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CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES
MANITOBA

Rising rents, condo conversions, and Winnipeg's inner city

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Introduction

The idea for this paper grew out of conversations between the CCPA-MB and our community partners about the housing challenges facing low-income renters. In addition to the usual challenges of *finding* affordable, good quality housing that meets their needs, many low-income tenants have trouble *maintaining* their housing, often because their rents increase sharply or their units are converted to condominiums.

Community organizations are concerned about the impact of these changes, not only on the individuals and families who are directly affected, but also on the wider community as rents increase and lower-income households may be displaced.

To learn more about this phenomenon, we examine three inner city neighbourhoods: West Broadway, Spence and Daniel McIntyre. The

first part of the research was conducted by Ellen Smirl, and looked at the quantitative reality of condo conversions and rent increases due to renovations in the West Broadway, Spence and Daniel McIntyre neighbourhoods. It was originally published in the 2010 *State of the Inner City* report.

The second part of the research looks at low-income renters' housing experiences. Karen De Blonde and Sharon Young interviewed residents to learn about their experiences of rent increases and condo conversions. Sarah Cooper analysed the results to show the impact of these on households in these three neighbourhoods.

Both reports offer recommendations about how to improve the current situation, particularly for those low-income renters who have fewer options to address their housing needs.

Squeezed Out: The Impact of Rising Rents and Condo Conversions on Inner-City Neighbourhoods

By Ellen Smirl with Clark Brownlee, Brian Grant,
Glen Koroluk, Shauna MacKinnon, Gord McIntyre
and Don Miedema

Shelter is widely recognized as a “fundamental indicator of health” (MacKinnon, 2010: 13) contributing to a community’s social well-being by “provid[ing] a sense of security, permanency, and continuity” (MacKinnon, 2010: 13). Rental housing is particularly important in urban communities. It provides an option for individuals and families who are financially unable to purchase their own homes as well as those who would prefer to rent.

Unfortunately, Manitoba’s rental housing market has seen a dramatic decrease in accessibility and affordability in recent years. The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) noted in its Spring 2010 report that Manitoba’s vacancy rate stood at 1 per cent, a rate that persistently remains among the lowest amidst Canadian provinces (CMHC, Spring 2010a).

Throughout the six years of conducting research for our *State of the Inner City* reports, individuals and organizations have consistently

told us that housing is the most pressing issue in their neighbourhoods.

This year we have heard these concerns again. Our community partners in three inner-city neighbourhoods have raised very specific concerns about the shrinking supply of rental housing. The goal of this report is to examine more closely the rental-housing situation in three inner-city neighbourhoods: West Broadway, Spence and Daniel McIntyre.

Preliminary research tells us that low-income residents in these neighbourhoods are particularly vulnerable to displacement because of some disturbing trends. For example, it appears that there is a growing number of units for which rent is being raised beyond the annual guidelines set by the Manitoba government.

The *Manitoba Residential Tenancies Act* regulates rents to guard against drastic increases. However, over the years the Act has been amended to include provisions allowing landlords to

Note: This report is updated from its original publication in *We’re in it for the Long Haul: State of the Inner City Report 2010* (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Manitoba, 2010).

increase rent beyond the guidelines. As will be described further, this has become a problem for low-income renters in the context of a tight rental market. When demand is high and supply is low, it makes sense for property owners to do what is necessary to be awarded above guideline increases as they are sure to find renters willing to pay the price. Many are doing just this, but as will be described further, the effect is not entirely positive.

A secondary concern explored in this report is what appears to be a growing trend to convert rental housing into condominiums (condos). Because our community partners expressed concerns about condo conversions in their neighbourhoods, it was our aim to quantify the magnitude of this activity in each of the three neighbourhoods. To our surprise, this information was surprisingly difficult to obtain, but we were able to collect enough information and data to see a trend emerging.

In this report we paint a picture of the magnitude of the housing challenge by first examining the demand side of the housing market in each of the three neighbourhoods to more clearly illustrate the characteristics of individuals and

families in relation to their current and future housing need. We follow with an assessment of the housing supply including availability, condition and types of rental housing available, as well as the changes taking place related to the rental housing stock in each specific neighbourhood.

Understanding housing demand in the context of housing supply is critical. Affordable rental stock is being lost through apartment-to-condo conversion as well as through the increasing number of rental units being affected by above guideline rent increases. The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) noted in its fall 2009 report that between October 2008 and October 2009 more than 250 rental units were permanently removed from Winnipeg's rental universe due to condominium conversion or conversion to alternative uses. Additionally, between 25 and 30 per cent of rental units received above guideline rent increases (CMHC, 2009: 5). These changes, combined with data from the CMHC that shows Winnipeg's rental vacancy rate is already at an extremely low 1.1 per cent, make housing the top concern of our community partners and the reason for our ongoing investigation into this matter in our *State of the Inner City* research.

Rent Regulation: A Hot Debate

The idea behind rent regulations, or rent ‘controls’, is that government needs to protect those who rely on lower-rent housing to meet their shelter needs. Rent controls are meant to contribute to the security of tenure so that tenants don’t face unpredictable rent increases.

Mainstream economists have been almost unanimous in their opposition to rent control, stating that it discourages new housing production (Arnott, 1995: 99). However, this consensus

appears to diminish when variations on regulatory models are examined more closely. There is an increasing recognition that rent controls vary dramatically in their characteristics and as such there is great difficulty in drawing generalized conclusions regarding the costs and benefits of rent control (Ellingsen & Englund, 2003; Arnott, 1995; Turner & Malpezzi, 2003) (see Box 1 for a description of different forms of rent control).

Box 1: Types of Rent Regulations

First Generation:

- Controls often involve a freeze on rents without taking consideration of costs or price.
- Generally established during emergencies to prevent landlords from taking advantage of a sudden scarcity of housing.
- These types of controls were enacted during both World Wars.

Second Generation (Manitoba’s type):

- Involve more complex provisions and restrictions governing rents, rental increases, conversion, maintenance, and landlord-tenant relations.
- Generally allow for automatic percentage rent increases in relation to the rate of inflation.
- Generally permit a higher percentage rental increases in accordance with meeting certain criteria.
- Often exempt certain categories of housing from rent increase restrictions, i.e. housing constructed after application of controls and high-rent units.

Third Generation:

- Rents are regulated within the tenure.
- Rents remain the same for residing tenant, but can be increased between tenants.
- Also known as ‘tenancy termed control’.

Increasingly, the literature on rent control has begun to acknowledge that perfect market conditions do not exist within the housing market (Arnott, 1995; Ellingsen & Englund, 2003), and as such, arguments that are based on the assumption that the market will effectively regulate itself without government intervention may be faulty. Such failings require regulation that prevents landlords from abusing the imperfect nature of the housing market.

While in theory Manitoba's rent regulations ensure security of tenure, this security becomes meaningless if it is not accompanied by regulations that prevent landlords from raising rents beyond what people can afford.

Rent regulation in Manitoba

In Manitoba, rents are regulated through the provincial *Residential Tenancies Act*. The Act allows landlords to increase rents annually by an amount set by the Residential Tenancies Branch (RTB); this allowable increase is termed the 'guideline'. The 2010 guideline was set at 1 percent and the 2011 guideline will be 1.5 percent, taking effect on January 1st 2011. As noted, within the legislation there are legitimate ways for landlords to work around these guidelines. Landlords can increase their rents above the provincially set guideline by applying for an above-

guideline rent increase through the RTB. In order to qualify for a rent increase above the guideline landlords must present their operating expenses (e.g. property taxes, utility bills, repair costs) and their capital expenses (e.g. how much it costs to replace the roof or buy new appliances) to the RTB to demonstrate that the guideline increase will not cover their expenses. The legislation requires that these expenses be incurred for work completed prior to application (i.e. a landlord cannot apply for an above guideline increase for work that they plan to do in the future).

The Act also exempts buildings constructed after March 7, 2005, for a period of 20 years. Units renting for higher than \$1,130 per month are also exempt.

While most renters welcome improvements to their units, the ability of landlords to increase rents above the guideline once renovations have occurred puts many renters in a difficult situation. Tenants are often forced to leave while buildings undergo renovations but are given right of first refusal once units are ready to be re-inhabited (see Box 2 for an overview of tenants' rights prior to renovations). But returning once work is completed becomes impossible for many tenants who are unable to afford the higher rent. In a low vacancy market, landlords are not affected because they have no difficulty attracting tenants willing to pay the higher rates.

Box 2: Tenants' rights prior to renovations

(Applies regardless of whether going condo or renovating suites for rent)

Prior to renovation, a landlord is obliged to:

- 1) Give at least 5 months notice from the time of the end of the lease when the vacancy rate is below 2 per cent. When the vacancy rate is at 2-2.9 per cent 4 months notice is required and 3 months are required when the vacancy rate is higher than 3 per cent.
- 2) Pay the tenants' moving costs up to \$500.00. This can be paid to a moving company, or to an individual who helps with moving (e.g. friends). It can also be used to rent a moving van. Also included is the cost of utility changes (hooking up telephone, cable, internet etc.) and change of address costs incurred at the post-office.

Tenants also have the right of first refusal, which means that they have the first option to move back into to the suite post-renovation. Once the renovations have occurred the landlord will most likely apply for an above guideline increase and as such, rents in the building will increase in relation to the costs of renovation. If the tenant chooses to exercise the right of first refusal, s/he must provide the landlord with written intent (generally prior to the termination of the lease).

When this phenomenon occurs within low-income neighbourhoods the result is the displacement of low-income renters. Not only do they lose their homes, but they find it extremely difficult to find decent and affordable alternative housing because it is in such short supply.

An additional concern with the current regulatory framework is the unclear criteria regarding what constitutes ‘renovation’. There appears to be too much potential for landlords to avoid regular maintenance, allowing their properties to deteriorate to a state where they are then required to do more significant renovations and thus qualify for an above guideline rent increase. The extent to which this practice is occurring requires further investigation.

Manitoba in the broader context

The Manitoba government is under constant pressure to eliminate rent regulation completely. Deregulation proponents argue that the shortage of rental units is directly attributable to rent regulation. However, Canadian provinces without rent regulations have similar challenges. This demonstrates that eliminating rent controls as a primary strategy will not effectively moderate price or supply. The two major centres in Saskatchewan, a province that deregulated rent control in 1992, are facing housing crises similar to Manitoba’s; Regina is currently facing a vacancy rate of 0.8 per cent, the second lowest rate in Canada’s Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA) and Saskatoon has had an average rent increase of \$53 between April 2009 and April 2010 (CMHC, Spring 2010b).

Traditional critiques of rent control promote the abolishment of regulation in favour of market-based mechanisms. However it is low and middle-income renters who face the greatest difficulty in finding affordable units, and a deregulated rental market would not encourage development of housing for this group. It is simply not profitable to do so (MacKinnon, 2008).

Apartment to condominium conversion

The practice of converting existing apartments into condominiums (condos) is becoming increasingly common. Condos can provide a viable housing option to entry-level buyers who may not qualify for the purchase of a detached home, as well as buyers who prefer homeownership with fewer maintenance responsibilities. Condominium development is appealing because it is high-density, making it a particularly appealing model for urban centres trying to contain urban sprawl. However, in a tight rental market, we create additional market challenges when we replace one form of housing tenure for another. As will be described further, this is why many cities have put regulations in place to control condo conversion when rental vacancies are low. Increasing housing options by adding units through new condo construction and the conversion of non-residential buildings into condos is another matter and should be highly encouraged to increase housing density and options.

Manitoba does not regulate the conversion of condominiums and in a market where housing prices are rising and rental availability is low, some rental property owners are realizing lucrative profits by converting their buildings into condominiums, thereby contributing to the shrinking supply of rental units.

The Condominium Act currently includes minimal consideration of individuals who would be affected by condo conversions. In Manitoba, under the *Condominium Act*, once a landlord has registered the building as a condominium, the original tenant has the ‘right to first return’: the right to continue to occupy the unit as a renter for a period of no fewer than two years and no more than the period of time the suite was occupied prior to the date of registration if that period is greater than two years. The tenant still pays the pre-conversion rent including any allowed rent increases. Even if the tenants face no contractual barriers—and there is concern that loopholes exist to this protection—to re-entering the suite

post-condo, the rental increase is almost certainly out of the price range of lower-income earners.

As noted, some Canadian cities have enacted legislation that prevents the conversion of existing rental units into condos when the vacancy rate dips below a certain level (see Box 3). This type of legislation is meant to address the greater possibility of displacement that accompanies lower vacancy rates. In Regina, a city that has recently experienced a steep decline in availability of rental units, regulations stipulate that if the vacancy rate is lower than 3 per cent in either the city as a whole or the neighbourhood where the property is located, conversion of rental properties into condominiums is not allowed (City of Regina, 2012). If 75 per cent or more of the tenants support the conversion however, it may be allowed to proceed (City of Regina, 2012). Regina has had a policy on condo conversion since 1994 and is currently reviewing its policy on condo conversion and has enacted a moratorium on all future conversions until the review is complete (City of Regina, 2012).

Recent changes to the Manitoba *Condominium Act* stipulate that a tenant must be given 5 months notice to vacate the rental unit (but the tenant still maintains the right of first return) when the vacancy rate is lower than 2 per cent (CBC 2010), and that municipalities have the option of limiting conversions of rental units when the vacancy rate is low (Province of Manitoba 2011). However, the City of Winnipeg does not currently have a policy regulating the conversion of existing rental units into condos. A motion put forward at City Hall in April 2010 requesting recommendations

to examine the desirability of developing a condo conversion policy was rejected.

While the 2009 fall rental market survey (CMHC, 2009: 4,5) marked the first year-over-year increase in the size of the rental market in six years (an increase of 755 units), a major source of these additions were units that had been temporarily removed for renovations and as such mark an “artificial gain in the universe count” (CMHC, Fall 2009: 4). More importantly, there were more than 250 permanent removals from the rental universe between 2008 and 2009 (CMHC, 2009: 5). These losses represent units that were converted to condominium or alternative use and will not be returning to the rental market.

CMHC estimates that between 1992 and 2009, Winnipeg’s private rental stock saw a decline from 57,279 units to 53,154, for a net loss of 4,125 units. This net loss includes the 5,473 condo conversions that occurred in the same period. As there is no change in zoning required for condo development and no formal mechanism that tracks conversion at the municipal level, it is difficult to determine at the neighbourhood level the number of buildings that are being or have been converted. This lack of available data poses serious impediments to the creation of policy recommendations that will prove effective in maintaining and creating both affordable and adequate housing options, particularly in the low-income neighbourhoods examined within this report.

Rental housing and the inner city

Originally defined by the 1980s Core Area Initiative, Winnipeg’s inner city encompasses the

Box 3: Canadian cities with condo conversion policies

Victoria: no conversions are allowed when apartment vacancies are below 2 per cent.

Vancouver: conversion of buildings with more than 4 units are not allowed when the vacancy rate is below 4 per cent

Kelowna: no conversions are allowed when vacancy rate is below 4 per cent

Ottawa: no conversions are allowed when vacancy rate is below 3 per cent

Toronto: has legislation to protect from condo conversions for existing rental property with more than 6 units

geographic area shown in Figure 1. The following section details the demographics of the inner city, including Spence, Daniel McIntyre and West Broadway neighbourhoods, followed by an assessment of the state of rental housing in these areas. Boundary lines of each neighbourhood are shown in Fig. 1.

As seen in Table 1, the City of Winnipeg has seen slow to marginal growth since 1971, growing by 31.2 per cent between 1966 and 1996 (CCPA-MB, 2008: 29). Comparatively, Winnipeg’s inner city saw a decline of 25.5 per cent during that same period (CCPA-MB, 2008: 29). However, between 2001 and 2006 the three neighbourhoods saw a reversal to the trend of decreasing population, with Spence experiencing the largest increase of 13.6 per cent (Table 1). While lack of research prevents attributing Spence’s population increase to

any identifiable cause, given its close proximity to West Broadway—which has seen increasing displacement amongst low-income renters—there is concern amongst housing advocates in both Spence and Daniel McIntyre that rapid population growth within these areas may result in displacement of low-income area residents.

It is important to note the increased incidence of low-income status in inner city neighbourhoods compared to the City of Winnipeg in general (Table 2). Canada does not have an official poverty line but the most commonly used measurement when quantifying poverty is Statistics Canada’s Low-Income Cut Off (LICO). LICO is an income level at/below which a family spends a greater percentage of income on food, clothing and shelter than the average family of similar size. If a family spends 20 percentage points more of its total

FIGURE 1 Neighbourhood boundary lines

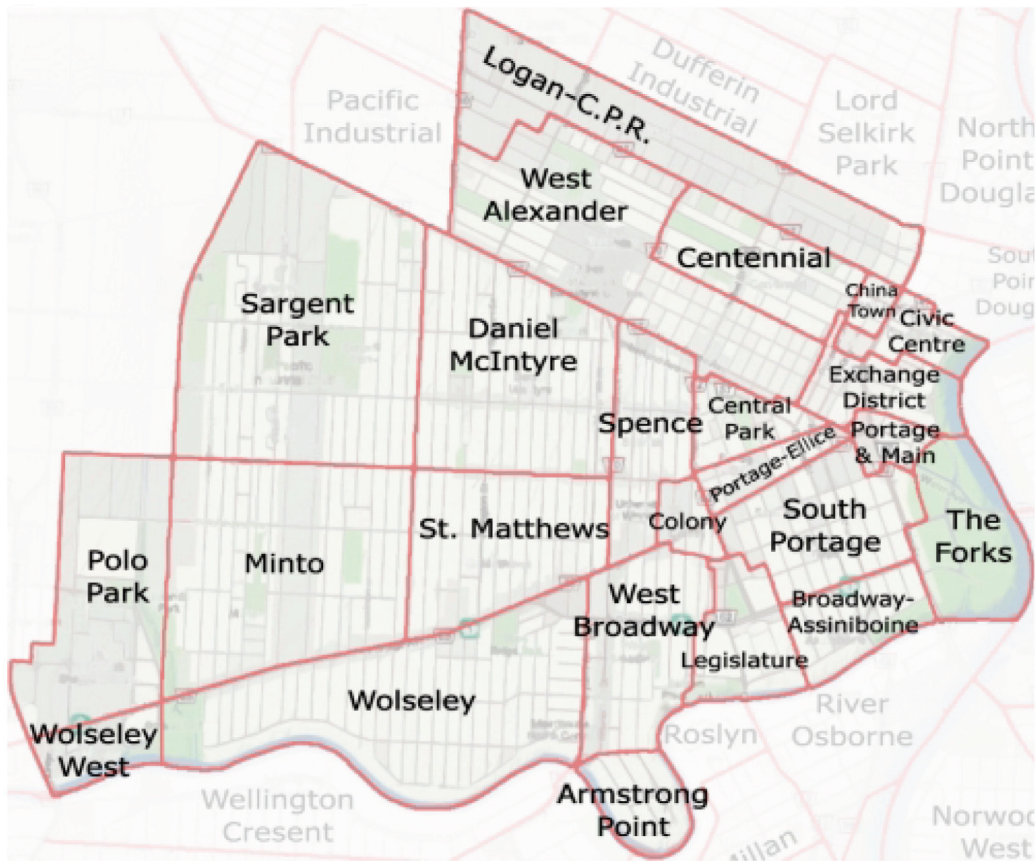


TABLE 1 Population changes: Spence, Daniel McIntyre, West Broadway and Winnipeg

Year	Spence		Daniel McIntyre		West Broadway		City of Winnipeg	
	Number*	% Change**	Number*	% Change**	Number*	% Change**	Number*	% Change**
2006	4,260	13.6 %	9,750	0.3 %	5,325	5.6 %	633,451	2.2 %
2001	3,750	-4.8 %	9,725	-1.6 %	5,045	-2.8 %	619,544	0.2 %
1996	3,940	-19.1 %	9,885	-5.0 %	5,190	-4.9 %	618,477	0.5 %
1991	4,870	-4.8 %	10,400	-5.1 %	5,455	-16.7 %	615,215	3.5 %
1986***	5,115	4.5 %	10,960	4.7 %	6,545	24.9 %	594,555	5.3 %
1981	4,895	-1.7 %	10,470	-3.4 %	5,240	0.8 %	564,475	0.6 %
1976	4,980	-20.1 %	10,840	-5.8 %	5,200	-22.9 %	560,875	4.8 %
1971	6,230		11,505		6,745		535,100	

SOURCE: City of Winnipeg and Statistics Canada, 2009, Winnipeg Neighbourhood Profiles.

* Includes non-institutional population only

** Change in percent from previous census year

*** Headingley is included in Winnipeg figures up to 1986

TABLE 2 Incidence of low income: West Broadway, Daniel McIntyre, Spence, & City of Winnipeg

Incidence of low income* in 2005 after taxes	West Broadway	Daniel McIntyre	Spence	City of Winnipeg
Total Economic Families	52.4 %	30.3 %	42.2 %	11.1 %
Female lone-parent economic families	64.7 %	55.1 %	61.4 %	33.6 %
Male lone-parent economic families	77.8 %	38.9 %	15.4 %	18.1 %
Couple economic families	40.8 %	20.8 %	32.7 %	6.4 %
Children under 6 years of age	86.8 %	53.5 %	60.2 %	25.9 %
Male Unattached individuals (15 years +)	57.5 %	53.2 %	66.9 %	34.5 %
Female Unattached Individuals	64.9 %	51.0 %	82.4 %	35.1 %

SOURCE: City of Winnipeg and Statistics Canada, 2009, Winnipeg Neighbourhood Profiles

* While this category existed prior to 2006, the breakdown of the groups within the category was different and as such cannot be compared to previous years and has not included prior years.

income on essentials (food, clothes, shelter) than the average family, then it falls below the LICO.

Families, individuals and children in Spence, Daniel McIntyre, and West Broadway are at greater risk of experiencing poverty than families living in Winnipeg in general (Table 2). These data are important when examining rental housing trends. Individuals who fall into the low-income category are the most vulnerable to displacement due to rising rent costs and lowered vacancy rates, both of which are currently occurring in Winnipeg and both of which result in fewer safe and affordable housing options.

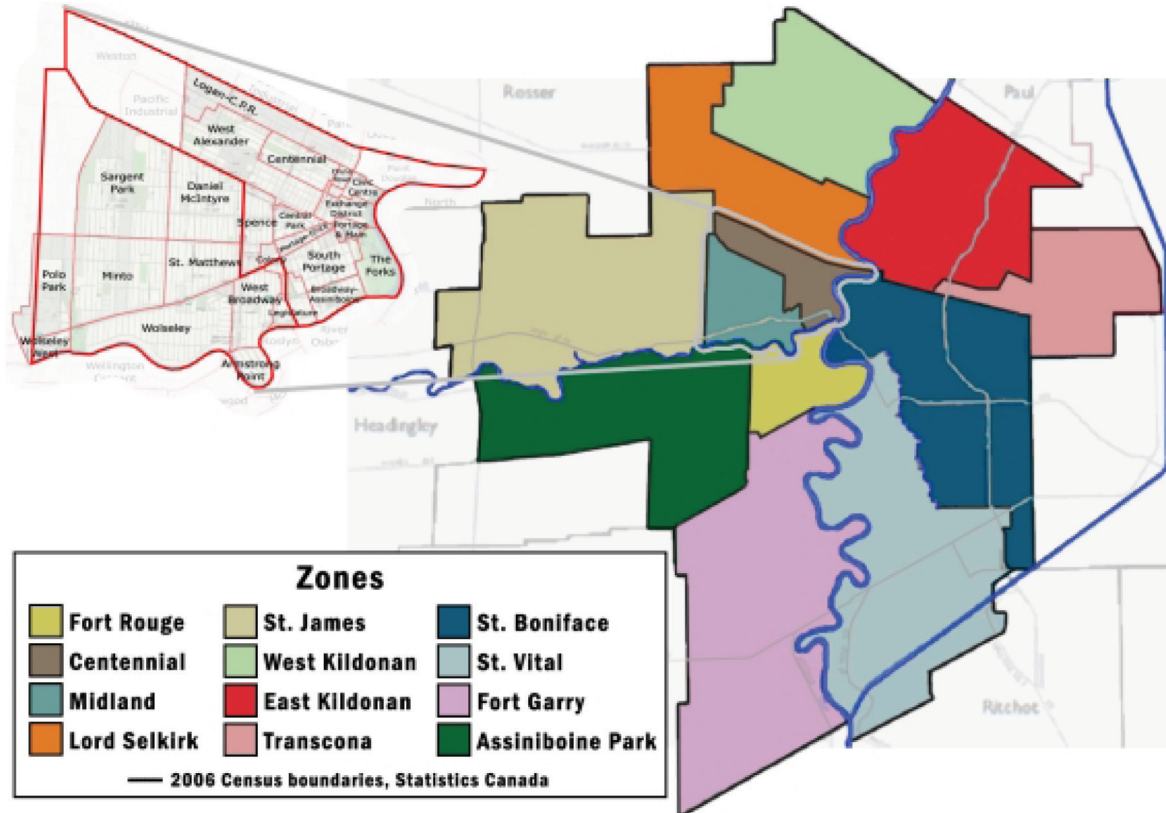
In a rental market characterized by extremely low vacancy rates, lower-income tenants may be directly displaced via condo conversion or through

the conversion of rooming houses to single-family dwellings. Additionally, low-income earners risk being indirectly displaced by the rising rents caused by increasing demand combined with reduced housing supply (Anonymous, 1988).

Core housing need

Core housing need describes households or individuals who face greater barriers to accessing adequate housing. Households in core housing need include individuals who reside in housing that has one or a combination of the following characteristics: in need of major repairs; does not have enough bedrooms to provide for the size of the household or; costs 30 percent or more of total before-tax income. As noted by Statistics Canada the primary

FIGURE 2 CMHC Midland and Centennial zones



cause of most households falling into core housing need is affordability (Statistics Canada 2005).

Rent increases and core housing need in inner-city ‘zones’

The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) reports on vacancy rates and rent increases in urban neighbourhoods using zones established by Statistics Canada. The zones do not correspond directly to the three neighbourhoods examined in this report, however the three neighbourhoods are encompassed within two of the zones used in the CMHC reports and data pertaining to each zone can give an indication of overall trends (see Figure 2). The Midland zone encompasses both Daniel McIntyre and West Broadway and is bounded by:

- North/East: Notre Dame Avenue; Sherbrook St. to Portage Ave., Portage to Osborne St., to Assiniboine River;

- South: Assiniboine River;
- West: St. James St.

Spence Neighbourhood is encompassed within Centennial Zone which is bounded by:

- North: C.P. Rail Winnipeg Yards;
- East: Red River;
- South: Assiniboine to Osborne St., north on Osborne to Portage Ave., Portage to Sherbrook St., Sherbrook to Notre Dame Ave.;
- West: Keewatin St.

Data from CMHC should be examined with the recognition that while these neighbourhoods are encompassed within the CMHC zones, other neighbourhoods with differing characteristics are also represented within these data and as such any conclusions drawn should be applied with caution when referring to the individual neighbourhoods.

TABLE 3 Average rents, 2007-2009: Midland zone

	Average Rent Bachelor	Average Rent 1 Bedroom	Average Rent 2 Bedroom	Average Rent 3 Bedroom
2009	\$438	\$507	\$657	\$788
2008	\$434	\$494	\$595	*
2007	\$426	\$494	\$582	\$632

SOURCE: CMHC Rental Market Report, 2008, 2009

* Data suppressed to protect confidentiality or data is not statistically reliable

TABLE 4 Average rents, 2007-2009: Centennial zone (Spence is within the Centennial Zone)

	Average Rent Bachelor	Average Rent 1 Bedroom	Average Rent 2 Bedroom	Average Rent 3 Bedroom
2009	\$432	\$596	\$820	*
2008	\$476	\$580	\$782	\$826
2007	\$469	\$566	\$768	*

SOURCE: CMHC Rental Market Report, 2008, 2009

*Data suppressed to protect confidentiality or data is not statistically reliable

TABLE 5 Median income 2006, Single individuals

	Spence	West Broadway	Daniel McIntyre	City of Winnipeg
2001	\$12,296	\$13,622	\$15,539	Data unavailable
2006	\$13,346	\$14,371	\$17,642	\$26,016

SOURCE: City of Winnipeg and Statistics Canada, 2009, Winnipeg Neighbourhood Profiles

When examining average rent increases (Table 3) both in the Midland Zone and Centennial zone (Table 4) as well as within the greater city of Winnipeg, it is interesting to note that the moderate level rent increases seem to contradict claims that low-level income earners are being priced out of the rental market. Additionally, a marginal increase in median income has occurred in all neighbourhoods (Table 5).

However, what marginal rent increases may obscure is the large number of people already spending more than 30 per cent of their income on housing and shelter costs (Table 6). In both Spence and Daniel McIntyre, 43.6 per cent and 43.5 per cent respectively of tenant-occupied households were spending more than 30 per cent of their income on shelter compared to 37.3 per cent in the city of Winnipeg (Table 6). West Broadway has 45.8 per cent of tenant occupied households in core housing need. If an individual or family is already falling into core housing need, even

a marginal increase in rent will take additional funds away from other necessities such as food. It is also important to note that while CMHC surveys landlords regarding average rent increases, response is not mandatory. Within smaller rental universes even one or two failures to respond can result in a skewed result and as such may not give an entirely accurate depiction of the true nature of the number of renters facing increased rents.

All three neighbourhoods have seen a decrease in the number of tenant occupied households falling into core housing need between 1996 and 2006 (Table 6). While on the surface this appears to be a positive trend, there is more we need to know. For example we don't know if the decrease of renters in core housing need is attributable to improved circumstances for residents. In fact it is more likely that the shrinking supply of low-cost rental housing has displaced low-income residents and made way for an influx of new higher-income renters. While general statistics show fewer people in the

TABLE 6 Tenant occupied households spending 30 per cent or more household income on shelter

	Spence	West Broadway	Daniel McIntyre	City of Winnipeg
1996	58 %	64.7 %	48.2 %	43.5 %
2001	47.6 %	52.7 %	43.5 %	38.0 %
2006	43.6 %	45.8 %	43.5 %	37.3 %

SOURCE: City of Winnipeg and Statistics Canada, 2009, Winnipeg Neighbourhood Profiles

TABLE 7 Rent increases in Winnipeg CMA 1999-2009

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Bachelor	\$337	\$339	\$357	\$378	\$379	\$388	\$405	\$420	\$451	\$464	\$447
All	\$500	\$514	\$521	\$537	\$554	\$568	\$589	\$608	\$638	\$663	\$690

SOURCE: CMHC Rental Market Reports-Winnipeg CMA1999-2009

TABLE 8 Annual EIA rates

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Single employable adult	\$5,352	\$5,352	\$5,352	\$5,352	\$5,352	\$5,572	\$5,592	\$5,592	\$5,592	6,816
Per cent of total EIA spent on rent	76 %	76 %	80 %	85 %	85 %	84 %	87 %	90 %	97 %	82 %

SOURCE: Social Planning Committee of Winnipeg

neighbourhood experiencing core housing need, they do not tell us who these people are and/or the length of their tenure in the neighbourhood. To better understand these data, further research regarding changes to the specific incomes of the population of each neighbourhood, length of tenure and in/out migration of individuals and families is needed. Additionally, it may be useful to examine any migration trends occurring among people on social assistance as those are generally the first to be displaced because of an increasingly competitive rental market.

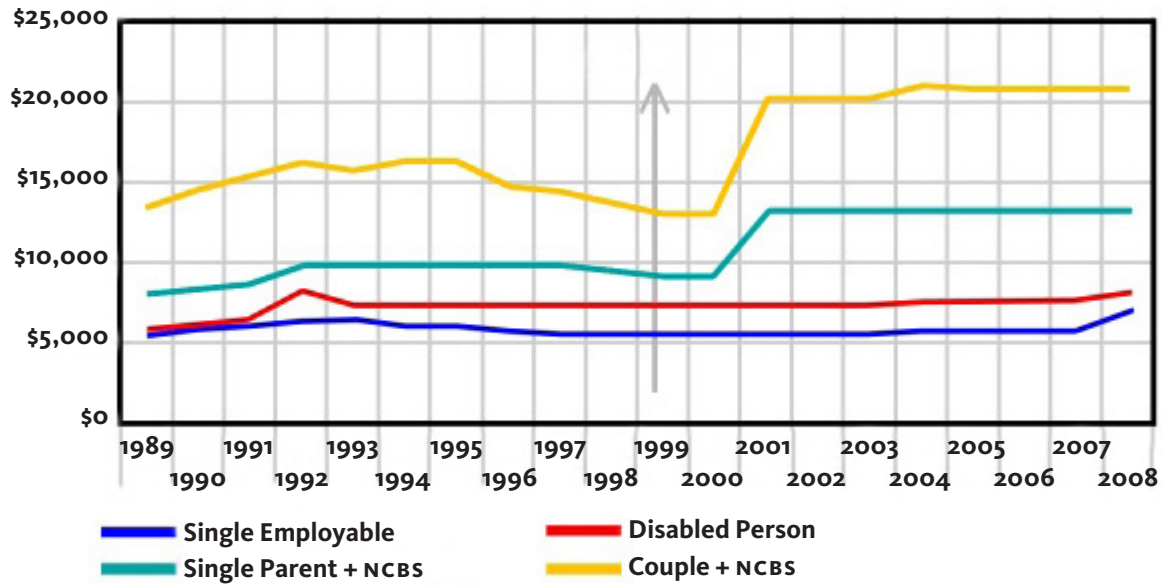
EIA and rent increases

Individuals on Employment Income Assistance (EIA) consistently remain in a high level of core housing need. Over a ten-year period, average welfare rates for single and disabled persons have remained relatively stagnant (Fig. 3) and shelter allowances remain much lower than average rents (Tables 7 and 8). The percentage of income that welfare recipients spent on shelter has ranged from 76 per cent in 1999, to a high of 97 per cent in 2007 (Table 8).

The current basic rent allowance that is provided by welfare for a single adult per month is \$285 (including heat, electricity and water; see Table 9) while the average gross rent for a bachelor within the Midland Zone is \$438/month (Table 3), which leaves a gap of \$153. If an adult with no disabilities and no dependents were to rent an average bachelor suite within any of the three neighbourhoods (\$486), they would, on average, be spending 71 per cent of their total monthly income (of \$616.40) on shelter, 2.3 times the amount required to qualify as being in core-housing need. Renting a bachelor outside of the inner city would constitute 78 per cent of their monthly allowance leaving a mere \$130.40 dollars for food and other necessities. Anecdotal evidence suggests that individuals on EIA are using some of their food allowance monies to 'top up' their shelter allowance and then frequenting food banks or finding other methods to compensate for the resulting shortfall.

These data demonstrate the high level of shelter insecurity that individuals on EIA face. In examining these numbers, questions arise as to

FIGURE 3 Basic Social Assistance Rates (with NCBS), Manitoba, 1989-2010



SOURCE: Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

where people on EIA are living, and in what kind of conditions, if they can't afford even a bachelor suite. Further questions arise regarding where these residents will go if the low-income rental units that do exist are eliminated in favour of higher-end rentals or condo conversions.

While it may not be all that surprising that persons on EIA would have difficulty finding affordable housing given that EIA rates have been slow to increase relative to the rental market, minimum wage is also insufficient to elevate an individual from core-housing need (in all housing types). An individual working 40 hours per week at the 2010 minimum wage of \$9.50 per hour would be spending 32 per cent of her before-tax income on shelter if she were renting an average bachelor suite in the city of Winnipeg (Table 10). These data dispel the myth that getting people off EIA and into entry-level jobs will improve the living conditions of low-income individuals.

New immigrant population

In 2008, 11,221 new immigrants entered Manitoba (Province of Manitoba 2008). The MB government has announced a target of 20,000 new

immigrants per year over the next ten years (Province of Manitoba 2008). New arrivals tend to initially occupy the rental housing market, which has raised concern that the vacancy rate will only get lower if sufficient new housing is not created in proportion to new arrivals.

It is important to note that there are different demographic groups that make up the immigrant population. Those who constitute the "immigrant" categories tend to have more job-market skills, maintain higher levels of education and literacy, and tend to transition fairly quickly from the renter market into the homeownership market. Alternatively, those defined as "refugees" tend to have lower levels of job-place skills, low levels of literacy and they tend to occupy the rental market for longer periods. Often many refugees have spent time in refugee camps, sometimes years, where they were prevented from attaining a formal education and from acquiring job skills and work experience. Many refugee families cannot afford to buy a house even four years after arrival in Canada (Carter & Osborne, 2009: 317) and as such, contribute to an already tight rental housing market. Refugees in particular

TABLE 9 EIA shelter assistance 2010

Family Size	Basic Rent Allowance	Rent with Heat, Lights and Water
1 Person	\$243	\$285
2 Persons	\$285	\$387
3 Persons	\$310	\$430
4 Persons	\$351	\$471
5 Persons	\$371	\$488
6 Persons	\$387	\$513

SOURCE: Province of Manitoba, 2012

TABLE 10 Comparison of average rents in the city of Winnipeg, 2007-2010

Average Rent Bachelor		Average Rent 1 Bedroom		Average Rent 2 Bedroom		Average Rent 3 Bedroom	
Oct 07	Apr 10	Oct 07	Apr 10	Oct 07	Apr 10	Oct 07	Apr 10
\$451	\$486	\$578	\$633	\$740	\$816	\$874	\$978

SOURCE: CMHC Rental Market Report-Winnipeg CMA, Fall 2009

face great difficulties in their search for affordable and safe housing which results in many of them settling into inner-city neighbourhoods (Carter & Osborne, 2009: 309).

Because their familial makeup tends to be larger and younger, overcrowding is a major concern for refugee families, many of whom need three and four bedroom units (Carter & Osborne, 2009: 312). However these larger units make up only 2 per cent of the rental universe in Winnipeg (CMHC, Spring 2010: 5). It should also be noted that larger units can allow families to live more affordably as they can house a greater number of people able to contribute to monthly shelter costs (Distasio, 2003).

While there are no data in the Canadian census to identify refugees from the greater immigrant population and track where they settle, a recent study found that 80 per cent of new immigrants and refugees are spatially concentrated in the inner city. Additionally, 85 per cent of new arrivals have incomes below the LICO with approximately 64 per cent being unemployed at the time of arrival, further limiting access to adequate and affordable housing (Carter & Osborne, 2009: 312). Empirical evidence suggests that inadequate housing inhibits proper inte-

gration, resulting in “poor health, educational and employment opportunities” (Carter & Osborne, 2009: 309).

The 2010 provincial budget included funding to create 400 additional social housing units as part of the government’s strategy to create 1,500 units in the province over the next five years (Province of Manitoba date unknown). This move is a positive step towards an increase in the number of housing units but falls short of providing the 1000 units a year over five years that housing advocates estimate is needed to keep up with demand. When the contention that housing is “one of the most important determinants of health” (MacKinnon, 2010: 139) is positioned against the shortage of affordable and adequate rental stock in, it becomes evident that a safe, affordable housing supply is much more than a matter of real estate. Housing policy has the potential to either negatively or positively impact the health of whole communities, and can set the stage for healthy integration of new Canadians.

Aboriginal population

Spence, West Broadway and Daniel McIntyre all have much higher rates of Aboriginal population than the areas outside of the inner city

TABLE 11 Aboriginal population*

Aboriginal Identity**	Spence	West Broadway	Daniel McIntyre	City of Winnipeg
1996	28 %	27.8 %	15.4 %	7.1 %
2001	32.3 %	26.4 %	19.3 %	9.6 %
2006	30.9 %	23.9 %	17.2 %	11.2 %

SOURCE: City of Winnipeg and Statistics Canada, 2004, 2009, Winnipeg Neighbourhood Profiles

* In 2001, the categories for counting Aboriginal populations changed between 1996 and 2001. In 1996 the category was 'Aboriginal population', in 2001, the category broke into two: 'Aboriginal Origin' and 'Aboriginal Identity'. In 2006 the category of 'Aboriginal Origin' was further changed to 'Aboriginal Ancestry'. To best compare data Table 12 comprises the 1996 Aboriginal population, Aboriginal Origin category in 2001 and 2006's Aboriginal Ancestry.

** This category includes Métis single response, North American Indian single response, Inuit single response, multiple Aboriginal response, and Aboriginal responses not included elsewhere.

TABLE 12 Aboriginal and overall household poverty rates (before tax): Winnipeg and Winnipeg's Inner City, 1996-2006

Year	Households in poverty in Winnipeg	Aboriginal households in poverty	Aboriginal poverty compared with non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal households in poverty in inner city
1996	28.4 per cent	64.7 per cent	2.27 per cent	80.3 per cent
2001	24.7 per cent	53.7 per cent	2.17 per cent	71.3 per cent
2006	20.2 per cent	46.0 per cent	2.27 per cent	65.0 per cent

SOURCE: State of the Inner City Report 2009, CCPA-MB

(Table 11). From the increased occurrence of poverty amongst Aboriginal households (Table 12), it can be hypothesized that Aboriginal populations within these neighbourhoods experience a higher level of vulnerability when the rental supply is reduced. It has also been noted that the overlapping concentration between the Aboriginal and recent immigrant population in the inner city has “[set] the stage for the competition for affordable housing amongst the two groups” (Carter & Osborne, 2009: 321) and that the two groups tend to compete for “very few units, generally of lower quality and at prices that are higher than they can afford” (Carter & Osborne, 2009: 321, 312).

Aboriginal populations in Manitoba have been demonstrated to have a greater risk of becoming and remaining homeless when moving to urban centres such as Winnipeg (Mulligan, 2008: 6). It has been estimated that 75–80 per cent of the homeless in Winnipeg are of Aboriginal descent (Mulligan, 2008: 6).

Aboriginal and refugee populations are more likely to experience low-income status and occupy positions as renters within the housing

market. These two combined factors increase vulnerability to homelessness and demonstrate the need to maintain existing and create new rental units that prove both affordable and accessible to these groups.

As demonstrated by the high percentage of low-income residents in all three neighbourhoods, there is a strong need for quality affordable housing in each area. Areas and residents vulnerable to displacement are in need of effective strategy to mitigate harmful consequences. Despite prevalent reports of the negative aspects of Winnipeg's inner city, area residents report a number of positive aspects including centrality of location, proximity of family and a strong feeling of community, and have frequently expressed the desire to remain in the inner city.

The following section will examine the demographics specific to residents of Spence, Daniel McIntyre and West Broadway in relation to one another as well as within the broader context of the city of Winnipeg. This section will expose the vulnerabilities that many within this group experience when trying to secure affordable and adequate housing.

West Broadway

This is what a lone parent living in West Broadway said when she received a notice from the landlord that the rent would increase. The quote is from an article called, *Where Exactly Are We All Supposed to Go?* (March/April 2010 edition of *The Broadcaster*):

Everyone was shocked and outraged. They applied for an increase nearly 9%. This would translate into an increase of between 50-80 dollars more monthly for tenants here... my daughter is not quite school age, and my income is very low and very fixed—it's real difficult. My rent went up by about \$50 a month. That's about \$600 more out of my pocket every year. When you're living below the poverty line—this new rent is a huge chunk.

West Broadway is bounded by: Portage Ave. on the north; Osborne St. on the east; the Assiniboine River and Cornish Ave. on the south and Maryland St. on the west. Located in close proximity to downtown, an expanding university campus and surrounding neighbourhoods with greater economic security, West Broadway is a neighbourhood noted for its vulnerability to gentrification (Silver, 2006). The displacement of low-income earners as a result of increasing rents and a shrinking housing supply is a primary concern to housing advocates in West Broadway.

Changes in housing stock and dwelling tenure (Tables 13 and 14) tell an interesting story in West Broadway. Even with a decline in the number of units being rented over the ten-year period, West Broadway remains a neighbourhood with an extremely high number of renters (92.8 per cent) compared to owners (7.2 per cent) (Table 14). However, these data—combined with anecdotal observations made by community advocates and members—indicate a trending within West Broadway towards ownership. The number of units that were owned increased during both census periods, for a total of 65 units over the ten-year period.

As noted in the previous section, the number of households experiencing core housing need has decreased in West Broadway (Table 16) but still remains high with 45.8 per cent of tenant occupied households in West Broadway spending 30 per cent or more on shelter. Changes made to the 2006 Census prevents comparison of individuals within each income bracket and as such, it is difficult to determine whether the decrease in the number of people falling into core-housing need is indicative of improvement in low-income status or rather is the result of displacement of low-income earners in favour of higher-income groups. However, the median income has remained extremely low (\$14,371) in comparison

TABLE 13 Changes in West Broadway housing stock

West Broadway	1996	2001	2006	Total +/-1996-2006
Apartment	2,555	2,575	2,530	-25
Apartment-detached duplex	145	195	160	+15
Single-detached house	190	225	175	-15
Semi-detached house	30	30	30	None
Row house	35	35	30	-5
Total # units	2,955	3,060	2,925	-20

SOURCE: City of Winnipeg and Statistics Canada 2009, West Broadway Neighbourhood Profile

TABLE 14 Dwelling tenure changes, West Broadway

	West Broadway			Winnipeg		
	1996	2001	2006	1996	2001	2006
Owners	4.8 %	6.2 %	7.2 %	62 %	63.6 %	65.1 %
Renters	95.2 %	93.8 %	92.8 %	38.0 %	36.4 %	34.9 %

SOURCE: City of Winnipeg and Statistics Canada, 2004, 2009, West Broadway Neighbourhood Profile

TABLE 15 Average gross rent in West Broadway

	1996	2001	2006
West Broadway	\$382	\$493	\$451

SOURCE: City of Winnipeg and Statistics Canada, 2004, 2009, West Broadway Neighbourhood Profile

TABLE 16 Tenant occupied households spending 30 per cent or more of household income

	West Broadway
1996	64.7 per cent
2001	52.7 per cent
2006	45.8 per cent

SOURCE: City of Winnipeg and Statistics Canada, 2004, 2009, West Broadway Neighbourhood Profile

to the greater city of Winnipeg (\$26,016) and as such would seem to indicate that a large portion of individuals within West Broadway still face economic hardship. The median income remains at a level which would dictate that average shelter costs fall below \$359.28 per month in order to escape core-housing need.

Since 2005, West Broadway has been affected by more than twice the number of above-guideline increases than the other two inner city neighbourhoods (Tables 17 and 18). Between 2005 and 2010, 1,355 units were affected by above guideline rent

increases in West Broadway (Tables 17 and 18). The average rent increase granted above the guideline in West Broadway was 15.15 per cent (Tables 17 and 18). The large amount of capital invested (Table 18) indicates that the approvals were primarily large-scale renovations. Many units within West Broadway are being renovated and landlords are allowed to raise rents well above the provincial guideline, ultimately shrinking the supply of units that are affordable to low-income earners.

According to our community partners, the conversion of rooming houses to single-fami-

**TABLE 17 Rent increase applications in West Broadway & Spence from October 2005 to September 2008
(Data unavailable for Daniel McIntyre)**

Neighbourhood	# Of Rental Units Affected	# Of Applications	Total Capital	Average Capital	Average Rent Increase Requested	Average Rent Increase Granted
Spence	328	14	\$1,077,730	\$76,981	23.9 %	17.4 %
West Broadway	882	31	\$1,820,046	\$58,711	17 %	15.1 %

SOURCE: State of the Inner City Report 2008

TABLE 18 Rent increase applications in West Broadway, Spence & Daniel McIntyre from October 2008 to March 2010

Neighbourhood	# Of Complexes Affected	# Of Rental Units Affected	# Of Applications	Total Capital	Average Capital	Average Rent Increase Requested	Average Rent Increase Granted
Spence	5	85	6	\$179,951	\$29,991.83	16 %	9.2 %
West Broadway	17	473	20	\$1,686,572	\$84,328.60	19.3 %	15.2 %
Daniel McIntyre	4	82	5	\$145,023	\$29,004.60	11.4 %	11.3 %

SOURCE: Manitoba Residential Tenancies Branch

TABLE 19 Private apartment vacancy rates (per cent) by bedroom type, Midland Zone

	Bachelor		1 Bedroom		2 Bedroom		3 Bedroom +		Total	
	Oct 08	Oct 09	Oct 08	Oct 09	Oct 08	Oct 09	Oct 08	Oct 09	Oct 08	Oct 09
Midland Zone	1.3 %	2.0 %	1.5 %	1.4 %	1.4 %	0.9 %	*	*	1.4	1.4

SOURCE: CMHC Fall 2009. Vacancy data is unavailable specific to neighbourhoods; Midland Zone includes the Daniel McIntyre and West Broadway neighbourhoods.

* Data suppressed to protect confidentiality or data is not statistically reliable

ly dwellings poses great potential for displacement because of the generally low-income status of most rooming-house residents. One owner in West Broadway recently converted two rooming houses (14 suites) into high-end rental suites resulting in the eviction of all of the tenants. Lack of financial security means that individuals who live in rooming houses are very often one step away from being homeless. Concerns similarly exist in West Broadway regarding the conversion of ex-

isting apartment rentals into condominiums. The City does not issue specific permits for the conversion of rental units to condominiums, nor is there a change in zoning when converting from a rental unit to condominium. The lack of tracking by the City makes it difficult to identify the number of units that have been or are going to be, converted specifically within West Broadway. Nonetheless, West Broadway Renewal Corporation estimates that there has been a loss of 27 rental units since 2003.

Spence

At Spence Neighbourhood Association, we are finding it important to recognize all community members as being part of the community association. Tenants are as important as homeowners, which means that not all our projects can focus on homeownership as the panacea for community improvement. We are refocusing our effort on developing new rental stock and improving existing rental buildings in an effort to keep rents affordable. We want to do our best at community improvement without displacement. This means a greater focus on people rather than buildings. Development that is more concerned with community appearance fails to take in consideration the needs of all the people who live there.

Don Miedema

—Spence Neighbourhood Association

The Spence Neighbourhood is bounded by Portage Ave. on the south; Notre Dame Ave. on the north; Balmoral St. on the east and Sherbrook St. on the west. Between 2000 and 2008, Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA) and partner agencies created more than 200 housing units in Spence, either through infill or renovation projects (CCPA-MB, 2008: 81). During this period, 99 rental units and 45 owner-occupied houses

were renovated, and 16 new rental units and 42 new private ownership houses were added to the housing universe (CCPA-MB, 2008: 81). It should be noted that the approximately 200 units were created on/from vacant lots or vacant buildings and did not reduce the rental housing stock. Despite an emphasis by the SNA towards homeownership during this period, the area has actually seen a decrease in home-ownership and an increase in the number of renters (Table 20). Primary concerns in Spence neighbourhood include both the disappearance of rental stock through condo conversions, as well as increases in rents through above guideline increases.

While anecdotes about the decreasing rental stock in inner city neighbourhoods abound, when initially examining the data, all dwelling types have actually increased in number with the exception of apartment-detached duplex, which lost 95 units between 1996 and 2006 (Table 21). An overall gain of 175 apartment units, and an increase of five row houses represent a positive step in the neighbourhood. However, the remaining increases arose in the single-detached house (+45) and semi-detached house (+45) both of which, even if they are included in the rental pool, are likely to be unaffordable for most low-income renters. The total number

TABLE 20 Dwelling tenure changes: Spence Neighbourhood & City of Winnipeg

	Spence			City of Winnipeg		
	1996	2001	2006	1996	2001	2006
Owners	19.4 %	18.5 %	17.5 %	62 %	63.6 %	65.1 %
Renters	80.6 %	81.5 %	82.5 %	38 %	36.4 %	34.9 %

SOURCE: City of Winnipeg and Statistics Canada, 2004, 2009, Spence Neighbourhood Profile

TABLE 21 Changes in Spence Neighbourhood housing stock

Spence	1996	2001	2006	Total +/- 1996-2006
Apartment	1050	1120	1,225	+175
Apartment-detached duplex	210	165	115	-95
Single-detached house	320	315	365	+45
Semi-detached house	0	25	45	+45
Row house	10	15	15	+5
Total # units	1595	1640	1765	+170

SOURCE: City of Winnipeg and Statistics Canada, 2004, 2009, Spence Neighbourhood Profile

TABLE 22 Private apartment vacancy rates (per cent) by bedroom type, Centennial zone

	Bachelor		1 Bedroom		2 Bedroom		3 Bedroom +		Total	
	Oct 08	Oct 09	Oct 08	Oct 09	Oct 08	Oct 09	Oct 08	Oct 09	Oct 08	Oct 09
Centennial Zone	3.1	3.0	0.8	1.7	1.7	1.5	3.7	**	1.5	1.9

SOURCE: CMHC Fall 2009. Data is unavailable specific to neighbourhoods concerning vacancy rates. Centennial Zone includes Spence neighbourhood.

** Data suppressed to protect confidentiality or data is not statistically reliable.

TABLE 23 Tenant occupied households spending 30 per cent or more of household income

	Spence (overall)	Renters	Homeowners
1996	64.7 %	58.0 %	25.4 %
2001	52.7 %	47.6 %	14.8 %
2006	45.8 %	43.6 %	7.9 %

SOURCE: City of Winnipeg and Statistics Canada, 2004, 2009, Spence Neighbourhood Profile

of units increased by 130 within a ten-year period, however an increase in population of 320 people over the same period demonstrates that despite positive steps in increasing the number of rental units, the increase is insufficient to meet the increasing demand. The lowered vacancy rate noted in the CMHC fall 2009 rental report fluctuated between a high of 3.0 per cent (bachelor) to a low of 0.0 (3 bedroom) while the

overall average vacancy rate was 1.9 per cent (Table 22) demonstrating that any gain in supply of rental units has not been sufficient to meet the demand. As losses and gains may represent artificial fluctuations in the housing stock due to units being removed for renovations or being added back post-renovations, a more accurate tracking of the number of units added and being lost is needed.

TABLE 24 Average gross rent in Spence

	1996	2001	2006
Spence	\$438	\$345	\$424

SOURCE: City of Winnipeg and Statistics Canada, 2004, 2009, Spence Neighbourhood Profile

TABLE 25 Median income in Spence

	Spence	Winnipeg
2001	\$12,296	*
2006	\$13,768	\$26,016

SOURCE: City of Winnipeg and Statistics Canada, 2009, Spence Neighbourhood Profile

*Comparable data unavailable for this year

When vacancy rates are critically low, as they are in both Spence neighbourhood and the Winnipeg CMA in general, landlords have the power to be more selective in regards to prospective tenants. Individuals on social assistance or of a lower socio-economic status may be passed over in favour of higher income earners that may be viewed as more desirable renters.

The median income in Spence has increased by \$1,472 and core housing need has decreased by 18.9 per cent. These numbers are likely indicative of higher income earners moving into Spence with landlords in Spence corroborating this (CCPA-MB, 2008: 71). The number of individuals in Spence facing core housing need remains high at 45.8 per cent with renters 5.5 times more likely to spend 30 per cent or more of their income on shelter than owners (Table 23).

The number of rent increase applications received by the RTB for Spence neighbourhood remained relatively constant between October 2005 and March 2010 (Tables 17 and 18) with approximately four applications per year. On a positive note, this is a decrease in the average rent increase granted—although at 9.2 per cent, it is still 8.2 per cent higher than the 2010 provincial guideline.

A lack of data prevented us from confirming the number of conversions that have already occurred or are planned in Spence, but there is much concern around condo conversion due to the high number of older rental units that often are the target of conversion. The danger of these units being converted increases the vulnerability of area residents to displacement, making further research and tracking of data important.

Daniel McIntyre

The people of the Daniel McIntyre neighbourhood have expressed their desire to have a healthy balance of home rental and home ownership options. Rental opportunities must be both affordable and offer a mix of units at market rates. As well as having an inclusive range of housing choices, residents envision a community that is safe, friendly, beautiful and sustainable. As a neighbourhood revitalization organization, Daniel McIntyre / St Matthews Community Association will work together with residents, businesses and community groups to reach these goals.

Housing Vision, Daniel McIntyre-St. Matthews Community Association

Daniel McIntyre is bounded by Notre Dame Ave. on the north; Sherbrook St. on the east; Ellice

Ave. on the south; and Ingersoll St. on the west. Like other inner city neighbourhoods, Daniel McIntyre has experienced the disappearance of affordable rental stock at a time when it is most in demand (Table 26).

The housing stock in Daniel McIntyre increased between 1996 and 2006 by a total of 65 units. However since the 2006 census survey, a trend of permanent removals has been seen citywide and has been documented by the Daniel McIntyre/St. Matthews Community Association (DMSMCA). Data gathered by the DMSMCA measured losses of six blocks and 60 rental units that were removed from the rental market due to condo conversion in the last two years within both the Daniel McIntyre and St. Matthews neighbourhoods. While the St. Matthews neighbourhood is not a focus of this report, it shares similar characteristics and demo-

TABLE 26 Changes in Daniel McIntyre housing stock

Daniel McIntyre	1996	2001	2006	Total +/- 1996-2006
Apartment	1,330	1,390	1,430	+100
Apartment-detached duplex	230	180	215	-15
Single-detached house	1,965	2,020	1,925	-40
Semi-detached house	60	35	65	+5
Row house	0	20	15	+15
Total # units	3,585	3,645	3,650	+65

SOURCE: City of Winnipeg and Statistics Canada, 2004, 2009, Daniel McIntyre Neighbourhood Profile

TABLE 27 Dwelling tenure changes: Daniel McIntyre & City of Winnipeg

	Daniel McIntyre			City of Winnipeg		
	1996	2001	2006	1996	2001	2006
Owners	46.2 %	45.3 %	47.6 %	62 %	63.6 %	65.1 %
Renters	53.8 %	54.7 %	52.4 %	38.0 %	36.4 %	34.9 %

SOURCE: City of Winnipeg and Statistics Canada, 2004, 2009, Daniel McIntyre Neighbourhood Profile

TABLE 28 Tenant-occupied households spending 30 per cent or more of household income

	Daniel McIntyre	Winnipeg
1996	48.2 %	43.5 %
2001	43.5 %	38.0 %
2006	43.5 %	37.3 %

SOURCE: City of Winnipeg and Statistics Canada, 2004, 2009, Daniel McIntyre Neighbourhood Profile

TABLE 29 Median income in Daniel McIntyre

	Daniel McIntyre	Winnipeg
2001	\$15,539	*
2006	\$17,642	\$26,016

SOURCE: City of Winnipeg and Statistics Canada, 2004, 2009, Daniel McIntyre Neighbourhood Profile

*Comparable data unavailable for this year

graphics with Daniel McIntyre and is covered under the purview of DMSMCA. Building neglect has resulted in the loss of three blocks and 100 units over the past three years combined within those same two neighbourhoods. As shown in Table 27, dwelling tenure has decreased a marginal 1.4 per cent over the ten-year period indicating that the balance between renters and owners in Daniel McIntyre remains relatively constant.

Tenant-occupied households spending 30 per cent or more of household income on shelter went down by 4.7 per cent between 1996 and 2001 and remained frozen for the following five years (Table 28). This decrease indicates that fewer people in Daniel McIntyre are spending excessive amounts of their income on shelter, however it doesn't tell us whether this is a result of displacement of lower-income tenants from the neighbourhood or whether the circumstances of long-term area residents are improving. The increase in median income (Table 29) raises similar questions.

Eighty-two units were affected by above guideline rent increase between October 2008 and March 2010, with the average approval permitting an average increase of 11.3 per cent. The already high number of people in core-housing need indicates that more affordable housing, not less, is needed and therefore rent increases create a greater risk for displacement for area residents.

Daniel McIntyre and Spence neighbourhoods face very similar issues and in fact appear to be so similar that it is near impossible to differentiate between the two areas without knowing the dividing boundaries. Both neighbourhoods are changing as a result of significant developments. Spence is faced with the encroaching development of a University campus on the east, while Daniel McIntyre faces the expanding homeowner push from the West. While these two neighbourhoods have yet to face the scale of gentrification experienced in West Broadway, there is legitimate concern that similar patterns are beginning to emerge.

TABLE 30 Average gross rent in Daniel McIntyre

	1996	2001	2006
Daniel McIntyre	\$407	\$400	\$493

SOURCE: City of Winnipeg and Statistics Canada, 2004, 2009, Daniel McIntyre Neighbourhood Profile

TABLE 31 Private apartment vacancy rates (per cent) by bedroom type, Midland zone

	Bachelor		1 Bedroom		2 Bedroom		3 Bedroom +		Total	
	Oct 08	Oct 09	Oct 08	Oct 09	Oct 08	Oct 09	Oct 08	Oct 09	Oct 08	Oct 09
Midland Zone	1.3 %	2.0 %	1.5 %	1.4 %	1.4 %	0.9 %	*	0.0	1.4 %	1.4 %

SOURCE: CMHC Fall 2009. Data is unavailable specific to neighbourhoods concerning vacancy, Centennial Zone includes Spence neighbourhood.
* Data suppressed to protect confidentiality or data is not statistically reliable

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The housing challenge in the three neighbourhoods examined in this paper is a snapshot of a much bigger housing problem. While gentrification has some positive effects—by creating mixed-income neighbourhoods—it can also lead to instability as some long-time residents are squeezed out. This displacement leads to further concentration of poverty in the few remaining inner-city neighbourhoods where rental housing remains affordable. The neighbourhood renewal corporations are doing their best to work within their communities and with the public and private sector to find solutions.

But housing remains a complex issue and we should be wary of one-size-fits all solutions. Neither government nor the market is adequately equipped to address this issue alone. For example, while limiting increases in rent through rent regulations and controlling rent to condo conversions can help protect low-income renters, it won't address the shortage of supply.

Allowing housing stock and prices to be determined in an unregulated market will similarly not provide an adequate solution because it limits accessibility, particularly amongst low-income earners. An increase in social housing units will help address the housing needs of some low-income renters, but it is not likely to

be sufficient to meet the growing demand and it won't address the broader need for rental housing. Therefore both public and private solutions will be required, but government will need to play a central role, directly through increasing supply, and indirectly by providing the private sector with incentives to encourage rental development for low and mid income renters.

Landlords, in conjunction with proper government assistance programs, have the potential to assert positive influence within neighbourhoods. For example, the federal/provincial rental *Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program* (RRAP) is a program that offers forgivable loans to landlords for eligible repairs in self-contained units that house low-income tenants. It is a positive step towards providing low-income housing options for those who do not qualify, are unable to access, or choose not to live in social housing. One landlord who owns properties in the Spence Neighbourhood noted that an increase in the number of RRAP's offered to landlords would aid in addressing low-income housing shortages.

In all three neighbourhoods, rooming houses make up a significant portion of housing for low-income individuals, however concerns regarding security, adequate maintenance, and vulnerability to displacement have been expressed by both

residents and researchers. RRAP offers funding specific to rooming houses with rental rates at or below the established levels for the market area and as such, could prove to be helpful in maintaining affordable housing options while contributing to better maintenance and security of the buildings.

RRAP has been noted by both landlords and community housing advocates as a positive step in maintaining low-income housing, however it has also been noted that greater funds are required to ensure that more affordable rental housing is preserved. We recommend that funding for RRAP be increased as a partial solution to the loss of existing affordable rental housing. We also recommend that RRAP funding be strategically allocated to communities in greatest need and that Manitoba Housing make information about the allocation of RRAP dollars more accessible to the public.

Other federal/provincial initiatives have contributed to an increase in supply and the Manitoba government's commitment to increase the number of social housing units by 1500 in five years will help. But it won't be near enough. Housing advocates continue to argue that a comprehensive national housing strategy will be required if we are to sufficiently tackle this issue nationwide. A strategy could serve to better coordinate efforts between the federal and provincial governments as well as introduce measures to spur private development. One promising development in this regard is *The National Housing Strategy: Bill C-304*. At time of writing Bill C-304 is scheduled for its third and final reading and is expected to pass with the support of the Liberals, the NDP and the Bloc. However the Conservatives are expected to oppose the Bill and this could delay it moving forward. Nonetheless, it is an important step and has the potential to move us closer in the direction we need to go.

While much of the responsibility for affordable rental housing lies with the federal and provincial governments, there is much that cities can do. The City of Winnipeg provides support for a

select number of community initiatives through the Housing Rehabilitation and Investment Reserve Fund and they have in the past contributed to new housing development by transferring ownership of vacant lots to affordable housing developers. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) has been an area where the City of Winnipeg has had some success in providing investment incentives for the private sector. TIF creates funding for projects by borrowing against future expected property tax revenues. Winnipeg's Multiple Family/Mixed-Use Building Grant Program provided grants that were equal to the incremental taxes on improved property for up to 15 years. This program, which was recently terminated, provided grants to developers in older neighbourhoods.

There is much more to be done at the municipal level. In this regard the City of Winnipeg can look to other jurisdictions that are responding to affordable rental issues through various means. We propose that the City of Winnipeg implement the following policies similar to those in other major cities.

Inclusionary zoning

Inclusionary zoning is a policy used to increase the amount of affordable housing. Inclusionary zoning policies require developers to include a minimum number of 'affordable' units in their development plans. While policies can be mandatory or voluntary (with incentives), mandatory approaches work best. Using this approach, developers can opt out of building affordable units by paying a fee that could then be applied toward affordable housing.

Condominium conversion regulations

As noted, many cities are regulating apartment-to-condo conversion when vacancy rates are low. Given the challenges described in this paper, Winnipeg should do the same. Introducing and enforcing a by-law that limits apartment-condo conversion when rental vacancy is critically low (under 3%) could prove helpful in limiting the

conversion of existing rental stock. At the same time the city and province could establish an incentive program to promote the conversion of vacant industrial space or derelict/boarded up buildings into rental and or condo developments. This could encourage the revitalization of vacant buildings while also protecting existing low-income rental units.

Housing development fund

Many U.S. and some Canadian cities have established Housing Funds to support the development of affordable housing. The City of Winnipeg's existing Housing Rehabilitation Investment Reserve Fund is far too limited in scope. It provides \$1 million annually to specific organizations and excludes neighbourhoods that are in dire need. The fund has not changed or grown since it was first introduced in the late 1990s and it is time to bring the 'fund' into the 21st century. It should be redesigned as a more comprehensive "affordable housing fund" that maintains existing programs but is expanded to include grants and loans to encourage development of rental housing for low-income families across the city. While it is recommended that such a fund could be accessed by both for-profit and non-profit organizations, we would recommend that special consideration should be given to projects that integrate a training and employment component for at risk inner-city youth. Following examples

in other cities, Winnipeg can build a fund using multiple revenue options (development fees, inclusionary zoning cash-in-lieu, portion of revenue from hotel tax, leverage from other levels of government, and others).

RRAP and TIF

The Multiple Family/Mixed-Use Building Grant Program, a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) program, should be reinstated and redesigned along the principles of inclusionary zoning. The municipality, being the delivery agent for RRAP in Winnipeg, can effectively use TIF incentives to promote mixed-rehabilitation projects, with a percentage of rental units receiving RRAP. This approach would not only promote mixed-income development, but will also stretch the RRAP funding further by impacting more multiple family rental buildings throughout the inner-city.

The above policy recommendations are far from exhaustive and many others should be explored. The main challenge will be to establish a comprehensive package that responds to the complexity of housing issues, including both supply and demand. In Winnipeg's inner city, it will be particularly important to ensure that the unique needs of low-income individuals and families are a priority if we are to mitigate the consequences of inadequate housing.

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Where Is a Poor Person Going?

How rent increases and condo conversions affect low-income tenants

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As the vacancy rate in Winnipeg has dropped over the last few years, we have heard stories from our inner city partners about renters being displaced due to rent increases and the conversion of rental units to condominiums. Winnipeg newspapers have published numerous articles describing the challenges faced by renters (McNeill 2011a; McNeill 2011b; Fuller 2011). These stories and articles have raised concerns about security of tenure and increasing housing costs for many renters. This paper focuses on the impact of condominium conversions and rent increases in three inner city neighbourhoods in Winnipeg: West Broadway, Spence, and Daniel McIntyre.

These three neighbourhoods were selected because they have changed quite a bit over the last decade or so. All three are part of the inner city, and all three have relatively high proportions of rental housing, compared with the rest of Winnipeg. Over the last 10 years, the average value of owner-occupied housing has increased much faster in these three neighbourhoods than in the city as a whole, and rents have also increased dramatically. As a direct result of these

changes, low-income families and individuals living in these neighbourhoods have experienced challenges in meeting their housing needs (Silver 2006; Toews 2010).

Today, Winnipeg's rental vacancy rate is extremely low. In April 2011, it was around 0.7 per cent; in October 2011, it had increased to 1.1 per cent (CMHC 2011a; CMHC 2011b). Between 1991 and 2010, over 5000 rental units were lost in Winnipeg, about 8 per cent of the total rental universe (D. Himbeault, CMHC Rental Market Survey, personal communication, November 7, 2011). Even as the rental universe has shrunk, the population of Winnipeg has increased, by about 10 per cent over the last 10 years (City of Winnipeg 2009). The impact of these changes has been increased pressure on the rental market, making the market even tighter and creating a 'landlords' market', where landlords have more opportunities to raise rents and be pickier about choosing tenants.

Many landlords are taking advantage of this market to renovate and improve their properties. In the West Broadway, Spence and Daniel McIntyre neighbourhoods, there has been a sig-

nificant amount of investment by governments, non-profits, and private investors over the last decade (Silver 2006; Toews 2010; Skelton, Yauk, Platt, McCleery and Jordan 2006). This investment has improved the quality of housing in these neighbourhoods, and added to the housing stock. However, it has also increased property values: for example between 2000 and 2007, property values in the Spence neighbourhood increased by 138 per cent (Toews 2010).

Much of this investment has resulted in above-guideline rent increases and the conversion of rental units to condominiums (for a description of rent regulations in Manitoba, see Smirl et al., this volume). As the market has tightened and property values have increased, average rents have increased dramatically. In 2011 alone, rents in Winnipeg increased by 4.6 per cent, significantly higher than the 1.5 per cent mandated by rent regulations (CMHC 2011c). This is in keeping with the trend of above-rental guideline increases over the last few years. Between 2000 and 2010, rents in the core area—including these three neighbourhoods—increased on average by 39 per cent (Dyck 2011). In 2011, 292 rental units were converted to condominiums; in 2010 over 450 units were converted to condos or demolished, removing them from the rental universe (CMHC 2011c; CMHC 2010). This loss of units contributes to the low vacancy rate, and although some condos may return to the rental market, the rents will likely have increased. Both condo conversions and above-guideline rent increases are often accompanied by renovations, during which tenants are required to leave. Although improving the quality of housing in the inner city is undoubtedly a good thing, and the cost increases may be consistent with market demand (Grant 2011), too often finding good housing is a challenge for those on fixed incomes and those on very low incomes. Tenants do have the option of returning to their suite, but many

will not be able to afford the increased rents or the newly-converted condo.

This is because while housing costs have increased, incomes have not risen as much. Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) has been essentially frozen since 1992 (SPCW 2007), and although many people are working longer hours, they are earning the same or less than they were a decade ago (Hudson 2008). The impact of these changes in the rental market for low- and even moderate-income households cannot be underestimated: many families and individuals are spending a significantly larger proportion of their incomes on housing than they had previously, and have less money left over to meet other needs.

In these three neighbourhoods, the incidence of low-income households is significantly higher than in the city as a whole. In West Broadway, 52.4 per cent of economic families fell below the low-income cut-off after taxes in 2005; in Daniel McIntyre this figure was 30.3 per cent; and in Spence, 42.2 per cent, compared with only 11.1 per cent for the city of Winnipeg (City of Winnipeg and Statistics Canada 2009). A large proportion of the households in these areas already spends more than 30 per cent of their income on housing.¹ Low-income households are at a particularly high risk of being displaced from their homes as a result of rising rents and low vacancy rates, and also face more challenges in finding a new place to live. Building on the research by Ellen Smirl (this volume), this report describes the experiences of people in the West Broadway, Spence, and Daniel McIntyre neighbourhoods who are looking for safe and affordable rental housing. It focuses on those who have had to move as a result of rent increases or conversion of the unit to condominium, and presents recommendations to address these issues.

¹ Thirty percent is the generally accepted benchmark for housing affordability. However, the extent to which this is affordable depends on overall income and the number of people supported on this income.

Methods

For this report, we conducted eight interviews with tenants who either live, or had lived in the last five years, in these three neighbourhoods. Staff at West Central Women’s Resource Centre, Klinik Community Health Centre, West Broadway Development Corporation and Resource Assistance for Youth helped to identify potential respondents.²

Of the eight people who were interviewed, seven were women, and one was a man. The ages of respondents ranged from 20 to 68, with half of the respondents in their 20s. One respondent

was employed, the rest were not. Two respondents had children at home with them; others either did not have children or their children did not live with them regularly. Two respondents identified as Aboriginal, and three identified as Cree, Saulteaux, or First Nation. One identified as Caucasian, one as Scottish/Irish, and one person declined to answer. Five of the respondents lived in West Broadway, two in Spence, and one in Daniel McIntyre, although most had moved a few times in the last five years.

² Initially the interviewers experienced some difficulty in identifying respondents who met the criteria for the research and who were willing to be interviewed, so the interviewers went to the community-based organizations (CBOs), and spoke directly with potential respondents there.

The Impact of Forced Moves

As noted above, the current tight rental market in Winnipeg puts pressure on lower-income individuals and families. Sometimes households move by choice, as they seek out better places to live, sometimes as a result of external forces such as renovations or a conversion to condominiums. Of the eight people interviewed, seven had had to move in the last few years due to rent increases relating to renovations or because their unit was being converted to a condominium. Most of the tenants interviewed in this study had moved at least three times in the last five years. Three had moved two or more times in the last year alone.

The impact of these moves is significant: respondents talked about the pressures that increased rents would put on their finances, the challenges of negotiating a complex rental system, and the difficulty of finding good housing that meets their needs. In addition, frequent moves—particularly those forced on households through renovations, condo conversions, or steep rent increases—result in stress and pressures on the household.

Increased rents

Although it is positive that the quality of housing has improved in many of Winnipeg's inner

city neighbourhoods as a result of increased investments, as property values have gone up, so have housing costs. When rents are going up, and there are fewer places to choose from, it gets much harder to find a place in good condition that meets the household's safety and other needs. When one has limited income, the choices become even more restrictive. Finding affordable housing is a challenge for most of the interviewees.

One interviewee noted that her rent is only affordable because she lives in Manitoba Housing; she also noted, however, that she is responsible for paying for electricity, which is about \$200 per month. Most interviewees find that their housing costs are high, and for those on EIA, it can be difficult to find affordable housing or to negotiate with EIA to cover the additional portion of the rent.

Two of the interviewees described significant increases in their rents as a result of renovations. One said that “when I moved in it was a one bedroom for \$650 or something when I moved in and we got these condominium notices slipped under our doors. ‘Oh, your rent is going to be \$950’”. Another described an increase from \$560 to \$930 over two years, as her

landlord upgraded the units in preparation for turning them into condominiums.

Two other interviewees described smaller increases, of \$50-75 per month. One mentioned her concern about how she would afford this increase, particularly as it was accompanied by a switch to tenant responsibility for hydro, which in effect would raise her total housing cost dramatically. The second said that with his limited income, even this size of increase is a big burden for his budget:

Yeah, it's a big increase, yeah, but they said, oh new everything, they were going to put new washers and dryers in, new flooring, they were going to do something with the lock system, they're putting cameras in as well. And when I was on EIA and everything, you will only have a certain amount that you can live with and if it gets too high you have to move and that's just the bottom line. That's what you have to suffer with... it's a big thing too, because I'm on disability so I have to stick with basically what's coming home, so it's hard.

The challenge is that even if a landlord is renovating and improving the building, and even if a tenant would like to stay, it may not be possible. EIA provides a set amount for rent, and when they can't find good affordable housing, many EIA recipients take money from their food or other budgets to cover the difference in their rents (Distasio, Dudley and Maunder, 2002; Food Banks Canada 2010). For many, even if they move to avoid a rent increase, their rent costs will still go up. It is increasingly difficult to find affordable quality housing in these three neighbourhoods, and people may end up moving regularly, trying to find better places that are more within the realm of what's affordable:

[I moved] two times because, well, most places I did live in were really high above what I am allowed and I did pay the extra just because of the fact that the place was a bit cleaner and more decent, because most places that are cheap

in rent. There's a reason for that, because you are moving into a dump.

The increased rents, along with stagnant EIA and incomes, make it difficult for low-income households to make ends meet. Finding affordable, good quality places to live is increasingly difficult, and the stress and expense of moving adds pressure. In addition to this, the rental system can be complicated and difficult to navigate.

Tenants' rights

There are a number of regulations and rules governing how renovations and condo conversions can happen in Winnipeg. Landlords make it their business to understand the legislation and rules governing condo conversions and rent increases, but all too often tenants, particularly those with limited incomes and complex lives, are unsure of their rights or where they can turn for assistance when dealing with the complexities of condo conversions and rent increases. Access to training and supports is essential in helping tenants understand and stand up for their rights.

One tenant, who moves often and is having a difficult time finding a place to live, said that she doesn't feel like she has rights or resources to draw on in addressing housing issues.

Do you feel that you know about your rights as a tenant?

Oh no... you don't have no rights

Well, I know that in the relationship when that's happening you feel like you have no rights, but do you feel like you have rights but that people just aren't listening...

Oh they don't care about your rights...

[residential tenancies] do agree I have rights but they won't stand up for them so it's like having no rights, you really don't have rights. As the owner said, we had a meeting, as he said, this is what's gonna happen, if you don't like it leave.

Another tenant ignored the letter slipped under her door from her landlord:

...I got an eviction notice and I was like, 'kay, well I'm not moving so I stayed there and I came home one day and my locks were changed.

This experience helped her to learn about her rights and responsibilities, and how to deal with these situations if they come up again:

I think I know a lot more now. I mean I know I can go to residential tenancies branch, and I know that when I get an eviction notice I can petition it for three months and I just have to send a letter stating that I'm appealing that eviction notice and for three months they can't do anything.

Other tenants have a clear understanding of their rights as tenants. One person took a housing training program through the West Central Women's Resource Centre, which helped her to learn more about her tenant rights. Although she was still not able to recoup her lost damage deposits, she feels that the program helped her to be more confident in her rights. Another mentioned that he has a good sense of where to get the information he needs:

Yeah like I know the resources and where to find it and I know where to call if I don't know the answer to it. Call the tenancies branch see what my rights are then go from there.

He noted, though, that he is not necessarily proactive in dealing with concerns, because his life is busy enough already:

Usually I don't worry about it because I have enough on my plate, so I don't worry about it until it actually happens.

Having additional resources to call on when dealing with rent increases, condo conversions and moving greatly helps. One tenant talked about the supports he received from Resource Assistance for Youth, with staff driving him around

and helping him find a place to live. Another talked about her experience when her building was going to be renovated. She contacted staff at the West Broadway Development Corporation, who were able to provide supports and helped her and other tenants to take the issues to the Residential Tenancies Branch. She noted though, that she was lucky:

I know not everyone has access to the same routes of information as I do, or knows how/where to look. I was fortunate because I knew someone — not everyone does.

All the respondents interviewed for this study were contacted through a community-based organization. This suggests that they are more likely to be able to access resources and supports than others, who may not attend programs or access resources through the community-based organizations in their neighbourhoods. Even when they have supports, however, finding good quality housing that meets their needs can be difficult.

Finding good housing

For some tenants, finding an apartment that is accessible is an issue. Two of the interviewees said that their health makes it increasingly difficult to navigate stairs. One lives in a three-storey walk-up, and says "I can't do the stairs anymore." The other lives on the 9th floor of a high-rise, and although there is an elevator, it is sometimes broken. She needs to follow an exercise regimen to manage arthritic pain, and has found it near impossible to find a building that doesn't require stairs, that provides appropriate equipment for her exercise needs, and which is affordable for her budget.

Although she is now in a place that welcomes her children, one interviewee talked about the difficulties she has had in the past finding a place for herself and her children. She had to leave one apartment because the caretaker complained that her baby cried too much. With the low vacancy rate, landlords can be pickier about their

tenants; for tenants with children, this can result in fewer options.

In addition, isolation can be an issue when people don't have much choice about where to live. For those on limited incomes, who don't have cars and may have mobility issues, it can be hard to maintain relationships with family and friends who live in another part of the city. This can increase the challenges that tenants experience in other parts of their lives, as social and family networks are integral to physical and emotional health.

Too often, the condition of the housing—even when it is not affordable—is a problem. One interviewee, who likes many things about her apartment, found that many of the amenities that she pays for don't work. For example, the laundry machines are frequently broken, and the facilities are not well maintained, although she still has to pay for them in her rent. Others mentioned having to go from floor to floor to find working laundry machines, spending hundreds of dollars a month on heat and hydro, and having to put plastic on the windows and keep the curtains closed to preserve heat in the winter.

Bedbugs are a concern in many apartments, and although none of the interviewees had experienced bedbugs directly, some were aware of other units in their buildings that had had bedbugs. Even maintaining defences against bedbugs can take large amounts of time and money, requiring tenants to pack up their stuff and constantly be watchful of infestations. Managing the potential for infestation also contributes to stress and financial pressure.

Safety, both within the building and in the neighbourhood, is a concern for many interviewees. Two of the interviewees mentioned specific safety concerns relating to their housing. One woman talked about a place she used to live where her male roommate would walk uninvited into her room. A second woman talked about the lack of privacy in the building she lives in and

her fear of a neighbour whom she had observed harassing other women on her floor.

At a neighbourhood level, many of the respondents talked about safety concerns. From witnessing violence, to experiencing violence themselves or hearing stories of violence from their families or friends, interviewees often feel unsafe in their neighbourhoods especially at night. These two kinds of violence contribute to stress, but tenants find them unavoidable when housing affordability continues to be a challenge.

Increased stress

All of these factors—lack of affordability, the difficulties of navigating a complex rental system, and challenges in finding quality housing that meets household needs—contribute to stress for individuals and families in finding and maintaining suitable housing.

Few of the interviewees mentioned stress due to moving explicitly, but it came out in how they talked about the difficulties they faced in finding good housing. Some mentioned frustration with the quality of their housing and amenities; struggles with allocating money between tight budgets; tensions with family roommates or neighbours; panic at the sight of bedbugs or other pests; fear for themselves and their families' safety. All of these forms of stress make life more difficult and complex.

One interviewee identified moving specifically as a stressor for herself and her neighbours. She described how she and her neighbours had to move while the building was being renovated, and how this created numerous hardships for many tenants:

...they did everything by the books, even if it was callous and with no regard to the people living in the building. They offered to pay for movers (as they are legally obligated to), but they didn't make it easy. If you didn't hire professional movers—if you hired friends or family—you needed to prepare receipts and justify

everything. Also, you needed to pay first and get reimbursed. I know for several people this was a struggle. A long time tenant living on a very fixed income used her food budget to pay for movers, and she waited several weeks for her refund.

Moving, whether by choice or because of a rent increase or condo conversion, is an expensive activity, and is often a great burden for lower income households. Another woman spoke about the stress of looking for a new place and the pressure of trying to find housing on a limited income:

You can't afford to be choosy because you're in desperate straits and where I'm gonna move

to now? I gotta be out of there in April...they are cutting down funding but if everybody is cutting down on things and everything is going up, where is a poor person going?

Although each respondent identified aspects of their current residences that are positive, including neighbourhood walkability and access to public transit, access to laundry facilities, a nice view or nearby playgrounds, green spaces and a good sense of community among residents and business owners in the neighbourhoods, frequent moves leave less money for food, medications, transportation and other basic necessities, and add stress to individuals, families and communities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As described above, the current rental market in Winnipeg can make it very difficult for low-income households to find good quality housing that meets their needs. Over the last decade or so, lower income households' housing situations have become more precarious as many rental units have been converted to condominiums and rents have increased sharply compared to incomes. Frequent moves are not uncommon, as people look for good quality housing that fits into their budgets. For those receiving Employment and Income Assistance, this situation is particularly dire.

As moderate-income households, more able to afford the higher rents or homeownership, have moved into the inner city, housing costs have gone up even more. This has reduced the availability of housing for lower income families and individuals. One interviewee speculated that her landlord's renovations and rent increases were due to a shift in his intended rental population:

It's because he's moving towards university students, because the higher you go on assistance, you can only go so high then you move and then that's when the students come in who can afford because they're getting help. So he's slowly getting rid of the people who can't

afford it and moving in the people who can, so that's what's going on in downtown.

As landlords see that they can make more money renting to a different group, many will do so. Similarly, many will choose to convert their buildings to condominiums, rather than maintaining them as rental units. Of course, these landlords are well within their rights to do so, but when the housing market is as tight as it is today in Winnipeg, lower income people bear the brunt of the loss of affordable units.

To address this situation, we propose the following recommendations:

The City should implement restrictions on condo conversions when the vacancy rate is less than three per cent.

Three per cent is generally accepted as the benchmark for a balanced rental market. When the vacancy rate falls below three per cent, it becomes difficult for renters to find housing. The City should ensure that the number of rental units available does not decrease through conversions to condominiums when the vacancy rate is below three per cent.

The Province should maintain and strengthen its rent regulations.

Rent regulations are intended to protect tenants from sharp spikes in rent increases when there is a tight rental market. There is constant pressure from landlords to abolish rent regulations. To address landlords' concerns, the regulations include numerous exceptions, including increases allowable for renovations, and exemptions for new buildings and units with rents above a certain amount. Today, when rents are already increasing faster than the rent regulations' guidelines and incomes are not increasing as quickly, rent regulations are especially important to protect housing that is affordable to lower-income households. The Province should strengthen the regulations (for example, by ensuring that allowable increases are permitted only for expenses above and beyond the costs of regular maintenance) to protect housing for lower-income households.

The Province should ensure that lower-income households have access to decent housing.

There are two main challenges in addressing the housing crisis for low-income households in

Winnipeg: supply and affordability. The Province has committed to developing 1500 units of social housing and 2500 units of affordable housing over the next few years, which is a step in the right direction but not enough to meet the need. In addition, those on EIA and those who are paid minimum wage do not earn enough money to be able to afford an average bachelor apartment in Winnipeg, much less a larger apartment. The Province should increase EIA housing allowances and Manitoba shelter benefits to 75 per cent of median market rents, with these levels indexed annually.

The Province should provide workshops on tenant rights and responsibilities.

For tenants, rent increases or condo conversions can seem to come out of the blue. Too often, tenants are not aware of their rights, and can be taken advantage of by unscrupulous landlords. Providing workshops for tenants—or funding for community organizations to provide workshops—would help to ensure that tenants have access to the information they need about the responsibilities and rights of landlords and tenants.

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