

GOING BEYOND LANDLORD ENGAGEMENT

INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES AND OUTCOMES IN A HOUSING FIRST CONTEXT

END HOMELESSNESS
ST. JOHN'S **#WECANENDIT**

TODAY'S PRESENTERS



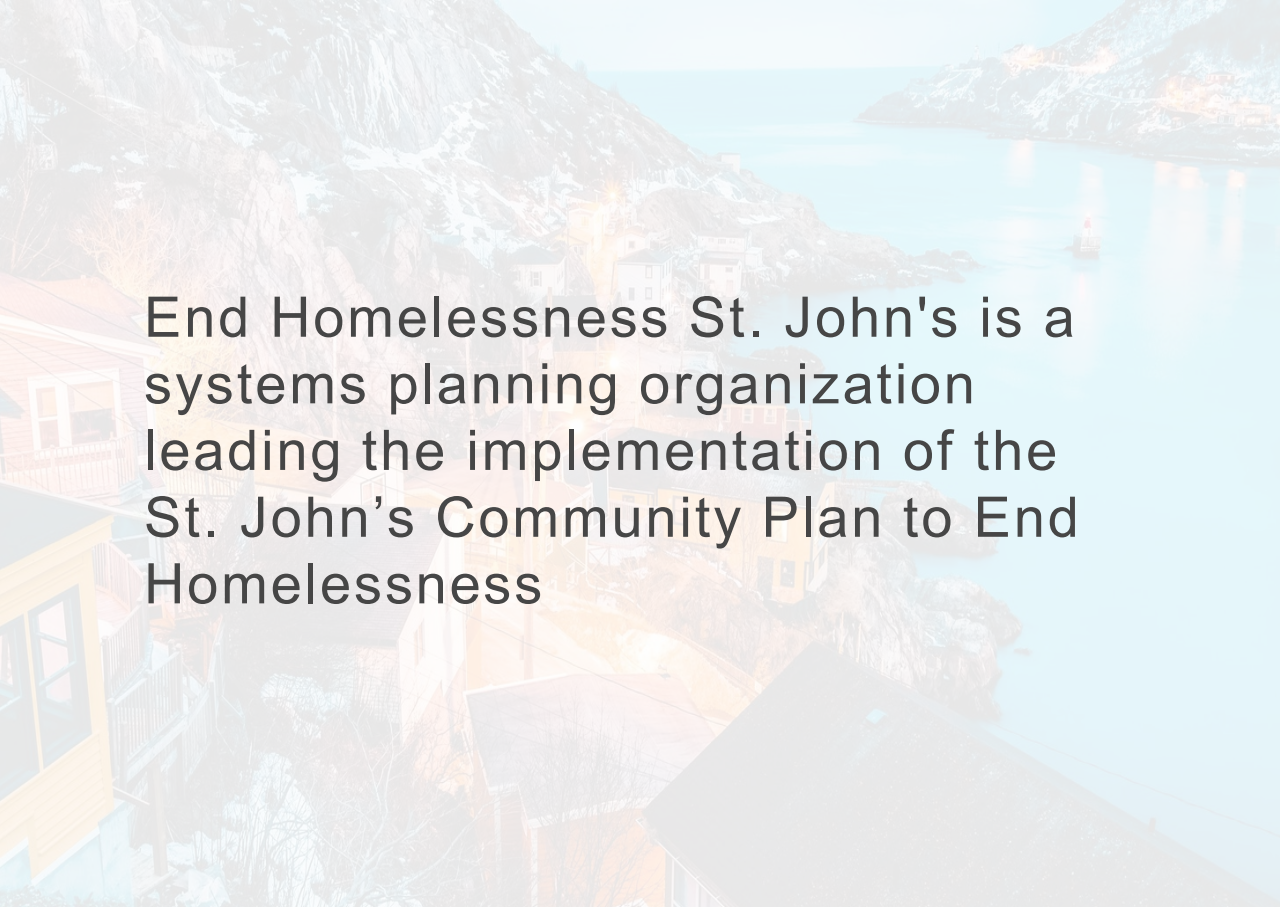
SHERWIN FLIGHT

Landlord Engagement Lead




NICOLE AYLWARD

Tenancy Support Lead



End Homelessness St. John's is a systems planning organization leading the implementation of the St. John's Community Plan to End Homelessness



We work together, with all our stakeholders towards a vision in which every resident of St. John's has a place to call home

#WECANENDIT



PRESENTATION OBJECTIVES

- Tell you more about the HomeConnect program
- Discuss tools and resources that can be replicated in other communities
- Talk about lessons learned on navigating landlord communication and relationships
- Share some of the outcomes we've achieved

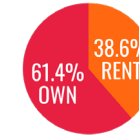
COMMUNITY CONTEXT

- Population: 108,860
- Total Households: 47,625
- Approximately 1 in 4 experience housing affordability challenge



HOUSING STOCK

- Housing stock is ownership heavy
61.4% Own vs 38.6% Rent
- Rental vacancy rate has rapidly decreased 2020-2021 from 7.5% to 3.1%
- Housing needs are not being met for vulnerable populations



In 2020 EHSJ began a program called HomeConnect.

This program aims to unlock private market opportunities for tenants facing barriers to housing.

It creates matches between landlords, community and tenants.

It seeks to create sustainable tenancies – not just housing for today, but homes for the long term.

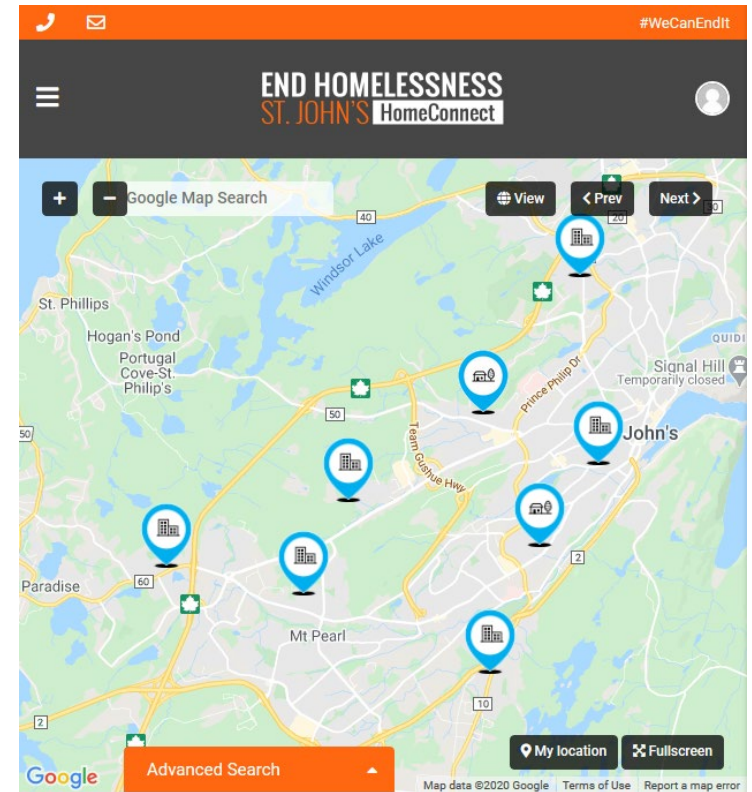
END HOMELESSNESS

ST. JOHN'S HomeConnect



WHAT IS HOMECONNECT?

- A Centralized Housing Inventory
- A Standardized Process
- Supports & Benefits



OVERCOMING BARRIERS

We asked Landlords what their concerns/barriers were and worked to create tools to address these concerns.

Continuously gathering feedback from landlords through surveys, events, media, etc.

FUNDING DELAYS

Problem: With multiple sources of funding, rent can be delayed at the start of a tenancy.

Solution: HomeConnect pays holding fees up-front.

- Paid from date of inspection to move-in.
- Ensures no lost rental income.
- Equal to monthly rent.
- Partially reimbursed if tenant moves in mid-month.





COMPLEX CLIENT NEEDS

Problem: There is often a lack of understanding and awareness of mental health-related issues.

Solution:

- Landlord training initiatives, including Mental Health First Aid, Cultural Diversity Awareness, etc.
- System navigation provided by HomeConnect staff.
- “Who to Call When” resources for landlords.
- Landlord debriefing when issues occur.

PERCEIVED FINACIAL RISK

Problem: There may be a perceived risk of renting to certain demographics due to damage, unpaid rent, utility arrears, etc.

Solution: EHSJ established the Landlord Protection Fund to help mitigate the risk.

- Coverage up to \$10,000 per tenancy.
- Available without going through dispute resolution.
- Has been a big selling point for HomeConnect.





LACK OF INFORMATION

Problem: Landlords had difficulty navigating which clients were connected to which agency when support was needed.

Solution: HomeConnect is a single point of contact for landlords.

- Easier for landlords to get help.
- Less frustrating when issues arise.
- Ensures consistent information.
- Helps keep on top of any problems.

LACK OF REFERENCES

Problem: Lack of rental references can make it difficult for landlords ensure their housing is the right fit.

Solution: Our relationships with landlords provide similar reassurances as a reference would.

- We collect housing history from agencies.
- Previous barriers to housing may be discussed.
- Landlords are less concerned about references knowing HomeConnect is there if anything goes wrong.
- Added benefit for tenants who do not have appropriate housing references.





LACK OF SUPPORTS

Problem: Landlords often worry about a tenant's ability to maintain a rental unit.

Solution:

- Regular in-home check-ins with tenants.
- Landlords can contact HomeConnect staff if they have housing or life skills concerns.
- Implement EPSP (Eviction Prevention Support Plan) to communicate Landlord concerns.

LANDLORD REPRESENTATION

Problem: Landlords are often unrepresented in different systems, making them feel like they have little say.

Solution: A separation of duties has been established for HomeConnect staff.

- Dedicated staff member for landlord engagement.
- Dedicated staff member for tenancy support.
- Regular meetings with HomeConnect landlords to give them an opportunity to voice any concerns.





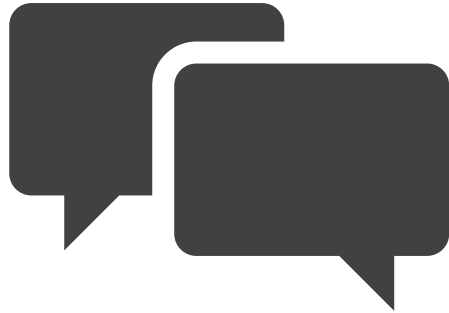
RENTAL UNIT INSPECTIONS

Problem: Multiple inspections take up a lot of landlord time.

Solution:

- HomeConnect staff knowledgeable on city standards to inspect rental units.
- HomeConnect staff have ability to inspect on behalf of rent funders.
- Educate landlords on property standards.
- Good relationship with city inspectors helping landlords prevent fines, by-laws notices, etc.

NAVIGATING LANDLORD RELATIONSHIPS



COMMUNICATION

Constant communication throughout the relationship is important. Consider regular meetings for larger landlords.

RESOURCES

Landlords appreciate efforts to share resources with them, such as energy rebate programs, city by-laws, funding map, energy saving kits, etc.

EXPECTATIONS

Always set reasonable expectations for landlords. Being up-front about the situations that may arise helps avoid surprises.

SUPPORT

Supporting landlords through difficult situations, and system navigation, relieves a lot of frustration that landlords often face.

OTHER THINGS WE DO FOR LANDLORDS



MAKING GOOD FITS

By focusing on making a good fit between landlord, tenant, and rental unit HomeConnect focuses on making successful tenancies as easy as possible from the start.



RECOGNITION

Recognize your landlords at every opportunity. Gift cards, social media shout outs, and treats on special occasions go a long way to show landlords you appreciate them.



COMMUNICATION

By using multiple forms of communication, such as automated email and text messages, we try to make it as easy as possible for landlords to communicate with us.



GET TOGETHERS

Regular in-person gatherings help landlords get to know us, and each other, and helps create a community. It's also a great way to stay on top of trends.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES



DAYS OF HOUSING
34,000+



AVERAGE TENANCY LENGTH
286 DAYS



TENANCIES 9+ MONTHS
50%

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

WEBSITE homeconnect.wecanendit.com
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Q&A



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