

World Habitat Day

The United Nations declared the first Monday of every October to be “World Habitat Day” – a day to call worldwide attention to the dire need for affordable housing for all, and a time to remind everyone of our collective responsibility for the future of human habitat.

On October 5, 2009, Habitat for Humanity Winnipeg (HFHW) held a news conference to raise awareness of the need for safe, decent, affordable housing in our own community.

There are 125,000 Manitobans living in poverty, and with rental vacancy rates in urban centres across Manitoba reaching an all-time low, more and more are living in unsafe, over crowded, expensive, or substandard accommodations. In 2006, 11.3% of Manitoba families were in need of core housing—about 46,900 households. Those who are more likely to be in need of core housing are single-parent families, persons with disabilities, Aboriginal families, and immigrants.

Habitat for Humanity Winnipeg serves an important need in our community by removing barriers to homeownership for families who are in financially vulnerable situations, but who otherwise are motivated to improve their situation.

Without advertising, over 500 families contact Habitat annually looking for assistance. Of those, a detailed review is completed on approximately 70 families. The families that are accepted into partnership must meet the following basic criteria:

1. A demonstrated need for housing,
2. The ability to pay a mortgage, and
3. A willingness to partner with Habitat for Humanity Winnipeg and our sponsors.

HFHW accepts into partnership the number of families for which it can afford to build homes. This year, 15 homes are being built for purchase by low-income working families.

Habitat homes are not given away. Low-income working families purchase their Habitat home with no down payment, and an interest-free mortgage. The monthly mortgage payments are based on family income rather than property value. This approach allows families to have adequate cash in the home for the other necessities of life while building equity for the future. Just as important, it allows people to experience, for the first time, the feelings of homeownership: joy, pride, security and warmth.

When people have access to affordable housing, their hopes and dreams can be renewed. Families plant roots and become proud, connected members of a community. Children can thrive in a stable environment, opening a door to a brighter future. Every family that becomes a homeowner helps to build the foundation of a better Winnipeg.

Elaine Skubovius, a 2004 homeowner had this to say about her experience “Before being welcomed into the Habitat program, we had been looking to buy a house for a very long time. We just could not find a house that was suitable for our family and in our price range. Becoming Habitat homeowners has transformed our lives. We now have a home, a dog and a fenced yard! Our kids no longer share a room and we live in a wonderful community in a safe and quiet neighborhood. We are thankful for all of the volunteers, and sponsors that worked so hard to make our dream come true.”

“Today, marking World Habitat Day, Habitat is very pleased to announce that the City of Winnipeg is showing their commitment to affordable housing by making a significant donation of land for future Habitat homes” said Sandy Hopkins, HFHW CEO. “Earlier in the spring, City Council approved the donation of one acre of land on Ross Avenue for our use. We are having discussions with the City of Winnipeg about acquiring the parking lot adjacent to the property allowing us to build a total of 14 to 20 homes. Some of these homes may be built as early as next year.”



Deputy Mayor, Justin Swandel

Deputy Mayor, Justin Swandel, stated “Our City is committed to relieving the shortage of affordable housing in Winnipeg and is grateful to Habitat for Humanity for addressing this challenge. We are pleased to support Habitat for Humanity and their commitment to Winnipeg by donating this significant parcel of land on Ross Avenue. We know that new housing development and the resulting home ownership will help to revitalize the area. Giving people equity in their community will build the capacity to make these neighbourhoods whole and healthy. Education is also a key to community revitalization and the close proximity to the Red River College Princess Street Campus will be of great interest to prospective homeowners.”

A draft plan of the development was presented by Dudley Thompson, Principal with Prairie

Architects. The first phase, based on the existing land could look like this:

