Work in Progress:
West Broadway Housing Plan 2008-2012



Artwork by Art City Participant

Quality, affordable, safe housing is the cornerstone of neighbourhood revitalization and healthy communities. West Broadway has been a leader in Winnipeg, working to improve our aging housing stock and building energy efficient new housing. While successes can be measured, much more work remains to be done to turn West Broadway around as a safe, stable neighbourhood that meets the housing needs of our residents.

The West Broadway Housing Plan maps out the housing priorities for our neighbourhood using an evidence-based approach grounded in the most recent data and research on demographics, information on the housing stock, resident's priorities, focus groups and a review of recent literature. This plan was guided by the Housing Plan Advisory Committee, comprised of housing stakeholders and residents, and was coordinated by the West Broadway Development Corporation. Thank you to all of the residents and stakeholders who contributed to this report.

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The Housing Plan is funded by the City of Winnipeg's Housing Reinvestment Reserve which supports community-driven housing plans. West Broadway was designated a Housing Improvement Zone in 2000 due to the aging housing stock and housing needs of the area. The City of Winnipeg's Housing Policy (1999), encourages collaborations between communities, industry, private and non-profit housing sectors and government to maximize housing and neighbourhood renewal.

"By empowering those who live and function in declining communities, solutions will be grounded in neighbourhoods and will reflect the social, economic and cultural realities of the local populations" (City of Winnipeg Housing Policy, 1999: 2).

This is the second housing plan for West Broadway and it is a working document to be updated regularly. The first Housing Plan 2001-2003 guided the revitalization efforts in the community. Stakeholders recommended a new plan be developed to reflect changes that have occurred in the neighbourhood.

During the past decade, a small yet strong dedicated group of housing stakeholders has emerged and has been working diligently to renovate and build new units to meet the needs of residents. Indeed since 2000, 422 units in our neighbourhood have been renovated or built thanks to over $8.6 million dollars of public investment. Additionally, West Broadway community-based organizations have been supporting residents to find and retain housing that meets their needs. However West Broadway remains a fragile neighbourhood with continuing evidence of decline and poverty. Housing needs are many, and small not-for-profit groups are challenged to address these needs.

The housing crisis facing Canadian urban inner-city neighbourhoods is well demonstrated in West Broadway. The neighbourhood is home to a high proportion of populations vulnerable to poverty, such as Aboriginal people, recent immigrants, lone parents, youth-at-risk, people with mental illnesses and/or addictions, people with disabilities, and seniors. Indeed over

half of all residents live in core housing need (Census, 2001), defined by unsuitable accommodations, inadequate conditions and unaffordable costs. Addressing the needs of these residents, to reduce transience and improve the stability of the neighbourhood remains a priority.

Participants in consultations recognize that housing providers must have adequate capital to make improvements. However when this is done through exemptions to rent control at the Residential Tenancy Branch it can have consequences for tenants. Over 55% of all exemptions from rent controls in the inner-city were in West Broadway (RTB data 2000—2005). This has resulted in displacement of residents who could not afford the new rental rates. Low income residents on fixed incomes, Employment and Income Assistance, Disability or Employment Insurance cannot afford rising market rents. Residents are then forced to move, which has negative effects. For example children who move often change schools, which sets back their education. In order to address the affordability of housing, the provincial government must address the affordability gap. This can be done through rent supplements or raising the shelter allowance for those receiving government transfers to help residents remain where they want to live and not be required to move in search of less expensive accommodations.

West Broadway has one of the oldest and highest densities of housing in Winnipeg. Initial revitalization efforts were focused on home-renovations and ownership, which served an important role initially stabilizing the neighbourhood.

During the information-gathering and research process for this housing plan, it emerged that the highest need rests in Single Room Occupancy (SRO) dwellings, or Rooming Houses. While some licensed SROs are well kept and maintained, there is a significant

number of SRO's that are unsafe and derelict in need of repair.

At the same time, the need to address West Broadway's remaining vacant lots with infill housing continues to be a priority, along with maintaining the architectural heritage of the neighbourhood and renovating existing housing stock. Pockets of decline must be improved to salvage the housing stock and meet the needs for housing. Incentives for property improvements, such as exterior fix-up grants for dilapidated and aging apartments and houses are one means to this end.

Environmental sustainability is a priority in West Broadway since most of our houses and apartments require retrofitting to improve energy and water efficiency. West Broadway is an environmentally aware neighbourhood, for example many residents enjoy living here because of close proximity to transit routes, and ease of travel by bicycle or foot. This interest in environmentalism offers a potential to work with residents to learn what the priorities are, and what information and resources are needed to be more environmentally sustainable. Residents are also interested in improving access to green spaces and gardens, and require more information on where to find existing green spaces.

In order for the above priorities to have the greatest impact, research and residents point to the implementation of the principles of Community Economic Development (CED). This means hiring and sourcing locally where possible, for example.

Research shows that housing development can and will meet our needs when it is done through a comprehensive approach that improves the housing stock, creates employment opportunities, supports the local population and is environmentally sustainable. This can only be accomplished through collaborative partnerships between stakeholders to leaver the most resources toward the common goal of neighbourhood revitalization that is financially and socially sustainable. Social sustainability builds the skills and knowledge of residents and local organizations to act on our own behalf.

Challenge #2: Rooming houses are the lowest cost of housing on the market, and are more likely to be unsafe, inadequate, unsuitable and unaffordable.

Goal #2: To improve rooming house tenants' living conditions and quality of life by facilitating housing improvements and awareness programming and resources for landlords, tenants and caretakers.

Objectives

2.1: Develop a Rooming House Improvements Program for tenants and landlords (safety, living space, amenities, common areas, etc.).

2.2: Develop a education and training programs and workshops for landlords, caretakers and tenants.

2.3: Implement landlord Property Management Program in cooperation with the Tenant Landlord Cooperation Program.

2.4: Provide an education program for the implementation of the Green Indicators for energy efficiency and environmental sustainability in Rooming Houses

Challenge #3: Protecting and preserving the quality and character of the many apartment blocks and homes constructed at the turn of the 20th century and pressures to change zoning regulations.

Goal #3: To promote and maintain the historical integrity and architectural character of the neighbourhood housing stock and ensure that development and property improvement conforms to neighbourhood zoning regulations and land use patterns.

Objectives:

3.1: Encourage exterior house and apartment building improvements and promote property investment through the continuance of a small fix-up grants program: Property Improvement Program (PIP).

3.2: Develop a local endorsement policy and criteria for property redevelopment which reflects community tolerances (scale, mass and density of new and existing buildings), and encourages exterior finishes which reflect the historical nature of existing buildings.

3.3: Develop a local endorsement policy and criteria for major upgrades of apartment buildings and houses under the federal Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP).

3.4: Support landlord membership in the Tenant Landlord Cooperation Program.

3.5: Encourage CED principles in housing development.

3.6: Collaborate with housing stakeholders to develop and promote a housing heritage educational campaign.

3.7: Provide an education program for the implementation of the Green Indicators program for energy efficiency and environmental sustainability.

3.8: Develop a proposal for an energy efficiency and water conservation program for apartment buildings and houses Property Improvement Program for Efficiency (PIPE).

Challenge #4: Demolitions (voluntary and involuntary), increased surface parking lot, and commercial operations abandonment over the last seven years have resulted in an increasing number of privately held vacant lands. Many vacant lots are a dumping ground for litter, debris, refuge and are unutilized for alternative neighbourhood development.

Goal #4a: To promote alternative development through new infill housing projects and opportunities for non-profit housing providers, tenants and homeowners.

Goal #4b: To address resident and community concerns about available green space.

Objectives

4.1: Facilitate housing design charettes with West Broadway housing providers, green-building experts and housing development professionals.

4.2: Develop alternative housing forms and tenures that match household income, family size, housing need and choice (i.e. rental, rent-to-own, co-operative, co-housing and homeownership).

4.3: Construct a variety of infill housing projects on available vacant land in balance with greening priorities.

4.4: Develop a prioritized plan to improve access to green spaces in West Broadway.

Challenge #5: The many different housing stakeholders and residents have diverse needs and priorities. Coordination and collaboration are needed to addresses gaps and avoid duplication of activities and services.

Goal #5: Provide a Housing Development Coordinator for the West Broadway neighbourhood to ensure the long term and sustainable support to all aspects of housing: development and co-ordination with local housing providers and stakeholders; brokering funding; partner with housing providers and community agencies to address core housing need and environmental initiatives and provide support and advise on housing.

Objectives

5.1: Facilitate, co-ordinate and update the neighbourhood housing plan and facilitate housing stakeholder group meetings and oversee committees.

5.2: Work with housing providers, developers and building professionals to revitalize and sustain the housing stock.

5.3: Work with tenants, homeowners, apartment owners and businesses to research, design and develop long term sustainable infill and rehabilitation programs to improve investment properties and land use.

5.4: Design and develop funding proposals and co-ordinate the implementation of housing projects.

Please note this is a summary version of the Housing Plan.

Please refer to the full report for a detailed description.

Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative

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Housing
Greening
Good Food Club
Broadcaster community newspaper
Neighbourhood planning and coordination

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