



NORTH END HOUSING LAB REPORT

In the Spring of 2019, The Winnipeg Boldness Project and End Homelessness Winnipeg, in partnership with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, and the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council began a lab that looked at housing in Winnipeg's North End community.

Both CMHC and the McConnell Foundation were interested in supporting community-led initiatives that addressed housing challenges and barriers, as well as the potential for housing-related employment for people in the North End. The Winnipeg Boldness Project was well positioned to run the lab and recognized early on that End Homelessness Winnipeg would be a critical partner as the lab was implemented. The lab centred the voices of people

with lived experience, drawing on the multiple reports that individuals in Winnipeg's North End have lent their thoughts, ideas and insights to over the past 3-5 years. The lab was guided at every step by its Indigenous Decision-Making Group, and engaged several people from diverse parts of the housing system to better understand what is getting in the way of people accessing the housing they need and identify opportunities for change.

The Housing Solutions Lab's

GOAL

was to answer the following challenge question:

How might we create an actionable approach to building homes and community in the North End through a meaningful engagement process that centres the voices of the people who live here, identifies and mobilizes the resources needed to ensure these homes are completed and lived in, and creates opportunities for people in the area to gain housing-related skills and jobs?



An Indigenous Decision-Making Group was formed to provide insight and direction related to what was emerging through the lab process. The Decision-Making Group includes:

- **Belinda Vandebroek**
Elder
- **Damon Johnston**
President and CEO,
Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg
- **Dana Riccio-Arabe**
Executive Director,
Wahbung Abinoonjiiag Inc.
- **Diane Roussin**
Project Director,
The Winnipeg Boldness Project
- **Dodie Jordaen**
Executive Director,
Ka Ni Kanichihk
- **Jarred Baker**
Program Manager,
Eagle Urban Transition Centre
- **Levi Foy**
Executive Director,
Sunshine House
- **Lucille Bruce**
CEO,
End Homelessness Winnipeg
- **Jill Andres**
Creating Value
(Facilitator)
- **Lissie Rappaport**
Manager of Housing Supply,
End Homelessness Winnipeg
(Notetaker)

WHOLISTIC APPROACH TO HOUSING IN THE NORTH END

The Decision-Making Group identified **four key prototypes** that can be explored separately, but all interconnect to address issues identified in the lab. Although each of these areas can be taken on separately by different partners, there is also value in considering how they interact in the real-life context of housing in the North End. The Decision-Making Group identified Wahbung Abinoonjiiag, an Indigenous organization located in the North End that is in the early stages of co-creating Indigenous housing and a new social enterprise, as a place to explore this intersection alongside other partners and community.

Indigenous-Led Housing Ventures

The community has indicated that there is a need for Indigenous-led housing ventures – particularly in Winnipeg's North End. There is significant inequity in the existing housing system and very little Indigenous control of the elements of this system that has a substantial impact on Indigenous communities. Purpose Construction, Building Urban Industries for Local Development (BUILD Inc.), and North End Community Renewal Corporation (NECRC), are currently exploring the idea of a new, collaborative Indigenous-led property development and management social enterprise. Wahbung Abinoonjiiag is also taking over Sponsor Management of Manitoba Housing units to house families they work with and develop their own property management social enterprise.

Zoning & Regulation

Like the housing stock, the infrastructure (water and waste, transportation, etc.) in the North End is old and in need of major repairs and upgrades. Little investment has gone into improving infrastructure; therefore, it has been left to developers to bear the cost of upgrading on-site infrastructure. Due to the challenges associated with developing multi-family dwellings and limited availability of incentives to do so, developers default to single-family homes for sale or simply leave land vacant. There is a pressing need for a prototype that would address the regulations and infrastructure challenges that get in the way of new affordable infill rental housing in the North End.

Indigenous Models of Housing

The community has also drawn attention to the need for housing forms that accommodate larger families, different family configurations and have spaces to gather as a community. These new homes and the housing resources that accompany them, must be based on Indigenous principles and understandings of family and home. These factors exacerbate the issues of child apprehension and child welfare in the North End, and often "suitable" housing in the eyes of Child and Family Services can be the lynch pin to family reunification.

Social Finance for Development

We have heard repeatedly throughout this process that funding to develop new low-income housing is almost non-existent. While all levels of government maintain initiatives to address these issues, efforts are largely not adequate in relation to the exponential need for affordable and safe housing in the inner-city. End Homelessness Winnipeg's Housing Supply Action Committee is exploring a new social finance approach to build much needed low-income housing through a framework similar to a P3 (Public-Private Partnership).

VOICES OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

Community Wellbeing

"I stay inside late at night because I'm afraid to be outside alone. It's safe to stay off the street."

"The white man came and we are supposed to follow their ways. Yuppies talk about 'community gardens' when there is real crime in my North Point Douglas."

"I love Point Douglas for its diversity. But I worry about the drugs and the crime."

"Clean up needles"

"As soon as the sun goes down, the neighbourhood changes."

"Need more lighting."

Crime and violence were the most disliked factor or neighbourhood life. Proximity of friends and family was the most liked. About half of residents felt safe in the neighbourhood - half did not.

"We are strong, resilient and compassionate. Always growing and learning together my North Point Douglas."

"I use transit bus frequently and when I arrive young people make sure I am safe. They will walk me to where I am going. Neighbours are friendly and greet me."

"NPD is a women-led community."

"Poor perception of NPD, need positive news stories."

Housing

"I want to see more balanced housing in the neighbourhood, I just don't want the drug dealers."

"More housing"

"Don't displace people."

Voices of lived experience unanimously, residents agreed that if the housing plan does one thing, it should ensure William Whyte and Dufferin are equally respected with other Winnipeg neighbourhoods. For residents, respect translates into equal enforcement of laws and By-laws, maintenance of properties, investment in infrastructure and provision of recreation and leisure options.

"We are still doing this thing where we adopt [a new] system and we throw out the old system. We don't keep what was good about the old system and then add to it... People have different personalities and different needs, right, so that continuum of services need to be happening... rapid rehousing [and] prevention has to be happening all the same time in order for us to make a dent, right?"

Property Management

"Too many slumlords."

"Landlords need to be held more accountable."

"Discrimination often begins when the landlord hears your accent, or they see your face, and they know you are Aboriginal. ... There are some slum landlords who take advantage of tenants."

"I tried to get a place in the suburbs. I thought I had an appointment and there was a vacancy sign, but when I showed up, they told me it was rented."

Feeling disrespected by landlords:

"Landlord was asking over the phone: 'Do you have an income?'"

'Yes, EIA.' 'Are you a visible minority?'
'Yes, Native.' Then landlord said, 'Oh, I think the apartment is rented.'"

"He asked where I was currently staying. I said Siloam. His face changed. He called me the next day. I was denied."

"A landlord asked her to go to bed with him and she refused, then was told to get out of there."

"Living in Manitoba Housing has given me purpose because I have somewhere that is home, somewhere I can count on. I feel lucky to have somewhere."

While slum landlords are a serious neighbourhood problem, nonpayment of rent and property damage are risks for housing providers.

Residents who rent want more support and less red tape when they encounter problems with their landlords.

The home-ownership model is not for everyone and can have costly consequences when housing mismatch is pushed forward. Lessons learned from NEHP emphasize the need for both quality rental and ownership opportunities.

Housing Conditions

"[The landlords] do not do enough upkeep. The place is slowly falling apart, especially the bathroom. There is not much maintenance and it's mouldy. It's not healthy for my daughter's baby."

"My last place I lived in, it was already trashed when I moved in. The sink in the washroom was broken; the floors were wrecked. Then, when I moved out, the landlord blamed me and didn't return my deposit."

Home inspections for grant applicants has reduced "band-aid" exterior fix-ups that disguise interior blight.

Dufferin has no access to Housing Improvement Zone funds. The Province provides \$30,000 to both Dufferin and William Whyte for fix-up grants.

People want simplified grant applications for "fix-up" grants and continued emergency repair support grants.

Over 56% of participants communicated that their home was in need of some repair or maintenance.

More residents had interior housing issues than exterior, and of those 40% of problems related to plumbing.

Residents want quality affordable housing.

Family Wellbeing

"For some of our community members, they are not always going to get their housing and everything straightened out at once. Just being able to regain access to see their children is often a significant step."

"The day I lost my kids, that's the day I was homeless. And I was homeless for a couple years. They came in and took my kids and everything was seized. All the cheques for the rent stopped. I had nowhere to go."

Transitions Out of Care

"I think there's a misconception, you know, that if people are couch surfing, in some way they are better off than people in shelters. But what I'm finding with women [who are] couch surfing is that women are staying in a violent relationship longer, that women are being taken advantage of to clean people's houses [or] to do childcare for nothing every day. They are trading sex for a place to stay. And all of that horribleness is hidden."

"They don't offer you any resources in jail to help [women] find places. That would be a really big help because you get out and you got nowhere to go but Siloam Mission. And if you're not there at a particular time... they have more male beds than females. So if I don't make in that line early enough then I miss out on a bed to sleep for the night then I have to sleep outside, or I have to search for a friend's place. But if they had those resources in jail for me then it would be better than I could start working on you know doing searching because they do provide access to phones and stuff."

"When someone's leaving adult corrections, or a place like a detox program, or if it's a short-term addictions treatment, generally the exit plan looks at a whole bunch of things. Maybe it looks at income... if it's justice, it's looking at how not to reoffend. If it's addictions, it's looking at how not to relapse. But often it doesn't look at how to be housed, which you would think would be a key component but it's not quite there. It's not always a priority."

"People come to the city because a family member invites them: come stay with me. Often, they feel like a burden when they arrive. This is the number one issue we see."

"I think there needs to be more transitional housing and not put people on extensive waiting lists. Especially for people exiting CFS (aging out) and moms and kids."

"There should be more support after things go ok." (youth)

"There are so many kids aging out of CFS right now and... I'm afraid that these kids coming out of CFS now are going to be the next generation on the street. Right now, the people on the street have been failed by systems like residential schools. It's kind of that generation right now. And I'm afraid the next generation will be failed by the CFS system, and they will become homeless because they are not prepared to live independently."

Indigenous-Led

"You need Aboriginal agencies for Aboriginal people. In the non-Aboriginal agencies, it's difficult, if not impossible for them to provide services that have real meaning to Aboriginals."

"I wasn't taught about my culture, that would have been a huge help." (youth)

"[We need] more cultural awareness groups: drum groups, traditional medicine teachings to have more of a sense of community, so that you don't feel alone in the struggle." (youth)



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