



**Report from the
Community Meeting on Housing Issues**

November 2007

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On November 22, 2007, the North Central Community Association held a community meeting to talk about housing issues. Community Associations and community members from the Al Ritchie, Core, Cathedral, North East and North Central areas were invited to attend. Twenty-eight community members and interested parties attended the session. Thank you to Brenda Mercer, Emmaline Hill, Ben Webster, and Jan Morier for facilitating the small groups.

The meeting was laid out in the following manner:

1) Introductions

2) Review of research undertaken by the NCCA

- "Improving Rental Housing in Regina" – January, 2007
- "Inner City Tenants Survey" – March 2007

3) Small group work

- Questions:
- a) What do you see as the major issues your community is facing when it comes to housing?
 - b) How do these things impact you personally? How do they impact your community as a whole?
 - c) If housing in the community was physically safe and healthy, how would that change the community?
 - d) What do you think needs to be done (or could be/should be done) to address the issues you've identified in Questions #1?

****Please see Appendix A for a list of all of the answers recorded in response to the questions during the small group work***

4) The answers to question d) were reviewed as a large group

5) Each attendee selected the top three ideas they thought should be acted on

6) During a break, that information was compiled, 5 boxes were drawn on a big sheet of paper and the 5 most common responses were placed in each of the boxes.

7) Each person was given three different coloured stickers. They were instructed to place their stickers on their top three picks (red=1st pick, blue= 2nd pick, yellow = 3rd pick). This would, in turn, direct the community association focus in the area of housing.

8) The sheets were left on the wall. Although no calculations were performed during the meeting, attendees could see what everyone had selected as their priorities.

	More Bylaw	Increase housing rates	Licence landlords	More Social Housing	More support services for tenants
	# of stickers	# of stickers	# of stickers	# of stickers	# of stickers
Red (3 points)	2	4	7	3	0
Blue (2 points)	3	2	3	1	7
Yellow (1 point)	2	5	2	0	6
# of points	14	21	29	11	20
Rating	4	2	1	5	3

The top five ideas/solutions that came out of the meeting:

- Licensing landlords (29 points)
- Increasing housing rates through DCRE for people living in “good” housing (housing that is physically safe and healthy) (21 points)
- Provide more support services for tenants (20 points)
- Put more bylaw officers on the street and have increased enforcement of the bylaws (14)
- Increasing the amount of social housing available (some must come WITH supports for tenants) (11)

The outcome of this meeting will be used to guide the North Central Community Association’s future actions with regard to housing issues.

****Copies of "Improving Rental Housing in Regina" and the "Inner City Tenants Survey" are available through the North Central Community Association's office****

Appendix A

What do you see as the major issues your community is facing when it comes to housing?

- Serious shortage of rental units
- Serious shortage of affordable rentals
- Lots of substandard housing
- Poor housing results in an increase of crime
- Zoning requirements need to be publicized better
- Individual neighbourhoods are frequently lacking different housing options to meet people's needs
- Transient renters can negatively affect the quality and safety of the units
- There is and continues to be too much of an "easy rush" to buy and rent properties without being ready
- SAP/TEA rates are inadequate to afford a safe, secure home
- Poorer neighbourhoods can discourage home ownership, although increased home ownership helps improve the overall neighbourhood
- Larger housing corporations are leaving houses vacant
- Absentee landlords
- Despair
- Drug houses/activity
- Garbage/furniture from vacant houses (same ones)
- Transient population
- Garbage bins/spillover
- Tenants have no accountability, the same ones all over Regina
- Constant repairs=raised rents
- Prostitution – slow/no response by police
- Gangs=violent crimes/graffiti
- Social Services – low subsidy
- Under-employment
- Home ownership
- External vandalism/mischief
- Maintenance of properties – poor heat, windows leak, basement walls – bylaws aren't being enforced, it's difficult to get action
- Poor quality housing=poor quality tenants – conduct illegal activities and can pay rent
- Expedite process of repair or bulldoze quickly
- Social housing/ownership
- Negative image
- "Broken house"
- "Alabama Flip" – minimum improvements
- More home ownership, more quality rentals
- Consolidate/centralize complaints – one contact number
- Dumping in the alleys
- Fine options programs can't keep up

- Landlords should be responsible for disposing
- Cars on lawn (broken down, unlicensed)
- Garbage in the yard
- Interpretation of "junk vehicle" bylaw
- Don't know how to get landlords investigated
- Mobilize neighbourhood – not just renters
- Find the champions at the City (Myles Kirkpatrick)

How do these things impact you personally? How do they impact your community as a whole?

- Transience affects the schools and neighbourhood negatively
- Housing conditions affect transiency and vice-versa
- Families on assistance spend a large amount of their assistance funds on housing and then have less for food and clothing
- Broken Window Theory – Some neglected and damaged housing encourages more vandalism
- Seniors and vulnerable people become afraid and distrustful
- Poor housing is affected/caused by poor economics/systems
- Substandard housing encourages criminal behaviour and instability
- Need to have people who are affected by substandard housing involved and heard when tackling the problems
- It is a drain on the system and resources, which is often not coordinated
- There is a disincentive to invest in the neighbourhood
- Safety issues
- Image (prostitution, gangs, etc)
- Housing boom
- Peace of mind, security, noise issues (drug houses)
- Rents double (by landlords) in order to keep the 200-300 BAD tenants from renting again
- Respect (lack of) from City
- Racism
- Houses around the one "bad" house are all affected negatively – the whole block – people don't want to visit
- Good landlords suffer too
- Bad tenants hurt good landlords and good tenants
- Bad landlords scare tenants who don't want to offend them
- Owners want to be proud of where they live, but with the neighbourhood perception it's hard
- Others look down on NC residents
- Unawareness of Housing Centres Enforcement Team – centralized agency/cooperation
- New ideas/structures aren't being implemented b/c of concern of "stepping on toes"
- Inspection/scrutiny f "who's making money off this" as explanation for inaction
- Enforcers are sometimes complacent
- Don't feel safe/security
- Did not implement rent freeze
- Devalues good houses (insurance and resale)

If housing in the community was physically safe and healthy, how would that change the community?

- Reduce transience
- Increase stability
- It may force low income people to move out, but many can stay with adequate supports and resources
- Safer and healthier community
- Increase hope, involvement, pride in the community, increase self-esteem
- Healthy and safe housing makes for healthier and safer people
- Decrease crime, and create a spiraling upwards of a neighbourhood
- More incentive to maintain and improve housing by owners and landlords
- Prices (rent/mortgages) would rise
- People would have more pride
- Displacement of people who could not afford
- No need for slum housing meetings
- Crime rates would go down
- Re-focus on income growth
- Low-income housing should be spread throughout city
- Renters could leave city
- Re-focus on programming (children, sports, etc)
- Increased pride
- Bring community together, get to know your neighbours
- Attract different renters
- Less temptation for kids to negative behaviour
- Landlords will put more money into houses
- Motivated to keep houses up
- Get better and better renters
- New perception of community
- Better health – fewer hospital visits (asthma, pneumonia)
- More money because of heat savings
- Possibly rent would go up and wouldn't be able to afford housing
- Needs to be safe, healthy, and AFFORDABLE
- Accessible to single people and families
- Possibly increased discrimination against low income/working poor – stigma
- We have had new houses – to what impact? Decent housing, shores up weaker parts of the block, progression towards improvement

What do you think needs to be done (or could be/should be done) to address the issues you've identified in Questions #1?

- Governments, communities, etc. need to seriously address poverty and it's causes which partly causes poor housing
- Government needs to increase housing rates, and only give higher rates for safe, affordable, and good quality housing
- Poor housing conditions should be actively discouraged

- Landlord and/or property licensing would be a program which could improve housing quality and increase accountability
- Increase family support/preservation to keep families together and decrease transiency
- Services/supports/resources must be coordinated. Decrease any duplication
- More supports/programs/resources need to be put in place to encourage stronger tenants
- Incentives to access supports
- Increased social housing including supportive housing
- Government programs must address need for increased supports to tenants, similar to what was previously done (Regina Low Income Housing Corp)
- 20 year tax exemption for new building
- Approach government – stiffer penalties for drug selling/growing
- Get rid of prostitution (cameras, vans patrolling)
- Fine tenants who dump garbage
- Return to individual garbage cans (not dumpsters)
- Large dumpsters every few blocks for renovation projects
- 3 year leases from tenants
- “free passes” for landfills for landlords
- Hold tenants responsible/accountable (not a letter from Social Services)
- Address social issues; focus on activities for youth, families!! Garden!
- Work for welfare
- More accessible training programs
- Share the despair
- Choose a block at a time – inform re: standards, improve house by house on the block
- City needs more bylaw enforcement officers – resource them with laptops, speed up the process
- Don't accept excuses
- Build a database of rentals that are up to standards
- Database of bad tenants
- Licensing – first step – can work on problem tenants next
- Monitor tenants (neighbours can help landlord monitor)
- Central access point for complaints
- Greater power/knowledge of power of the Rentalsman
- Program for landlords to refer good tenants
- SCAN – publicize the legislation/program
- Increase knowledge of renters (tenants) rights
- Help people stand up, feel less intimidated
- More resources for helping agencies