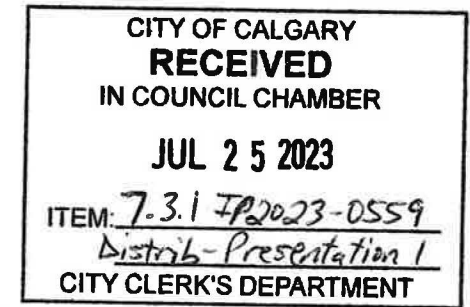


Sprawl is not an Affordability Strategy



Dr. Noel Keough

Associate Professor Emeritus, University of Calgary

Co-Founder, Sustainable Calgary Society

July 25, 2023

Agenda Item : IP2023-0559 amendments to the *Municipal Development Plan* and various Area Structure Plans

Sprawl is not an Affordability Strategy

I am in full agreement with the arguments put forth by Calgarians for Sensible Growth. There is no need to plan a strategy for choosing new suburban neighbourhoods, because we have more than enough land and new neighbourhoods in place. Even at current levels of new suburban neighbourhood inventory, the city is trending to exceed the new housing split mandated by the Municipal Development Plan.

In my submission I want to urge council to reject the prevailing myth that suburban sprawl, is an affordability strategy. The evidence does not support that assertion and in fact strongly suggests it burdens households with a higher cost of living, in addition to producing less healthy lifestyles, and more climate damaging CO2 emissions.



Sprawl is not an Affordability Strategy

1. The Centre for Neighbourhood Technology conducted research on the major US cities to gain insight into the cost of living. What they found, in almost every instance is that 'Drive 'til you qualify' is a myth. Combining the two largest household expenditures, Housing + Transportation demonstrated living in suburban communities far from the city centre is not an affordable living strategy. As distance from city centre increased so did the combined cost of housing + transportation.

Center for Neighborhood Technology (2010) Penny Wise Pound Foolish: New Measures of Housing + Transportation Affordability, Center for Neighbourhood Technology (March 2010), Chicago, USA.

Center for Neighborhood Technology, P. Haas, C. Makarewicz, A. Benedict, T.W. Sanchez, and C.J. Dawkins (2006) "Housing & Transportation Cost Trade-offs and Burdens of Working Households in 28 Metros." Center for Neighborhood Technology, Chicago, USA.

Sprawl is not an Affordability Strategy

2. Natural Resources Canada funded *The Urban Archetypes Project*, a study of 12 Calgary neighbourhoods from inner city to suburban. The study found that households located further from the city centre have higher rates of car ownership and drive more kilometres annually producing more GHG emissions.

Natural Resources Canada (2009) *The Urban Archetypes Project, Community Case Study: The City of Calgary*.
https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2009/nrcan/M154-15-3-2009E.pdf

Sprawl is not an Affordability Strategy

3. Statistics Canada – research based on census data demonstrates that across Canada the further from the city centre you live the more you use your car, the longer you spend driving and the more kilometres you travel. The study also showed that beyond 10 km from city centre increased neighbourhood density did not result in less driving.

Statistics Canada. **Dependence on cars in urban neighbourhoods.** <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-008-x/2008001/article/10503-eng.htm>

Public and Private Spending on Transportation

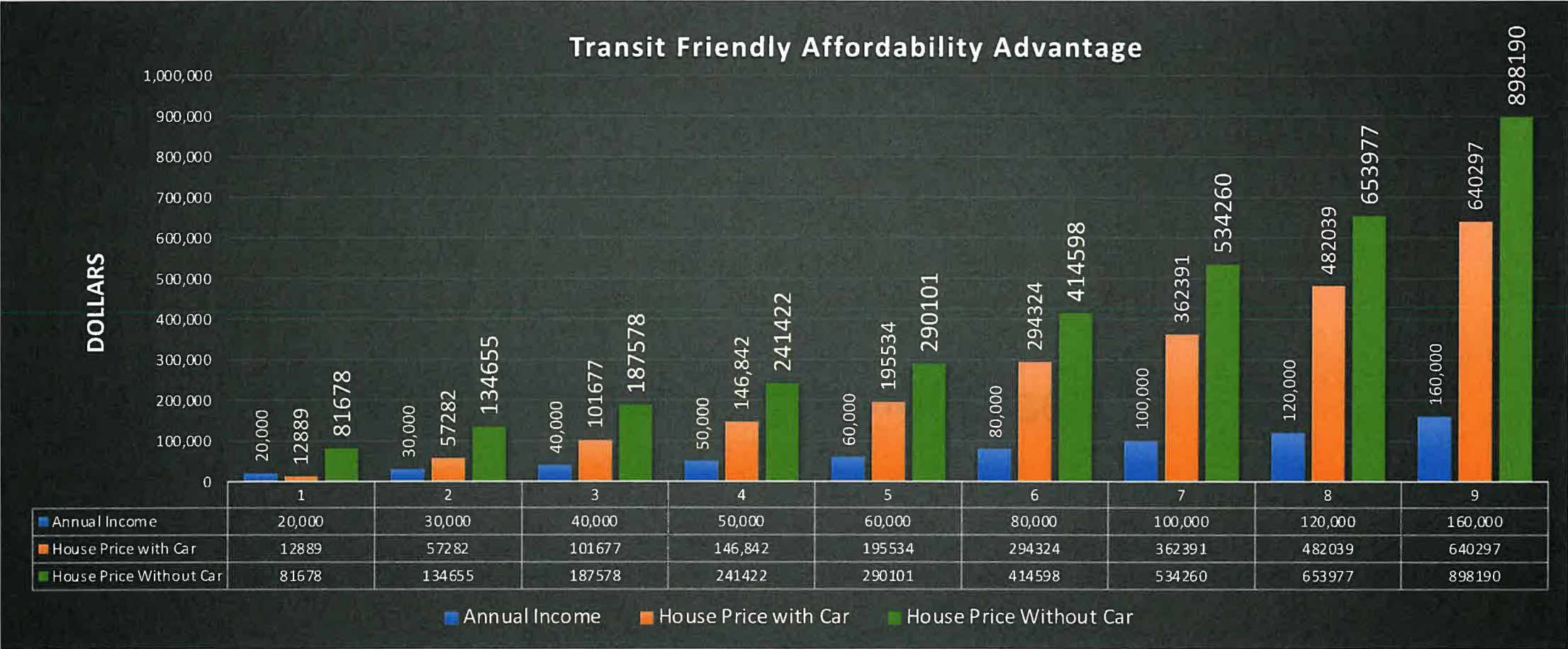
Building a city almost completely dependent on the private automobile obliges Calgarians to collectively spend at least 5 Billion annually on the purchase, fueling, insurance, and maintenance of cars, trucks and SUVs. For many Calgarians this is a significant financial burden. A city that prioritizes active and mass transit infrastructure, one that gives Calgarians the realistic option to choose not to purchase a private automobile, could save Calgarians billions annually.

Keough, Noel. **Final Report to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation** Project: Action Research on Transportation Housing Affordability CR File No.: 6585-K090 , June 30, 2011

Source	Amount
Federal government	\$75,000,000
Provincial government	\$1,750,000,000
Municipal government	\$5,200,000,000
Private Spending (Automobiles)	\$52,500,000,000
Total Spending	\$59,525,000,000
Social Costs	\$7,100,000,000
Total Cost	\$66,625,000,000

The CMHC-funded Action Research on Transportation Housing Affordability Findings

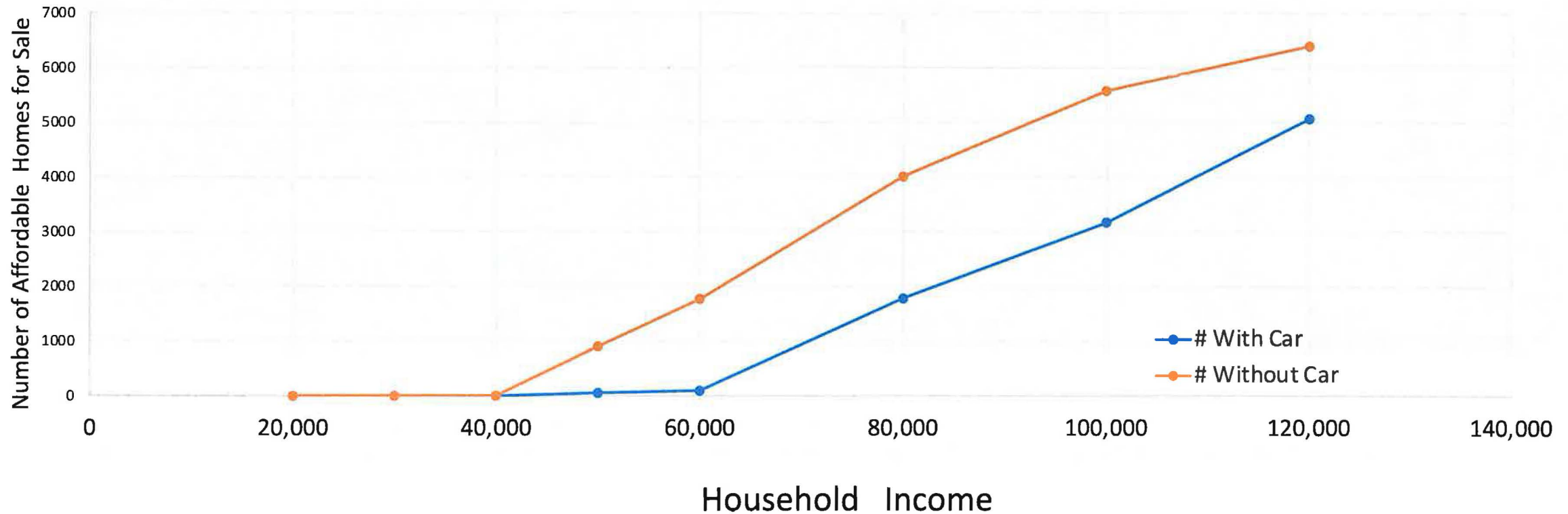
This graph shows the differential between the house price a family with various household incomes can afford when they are obliged to own an automobile versus when they have the option to direct money saved by living car free (or with one less car) toward housing.



The CMHC-funded Action Research on Transportation Housing Affordability Findings

This graph shows when households have a viable option to live car free (or with one less car) the number of homes for sale in Calgary on any given day, that they can afford increases significantly. The greatest increase in choice occurs for average and median income households.

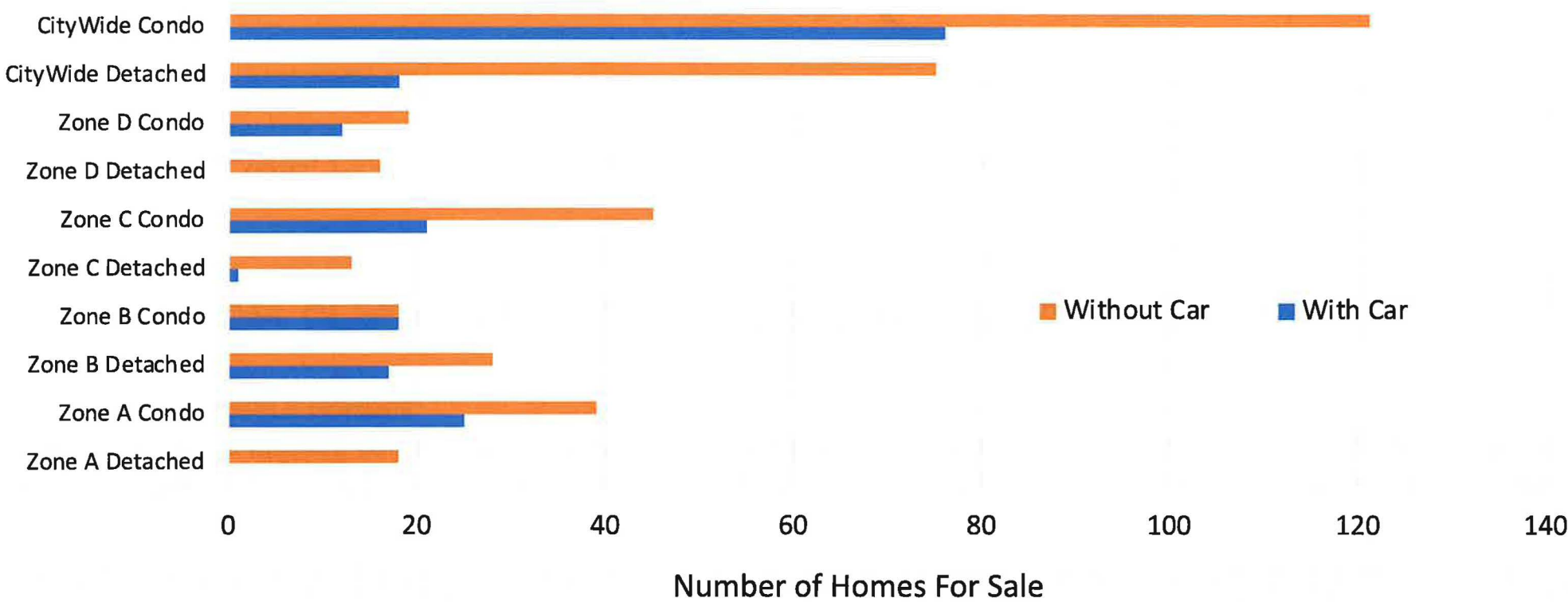
Affordable Homes for Sale June 27, 2011



The CMHC-funded Action Research on Transportation Housing Affordability Findings

This graph shows the differential between the actual number of homes for sale that families of various incomes can afford in each city quadrant when they have a viable option to live car free (or with one less car). With a car these modest income households can afford a detached home in only one quadrant, with a car free option, they have choices in every quadrant of the city.

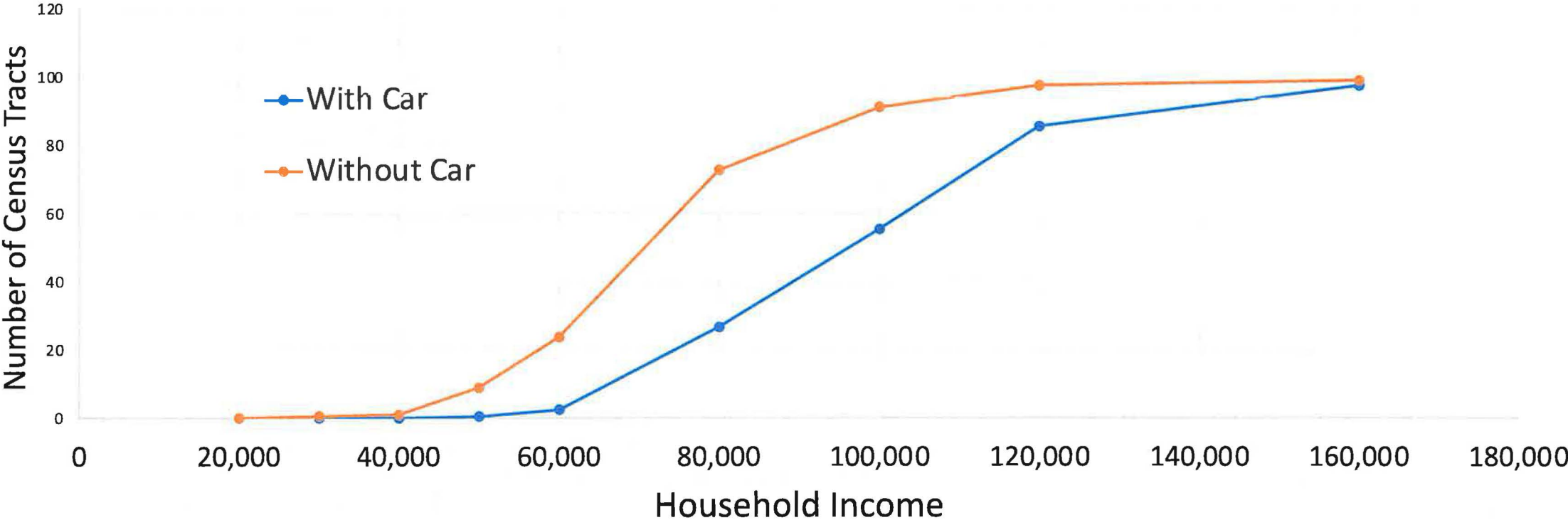
Affordable Homes for Sale at \$80,000 Annual Household Income by Quadrant/Zone



The CMHC-funded Action Research on Transportation Housing Affordability Findings

This graph shows the differential between the number of neighbourhoods a family with various household incomes can afford to buy in, when they are obliged to own an automobile versus when they have the option to direct money saved living car free (or with one less car) toward housing.

Number of Affordable Census Tracts (proxy for neighbourhood)



The CMHC-funded Action Research on Transportation Housing Affordability Findings

This graph shows the significant increase in affordable rental units in Calgary for various household income levels when families have the option to direct money saved living car free (or with one less car) toward housing.

Rental Units Available By Household Income

