



Right to Housing Housing is City Business

Winnipeg is in the midst of an affordable housing crisis. The city needs an increased supply of affordable homes for existing residents, and those expected to move here over the next 10 years.

Affordable housing is City business. An adequate supply and array of housing options benefits a city and its people with social inclusion, safety, healthy communities and healthy citizens, all of which attract businesses and workers. And there are solutions, which other cities have implemented, that Winnipeg cannot afford to ignore any more.

The Need is Great.

On any given day Winnipeg, at least 1,500 people are experiencing homelessness, including at least 600 in emergency shelters and outside.

In 2016, nearly 17,000 rental households in Winnipeg were paying 50% or more of their income on rent and utilities, and therefore at a high risk of losing their housing. Those in housing need include students, seniors, newcomers, Indigenous peoples, single parent families, and single individuals. In other words, everyone is affected.



Spending more than 30% of Income on Rent



Spending more than 50% of Income on Rent

Cities across Canada have made housing their business.

Given this need, it would be appropriate for The City of Winnipeg to set targets aligned with the Provincial Government, utilizing City resources to facilitate,

partner and leverage Provincial and Federal dollars. Many cities across Canada have recognized the benefits of affordable housing and have committed to action. Since it committed to supporting the development of 8,500 affordable housing units by 2018, the City of Calgary has enhanced its housing department, leveraged city land, provided grants, and exceeded its targets. Saskatoon has targeted the development 5,000 affordable units over 10 years, which it is also on track to achieve.

In comparison, The City of Winnipeg’s Housing Policy and Implementation Plan committed to developing only 75 units of affordable rental housing over 5 years. Mayor Bowman agreed at an election forum in 2014 that a target of 350 units per year would be more appropriate, however the number has been closer to 15 units over the past three years.

Consequently, we propose that The City of Winnipeg support at least 300 new units of affordable rental housing, and 300 new units of social housing, matching our request to the Province of Manitoba.

Winnipeg has the resources to support affordable housing.

Mayor Robertson: “The City needs to be a leader in creating the affordable housing our residents deserve, especially when there is such a shortage of affordable homes in Vancouver.”

Here are a few ways Winnipeg can support affordable housing that don’t require changes to the budget:

1. **Land donations** – Land is a limited resource, which should be used wisely and in the best interests of The City. Many cities have and Winnipeg could prioritize city-owned land for affordable housing first.
2. **Tax increment financing** – Grants equal to municipal taxes to developers have increased downtown development. TIF grants will be

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effective if prioritized for affordable housing development.

3. **Cost offset grants** – Waivers of development fees and other charges cost the city very little and help the economic viability of projects.
4. **Moratorium on Condo Conversions** – The City has the authority to preserve its existing rental housing stock when vacancy rates are low.
5. **Planning and land use** – Identifying and pre-zoning land for affordable housing initiatives speeds up the development process. City planning and zoning should respond to affordable housing needs. Planning departments can also expedite permits for affordable housing projects, have different development standards for affordable housing projects (such as reduced parking requirements or higher density provisions), and provide hands-on support for not-for-profit groups going through the development application process. All of these would reduce the cost of developing affordable housing, and increase the pace at which organizations can get new housing built.
6. **Inclusionary zoning** –The City can require developers to build, or pay for, a portion of affordable housing whenever they build any housing. The City should assure affordable housing exists in all Winnipeg neighbourhoods.

Increasing the supply of affordable housing needs government.

Budgets indicate a city's commitments, and Winnipeg's housing budget has remained stagnant for years. Most of the City's Housing Rehabilitation Investment Reserve (\$1m/year) goes to neighbourhood revitalization initiatives. This funding is successfully improving housing in inner city neighbourhoods, but it's not building new affordable housing at the scale required. This funding should be doubled to \$2m/year to renew existing housing and support the development of new affordable housing.

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Mayor Nenshi: *"Well quite bluntly, everyone in the city should have a safe and a decent place to live. And the problem we have right now is that the supply of rental housing and entry-level housing has not kept pace with the demand."*

Additionally, Winnipeg needs creative, skilled, empowered people who can support the creation of affordable housing. Currently, there is one Winnipeg employee with a focus on housing. Non-profit and community groups seeking to develop housing need more partnership from the city. An affordable housing development corporation, or a much larger Housing Department, with the mandate and resources to develop affordable housing, could be this partner.

The City of Winnipeg should show government support, coordination and resources for affordable housing development through an agency dedicated to increasing affordable housing throughout the city.

Affordable housing is city business.

Federation of Canadian Municipalities: *"Safe, affordable housing is the bedrock of livable, competitive cities – and the stronger Canada we all aspire to build."*

Affordable housing provides the foundation for commercial and community development. Affordable housing is required for seniors to age in their neighbourhoods, for young families to grow their roots, for workers and students to come to Winnipeg, stay in Winnipeg, and succeed. **Effectively providing a range of housing options for all residents needs leadership that only the City can provide – in planning, zoning, land allocations, funding and collaborations with developers and social organizations.** Cities that have made any significant progress in increasing affordable housing options have Mayors and City Councillors who understand that affordable housing is city business.