



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Affordable tiny home community announced for Saint John**

**Saint John, NB** – September 9, 2024: Local business leaders Steve Belyea and David Alston, together with United Way Saint John, Kings & Charlotte, are pleased to announce the launch of the Sunnyside Tiny Home Community – a supportive affordable housing community modeled after Fredericton’s 12 Neighbours – to be located on Saint John’s east side.

“The idea for the Sunnyside Tiny Home Community really took root after a friend introduced me to Marcel LeBrun and the team at 12 Neighbours in Fredericton,” says Belyea, entrepreneur and partner in Victory Motors. “I toured their community earlier this year and knew immediately that something similar could be a game-changer for Saint John.”

Belyea and Alston, co-leads of what became a community task force, spearheaded the land assembly process and search for an operating partner.

“We have been amazed at how quickly the collective has come together,” says Alston, entrepreneur and owner of TimberTop Adventures. “Housing is a pressing issue for our community, and everyone wants to lend a hand.”

United Way Saint John, Kings & Charlotte has signed on to purchase the property and serve as operating agency for the community. This was made possible by the recent unification of seven United Way organizations across the Maritime provinces and the formation of a new regional housing division that will serve central and southwestern New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and mainland Nova Scotia.

“The Sunnyside Tiny Home Community will be an important new component of our community’s response to the housing challenges faced by some of the more marginalized residents of Saint John,” says Alexya Heelis, Senior Executive Director – Central & Southwestern New Brunswick for United Way Maritimes. “This is an excellent example of the power of collective impact, where a need is identified, and proven solutions can be adapted and implemented here to address the specific needs of our community.”

Land assembly for the project could not have happened without the support of Saint John Energy, which has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with United Way to donate a portion of the land it owns between East Point Way and Fernhill Cemetery to the project. It is also donating refurbished heat pumps for all the homes in the community.

“Supporting Sunnyside was an easy decision for Saint John Energy because we know the impact that safe, affordable housing can have on people’s lives,” says Ryan Mitchell, President and CEO of Saint John Energy. “We believe that when businesses and organizations come together for the common good, we can create lasting change. We invite others to step forward and join us to create that change.”

The project has benefitted from a close relationship with Marcel LeBrun, the 12 Neighbours team, and a variety of 12 Neighbours residents. Neighbourly Homes, the 12 Neighbours construction team, will also be the project’s construction partner – building and delivering approximately 75 houses for the new community.



“We are excited to share our model of an inclusive community-first approach to housing. We are community builders, not just home builders,” says LeBrun. “Community is the healing agent, as people work to overcome challenges to a healthy, full, and independent life.”

Engineering planning is underway, but before construction can begin and timelines for opening can be finalized, the project will need to proceed with a rezoning application through the City of Saint John’s Planning Advisory Committee.

“Housing remains a top priority for the City of Saint John, and we are committed to exploring diverse tools and solutions to meet our community’s needs,” says Mayor Donna Noade Reardon. “The Sunnyside Tiny Home Community represents an innovative approach with the potential for significant and lasting benefits for Saint John. We look forward to working with the project team as their planning application moves through the City’s review and approval process.”

The project is estimated to cost approximately \$10 million, and United Way Maritimes will seek support from all orders of government, ideally aiming to use the same or similar grants used by 12 Neighbours, to help make it a reality. A special fundraising initiative will help close the gap for costs such as the land purchase, infrastructure, project management, programming and other needs.

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About the Sunnyside Tiny Home Community: [www.sunnysidecommunity.ca](http://www.sunnysidecommunity.ca)

**About United Way Saint John, Kings & Charlotte:**

United Way Saint John, Kings & Charlotte is a proud part of United Way Maritimes - a donor-funded regional impact organization that brings together donors, volunteers, partners, community organizations and government to create lasting social change in our communities. With dedicated local teams serving central and southwestern New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and mainland Nova Scotia; United Way Maritimes is changing lives by providing funding, creating solutions, partnering with others, and advocating for change.

**About United Way Maritimes Affordable Housing Division**

Across the Maritimes, United Ways have a vested interest in addressing affordable housing. We have a long history of engaging with stakeholders, including those experiencing marginalization, service providers, business leaders and government officials. We also have experience leading housing symposiums, developing an affordable housing community land trust, sitting on advisory boards and committees and more. With the unification of seven United Ways to become United Way Maritimes, we have recently established an Affordable Housing Division. The Affordable Housing Division is focused on providing sustainable, non-market affordable housing, using our own unique expertise to join others helping to address the growing housing crisis.

**About Saint John Energy:**

Saint John Energy, a trusted energy provider since 1922, delivers high-quality products and services to more than 36,000 homes and businesses in Saint John, New Brunswick. A top-rated utility renowned for innovation, reliability and top customer service, it is committed to being a national utility leader in the transition to net zero. It has embarked on Zero30 – a roadmap to becoming carbon neutral by 2030. For more information, visit [www.sjenergy.com](http://www.sjenergy.com) and [www.zero30.ca](http://www.zero30.ca).



# Sunnyside

TINY HOME COMMUNITY

## **Media Contacts**

### ***For David Alston and Steve Belyea:***

Katie Bowden

[katie@thisisduke.com](mailto:katie@thisisduke.com)

506-654-2446

### ***For Alexya Heelis and United Way:***

Sarah White

Manager, Communications & Public Policy

United Way Maritimes

[Swhite@unitedwayhalifax.ca](mailto:Swhite@unitedwayhalifax.ca)

782-234-2504

### ***For Ryan Mitchell and Saint John Energy:***

Shelley Wood

Executive Director, Finance, People & Community

Saint John Energy

[Shelley.wood@sjenergy.ca](mailto:Shelley.wood@sjenergy.ca)