



# Filling the gaps

URBAN PIONEER INFILL INC.  
DELIVERS SMART GROWTH  
TO EDMONTON



According to the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board (EMRB), Edmonton's metropolitan region will grow to between 1.96 million people and 2.24 million by 2044. This is higher than the city's population projection of two million, which was released in its City Plan in 2017. This growth will put pressure on housing supplies, rising prices, and the demand to develop more walkable communities. Having walkable neighbourhoods as part of sustainable urban design yields social, ecological, and economic benefits, and Bard Golightly of Urban Pioneer Infill believes in the approach that building infill projects that foster interconnectivity and well-being at the architectural and urban level.



Golightly brings more than 30 years of experience in the industry; having served as the past president of the Canadian Homebuilder Association (CHBA) and Chief Operating Officer for Christenson Developments.

“My experience particularly with the Christenson Group fed my interest and passion for revitalization. Christenson did a lot of re-development, and I became aware that this was a great way to help the city grow in a more responsible way,” he says. “Over time, with my partner, who also has over 30 years of experience, we decided to start Urban Pioneer Infill with the idea of being able to provide a high quality and environmentally responsible build. My experience with the Home Builders Association exposed me to a lot of good thinking about how housing doesn’t have to be the way it’s always been, which has been focused on continued outward growth. There is substantial housing stock in Edmonton’s mature neighbourhoods that has reached its useful life and needs to be replaced or rebuilt. In doing so, we can capitalize on the existing infrastructure. All these things attracted us to residential infill.”

### Pride in the details

Collaborating with their clients, whether for a new home or a renovation is paramount with Urban Pioneer Infill and they work hard to develop a dynamic response to the site and to their client. The company has streamlined the process to the highest degree, ensuring a building experience replete with integrity and a focused delivery.

“We build everything to a high standard, and we are both design and budget driven,” he says. “The collaboration with clients is very important and we spend a lot of time with them up front, working through the design to make sure they get what they want. And the other part is budget. We create very detailed budgets which work hand in hand with all design decisions. By the time we get to the design the client wants, we’ll have a full budget and contract for them explicitly laying out what they’re going to get with their home. We probably take a little longer than some other builders to get to that point, but what we’re trying to do is do our best to minimize surprises for the client.”



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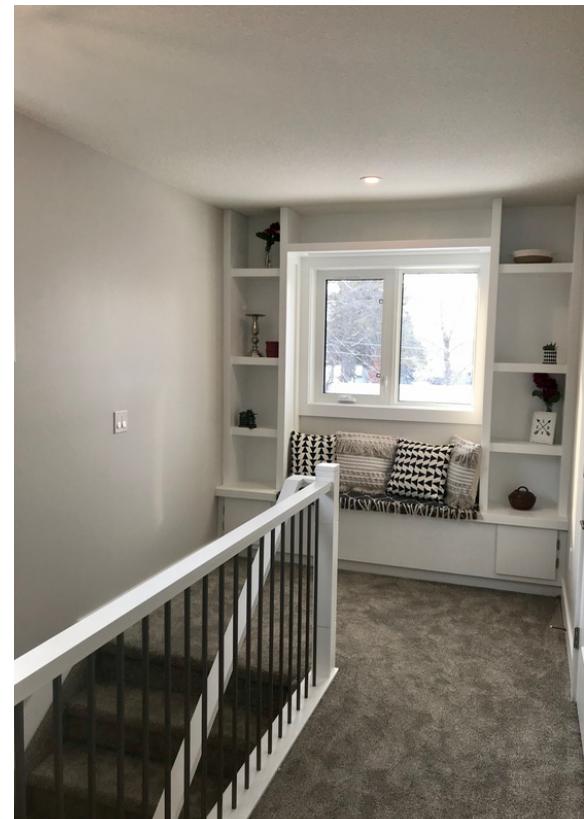
Urban Pioneer Infill takes its leadership duties seriously and is committed to developing communities that are environmentally friendly and energy efficient. "Everything we do is certified Built Green, which is an environmental building system for builders, we made a conscious decision to certify our homes. We use Built Green Canada's Third-Party Certification to meet the compliance requirements and energy performance. Our homes are more durable and more comfortable. Beyond using less energy, our homes use less water, less electricity, and improves indoor air quality."

Golightly credits Urban Pioneer Infill's success to the knowledge, skills, experience, and dedication of the partners, their team and roster of subcontractors they have built long lasting relationships with. "We're not a big company, we have a very tight team and have a strict set of criteria when we're designing the spec. We spend a lot of time internally going over the plans and making sure everybody understands what it is we're doing and what level of quality we want," he says. "We're very proud to say we have a very strong team of sub-trades, and we tend to be quite loyal to them. We communicate with our trades frequently about the project to ensure we are all on the same page and that together, we end up delivering high quality homes with every build."

### Architectural approach

For infill sites to achieve both livability and functionality, they need to be designed with great care and imagination. A key component of Golightly's philosophy is the importance of incorporating design elements within existing neighbourhoods that respect and enhance existing residential patterns and developments while reinforcing the structural and functional relationships of the neighbourhoods.

"When we contemplate buying a lot in an infill neighbourhood, the first thing we look at is the design aesthetics in that area. What's up and down the street, what's up and down the block, and what's in the neighbourhood overall. We don't copy, we compliment what's already there with a home offering what today's home buyer is looking for. After assessing the current surroundings that the spec will be integrated into, we determine the best creative approach that will help the home establish a connection with the surrounding area."





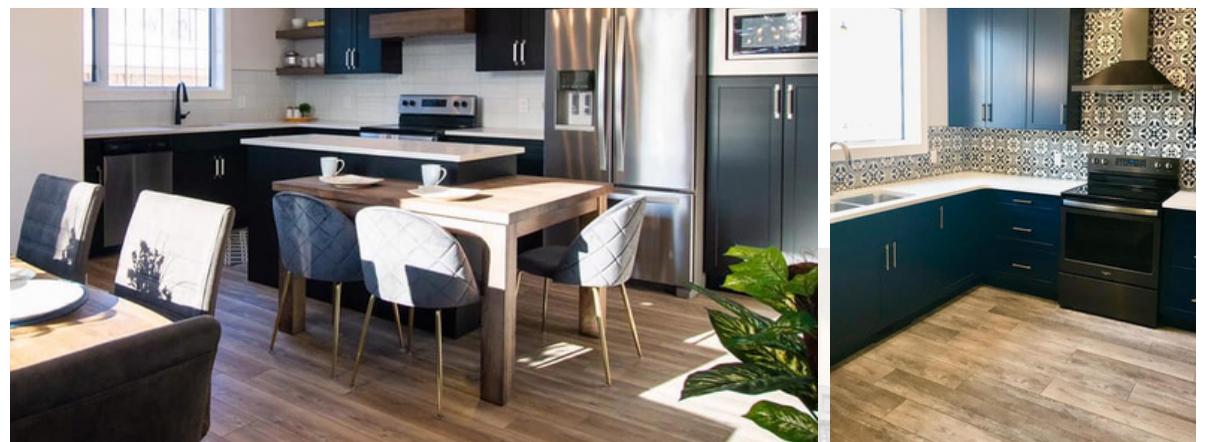
As an example, Golightly points to a recent duplex build - Fulton Place. Targeted to young professionals and mature adults, Fulton Place is in southeast Edmonton on a well-established residential block of mostly single detached homes built in the mid-to-late-1950s and early 1960s. "Fulton Place is a good example of combining an infill development with a mature neighbourhood. It has an impressive presence due to the treatment of the façade, which incorporates both wood cladding and brickwork that blends naturally into the existing neighbourhood design. That entire area is starting to change and revitalize either with new builds like what we're doing, or several people that are renovating their home in the neighbourhood."

### Leading the way

Infill construction can be a very challenging process that involves permitting, zoning, demolition, and sometimes, historical preservation challenges along with a good deal of diplomacy when dealing with planning/zoning officials and neighbours. For the process to succeed, it requires builders and local officials to work together to provide a broader diversity

of housing options and a flexible approach to infill development.

"In Edmonton, our city direction is to have a minimum 25% percent infill, so the city really does support and encourage infill development. We work almost exclusively on developing Class A applications required by the Edmonton Zoning Bylaw that centers around; single detached homes, or semi-detached homes, with the purpose of encouraging better construction practices and supports the city's Infill Roadmap. Part of our advantage is that we have 30 plus years' experience in this industry, so we have a long-standing relationship with the city. The processing times for infill builds do take longer, however the city is trying to improve the permitting process timelines and consistency. We won't colour outside the lines regarding pushing the height or the size of the house according to the city bylaw, and we work hard at introducing ourselves to the neighbours and making ourselves available when people have questions throughout the process."



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## Welcoming communities

As Edmonton's urban renewal specialist, Urban Pioneer Infill not only benefits from a streamlined process and commitment to high building standards within the company, but also from a clear and united approach when it comes to their short-term and long-term future. "We have a steady growth plan, and we're increasing our volume over the next 5 years. We have a site in the Inglewood neighbourhood where we're set to build a three-plex development which will be new for us. They will be stylish and affordable homes consisting of 3 two-storey units, 3 bedrooms, 2.5 bathrooms, with over 1500 square feet. With Inglewood, we can bring an outstanding project in a mature community that is very walkable and has easy access to the university area, downtown, and the river valley.

We're also exploring the idea of getting involved in the purpose-built rental market. Edmonton's rental market is experiencing a boom as home prices rise and younger adults look for homes that offer more flexibility and lifestyle options. It's tough, especially for the first-time home buyer to get into the market. So, as we develop our strengths and capacity, one of the things we're looking closely at is how we can deliver a variety of affordable program options to the market."

One thing that is sure to remain constant at Urban Pioneer Infill is the company's approach and clear vision for infill, redevelopment, and revitalization in areas targeted for growth and reinvestment. "We are very excited to be able to contribute to neighbourhood revitalization. Through our work we are creating thoughtful densification. This ultimately brings more people back into our mature areas and that means a positive impact across the community, including increased school enrolments, better use of local parks, as well as bringing in new and diverse clientele for existing and new local shops and services. All of this means more activity on the sidewalks as folks walk their dogs or stroll to the local coffee shop. Not only does this make great environmental sense, it also brings life and energy back into these well-established communities."



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