OVERVIEW

If all HRM permits are in place and the weather cooperates, the 249 year-old house saved from the landfill in December 2009, will be moved the weekend of January 25-27 to start a new life in north end Halifax as affordable housing for young adults.

The material in this package provides relevant background information on the partner organizations behind the project, the proposed future of the house, and frequently asked questions.

For up-to-date information on the move:
www.morrishouse.ca

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WHY THE MORRIS PROJECT?
The Morris Project aims to provide a new model for affordable housing in HRM, a model that utilizes and revitalizes existing buildings to provide quality living spaces while enhancing neighbourhoods and building cohesive, supportive communities.

FULFILLING A NEED
Young adults have been identified as the fastest growing segment of the homeless population in Halifax. Currently about 25% of the clients served by Halifax Housing Help, a function of the Metro Non-Profit Housing Association, are young adults. Over the past year Halifax Housing Help (HHH) has assisted more than 100 young people with trustee services, housing placement, and housing support.

The Morris Project is unique because it specifically addresses the needs of young adults ages 18-25 and will provide Metro Non-Profit Housing (MNPHA) with a key resource for the work it is doing with this group. The Morris House will provide nine units of energy-efficient affordable housing for the tenants.

A NEIGHBORHOOD-INTEGRATED PROJECT
The Morris Project will establish a home which fits in with the existing neighbourhood, a key element of the province of Nova Scotia’s ‘invisible housing support’ objective. Architecturally, the rehabilitated Morris will blend with its Creighton Street neighbours. A second house compatible to the Morris in size and appearance will be added to the ‘parent’ building.

For more than 20 years MNPHA has delivered housing in community-based housing units, which are successfully integrated with their neighbourhoods. A key element in the success of these projects and their acceptance by the community has been the development of a peer network among the tenants in a building so residents develop a sense of ownership and of responsibility for their home. A lead tenant in each building helps to foster this sense of community.

The north end neighbourhood at Creighton and Charles Streets is diverse: home to single family homes, apartments, residents of many different backgrounds and neighbourhood businesses. The Joint Action Committee for the Morris has been involved with the neighbours through activities on the site and at Joseph Howe Elementary School, located immediately across the street, and events with local businesses. The response has been welcoming and enthusiastic.

NEW RESOURCES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING
The unique and innovative partnerships born out of the Morris Project bring new resources to the housing sector.

Working with a local foundation, the Joint Action Committee secured the donation of the lot at the corner of Charles and Creighton Streets. Heritage Trust, current owners of the building, will ‘donate’ the house to Metro Non-Profit Housing once the building is at its new site and the conservation/new construction work is ready to begin. The Ecology Action Centre is contributing both knowledge and connections to provide long-term energy and operating efficiencies that will ensure the on-going viability of the building.

The collaborative nature of this project meets not only the key objectives of the partners -- quality affordable housing for young adults, heritage conservation and ecological sustainability -- but in the past three years has involved educational institutions, community based groups and private and public organizations and individuals committed to the vision of the project.

1 Quoted in http://www.halifax.ca/qol/documents/GettingofftheStreet.pdf Getting Off The Street: Exploring Strategies Used by Canadian Youth to Exit Street life
PRINCIPAL PARTNERS IN THE MORRIS PROJECT

Since one incredible night in December 2009 when the 249 year old house was moved to a lot on Hollis Street, the Morris Project has brought together a vibrant group of community organizations committed to seeing the historic Morris building restored to new life as an asset to the community. Collectively, the partner organizations bring to the project 125 years of experience in the fields of heritage conservation, social service and the environment.

THE HERITAGE TRUST OF NOVA SCOTIA
In the fall of 2009, the Trust was faced with one of the biggest, but most challenging and exciting, opportunities in its 50-year history: the chance to save the Morris house, built in 1764 and the fourth oldest building in Halifax. After the house is moved to its new location on Creighton St., Heritage Trust will gift the it to Metro Non-Profit Housing Association. (www.htns.ca)

METRO NON-PROFIT HOUSING ASSOCIATION
Since 1988, Metro Non-Profit Housing has been assisting single adults to create and maintain their homes. In 1990 MNPHA opened Stewart Place, 16 units of housing for low-income single men in Dartmouth. Since then the Association has created an additional 64 units in small to mid-sized apartment buildings in neighbourhoods in HRM.

The Association also operates a Housing Support Centre and Halifax Housing Help, an innovative eviction prevention and housing placement service. The Association has also published a number of public policy studies on housing.

MNPHA is a registered charity managed by an Executive Director in collaboration with staff and participants. A Board of Directors made up of tenants, participants, volunteers, and the Executive Director oversees the organization. (www.homeatmnpha.ca)

THE ARK
In operation for 12 years, the ARK acts as a supportive home base for transient or homeless young people by providing a drop-in centre for young adults ages 16-25, many of whom are experiencing difficulties with the housing market.

In conjunction with Metro Non-Profit Housing, the Ark will develop and manage programming with the young adults living at the Morris and direct prospective tenants to the Morris House. (http://www.arkoutreach.com)

THE ECOLOGY ACTION CENTRE
For more than 40 years the Ecology Action Centre has acted as a voice for Nova Scotia’s environment. From the beginning of the Morris project in the fall of 2009, the leadership, coordination and expertise provided by EAC members has helped guide it and keep it on track.

The Built Environment Committee has used the Morris as an opportunity to explore options for best building and construction & demolition practices through its Waste? NOT! project.

As the Morris Project continues, the EAC will work to ensure the building is environmentally responsible and affordable, providing another local example which illustrates the value of adaptive reuse of buildings. (www.ecologyaction.ca)
WHAT IS THE MORRIS PROJECT?
The Morris Project recognizes the great need for quality affordable housing for young people in Halifax, especially on the Peninsula close to jobs and schools. The Project will provide long term housing for nine young adults who are having difficulty finding reasonably priced housing in Metro. It is not a halfway house, shelter, or transition house.

The Morris Project is a collaboration among four not-for-profit organizations: the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia, the Ecology Action Centre, the Metro Non-Profit Housing Association and the ARK. Collectively, the partner organizations bring to the project 125 years of experience in the fields of social service, the environment, and heritage preservation.

WHAT WILL IT LOOK LIKE?
The Morris Project is designed to be an integral part of the existing neighbourhood. There will be two buildings on the property which will share a common wall. The historic Morris house, will be rehabilitated and will face Creighton Street. A second house compatible to the Morris in size and appearance will be added on to the rear of the building and accessed from Charles Street. Work on both structures will begin in 2013.

HOW WILL THE TENANTS BE CHOSEN?
The houses will be owned and operated by the Metro Non-Profit Housing Association (MNPHA). Prospective tenants will make application to MNPHA to live at the Morris and will go through the tenant review and selection process used at all Metro Non-Profit Housing buildings. For questions about residency requirements please contact:

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WOULD IT BE CHEAPER TO BUILD A NEW BUILDING?
No. Construction costs for the conservation and reuse of the Morris building have been estimated at approximately 2/3 of the cost of new construction, making the heritage part of the project an economical alternative.