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New Housing Development Strategy in North Point Douglas, Winnipeg

INTRODUCTION

Winnipeg is the largest urban centre in Manitoba, with smaller cities such as Brandon being two hours of primarily agricultural land situated to the west of Winnipeg. From within Winnipeg's urban landscape, the Point Douglas neighbourhoods occupy a distinctive position as a peninsula near the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. Historically, this location served as a critical junction where nature's transportation features and man's transportation routes intersected, shaping the area's economic and social development (Society, 2024). The geography of Point Douglas—framed by the Red River, the Canadian National Railway, and key bridges such as the Redwood, Louise, and Disraeli—has played a significant role in its identity and growth. However challenging, North and South Point Douglas remain communities marked by historical resident activism, resilience, and endurance reflecting broader patterns for good urban change. Rather than surrender to a neighbourhood's reputation as a “problem area,” a gradual, deliberate social good approach to redevelopment offers greater long-term benefits for North Point Douglas.

The Point Douglas neighbourhoods are split from interaction due to the rail lines, and this is demonstrated in various policy initiatives and electoral maps. Each side also shares boundary zones with other neighbourhoods yet main remain developmentally isolated to themselves. South Point Douglas is in with The Exchange District on various matters, as well the City of Winnipeg downtown revitalization zone *CentrePlan 2025* (Winnipeg C. o., 2024). North point Douglas will be our direct subject for this study, and it is considered to be in the resource range of the greater North End neighbourhoods (Corporation N. E., n.d.). Beginning at Higgins, Main Street is the most direct artery for residential level interaction between neighbourhoods. A stand of this paper is that Point Douglas is well suited to be reverted back to a semi-dense residential neighbourhood

today because this is what it had been before the transportation lines. Point Douglas needs its own housing practice as it tends with environmental concerns and lack of lucrative development; the time is now while there is supply of decaying housing stock, vacant industrial and residential lots (Winnipeg C. o., 2025). Right now, there is a moment happening where the community possesses the necessary policy framework, active civic engagement, and local initiative to support and take full advantage of post-pandemic housing redevelopment strategies.

This paper argues that the revitalization of North Point Douglas must be guided by a community-led housing strategy that integrates social equity, environmental remediation, and coordinated action across all levels of government. Constrained by geographic boundaries and a legacy of industrialization, this neighbourhood's limited land base demands careful, intentional use that prioritizes safe, stable, and affordable housing as a foundation for long-term well-being. Rather than pursuing large-scale redevelopment or market-driven gentrification, Point Douglas requires incremental, semi-dense, and socially inclusive approaches rooted in local participation, reconciliation, and sustainability. Through targeted infill development, inclusionary zoning, and the mobilization of social enterprises, this model leverages existing policy frameworks and political will to rebuild community trust, expand housing options, and foster local capacity.

This study contends that North Point Douglas can serve as a replicable example of equitable urban renewal—demonstrating how marginalized, historically industrial neighbourhoods can achieve transformation through small-scale, community-driven, and cross-governmental collaboration. The sections that follow examine the neighbourhood's context and challenges, define key terms and concepts, and present an integrated framework for sustainable redevelopment grounded in equity, place, and collective action. By taking full advantage of existing policies, the levels of activity will quickly demonstrate the neighborhood's

power to make change and positivity created from this change. Leveraging local labor, fostering skill development, and aligning with broader policy priorities, this redevelopment model has the potential to serve as a replicable framework for other communities seeking inclusive, grassroots-driven urban renewal. In a neighbourhood where new construction is rare and vacant lots are often neglected; each development carries heightened significance. Revitalization efforts should focus on activating these spaces, turning vacant lots into yards, and creating more windows with plants instead of plywood.

TERMINOLOGY

To translate this vision into a practical framework, it is essential to clarify the terms and concepts that guide equitable housing development in North Point Douglas. Each term—whether financial, spatial, or policy-based—carries specific implications for how redevelopment can be implemented in a way that strengthens community control, supports affordability, and builds long-term capacity. Establishing a shared vocabulary not only enhances clarity but also ensures that discussions among policymakers, practitioners, and residents operate from a mutual understanding of key principles. The following section outlines the foundational terminology that frames this study’s approach to community-led, housing-centered revitalization.

DEFINITIONS

In the housing delivery chain, several interrelated elements determine the success of a project, these include: finance, land acquisition, policy and permissions, labour, and design. Each of these represent a critical essential for creating coordinated, community-led redevelopment in North Point Douglas. Finance addresses the sourcing, distribution, and management of capital, outlining who funds a project, how resources are allocated, and how payments are sequenced

across its lifecycle. Predictable and timely access to financing ensures progress from planning to completion without costly interruptions. Land acquisition focuses on identifying, securing, and preparing suitable sites for development. In built-up areas such as North Point Douglas, where land is scarce, infill development (Caulfield, 2024) —constructing new homes within existing urban fabric—is often the most practical approach. These projects occur in close proximity to established residences, requiring thoughtful coordination, communication, and design sensitivity to maintain trust and respect for neighbouring properties. Policy and permissions comprise the regulatory and statutory frameworks that guide development, including zoning, funding programs, permits, inspections, and legislative amendments. Streamlining these processes is essential for enabling local builders, cooperatives, and social enterprises to participate meaningfully in affordable housing creation.

A sustainable housing strategy must also address labour supply, adequacy, suitability, and affordability. Skilled trades are fundamental to achieving housing targets, yet the sector faces persistent shortages due to limited training pathways and insufficient incentives (Association M. H., n.d.). Strengthening social enterprises and workforce programs in Winnipeg offers a promising avenue to cultivating local talent, though success will depend on stable funding and institutional support. Design decisions must align with community needs, emphasizing smaller-scale developments—such as two- to four-bedroom homes —that foster economic feasibility, minimize disruption, and enhance social cohesion. Adequacy refers to housing that is structurally sound and not in need of major repairs, while suitability ensures that dwelling size matches household composition (Corporation C. M.). Affordability, as defined by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), denotes housing costs that do not exceed 30 percent of gross household income, inclusive of mortgage or rent, taxes, insurance, and utilities

(Corporation C. M., n.d.). Complementary urban planning tools—such as urban infill, densification, and secondary suites—encourage population growth and reinvestment within mature neighbourhoods while countering suburban sprawl. Inclusionary zoning policies further guarantee that new developments incorporate a fair proportion of units affordable to local median incomes, reinforcing neighbourhood stability and equity.

CONCEPTS

Social housing has re-emerged as a central pillar of equitable housing policy, reflecting a paradigmatic shift away from the isolated, high-density public projects of the twentieth century (Fernandez, 2024). Contemporary strategies emphasize integration, participation, and lasting affordability, seeking to weave new developments into the social and economic fabric of existing communities. This renewed focus recognizes that the creation of stable, inclusive housing is not merely a social intervention, but a process of nation-building, one that requires mass participation and cross-sector collaboration. A robust homebuilding economy, rooted in equitable opportunity, can stimulate job creation, workforce training, and community revitalization. By embedding housing within broader strategies of reconciliation, sustainability, and local governance, municipalities like Winnipeg can foster developments that are both economically viable and socially cohesive. The new era of social housing thus extends beyond physical construction to embrace economic empowerment, skill development, and participatory planning, marking a decisive departure from top-down, one-size-fits-all models of the past.

At the municipal level, inclusionary zoning could become a vital instrument for ensuring that housing development reflects the income realities and demographic composition of existing residents (Rights, 2021). This policy mechanism requires that a designated percentage of new residential units be offered at affordable rates tied to the community's current median household

income. In North Point Douglas, inclusionary zoning can function as a safeguard against speculative development and gentrification, preserving access for long-standing residents and ensuring that new projects align with local needs. By integrating affordability requirements into zoning permissions, the city can direct private investment toward socially beneficial outcomes, achieving a balance between market dynamics and public interest. Moreover, inclusionary zoning complements broader sustainability objectives by encouraging mixed-income developments, reducing socio-economic segregation, and promoting equitable access to urban amenities. When implemented alongside community consultation and transparent oversight, it helps reinforce the principle that revitalization should benefit—not displace—the people who have sustained the neighbourhood over generations.

The construction industry, historically burdened by complex regulatory procedures and inflated costs, requires modernization to meet urgent housing needs. Streamlining approval processes, reducing administrative duplication, and embracing innovative methods such as prefabrication, modular construction, and non-profit labour models can significantly expand the capacity of local actors (Skura, 2024). In Winnipeg, these strategies can empower smaller developers, cooperatives, and social enterprises to participate in the housing supply chain, fostering localized economic activity and community ownership. Carefully planned and communicated planning, offers a low-impact path to increasing density within mature neighbourhoods and unlocking existing assets. By emphasizing human-scale design and walkability, such projects strengthen community trust and aesthetic continuity. The City of Winnipeg's Secondary Plan for North Point Douglas, launched in Winter 2024, reflects these principles, outlining a 25-year vision for community-led growth (Winnipeg C. o., 2025). Through continuous engagement and iterative design, the plan aims to balance housing

expansion with environmental stewardship, historical preservation, and cultural identity, ensuring that redevelopment enhances rather than erases local character.

Holistic urban renewal extends beyond housing to encompass mobility, accessibility, and public space. Revitalization efforts in North Point Douglas must prioritize a variety of housing types compatible with neighbourhood character—ranging from single-family dwellings and duplexes to secondary suites and multiplexes (Winnipeg C. o., 2021). Equally important is the integration and investments in green spaces, amenities, bike lanes, transit connectivity, and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, to support environmental goals and encouraging active lifestyles and social interaction (Akram Mahani, 2024). By reinvesting in mature communities, Winnipeg can counter the unsustainable patterns of suburban sprawl, channeling resources toward the renewal of its oldest and most historically significant districts. For North Point Douglas, one of the city’s oldest and economically challenged neighbourhoods, positive investment grounded in inclusion and reconciliation offers a pathway toward equitable development that honours local heritage while fostering long-term stability.

Achieving lasting progress in housing development requires institutional coordination across municipal, provincial, and federal levels. The Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation (MHRC), as a provincial Crown corporation, possesses the statutory authority and financial tools to leverage federal infrastructure programs and capital maintenance funds (Winnipeg C. o., 2004). By establishing a provincial capacity fund, MHRC could support non-profit organizations in hiring, training, and retaining skilled workers—thus embedding economic benefits within local communities (Kirsten Bernas, 2023). Recognizing deeply affordable housing as a public good that the private market alone cannot provide, provincial governments are urged to reapply proven strategies to expand the non-market housing supply.

Moreover, the federal government’s borrowing capacity enables sustained investment in infrastructure assets that are partially self-supporting and socially transformative (2025). Coordinated policy frameworks, procurement reforms, and outcome-based funding models can ensure that resources are directed efficiently toward projects that maximize social return, equity, and community resilience.

A comprehensive housing strategy must also integrate social support mechanisms that extend beyond construction. The Housing First model (Housing First, 2019) underscores that homelessness cannot be eradicated without guaranteeing immediate access to safe, affordable homes. In Winnipeg, where low-income households often allocate 70 percent of their income to shelter and with over 6,000 individuals on waiting lists for social housing (Kristin Annable, 2023), this approach is especially urgent. Implementing case management ratios—such as one housing worker per one hundred units, as recommended by the Right to Housing Action Plan (Kirsten Bernas, 2023)—would ensure ongoing tenant support, property maintenance, and community stability. Expanding non-profit housing initiatives and attaching affordability benefits to units’ community well-being would deepen social impact, enabling residents to thrive within secure, dignified living environments. The sustainability of housing policy depends not only on unit production but also on fostering inclusive systems of care, employment, and empowerment. By aligning physical development with social investment, North Point Douglas can become a model of equitable, community-driven regeneration.

HISTORY

The idea of North Point Douglas as a desirable place to live has always been remarkably resilient. A vibrant Indigenous community thrived there long before colonial settlement, and even after a devastating fire cleared the land for the Selkirk settlers, the area endured as a stylish

and esteemed residential neighbourhood in the early 19th century (Society, 2024). As steamboats brought successive waves of Europeans—despite persistent spring flooding that could have discouraged settlement—North Point Douglas continued to attract residents who valued its geography and connections to the river. However, while seasonal challenges influenced settlement patterns, nothing challenged the character of the community more than the profound North–South split triggered by the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Dominion Lands Act of 1872. This division transformed Point Douglas: South Point Douglas became heavily industrialized, while North Point Douglas was left with a thin industrial-residential strip along Sutherland Avenue, and heavy residential activity on both sides of Euclid Avenue (Winnipeg C. o., 2025). The population and industrial booms shifted the neighbourhood’s identity from upper-middle class to a working-class community, beginning a lasting adjustment to its owner-tenant fabric and social landscape.

There was resilience here — a sense that it was a good place to live — and that character shined through, empowering people to challenge the unequal prosperity that surrounded them. The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters used North Point Douglas, and especially the Craig Block at 795 Main Street in Winnipeg, as a rallying and organizing point (Archives, n.d.). This gave the building the distinction of hosting the very first Black labour union in North America. From the late 19th century to the first half of the 20th century, hospitality train workers (Porters) experienced exploitation and discrimination (Tomchuk, 2014). Black men from the Caribbean, the United States, and Canada came together to organize for their labour rights on the Canadian Pacific Railway, fighting against unfair costs such as having to replace train supplies out of their own wages. The trains brought prosperity for a few, but the porters built their own — standing as a lasting symbol of strength and justice.

North Point Douglas has always been trying to get back to being a good place to live and despite industrialization's challenges, the area became known for its activism (Wins Bridgman, 2019). By the late 1950s, the construction of the Disraeli Bridge and lack of residential redevelopment spurred the area's evolving identity—industrial yet activist, displaced yet resilient - and set the stage for new visions of community development. From the 1960s onward, Indigenous and Métis leaders advanced the plan Neeginan (“Our Place”), envisioning education, housing, and employment opportunities (Wins Bridgman, 2019). This effort led to landmark developments in South Point Douglas: The Aboriginal Centre in the former rail station, the Circle of Life Thunderbird House, and Neeginan Village all there to reawaken and reconnect Indigeneity back to the area with Point Douglas as home. Current residents have also restored historic treasures like the 1862 Barber House, established the North Point Douglas Women's Centre, and launched grassroots safety programs such as Powerline. These achievements reflect a community determined to preserve heritage while building an inclusive future.

Despite its strengths in historic architecture and legacy, 2.5 kilometres of scenic waterfront, proximity to downtown, quiet residential streets, two central elementary schools, accessible neighbourhood entry points, and a resilient community spirit, Point Douglas faces serious challenges. The Canadian Pacific Railway's long-standing presence and industrial activity left lingering soil contamination, a reminder of its heavy-industry past. Housing values remain below the city average, reflecting both economic disparities and hesitation from potential investors. Point Douglas deserves equal recognition and thoughtful planning, not least to heal the scars left by expressways and urban sprawl that once fragmented its tight-knit fabric. Encouragingly, some of that work is already underway. The City of Winnipeg prepared the secondary neighbourhood plan for Point Douglas, prompted in part by the planned bus rapid

transit line along Sutherland Avenue, which is expected to accelerate redevelopment on former industrial lands. Without clear guidelines, this surge in interest could risk erasing historic character or displacing long-term residents—outcomes careful planning seeks to prevent.

The neighbourhood plan—also called a secondary plan—will function as a by-law, setting a long-term vision for land use, housing variety, and building design. After background research and the first round of engagement in 2024, city planners have been refining the draft through the spring and summer of 2025, before Council submits a secondary plan bylaw in fall 2025. This community has been waiting for a wind-fall and the secondary plan for North Point Douglas places protection on historic buildings that are vulnerable and pursues redevelopment that is coordinated. Community voices are central to this process setting a long-term vision for land use, housing variety, and building design. It will ensure parks and amenities remain within walking distance, that new homes complement existing ones, and that Point Douglas continues to grow as a walkable, bikeable, and transit-oriented community. As Canada embraces reconciliation, Point Douglas offers Winnipeg a chance to lead. Strategies such as inclusionary zoning, community land trusts, and protection of non-profit housing can increase density without displacing Indigenous and long-term residents.

By honouring the area's Indigenous roots, industrial legacy, and activist spirit, Winnipeg can create a model of inclusive urban renewal—one that celebrates the past while confidently shaping the future. However deeply layered the problems of North Point Douglas may be, its very geography makes transformation possible. The neighbourhood is small, surrounded by the Red River on three sides, and distinctly isolated, which means its limited land can be reimaged without the sprawl or disruption seen elsewhere. In many ways, the same conditions that once supported heavy industry could now support a turn toward thoughtful deindustrialization and

community-focused growth. Winnipeg as a whole is a city grappling with crumbling infrastructure, underfunded social services, and persistent poverty. Within just sixteen compact blocks, North Point Douglas reflects all of these challenges in miniature—yet it also offers a chance to prove that renewal does not require another shopping mall or factory, but rather vision, equity, and respect for place.

PROBLEM

Point Douglas faces a complex set of challenges that extend beyond economic and infrastructure issues. In October 2020, the Winnipeg Police Drug Enforcement Unit launched Project Matriarch, an investigation that uncovered a drug trafficking organization operating within the neighbourhood (Unger, 2021). The operation revealed the production and distribution of crack cocaine in the area, and subsequent charges also included proceeds of crime and money laundering offences. This incident highlights ongoing issues related to crime and public safety, which intersect with the area's historical economic marginalization and social inequities. These issues coexist alongside the neighbourhood's other persistent challenges. The legacy of heavy industry has left lingering soil contamination, while historical patterns of industrialization and urban planning—such as the North–South division created by the Canadian Pacific Railway—contributed to economic marginalization and shifts in the owner-tenant fabric. Public safety concerns, such as those exposed by Project Matriarch, underscore the importance of comprehensive neighbourhood planning, community engagement, and social investments to ensure that revitalization efforts benefit the multi-dimensional elements of a creating a healthy community.

Even after the removal of a long-standing criminal organization, housing values in Point Douglas remain below the city average, and underinvestment continues to challenge residents.

The operation had significant impacts on the community: residents reported feeling intimidated, after 20-years of a drug trafficking operation across the neighbourhood that controlled multiple properties strategically located to maintain dominance (Gowriluk, 2024). The operation's scale and longevity demonstrate the persistence of organized crime in Point Douglas, revealing how illicit activity can embed itself deeply within the community landscape over decades. Project Matriarch marked a turning point, not only for law enforcement but also for residents, signaling the potential to reclaim neighbourhood spaces for positive enterprises. The demolition of six large properties represents both a symbolic and practical step toward restoring residents' sense of security, allowing the community to feel ownership over spaces once again (Greenslade, 2023).

However North Point Douglas is still economically disadvantaged, with high poverty rates contributing to vulnerability that illustrates how lucrative illicit markets can exploit economically marginalized residents. Long-standing poverty in the area, compounded by limited employment opportunities and underfunded social services, created conditions where illegal activities could thrive. The neighbourhood's economic challenges are not just social; they intersect with financial inequities and housing instability. Underinvestment in infrastructure and social services continues to challenge residents, poverty and housing instability remain deeply entrenched: citywide, 2,469 people experienced homelessness on November 5, 2024—nearly double the 1,256 counted in 2022 and the highest in the 10-year history of the Winnipeg Street Census (Winnipeg E. H., 2025). By addressing these conditions through redevelopment, affordable housing initiatives, and community-focused planning, the city and province aim to eliminate residents' exposure to criminal networks, providing alternatives that strengthen social and economic stability.

With the removal of disruptive properties associated with criminal activity, the provision of affordable housing, financial support, and mental health or substance use services becomes essential for addressing homelessness and creating measurable improvements in community well-being. Citywide, contributing factors to housing loss include low income (32.6%), eviction (16.9%), substance use (16.3%), conflict with a spouse or partner (14%), and discrimination (10.8%), illustrating the complex socio-economic dynamics that exacerbate vulnerability (Winnipeg E. H., 2025). In Point Douglas, the drug trafficking operation directly affected both the housing stock and the quality of available housing, as ten properties were used as operational bases and residences creating unsafe and overcrowded conditions. These properties also carried a large environmental footprint due to years of industrial neglect and misuse. In response, six of these properties have been demolished, and in 2023, the province issued a request to sell homes on Lisgar Avenue and Austin Street for \$1 each to Indigenous or non-profit organizations (Gold, 2025). These homes are now slated to become at least six affordable, low-to-moderate-income housing projects, providing new opportunities for families, and improving the overall housing supply. By replacing spaces previously tied to criminal activity with safe, well-managed housing, the neighbourhood is strengthened, ensuring residents live in more stable, secure, and equitable environments while directly addressing historical inequities in property access and quality.

As the layers are peeled back negative trends do repeat like that of environmental concerns around contamination. The redevelopment of these former drug properties has both environmental and social implications. Demolition and cleanup of six large, environmentally degraded homes reduce health risks associated with contamination and neglect. Environmentally responsible redevelopment provides an opportunity to create safe, sustainable housing. Socially, replacing the sites of criminal activity with homes for low-to-moderate-income families helps

foster community cohesion and reduces intimidation, restoring residents' sense of belonging and pride. Affordable housing initiatives spearheaded by Indigenous or non-profit organizations also promote inclusivity and reconciliation, demonstrating how the built environment can directly impact social outcomes and improve quality of life for long-standing residents. Add this to the levels of soil contamination from heavy industry and the rail lines: what little land North Point Douglas has required that it not to be wasted. While problems have been long lasting, things can always be worse. Report of structure fires that have taken all of the Euclid to Sutherland strip of Main Street, including most famously the Sutherland Hotel, are one example of this (Bernhardt, 2025).

As the historical and structural layers of North Point Douglas are examined, recurring patterns of geographical and social inequity become evident, particularly concerning environmental degradation and contamination. The neighbourhood has long faced challenges related to soil contamination stemming from heavy industrial activity and the construction of railway lines, which have left enduring health and ecological risks. In this context, the redevelopment of properties formerly associated with criminal activity carries both environmental and social significance. The demolition of six large, environmentally compromised homes mitigates the health hazards posed by prolonged neglect, while environmentally responsible reconstruction offers opportunities to create safe, sustainable, and resilient housing. Initiatives led by Indigenous or non-profit organizations further advance inclusivity and reconciliation, demonstrating the intersection of urban planning, social equity, and environmental stewardship. Land available in North Point Douglas requires strategic redevelopment as an essential to ensure both ecological and social benefits that demonstrate urban reinvestment and a shift away from profit being a primary driver of housing projects.

The social benefits of collaborative and responsive redevelopment extend beyond safety and housing provision. The handling of Project Matriarch’s aftermath reflects broader political and policy considerations across all levels of government. At the municipal level, the City of Winnipeg plays a pivotal role in land use planning, zoning, and local infrastructure development, which directly influence the feasibility and location of affordable housing projects. The province of Manitoba, through agencies like Manitoba Housing, is responsible for developing and managing public housing policies and programs. This includes providing subsidies for social and affordable housing, as well as overseeing the construction and operation of housing units. The federal government, primarily through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), supports affordable housing initiatives like the Housing Accelerator Fund in Winnipeg by providing funding to provincial and municipal governments to see out localized housing development (Winnipeg C. o., 2024).

The potential unlocked through a push of collaborative approaches underscores the intersection of governance, justice, and urban planning in shaping positive and healthy neighborhood futures. For instance, under the National Housing Strategy, the federal government has committed to investing in affordable housing projects and partnering with non-profits, co-ops, and the private sector to increase the supply of affordable units (Corporation C. M., 2024). By offering the Lisgar and Austin homes for \$1 each to Indigenous or non-profit organizations, the provincial government signals a political reinvestment in North Point Douglas, demonstrating current responses to the community’s need for change and making the area Neeginan, “Our Place,” once again. This also demonstrates a shift in approach that prioritizes equitable redevelopment and affordable housing over the monetization of criminal assets, while reducing adherence to the deeply financialized housing system that has long limited access to

safe, stable homes. These efforts demonstrate that thoughtful interventions taken in the built environment can directly influence social outcomes, improve quality of life, and foster a resilient and engaged community over time.

Point Douglas faces deeply entrenched challenges that are structural, historical, and social in nature, encompassing economic marginalization, environmental contamination, persistent crime, and systemic inequities. Across ten properties for two decades, illicit activities intersected with longstanding poverty, housing instability, and chronic underinvestment in social services, further constraining residents' opportunities for economic and social mobility. Compounding these challenges, the neighbourhood's industrial legacy, and the North–South division created by the Canadian Pacific Railway, produced lasting environmental degradation, including soil contamination, and contributed to structural inequities in property ownership and land use. Nonetheless, significant interventions are underway to address these historical and contemporary challenges. The demolition of six environmentally compromised properties is only the beginning of the potential in strategically repurposing lands for nominal cost to Indigenous and non-profit organizations that would exemplify coordinated efforts across municipal, provincial, and federal levels. These measures not only remediate environmental hazards but also foster social cohesion, equitable access to housing, and community resilience. Through these targeted interventions, Point Douglas is being transformed into a more secure, inclusive, and vibrant residential neighbourhood.

CASE STUDY

North Point Douglas stands at a decisive crossroads—where conceptual frameworks of equitable redevelopment must now translate into tangible, community-rooted action. The neighbourhood’s restricted geography layered industrial legacy, and recent reclamation of properties once tied to criminal enterprise demand strategies that are both restorative and forward-looking. As the preceding sections have outlined, successful revitalization depends on aligning financial, spatial, and social tools—such as inclusionary zoning (Kreda, 2017), infill development, and non-profit labour —with locally grounded leadership and cross-governmental coordination. Yet beyond policy and terminology, the question remains: how can these principles manifest in the built environment, in ways that reflect community priorities and capacity? The work of Purpose Construction, a Winnipeg-based social enterprise, offers a compelling answer (Stewart). By transforming these vacant and forfeited lots into deeply affordable, family-oriented housing, Purpose operationalizes the very ideas of reconciliation, sustainability, and inclusivity at the heart of North Point Douglas’s renewal. Their current projects in the neighbourhood embody a shift from theory to practice, demonstrating how small-scale, community-led development can reclaim land, restore trust, and rebuild opportunity from the ground up.

Founded over fifteen years ago, Purpose Construction (formerly Manitoba Green Retrofit) operates a nonprofit in the North End region of Winnipeg as a social enterprise specializing in trades training for individuals facing systemic barriers to employment. Its target participants include Indigenous peoples, newcomers, women, LGBTQ2S+ individuals, and those exiting the justice system. The organization’s long-standing partnership with Manitoba Housing forms the backbone of its business model, generating approximately \$2.5 million annually through maintenance and unit turnover contracts (Homes, n.d.). This partnership, unique in Canada, has allowed Purpose to develop both operational stability and deep community trust.

The COVID-19 pandemic, however, prompted a significant strategic shift. Restrictions on access to public housing units required Purpose to re-evaluate its operational model, revealing that many trainees were concurrently experiencing housing insecurity. This recognition broadened the organization's mission beyond workforce training to encompass housing provision as an integral component of program development. Through consultation with Indigenous-led initiatives such as the Winnipeg Boldness Project and CMHC's North End Indigenous Housing Lab, Purpose identified the urgent need for larger three- and four-bedroom homes for multi-generational families, shaping its evolution into a housing developer and community change agent (Project, 2022).

Purpose Construction represents a leading example of how community-based social enterprises can contribute to inclusive housing development in Winnipeg's North End. As a nonprofit construction company, Purpose integrates trades training with housing delivery, linking workforce development and community revitalization. This approach aligns with the broader vision for North Point Douglas, where limited land availability necessitates intentional, community-centered redevelopment that prioritizes affordability, local employment, and intergenerational stability. The organization's newest initiative, focused on constructing deeply affordable rental and ownership housing across six vacant lots, reflects a model of equitable urban infill that addresses both labour market inequities and housing insecurity. By situating its operations within the social and economic realities of the neighbourhood, Purpose's work underscores the thesis that sustainable revitalization in North Point Douglas must center on inclusive, locally driven strategies. Their emphasis on multi-bedroom family units responds directly to the area's demographic needs, while their use of donated land and provincial

partnerships illustrates how multi-level collaboration can transform vacant lots into assets that foster stability, build capacity, and improve neighbourhood conditions.

Purpose Construction works in partnership with Manitoba Housing, CMHC, and the North End community, and is currently constructing the six lots in Point Douglas into housing projects—comprising single-family homes and triplexes. Leveraging provincial funding for its trades training program, Purpose offsets labour costs by integrating trainees into every stage of construction, transforming the building process into a living classroom. This dual model simultaneously addresses the city’s labour shortage and expands housing supply. The affordable homeownership program, inspired by but distinct from Habitat for Humanity’s approach, reduces construction costs through donated land, nonprofit labour, and shared equity models, enabling lower-income people facing systemic financial barriers to plan a way to achieve homeownership. For participants not yet mortgage-ready, the development includes affordable rental options managed through Purpose Homes, a sister organization. Beyond physical construction, Purpose engages in wraparound supports—case management, licensing assistance, and community partnership—to ensure participant stability and long-term integration.

POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

The successful revitalization of North Point Douglas hinges upon coordinated governance and strategically aligned policy frameworks that span municipal, provincial, and federal levels. As a neighbourhood constrained by geographic boundaries, historical industrialization, and socio-economic inequities, North Point Douglas requires an integrated approach where regulatory oversight, funding mechanisms, and community-led initiatives operate in concert. Municipal instruments, including the NPD Secondary Plan (Winnipeg C. o., 2025), guide land use, zoning, and housing typologies, ensuring infill, multiplex, and low-rise residential

developments address the diverse needs of residents while protecting historic character. Provincial programs, such as *Housing Starts Here* and associated funding streams, provide conditional grants, tax incentives, and capacity-building resources that facilitate both social and affordable housing delivery, particularly for Indigenous and Black-led organizations (Manitoba, 2024). Federal initiatives, including the Affordable Housing Fund and Community Housing Initiative, inject substantial capital into the housing supply chain, enabling long-term project viability and scaling local interventions (Association C. H., 2024). Collectively, these governance structures and policy tools align with the broader thesis of this study: that equitable, community-led redevelopment—supported by deliberate multi-level coordination—can transform North Point Douglas into a resilient, socially inclusive, and economically vibrant urban neighbourhood.

Municipal Level:

The City of Winnipeg establishes the regulatory and physical framework guiding redevelopment in mature communities such as North Point Douglas (Winnipeg C. o., 2021). Through the Small-Scale and Low-Rise Residential Development Guidelines, the city prioritizes the creation of complete communities that accommodate housing diversity and support all life stages. With a median housing age of 73 years, mature neighbourhoods require reinvestment to meet the needs of first-time buyers, families, and seniors (Winnipeg C. o., 2021). By enabling semi-detached homes, townhouses, and low-rise apartments, Winnipeg fosters a range of housing types that promote social inclusion and affordability to happen in North Point Douglas. The City's commitment to infill development, with a 50% target in strategic locations under the Winnipeg Climate Action Plan, encourages compact, transit-oriented growth (Winnipeg C. o., 2021). This approach is suitable to North Point Douglas because it simultaneously supports

densification, revitalizes aging infrastructure, enhances walkability, and aligns housing development with environmental sustainability goals. Additional municipal tools, including inclusionary zoning, discounted land transfers, and permissions for multiplex housing, ensure that redevelopment expands housing options while preserving community character and facilitating equitable access for long-standing residents. Together, these instruments demonstrate how municipal governance can shape neighbourhood-scale transformation that balances density, affordability, and social cohesion. Municipal policies in Winnipeg—particularly inclusionary zoning, discounted land programs, infill incentives, and multiplex zoning—create the conditions for equitable, place-based redevelopment. Discounted municipal land enables non-profit and Indigenous-led developers to acquire centrally located parcels at reduced cost, while inclusionary zoning ensures that affordability is incorporated directly into new developments. Infill and multiplex strategies promote density and optimize land use in mature communities without compromising the existing character of the neighbourhood, contributing to more walkable, connected, and socially diverse communities.

Provincial Level: Manitoba Housing

Provincial governance, led by Manitoba Housing, provides financial, programmatic, and operational support to enable large-scale housing development. Initiatives such as Housing Starts Here, launched in November 2024, streamline project approval, integrate support services, and expand the supply of social and affordable housing. Through programs including Proposal Development Funding, Capital Funding, Rental Housing Construction Incentive, and Support Services Funding for New Supply, Manitoba Housing ensures that projects are financially viable while embedding wraparound services to promote tenant stability. Collaborations with the City of Winnipeg and social enterprises such as Purpose Construction integrate economic

development into housing redevelopment, creating local employment opportunities and workforce training pathways. This coordination illustrates how provincial governance can simultaneously advance social, economic, and housing objectives, providing a replicable framework for equitable urban renewal. Provincial policies focus on building organizational capacity, aligning services, and supporting sustainable housing production. By prioritizing projects that are socially inclusive and support marginalized populations, Manitoba Housing aligns housing development with broader goals of equity, reconciliation, and workforce development.

Federal Level: National Housing Investments

At the federal level, initiatives provide the capital necessary for new construction, repair, and renewal of social and affordable housing. With commitments being renewed and adapted these programs ensure the sustainability of both market and below-market rental stock while supporting workforce development through construction-related training programs. Federal investments also preserve operational capacity for community housing providers and encourage alignment with provincial and municipal initiatives. By integrating funding, technical support, and policy guidance across all levels of government, federal governance ensures that local redevelopment projects like that of Purpose Homes in NPD are financially and operationally feasible while remaining socially equitable. Federal policies provide overarching financial stability and strategic guidance. The Affordable Housing Fund and Community Housing Initiative support both capital construction and operational sustainability while encouraging energy efficiency and accessibility upgrades. Federal funding also reinforces provincial and municipal priorities by enabling workforce development and supporting large-scale housing delivery.

REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

As stated earlier, there is a robust policy framework available to provide equitable housing development across the North Point Douglas neighbourhood—one that enhances housing diversity, security, and community well-being. A project like Purpose Homes demonstrates how theory and practice can converge to address the complex, layered realities of urban renewal in Winnipeg’s inner city. The preceding analysis confirms that coordinated policy instruments at municipal, provincial, and federal levels ensure redevelopment can be both scalable and inclusive. This alignment of governance structures establishes a replicable framework for equitable urban redevelopment grounded in affordability, inclusion, environmental sustainability, and local economic development. The North Point Douglas experience thus illustrates the transformative potential of multi-level collaboration when guided by community priorities and reconciliatory intent, positioning the neighbourhood as a model for other urban centres pursuing socially inclusive and sustainable housing outcomes.

Integrating funding mechanisms, regulatory flexibility, and social enterprise engagement, North Point Douglas exemplifies how equitable redevelopment can advance reconciliation while fostering long-term community resilience. The Purpose Construction case study highlights how a social enterprise, rooted in place, can bridge workforce development and housing delivery, translating policy aspirations into tangible outcomes. Through affordable homeownership, non-profit labour, and inclusive design, these initiatives operationalize the principles of sustainability and social justice. They show that housing can function simultaneously as infrastructure, employment generator, and tool of equity. As a replicable model, this approach underscores the importance of leveraging local capacity—training, land, and social capital—to achieve systemic change within historically marginalized communities.

The process of renewal in North Point Douglas also reveals that equitable housing development is inseparable from environmental remediation and historical recognition. Addressing soil contamination, reclaiming neglected properties, and reintroducing housing to former industrial or criminal sites symbolize a broader commitment to restorative urbanism. By transforming these spaces into homes for low- and moderate-income families, redevelopment fosters community cohesion and reduces social stigma, allowing residents to reclaim ownership of their neighbourhood. Furthermore, these efforts intersect with Indigenous leadership and non-profit advocacy, advancing reconciliation through practical, place-based action. The built environment thus becomes a site of healing and empowerment, where policy, design, and social purpose converge to redress past injustices and secure future stability.

The lessons drawn from North Point Douglas emphasize that sustainable revitalization cannot be imposed through top-down planning or market speculation. Instead, progress arises from iterative collaboration—where municipal zoning reforms, provincial funding programs, and federal housing strategies respond directly to community-defined priorities. Purpose Construction’s success is instructive: its capacity to integrate training, housing, and social supports demonstrates that inclusive redevelopment thrives when residents are co-creators, not passive recipients. This approach challenges traditional housing paradigms, embedding equity and participation within every phase of development. By building trust and local ownership, North Point Douglas reaffirms that equitable urban renewal is not solely a technical exercise but a deeply social process requiring humility, persistence, and shared vision.

The transformation of North Point Douglas reflects a broader urban policy imperative: to reconcile economic growth with social justice, and environmental stewardship with human dignity. The community’s experience demonstrates that strategic alignment across all levels of

government can convert marginalized urban spaces into resilient, inclusive, and thriving neighbourhoods. As Winnipeg continues to grapple with housing affordability, labour shortages, and infrastructural decline, the North Point Douglas model offers a blueprint for integrated action rooted in local capacity and cross-sectoral cooperation. Through sustained commitment, North Point Douglas can become not only a restored neighbourhood but a living testament to equitable development—one that honours its layered history while shaping a more just and sustainable urban future.

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