69% have heating costs included in the monthly rent. When you break this down by type of housing provider, 100% of public housing units have heat included, 49% of for-profit rentals have heat included, and 4% of non-profits do the same. Lighting costs are only sometimes included: in public housing, 54% of rents include lights (as described above, families, but not seniors, pay for their lighting costs in public housing), while 27% of for-profit and 2% of non-profit housing units include the cost of lights. Water is included in the rents of all public housing units, in 97% of for-profit housing units, and 64% of non-profit units.

These figures show that utilities often add additional costs for those who rent, especially for those living in for-profit and non-profit rentals. More than half of renters (62%) have to pay for at least one of their utilities. Broken down by sector, 46% of tenants in public housing have to pay for at least one utility, 72% of tenants in for-profit housing have to pay for at least one utility, and 98% of tenants in non-profit housing have to pay for at least one utility.

When heat and water are included in the rent, lights add the following in median monthly costs: \$50.00 for a studio, \$65.00 for a one bedroom, \$50.00 for a two bedroom and \$110.00 for a three bedroom or larger.

When heat and lights are not included in the rent (but water is), the following is the additional median cost faced by the tenant per month: \$82.50 for a studio, \$100.00 for a one bedroom, \$125.00 for a two bedroom and \$250.00 for a three bedroom or larger²⁰.

For rooming houses, 93% of rooms have utilities included. For the remainder, heat and water are included but not lights, adding \$80 to the cost of shelter per month.

With respect to Housing First and housing and homelessness in the CBRM, these results not only demonstrate that utility costs often place an additional financial burden on renters, but that it may be important for the CMHC to collect data specifically on utilities to capture the true cost of shelter in the CBRM. For example, the CMHC could ask landlords whether or not the rental amounts they are reporting include utilities so that figures presented in their rental market reports are placed in context.

²⁰ Note that it was not possible to calculate how much water only contributed to monthly shelter costs, since there were no cases of water being the only utility not included in the rent. It was also difficult for research participants to provide us with estimates of utility costs, since many stated they were not aware of the costs since they did not receive the utility bills. Specifically, 18% of the data on utility costs were missing from non-profit and for-profit units. As we did for public units, we imputed values for these missing data based on landlords who reported utility costs, and did so by unit size (McKnight, McKnight, Sidani, & Figueredo, 2007).

Cost of Shelter (Rent and Utilities)

Table 6 presents median shelter costs, broken down by type of housing provider and the size of the units. Data clearly show that shelter costs in public housing are much lower than in other rentals: the difference is about \$380 for studio apartments, \$190 for one bedroom units, and almost \$545 for two and three bedroom units. Additionally, non-profit housing offers lower shelter costs for one, two and three bedroom apartments. However, it is worth noting that shelter costs in non-profit housing are still high compared to income assistance levels. Overall, these data also show that shelter costs in the CBRM are very high considering not only the level of income support available to low-income households, but the limited employment opportunities available in the region as well as the current minimum wage rate. In the context of Housing First, data show that even the cost of a studio apartment is out of reach for an individual receiving the maximum shelter allowance available through income assistance (\$535 per month), and that greater financial support will be required so that Housing First tenants can pay for their shelter.

Table 6: Median Shelter Costs by Type of Provider

Median Monthly Shelter Costs	Studio	One Bedroom	Two Bedroom	Three Bedroom
Public	\$204.00	\$463.00	\$281.50	\$431.63
Non-profit	NA	\$630.00	\$800.00	\$925.00
For-profit	\$585.00	\$650.00	\$850.00	\$1060.00
Difference?	Public<for-profit ^a	Public<other types ^b Non-profit<for-profit ^c	Public< other types ^d Non-profit<for-profit ^e	Public< other types ^f Non-profit<for-profit ^g

^a $z=4.64, p<.001$; ^b $\chi^2 = 972.35, p<.001$; ^c $z = -2.38, p<.05$; ^d $\chi^2 = 431.42, p<.001$; ^e $z = -9.09, p<.001$; ^f $\chi^2 = 972.35, p<.001$; ^g $z = -7.844, p<.001$

Given the important role of for-profit rentals in providing housing in the CBRM, and thus the likelihood that Housing First participants and staff will seek to rent from for-profit providers, we broke down shelter costs for one bedroom units using a frequency distribution and with shelter-cost increments of \$49.99 (see Table 7). This shows that only 10% of these one bedroom units are the same or less than the maximum shelter allowance of \$535 per month. We also analyzed whether or not one bedroom units experienced a vacancy in the past year based on this cut-off. We found that 2% of those units which were \$535 or less per month experienced a vacancy, while 14% of those costing more than this amount reported the same ($p<.05$).

Table 7: Frequency Distribution, Shelter Costs for One Bedroom Apartments – For-profit Rentals

Shelter Costs	Percentage of One Bedroom Units in this Price Range	Cumulative Percentage
\$350 – \$399	.23	.23
\$400 - \$449	1.84	2.07
\$450 - \$499	2.30	4.37
\$500 - \$549	5.98	10.34
\$550 - \$599	11.96	22.30
\$600 - \$649	18.62	40.92
\$650 - \$699	19.77	60.69
\$700 - \$749	13.11	73.79
\$750 - \$799	8.97	82.76
\$800 - \$849	8.05	90.80
\$850 - \$899	1.84	92.64
\$900 - \$949	2.76	95.40
\$950 - \$999	1.15	96.55
\$1000+	3.45	100.00

With respect to rooming houses, the average shelter cost for rooms which do not include meals is \$451. Although rooming houses may not be what all Housing First advocates consider the best housing option to enable individuals to fully integrate into their communities, our data show that they are the most affordable housing option for singles in the CBRM.

Table 8 examines shelter costs by location. Except for studio apartments, data reveal that shelter costs are higher in Sydney. For Housing First staff, this means that placing individuals in units in the community in which there are the most health care services and employment and recreational opportunities is also the most costly option available.

Table 8: Median Shelter Costs by Location, Non-profit and For-profit Rentals

	Studio	One Bedroom	Two Bedroom	Three Bedroom
Sydney	\$585.00	\$700.00	\$850.00	\$1020.00
Non-Sydney	\$525.00	\$630.00	\$785.00	\$925.00
Difference?	No	Sydney>Non-Sydney ^a	Sydney>Non-Sydney ^b	Sydney>Non-Sydney ^c

^a*z*=6.49, *p*<.001; ^b*z*=10.24, *p*<.001; ^c*z*=9.26, *p*<.001

Finally, we compared median shelter costs of rental units by whether or not they were in the primary or secondary markets; we made this comparison given that the CMHC collects and reports data on the primary rental market only. Table 9 shows that shelter costs are significantly different for two and three bedroom units, depending on the rental market. These findings, reported in Table 9, also show that shelter costs are higher than what was presented in the 2015 market rental report done by the CMHC. This could be because data reported below includes

utilities, while it is not clear what is included in the CMHC results. This disparity could also have been caused by an increase in local rents over time. Additionally, the CMHC reports average rental costs whereas we report the median; this is because our data on rents are not distributed normally, and reporting averages would have provided skewed results.

Table 9: Median Shelter Cost by Rental Market and Unit Size

	Studio	One Bedroom	Two Bedroom	Three Bedroom
Primary Market	\$580.00	\$650.00	\$815.00	\$1060.00
Secondary Market	\$675.00	\$700.00	\$900.00	\$925.00
Market Difference?	No	No	Primary<secondary ^a	Primary>secondary ^b

^a $z=9.31, p<.001$; ^b $z=-8.18, p<.001$

FINDINGS: PRACTICAL COMPONENTS AND INTEREST IN HOUSING FIRST

Amenities and Furnishings

The vast majority of rental units are not furnished (98.2%). No non-profit or public units provide furnishings. Three percent of for-profit rentals are fully furnished, and one percent of for-profit rentals are partially furnished. This means that Housing First staff will need to work with clients to obtain furnishings for their units, which will add additional costs to running the initiative.

In a previous study, conducted on an initiative similar to Housing First in the CBRM, washers and driers were identified by tenants as key features of their rental units. These amenities offered individuals convenience, eliminating the need to take the bus to a neighbouring community to access a laundromat, and provided individuals with a sense of normalcy (Leviten-Reid, Johnson, & Miller, 2014). As a result, we asked landlords if their units feature washers and driers, either in the units or in a shared location²¹. Thirty two percent of non-profit units offer access to washers and driers and 56% of for-profit rentals have the same (an additional 1% of units in the for-profit rental market have washers but not driers). Sixty-seven percent of non-profit and 29% of for-profit units have washer and dryer hookups available, while 2% of non-profit and 14% of for-profit units do not provide access to these amenities or have hookups available. Note that information on washers and driers in public housing was not available at the time data were being analyzed for this report.

Broken down by unit size, 13% of studio apartments and 48% of one bedroom apartments have access to a washer and drier, while 65% of two bedroom apartments and 20% of three bedroom apartments offer the same. No hookup was available in 77% of studio apartments, 31% of one bedroom apartments, 5% of two bedroom apartments and 2% of three bedroom units.

²¹ Percentages in this section do not always add up to 100 due to rounding.

Most rooms in rooming houses are furnished (83%). All feature shared washing machines, and 96% feature shared driers as well. All rooming houses have shared bathrooms and kitchens.

Interest in Housing First

One of the purposes of this project was to gauge the level of interest that landlords in the CBRM have with respect to learning more about Housing First. Specifically, we asked if landlords were interested in being contacted about information sessions hosted by the CBCHA regarding this approach. Through our fieldwork, we learned that many housing providers agreed: the public housing authority is interested, and among non-profit and for-profit providers, the landlords who said yes to this question own or manage 1,798 units of rental stock. More of these units are in Sydney than non-Sydney (68% versus 54%, $\chi^2=51.24$, $p<.001$), and more are in the primary market (73% versus 48%, $\chi^2=182.54$, $p<.001$).

All owners of rooming houses who participated in this study are also interested in learning more about Housing First.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While the results of this report need to feed into a larger discussion with community stakeholders, we feel that the following points should be strongly considered by those developing an affordable housing strategy in the municipality and by those organizations (such as Housing Nova Scotia and the Cape Breton Island Housing Authority) which are well-positioned to both partner in Housing First and to play key roles in the development of affordable housing more broadly in the CBRM.

First, affordable units need to be provided to all segments of the population in core housing need: non-senior, single-person households have fallen through the cracks. As stated earlier, although many who experience core housing need in the CBRM are single households under the age of 65, public housing units are not available to them. Additionally, many non-profit and for-profit landlords do not target this household type. Moreover, shelter costs in the private rental market are out of reach considering the high levels of income assistance and the number of low-income households in the CBRM (Statistics Canada, 2011d). Vacancies in the CBRM are highest among apartments most suitable for single individuals - studio and one-bedroom apartments and units with no target renter. One bedroom apartments, costing \$535 or less, experienced significantly fewer vacancies in the past year than those costing over \$535. Providing subsidies to compensate for the gap between how much tenants can pay and rents charged by landlords may be one approach to address this need.

Data collected on the state of repair of this housing suggest that incentives are also needed for landlords to improve the quality of their stock. In addition, the large amount of one bedroom rental units in the public housing portfolio indicates this infrastructure is suitable for single, younger occupants, and we recommend that public housing staff consult with other jurisdictions

(such as Ontario) which have made units available to single-person, non-senior households on implementation.

Second, more needs to be done to encourage the development of accessible rental units across the municipality. This study shows that only a small fraction of units may be lived in by people with disabilities. Other research done in the province found that cost and lack of forethought, with respect to current and future needs of tenants, were reasons why landlords had not built accessible units (Leviten-Reid & Lake, 2016). We recommend that the province review the technical and financial support it offers landlords related to accessibility and that it considers adopting Newfoundland and Labrador's policy approach of requiring all new affordable rental housing to be fully accessible. At a minimum, we recommend that the province engage with landlords in a process of experimentation and learning to better understand why landlords do not make their units accessible, and to make adjustments to programming and policy based on this engagement.

Third, that the CMHC collect data on the secondary rental market in the CBRM. The CMHC has the knowledge required to adopt this recommendation, since they collect secondary rental market information from other Canadian communities. This is critically important in the CBRM because of the extent to which rental housing is situated in this secondary market (particularly outside of Sydney); the finding that primary and secondary markets can differ with respect to shelter costs; and because of the trend towards building new rental housing in the secondary versus primary market in the CBRM. Given the important role of rooming houses in the community, we also encourage the CMHC to consider collecting data on this type of housing.

Fourth, that stakeholders consider developing rooming houses specifically for women in the CBRM, given the important role that rooming houses seem to play in providing lower cost housing to single-person male households in the communities of Sydney and Glace Bay.

Fifth, that the provincial government develop and disseminate plain-language information on discrimination in the housing market which could be used by landlords, tenants and community-based organizations. While we hesitate to state that landlords deny units to specific kinds of tenants in the CBRM, the data we obtained on whether and to whom landlords target their units suggest that this information may be beneficial.

APPENDIX A: GOODNESS OF FIT RESULTS

Four goodness of fit tests were completed.

Table 1A compares the distribution of rental housing in the CBRM by structure type, as collected through the National Household Survey, to the data we collected for this present study. Results show the two distributions are not statistically different, which means our results are generalizable based on this characteristic.

Table 1A: Distribution of Rental Housing in the CBRM by Structure Type

	Single-detached	Semi-detached/ Duplexes	Row Housing	Low-rise Apartments	High-rise Apartments	Other*
NHS Data	30%	24%	6%	35%	3%	1%
Our Data	28%	19%	9%	40%	4%	1%

**Other includes mobile homes without foundations, movable dwellings and apartments attached to commercial properties (Statistics Canada, 2011a).*

Table 2A compares the distribution of rental housing in the CBRM based on dwelling condition, as collected through the National Household Survey, to the data we collected for this study. Results show the two distributions are statistically different ($\chi^2=35.9$, $p<.001$), which means our results underrepresent lower quality rental housing. It is worth noting that the NHS data reflect the opinions of renters, while our data were collected from landlords; however, we still consider our results to underrepresent lower quality rental housing in the CBRM given the discrepancies identified in the table.

Table 2A: Distribution of Rental Housing in the CBRM by Condition of Dwelling

	General Maintenance	Minor Repairs	Major Repairs
NHS Data	62%	27%	11%
Our Data	91%	6%	4%

Table 3A compares the distribution of for-profit rental housing in the CBRM based on whether it falls in the primary or secondary markets, as collected by the municipality’s planning department and adjusted based on our fieldwork, to the data we collected for this study. The distributions are not statistically different, which means that our results may be generalized to primary and secondary, for-profit rental housing in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality.

Table 3A: Distribution of For-profit Rental Housing by Primary and Secondary Markets

	Rental Housing in Primary Market	Rental Housing in Secondary Market
<i>CBRM</i>		
Planning Department Data	51%	49%
Our Data	58%	42%
<i>Sydney</i>		
Planning Department Data	60%	40%
Our Data	64%	36%
<i>Non-Sydney</i>		
Planning Department Data	41%	59%
Our Data	48%	52%

Finally, Table 4A compares the distribution of for-profit rental housing in the CBRM based on whether it is located in Sydney or other communities, as collected by the municipality’s planning department and adjusted based on our fieldwork, to the data we collected for this study. The distributions are not statistically different, which means that our results reflect for-profit rental housing in the municipality with respect to location.

Table 4A: Distribution of For-profit Rental Housing by Location

	Sydney	Non-Sydney
Planning Department Data	56%	44%
Our Data	65%	35%

REFERENCES

- Access Nova Scotia. (2016). *At the End of a Tenancy*. Retrieved from Access Nova Scotia: <http://www.novascotia.ca/sns/access/land/residential-tenancies/landlord/end-of-tenancy.asp#faq19649>
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2014). *Housing Market Information Portal*. Retrieved from Methodology for Rental Market Survey: <https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en/TableMapChart/RmsMethodology>
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2016a). *Canada: Household Type (% of Households in Core Housing Need)*. Retrieved from Housing Market Information Portal.
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2016b). *Cape Breton: Activity Limitations (%), Renters*. Retrieved from Housing Market Information Portal.
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2016c). *Cape Breton: Average Rent by Bedroom Type and Zone*. Retrieved from Housing Market Information Portal.
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2016d). *Cape Breton: Household Type: One Person Households (Households in Core Housing Need)*. Retrieved from Housing Market Information Portal.
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2016e). *Cape Breton: Household Type: One Person Households (Households in Core Housing Need), Renters*. Retrieved from Housing Market Information Portal.
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2016f). *Cape Breton: Household Type (% of Households in Core Housing Need)*. Retrieved from Housing Market Information Portal.
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2016g). *Cape Breton: Vacancy Rates by Bedroom Type and Zone*. Retrieved from Housing Market Information Portal.
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2016h). *Nova Scotia: Household Type (% of Households in Core Housing Need)*. Retrieved from Housing Market Information Portal.
- Cheng, A.-L., Lin, H., Kaspro, W., & Rosenheck, R. (2007). Impact of Supported Housing on Clinical Outcomes Analysis of a Randomized Trial Using Multiple Imputation Technique. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 195 (1), 83-88. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1097/01.nmd.0000252313.49043.f2>
- Community Services. (2013). *Basic Income Assistance Rates*. Retrieved from Government of Nova Scotia: http://novascotia.ca/coms/employment/income_assistance/BasicAssistance.html
- Desmond, M. (2016). *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. New York: Crown.

- Goering, P., Veldhuizen, S., Watson, A., Adair, C., Kopp, B., Latimer, E., & Aubry, T. (2014). *National at Home/Chez Soi Final Report*. Calgary: Mental Health Commission Canada.
Retrieved from:
http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/mhcc_at_home_report_national_cross-site_eng_2_0.pdf
- Henwood, B.F., Stanhope, V., & Padgett, D.K. (2011). The Role of Housing: A Comparison of Front-Line Provider Views in Housing First and Traditional Programs. *Journal of Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Services Research*, 38(2), 77-85.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10488-010-0303-2>
- Law Reform Commission of Nova Scotia. (2011). *Seniors-only Housing*. Halifax: Law Reform Commission of Nova Scotia. Retrieved from:
http://www.lawreform.ns.ca/Downloads/Seniors-only_Housing_Final.pdf
- Leviten-Reid, C., Johnson, P., & Miller, M. (2014). Supported Housing in a Small Community: Effects on Consumers, Suggestions for Change. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, 33(3), 57-69. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7870/cjcmh-2014-020>
- Leviten-Reid, C., & Lake, A. (2016). Building Affordable Rental Housing for Seniors: Policy Insights From Canada. *Journal of Housing for the Elderly*, 30(3), 253-270.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02763893.2016.1198738>
- McKnight, P.E., McKnight, K. M., Sidani, S., & Figueredo, A. J. (2007). *Missing Data: A Gentle Introduction*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- National Trust for Canada. (N.d.) *Nova Scotia – Company Houses*.
<https://www.nationaltrustcanada.ca/issues-campaigns/top-ten-endangered/explore-past-listings/nova-scotia/nova-scotia-company-houses>
- Polvere, L., Macnaughton, E., & Piat, M. (2013). Participant Perspectives on Housing First and Recovery: Early Findings from the At Home/Chez Soi Project. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 36(2), 110-112. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0094979>
- Province of Nova Scotia. (2013). *Human Rights Act*. Retrieved from:
<http://nslegislature.ca/legc/statutes/human%20rights.pdf>
- Province of Nova Scotia. (2016a). *Public Housing for Seniors*. Retrieved from Housing Nova Scotia: <http://housing.novascotia.ca/programs/public-housing-and-other-affordable-renting-programs-housing-programs-seniors/public>
- Province of Nova Scotia. (2016b). *Guide to Form P Standard Lease*. Retrieved from Residential Tenancies Program: <http://novascotia.ca/sns/pdf/ans-rtp-form-p-standard-lease.pdf>
- Robson, C. (2011). *Real World Research*. West Sussex, UK: John Wiley and Sons Ltd.

Soles, K. (2003). *Affordable, Accessible Housing Needs Assessment in the North Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre*. Saskatoon, SK: Community-University Institute for Social Research.

Statistics Canada. (2011a). *Census Dictionary 2011*. Retrieved from Statistics Canada: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/ref/dict/98-301-X2011001-eng.pdf>

Statistics Canada. (2011b). *Housing Tenure Including Presence of Mortgage and Subsidized Housing (7), Shelter-cost-to-income Ratio (5A) and Household Type (9) for Owner and Tenant Households in Non-farm, Non-reserve Private Dwellings of Canada, Provinces, Territories, Census Divisions and Census Subdivisions, 2011 National Household Survey*. Retrieved from 2011 National Household Survey Data Tables: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/dt-td/Rp-eng.cfm?LANG=E&APATH=5&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=1217030&GID=0&GK=3&GRP=0&PID=107595&PRID=0&PTYPE=105277&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2013&THEME=98&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF>

Statistics Canada. (2011c). *NHS Focus on Geography Series*. Retrieved from Statistics Canada: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Pages/FOG.cfm?lang=E&level=4&GeoCode=1217030>

Statistics Canada. (2011d) *NHS Profile, Cape Breton, RGM, Nova Scotia, 2011*. Retrieved from Statistics Canada: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=1217030&Data=Count&SearchText=1217030&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&A1=All&B1=All&Custom=&TABID=3>

Tsemberis, S., Gulcur, L., & Nakae, M. (2004). Housing First, Consumer Choice, and Harm Reduction for Homeless Individuals With a Dual Diagnosis. *American Journal of Public Health, 94*(4), 651-656. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.94.4.651>