



IT'S A PRIORITY ISSUE

Affordable Housing

Right to Housing is a coalition of individuals and organizations that believe everyone has the right to safe, adequate, and affordable housing. We advocate for policies at each level of government that will ensure this right is realized for all people in Winnipeg.

Ending homelessness and creating truly affordable housing is a priority not only for Right to Housing, but for a vast majority of Winnipeggers. The 2021 City Survey conducted by the City of Winnipeg found that investment in housing and social programs was the most common answer when asked how to improve the quality of life in our city. Satisfaction with funding for improving inner-city housing has

been steadily declining in the past few years; in the 2021 survey just 53% were satisfied with the City's investment in this essential area.

These responses are unsurprising given the state of housing and homelessness in the City. The city's Comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment reported in 2020 that there were over 1,500 people without homes in our city, and over 34,000 households experiencing core housing need (spending more than 30% of household income on housing)– living in housing that is unaffordable, overcrowded, or in serious disrepair, and unable to find appropriate housing they can afford.

The citizens say it, our coalition says it, the City even says it to itself: Affordable Housing is a Priority for Winnipeggers. The City's own 2021 survey found that investment in housing and social programs was the most common answer when asked how to improve the quality of life in Winnipeg. The city's 2020 Comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment reported that there were over 1,500 people without homes in our city, and over 34,000 households in core housing need.



A LEGACY OF LOSSES

A Staggering Loss

That so many of our neighbours face these issues is the result of a staggering loss of lower rent units in the private market and a lack of new affordable, rent-geared-to-income units. Between 2011 and 2016 there was a net loss of 18,458 rental units in the city priced below \$750 per month, including 976 subsidized

units. Between 2019 and 2021 another 881 subsidized units and 54 rooming house units were lost. Recent Federal investments under the Rapid Housing Initiative supported by the City will create fewer than 150 units of new affordable housing.

We've lost more than 19,000 affordable housing units in Winnipeg in the last decade, exacerbating the housing crisis for decades to come. Our new mayor and council will need to take action or this will only continue to get worse.





PROTECT, RECLAIM AND BUILD

PROTECT:

Create a No Net Loss policy to protect existing lower rent housing.

RECLAIM:

Reclaim the hundreds of vacant and derelict housing units.

BUILD:

Transfer these at no cost to affordable housing developers.

The Right to Housing Coalition is calling for a **No Net Loss policy** to protect existing lower rent housing in the city. Other cities have implemented policies and by-laws to ensure conversion of rental housing or demolition for other uses does not result in a net loss of affordable housing. A bylaw in Toronto prevents demolition or conversion of certain rental properties without a one-for-one replacement with units renting at comparable rents. A new Replacement

bylaw, supported by stronger enforcement of the existing Vacant and Derelict Buildings bylaw, would address the hundreds of vacant residential buildings in Winnipeg. Fines could be used to fund revitalization of properties with affordable rents. The City can also prioritize the appropriation of delinquent homes and transfer these at no cost to affordable housing developers, with a priority for Indigenous organizations.



INVESTMENTS

Make Housing Happen

In addition to preventing the loss of existing affordable housing, the City needs to **invest in the creation of new rent-geared-to-income housing**. While ongoing funding for housing subsidies is a responsibility of the Province and the Federal government, there are a variety of tools the City can use to support the development of new affordable housing. The City must commit to creating a minimum of 150 new units of rent-geared-to-income housing each year, using the tools and funding at its disposal.

To maximize the benefits of these low-cost tools, **Winnipeg must increase its housing development and policy capacity**. Winnipeg's housing department is far behind most major Canadian cities of

similar size, who have an average of 1 staff per 100,000 residents. A city of 750,000 people, we have just three housing staff, and two of those are temporary staff. The City needs to create an Affordable Housing Office of at least 7 full-time staff to coordinate and support efforts across all City departments to develop new housing and prevent the loss of existing lower-rent housing.

We need housing if we are to end homelessness. Doing so is not only right and compassionate, it is less costly than maintaining homelessness. All Winnipeggers deserve to have a home that is safe, adequate, appropriate and affordable. The priorities listed above can help the City achieve that vision.



Winnipeg has about 40% of the City housing staff compared to other cities in Canada. To make housing happen, we need people at the City to do the work of supporting affordable housing projects.

WINNIPEG HAS THESE TOOLS IN HAND, LET'S PUT THEM TO USE

Cities can be strong advocates and partners for affordable housing. They can develop plans, provide funding, and implement regulations that support an increase in affordable housing. Winnipeg has a variety of tools already approved and in place, but they are very underutilized.

PLANNING TOOLS

- ✓ Develop community and neighbourhood plans that commit to providing a range of housing choices
- ✓ Develop an affordable housing strategy and action plan
- ✓ Identify priority sites (land, vacant units, locations) for affordable housing
- ✓ Provide city staff to support or facilitate affordable housing projects, or fund neighbourhood renewal corporations to do it

FISCAL TOOLS

- ✓ Lease or gift city-owned properties to affordable, non-profit housing providers
- ✓ Provide property tax incentives or reduction
- ✓ Waive or provide grants in lieu of development costs and charges
- ✓ Increase annual allocation to Housing Rehabilitation Investment Reserve
- ✓ Redirect rehabilitation grants in Housing Improvement Zones to address unit livability and disrepair and require landlord recipients to not increase rents above provincial guideline

REGULATORY TOOLS

- ✓ Increase the permitted density in areas appropriate for affordable housing, through zoning
- ✓ Permit secondary suites
- ✓ Allow for smaller lot development
- ✓ Reduce parking requirements for affordable housing
- ✓ Fast track the approval of affordable housing projects

NEW TOOLS FOR WINNIPEG

NO NET LOSS BYLAW

No net loss bylaw to ensure conversion of rental housing or demolition for other uses does not result in a net loss of affordable housing

INCLUSIONARY ZONING

Implement inclusionary zoning, requiring developers to include a portion of affordable housing in each new residential development



EXAMPLES OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGIES IN CANADIAN CITIES

Cities across Canada are implementing innovative and strategic initiatives to increase the supply of affordable housing. These are just three examples of cities that Winnipeg can take inspiration from.

CALGARY

- 10 year Affordable Housing strategy (2016 -2025)
- The City-owned subsidiary, Calgary Housing, develops and manages affordable rental housing while Attainable Homes Calgary, another City-owned subsidiary, builds new attainable ownership homes. Affordable housing is a business unit within Community Development, responsible for policy, strategy, and funding for affordable housing
- Funding for building conversions from office to residential. A \$200M program that developers can apply for to assist with the conversion of office to residential in the downtown core. So far, 5 buildings have applied, creating 707 units, & city investment of \$50m
- Co-locate affordable housing into municipal purpose projects. For example, a new library has affordable housing attached, and a new firehall has affordable housing integrated into it
- Leverage city owned land: the City sells its land below market or at nominal fee (book value)
- Home Incentive Program: grants of up to \$50K for pre-development costs, as well as rebates on development charges. Available to affordable non-profit housing
- Surplus School sites identified as appropriate for affordable housing projects, city funded projects
- All city projects must be LEED Gold
- Calgary dedicates 5% of gross proceeds from industrial land sales to affordable housing. We started that in 2013, and so far has generated over \$10M for Affordable Housing

EDMONTON

- 10 year Affordable Housing strategy (2016-2025)
- Surplus School sites identified as appropriate for affordable housing projects, city funded projects
- Affordable Housing Investment Program: up to 25% of total construction cost (for Affordable component)
- Making city owned lands directly available for Affordable Housing projects through an RFP, which could include selling the land at \$1 (LEED certification required)
- Housing Redevelopment Grant: up to 40% of capital costs for redevelopment of “problem properties” (vacant properties) into affordable non-profit housing

VANCOUVER

- 10 Year Affordable Housing Strategy (2017-2026)
- Vacancy (Empty Homes Tax) tax: 3% of assessed value on properties deemed vacant. Targeted towards foreign investment into the condo market but could be used in Winnipeg against vacant & derelict properties. Collected revenue is targeted to support affordable housing (\$106M to November 2021)
- Community Housing Incentive Program, funded by Vacancy tax. For non-profit and co-operative housing providers
- Temporary Modular Housing: targeting homelessness, rapidly installed modular housing with a target lifespan of 5 years is being built as a Housing First approach. Tenants get 2 meals a day, as well as other needed supports
- A lot of work is done through Vancouver's Affordable Housing Association

