

# Family thankful for affordable housing program

## Many of the townhouses relocated from McNab Park to Camponi Place now occupied

BY RORY MACLEAN, THE STARPHOENIX    JANUARY 11, 2010



Syeda and Salatin Ahmed stand with their children Arissa (in purple) and Ariq outside their new home on Camponi Place

**Photograph by:** Greg Pender, The StarPhoenix, The StarPhoenix

Without the affordable housing program in which the City of Saskatoon offers a five per cent downpayment grant for those below a certain income level, Syeda Ahmed and her husband Salatin would not be owners of their first home.

"It was kind of funny. We weren't really planning on buying a house right now, but when we heard about this place we thought we'd give it a shot," said Ahmed, a mother of two.

The family moved into its townhouse on Camponi Place in mid-November.

With the cost of housing in Saskatoon so high, the family may not have been able to afford a place without a little help, said Ahmed, who is currently on maternity leave but is not receiving benefits as she had not been employed for enough hours to qualify.

The 60 townhouses in Camponi Place were relocated from the McNab Park neighbourhood, located adjacent to the airport, and were originally built in the 1950s to accommodate air force personnel and their families. The city eyed McNab Park for rezoning as an industrial park in 2002 due to its remoteness from the rest of the city.

All 60 units have been renovated and are being sold as affordable housing units under the mortgage flexibilities support program created by the city, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. and Saskatchewan Housing Corp. Singles or couples with a total household income of less than \$44,500 or families with dependents with an income less than \$52,000 a year are eligible for the grant.

"These buildings were not only saved from demolition but were able to contribute to the city's affordable housing stock," said Allan Wallace, the city's senior neighbourhood planner.

"I don't think there's another city in Canada with this program."

The program is revenue neutral, since the five per cent grant is later recouped by diverting the property taxes back into the grant fund over several years until the participant has paid taxes equalling the grant.

The city is set on offering 50 new units of affordable housing for sale each year with its grant program, said Wallace.

"The vast majority of people buying into this are renters, and the majority are first Canadians," he said.

In the four months since they have been on the market, 43 of the Camponi Place townhouses have sold.

"This place is filling up pretty quickly," said Ahmed. "Already we have neighbours on both sides of us."

She is glad to be living in a quiet neighbourhood close to a grocery store, she said.

"I don't really like a lot of hustle bustle so I'm good with that. My son's school is not far away. I'm happy I moved in here."

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