Executive Policy Committee
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Report by
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Dilapidated housing, communities rife with crime and drugs, and neighborhoods characterized by low levels of capacity and social organization are among the most visible signatures of areas of concentrated poverty. These conditions are generally a result of social, physical and economic disinvestment. A significant component of the social and physical disinvestment in low income neighborhoods involves their housing stock. Although disinvestment often leads eventually to housing abandonment by the residents, and owners, many distressed properties continue to serve as homes. The number of people living in these conditions may well increase as a result of any changes to the public mandate to make decent, safe, affordable housing a priority to safeguard social needs.

For the past 7 or so years, the City has been contributing to the revitalization efforts to several low-income communities throughout Winnipeg City Centre. This financial investment along with social mobilization and community cooperation, has lead to an increase in extensively rehabilitated properties, produced new infill builds which in turn has provided much needed housing stock that these communities have lacked for many years. In part, this focus has alleviating social malaise and arrested decline and thereby stimulating market activities and attracting investment into these areas.

To address the severe deterioration that our inner cities were facing, the City initially began investing $250,000 dollars per year in what they politically determined as "Housing Improvement Zones" (HIZ). Slowly, William Whyte (WW), and North Point Douglas (NPD) residents, businesses and other stakeholders started to experience some positive effects from this investment. In 2006 the initial financial commitment was reduced to $160,000 per HIZ community to accommodate and include another community as a HIZ.

Just as the financial investment was starting to generate physical improvements, and economic spin offs, the financial investment reduction meant that these communities had to continue to battle the same war with less armory. It took several years for the communities to star seeing the transformation happen; Rome was not built in one day.

For the City to reduce its commitment now or even in the very immediate future would not be sound social or business decision. For instance, we have found that through our small renovation grants that for every City dollar invested in our communities, a large percentage is invested back into the program by program participants, which include residents and private landlords. In 2008 for example, the WW and NPD Exterior Fix up Grant program provided $60,000 in grants to resident homeowners and landlords to do small renovations to their properties.

In WW grant dollars paid out to resident and landlord program recipients was $72,604; recipients were required to contribute a minimum amount which amounted to $15,600; however recipients contributed $29,364 out of pocket which means the total program value or worth is actually $117,568. The City put in $30,000, the province put in $30,000 but the community stakeholders themselves invested in $57,568, almost 50%. That is just one community out of the five HIZ and this example is just one year out of six years.

PERCENTAGE OF OWNER-CONTRIBUTED DOLLARS FROM TOTAL PROJECT COSTS						
RESIDENT OWNERS	***WW***	***NPD***	***Dufferin***	***LSP***	***St. Johns***	***Total $/%***
Grant dollars paid	$60,604	$50,329	$20,992	$18,880	$18,581	$169,386
Required contribution	$3,600	$3,400	$1,300	$800	$1,800	$10,900
Voluntary contribution	$21,263	$37,128	$18,724	$1,047	$8,192	$86,354
Total project costs	***$85,468***	***$90,856***	***$41,015***	***$20,728***	***$28,573***	**$266,640**
Required contribution % of total project cost	4%	4%	3%	4%	6%	**4%**
Voluntary contribution % of total project cost	25%	41%	46%	5%	29%	**32%**
Total contribution % of total cost	**29%**	**45%**	**49%**	**9%**	**35%**	**36%**
LANDLORDS						
Grant dollars paid	$12,000	20,856	$5,895	$8,998	$8,753	**$56,502**
Required contribution	$12,000	20,856	$5,895	$8,998	$8,753	**$56,502**
Voluntary contribution	$8,101	5,881	$3,187	$7,840	$3,459	**$28,467**
Total project costs	***$32,101***	***$47,594***	***$14,977***	***$25,836***	***$20,964***	**$141,471**
Required contribution % of total project cost	37%	44%	39%	35%	42%	**40%**
Voluntary contribution % of total project cost	25%	12%	21%	30%	16%	**20%**
Total contribution % of total cost	***63%***	***56%***	***61%***	***65%***	***58%***	***60%***
RESIDENT & LANDLORD						
Total grant dollars	$72,604	$71,185	$26,887	$27,878	$27,334	**$225,888**
Total Required contribution	$15,600	$24,256	$7,195	$9,798	$10,553	**$67,402**
Total voluntary contribution	$29,364	$43,008	$21,911	$8,887	$11,651	**$114,821**
Total project costs	**$117,568**	**$138,450**	**$55,992**	**$46,564**	**$49,538**	**$408,112**
% of total required contributions	13%	18%	13%	21%	21%	**17%**
% of total voluntary contributions	25%	31%	39%	19%	24%	**28%**
Total % of owner contributions	**38%**	**49%**	**52%**	**40%**	**45%**	**45%**

Simply put, the investment in this program alone from the City, Province and community property owners is a sound business decision because the investment is producing the intended effects-- housing rejuvenation, and thus community revitalization.

But even though we say positives changes and transformations are happening, the HIZ communities still have a long road ahead. We're at a major cross roads-- if the government were to begin the disinvestment process now or even next year, these communities would most certainly slip back into deterioration. The government plays a crucial role in our communities.

If the time comes that the City should decide to revamp our existing housing budget, the community needs to be consulted. The residents who endure the discomforts of these plague communities, need to be apart of any discussions and decisions that impact them the most.

We have appreciated to commitment we've received from the previous and current administration, no doubt about it. However we are requesting that the budget not be reduced, and that should we come to a point where budget reductions or cuts have to be made, that you take the time to consult with your partners-- the community, who are your biggest stakeholders.

Thank you for your time.