

Portage la Prairie Social Planning Initiative



Phase One Report
August 2009

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The Social Planning Initiative in Portage la Prairie is a two-part initiative which includes a) the study of social conditions in the City of Portage la Prairie and b) the completion of a social plan for the community utilizing the information gleaned in the study and included in this report.

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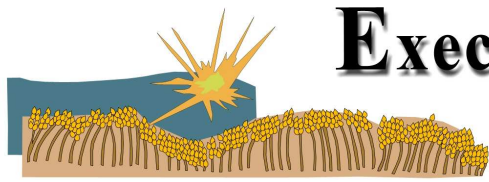
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Executive Summary

The Institute of Urban Studies (IUS), in partnership with the Portage Community Network (PCN), undertook a public engagement process to produce a *social planning framework* for the city of Portage la Prairie. This document represents the Phase One report on this process. The PCN had previously identified the following areas of concern: Poverty; food security; crime prevention; public transportation; community and neighbourhood development; availability and accessibility of services and resources; recreation/youth programming; and affordable housing and homelessness.

Social planning involves the collection and analysis of social information about a community, including not only general population characteristics but also the issues facing specific population groups. A social plan addresses a community's conditions, concerns, and resources in order to strengthen its ability to meet social programming needs. Broadly speaking the social plan is not social policy per se, but rather should be considered to be a *framework* for the creation and implementation of social policy, one that can articulate a vision for the community, as well as underlying principles for achieving that vision. This framework, in being participatory and community-driven, should derive its issues and values from members of the community.

A Social Plan will help the community set out long-term objectives, establish priorities and define broad strategies for social programs and services. It will assist in the development of long-term social policy and help to define the relationship among and between organizations in the voluntary and public sectors.

This report highlights the findings of this process and includes a demographic profile and mapping study of the city, a summary of findings from the stakeholder and public

engagement processes, and a review of social planning theory and practices. The overall intent is to gain an initial understanding of the issues at hand, and to set out the theoretical and practical issues involved in social planning. The Phase One report should then be able to aid the city in preparing for, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the social planning process in Portage la Prairie.

To develop the report, the staff of the Institute of Urban Studies engaged in reviews of best practices in social planning, emphasizing small cities; analyzed demographic data relating to social conditions in Portage la Prairie; engaged in a broad consultation with key informants and residents about social needs and assets; identified social policy and program areas of strength and weakness, and proposed improvements and additions to the programming environment; and proposed elements, dimensions and values into an evaluative framework to guide the production of a social plan, and suggested indicators to gauge its effectiveness.

Most of the data analyzed in this report was taken from the 2006 Canadian Census from Statistics Canada.

According to the 2006 Census, Portage la Prairie has a population of 12,728 people. With more than half of this population (57.5%) under 45 years old, Portage can be considered to be a fairly young community. Nearly 20% of the city's population is comprised of children (those under 14) while nearly 38% fell between 15 and 44. Similar to other small prairie cities, Portage la Prairie's ethnic composition is highly homogenous. Despite a 56% increase in the number of persons identified as being a visible minority, no neighbourhood within the city has more than 3.2% of their population identified as a visible minority (this figure excludes Aboriginal persons).

The city's population of Aboriginal Canadians continues to increase. Comprising just over one-fifth of the population, the number of Aboriginal persons within Portage increased 11% from 2001 to 2006. The distribution of the Aboriginal population is far from uniform. Nearly 40% of the North North East's population identifies themselves as

Aboriginal while the Koko Platz/Mellenville neighbourhood has a city wide low of only 7%.

When compared to Manitoba's five largest cities, Portage's rates of educational attainment rank in the middle. With approximately one third of the city's adults aged 15 and older without a high school diploma or equivalent, this statistic is significantly higher than Winnipeg's rate of 23.1% and lower than Thompson's rate of nearly 40%. Similarly, Portage ranked third out of the province's five largest cities in terms of high school, university degree and apprenticeship or trades attainment. Within the City, certain neighbourhoods have lower rates of educational attainment: in the South East over 45% of the residents do not hold a high school diploma or other certificate. The highest rate of attainment is in Koko Platz/Mellenville, where almost 8 in 10 adults have some form of recognized educational attainment.

According to the 2006 Census in 2005, the median household income in Portage la Prairie was \$43,015, an increase of 18% from 2000. The same data also indicated that, of Manitoba's five largest urban areas, only Selkirk had a lower median income with \$42,502. Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson each had higher median incomes than Portage la Prairie. Within the City there is a large geographical variation within income. According to the statistics provided by Neighbourhoods Alive!, the average median income ranges from a high of \$83,171 in Koko Platz/Mellenville to a low of \$42,082 in North North East. On average, Portage families make 74.6% of their income from employment. The remaining 25% of income is generally drawn from government transfers or other sources.

With an unemployment rate of 6.3%, Portage's rate is slightly higher than the Manitoba average of 5.5%. The city's participation rate of 65.5% is also slightly lower than the provincial average of 68.2%. With a rate of 31.8%, the South East neighbourhood has the lowest participation rate in the city (note that this is largely owed to the concentration of Seniors' housing in the South East). The Koko Platz/Mellenville neighbourhood has the highest labour participation rate with almost 74% of residents over 15 employed and just 3.9% actively searching for employment.

While the majority of residents (71.5%) in Portage la Prairie live in owner-occupied accommodations, a significant proportion (29.5%) reside in rented dwellings. The Koko Platz/Mellenville, Central North West and North North West neighbourhoods have the highest proportion of owners in the city (87.4%, 81.4% and 79.6% respectively). In contrast the lowest levels of home ownership is found in the South East with less than half (45.8%) of the neighbourhood's 295 dwellings owned by their occupants.

In terms of affordability, on average, nearly 11% of the city's home owners are paying more than 30% of their monthly income on mortgage payment with the highest proportion occurring in South East (18.5%). The number of renters facing a similar situation jumps dramatically with nearly 37.5% with the South East, Central North East and South West neighbourhoods each experiencing above average rates (56.3%, 40.9% and 39% respectively).

It was found that the Koko Platz/Mellenville neighbourhood had the highest rate of homes in good condition at 76.0% and the lowest needing major repairs, 3.4%. Meanwhile, the North North East and Central North West neighbourhoods contain some of the city's poorest housing stock with 15.6% and 12.3% of their structures requiring major repairs. There are several Census Dissemination Areas (DAs) where over 50% of their homes need minor or major repairs. Over one quarter of its homes within the North North East require major repair.

On average 60% of families (defined as more than one person living in the same residence related by blood, marriage or common-law partnership), have children. Of these, 36% are lone parent families. Lone parent families outnumber two parent households in two neighbourhoods: Central North East (56.4%) and North North East (51.7%). The South West has 72.4% of families reporting children. This is partly the result of just one DAs contribution, which has 88.5% of families reporting children.

This analysis demonstrates that the city of Portage la Prairie features some dramatic spatial disparities; for almost every indicator, positive and negative trends are each

concentrated in certain areas. This points to a level of socio-spatial division within the community, that advantage and disadvantage can depend greatly on where one lives. It is not an ethnically diverse community, but does contain a significant proportion of Aboriginal residents, who again are concentrated in certain neighbourhoods.

So that Portage la Prairie can address some of these disparities, examples of existing social plans are reviewed in order to inform social planning in the city. These plans are discussed briefly in terms of their *rationales*; the *content* of the plans; the *purpose* of the plans; how the plans are to be *implemented, maintained and monitored* (is it a one-time publication vs. flexible document); and the *connections* the plans have with other plans. This review showed that the most effective social plans: Take a social development approach; focus on wider community social processes and structures; drive overall policy and enable effective resource allocation; base recommendations on solid community-based research; develop existing community assets; focus on processes, transactions and institutions; emerge from the community; strike a balance between pragmatism and transformation; and measure their progress.

In order to establish the nature and extent of the key areas of concern, IUS researchers engaged in a strategy of public consultation. First the researchers met with stakeholders representing the various member agencies constituting the Portage Community Network. Concurrently, six smaller focus group sessions were held with limited-income parents; health care providers; new immigrants; seniors; Aboriginal persons; and residents with housing challenges. Then a broader community was consulted in two public forums. These results then informed the development of recommendations.

Respondents noted that many social issues connect to poverty; so much so that they can't be addressed without understanding the root causes. Poverty was seen as affecting all aspects of life, from social relationships to education outcomes to transportation. An increasing number of households struggle with low wages, are unable to get ahead and don't qualify for many programs that might otherwise help them improve the quality of their lives. Some people in need are, for a variety of reasons, unable to access services

adequately and so are “falling between the cracks.” The use of food banks is not seen as a sustainable solution to poverty and the community must seek ways to reduce the reliance on such institutions.

Recommendations:

- *Develop a holistic approach to understanding and dealing with the issues and root causes of poverty, including working poverty. Include identifying gaps and barriers in service provision and a food security policy.*

One of the most frequently recurring themes raised by the community was that of a lack of affordable and quality housing. Addressing this need should include meeting the needs of a diverse population, including larger families. Much of the affordable housing stock was thought to be in poor condition, requiring investment and supports. The Community’s social challenges were seen as being exacerbated by housing, including “concentrations of poverty.” Affordable rental units are felt to be in too few hands. It was suggested that more landlords be encouraged to build and manage units within Portage. Relations between residents and the owners and managers of some residential properties were cited as a source of conflict. People often fall through the cracks because their life circumstances make them ill-prepared for independent living, and this includes young adults leaving the child welfare system.

Recommendations:

- *Seek ways to fund the construction of new and affordable housing that meets the diverse needs of all members of the community.*
- *New housing types must recognize the changing needs of residents and must include more examination of both extended family models as well as meeting the need for compact affordable units for single persons.*
- *Support existing owners with accessing repair and renovation programs to ensure that quality and sustainability of the stock is maintained and enhanced.*
- *Deconcentrate poverty by distributing affordable housing throughout the community.*

- *Explore ways to improve the perceptions and relationships among owners/managers, tenants and the general community through creative programs. This should include looking to the Manitoba Residential Tenancies Branch for support.*
- *Seek ways to create a more positive environment such as West Broadway's Tenant Landlord Cooperation Model¹.*
- *Provide incentives to expand the choices and location of rental housing along with exploring new funding models to encourage additional development.*
- *Focus on the development of supportive and transitional housing to meet the needs of individuals who are currently difficult to house.*

Many residents reported having inadequate access to key activities in the community as a result of poor mobility options, such as not owning a car or being too far from needed destinations to walk. As a result, access to employment, services, shopping and recreation opportunities imposes an unnecessary burden on already struggling families and individuals. The closure of some of the retail operations in the downtown and the flourishing of suburban big-box retail were raised as a major reason why shopping and services have become impractical destinations for many limited-income households. Big box stores were felt to be too far to walk to, especially in winter.

Recommendations:

- *Explore in more detail the possibility of a public transportation system as both a social equity issue as well as part of a more sustainable future.*
- *Frame transportation as an urban and economic development opportunity that can enhance the quality of life and economic well-being of Portage.*
- *Seek creative partnerships for households that would like to take advantage of big-box retailers by exploring the cost-benefit/effectiveness of shuttle services from downtown.*

¹ See <http://www.winnipegrentnet.ca/tenant-landlord-coop.cfm>

There was a strong sense from participants that a division exists between the Aboriginal population and the other residents. Some viewed this as an indication that more visible or formal collaboration is needed between the Aboriginal leadership and Portage decision makers. The divide between Aboriginal and non- Aboriginal peoples was repeatedly cited as one of the most significant barriers to addressing a host of social issues.

- ***Embed race and “racialization” as a principal factor in all social planning initiatives.***
- ***Investigate and implement planning models aimed explicitly at overcoming barriers through building cross cultural awareness, bridging divides and building trust.***

The inability of people to access employment was felt to be hindering the potential of the local economy. It was suggested that the employment potential of some residents could be enhanced through appropriate skills-building that focused on basic literacy, numeracy and job readiness. However, many parents are reportedly unable to participate in the work force because they are unable to find affordable and safe child care. This was seen as a barrier not only for families but for the businesses that are unable to benefit from hiring skilled people. Another barrier to economic development that was commonly cited was the lack of public transportation.

Recommendations:

- ***Make locally available training opportunities part of economic development initiatives so that potential workers are provided with the skills needed.***
- ***Community economic development initiatives should strive for balance by supporting a strong retail presence in the downtown.***
- ***Provide more day care spaces. Work with employers and training centres to ensure that day care space becomes part of the long range planning process.***
- ***Promote public transportation as an economic development tool.***

Many people report being afraid to walk the streets at night. This is not just about public safety, it is also a public transportation, racial equality and public perception issue. For example, it was suggested that if buses were available people wouldn't need to be walking at night. However, the basic safety of the community needs to be improved so people can feel free to walk at night. Aboriginal informants reported feeling harassed by police if they were out at night, and this made them feel unsafe while contributing to racial tension in the city.

- ***Identify areas perceived as unsafe. Consider conducting a Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) audit as one way to assess the local issues.***
- ***Explore how new or existing structures such as the Community Consultative Group and Community Justice Group can aid in improving Aboriginal-police relations.***

Many families reported being unable to afford, or too remote from, recreational activities. Many recreational facilities require fees, and numerous participants reported missing free community skating rinks. Life circumstances can also prevent attendance in recreational programs. The most frequently cited barrier to greater participation in recreational activities was the lack of mass public transportation. There was also a suggestion that young peoples' interests in activities and sports are diverse and may not be the same as the ones we grew up with, nor might these be deemed "acceptable" to adults.

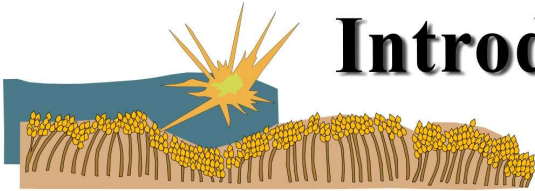
- ***Invest in family-friendly places. Children and families need more no- or low-cost public spaces for kids to hang out, such as skating rinks, parks and plazas, and they need to be placed where needed across the city.***
- ***Consult young people when creating recreational opportunities.***
- ***Engage and empower youth. Consider a youth committee that has a budget and authority to make real decisions.***

Many social services are located in Portage – so many in fact that some worry that Portage is a “social services city.” Yet people stated that many are still falling through the cracks because of the narrow range of mandates in existing programs. As well, some providers acknowledge that they don’t know what is available locally, limiting their ability to refer clients.

- ***Coordinate and Communicate: More knowledge, awareness and an institutionalized means of communication and information-sharing is needed so that social service providers are able to refer their clients to needed resources.***
- ***Develop a Social Planning Council [Portage la Prairie Social Planning Council (PLP-SPC)] which could engage in ongoing needs assessments, program evaluation, lobbying and coordination.***
- ***Engage in ongoing consultation with the community. It could also help to identify structural barriers.***

It should adopt an integrated planning approach that links it to other planning processes in the municipality and region, so that it is consistent with existing institutional structures and engages relevant local actors. The necessary processes to achieving this holistic approach would include preliminary and ongoing research, including data gathering and analysis; a robust and multi-platform community consultation process; the identification of key target groups; ongoing communication with multiple governmental departments and agencies; and the development of indicators.

The report concludes with recommendations for moving forward on a social planning process.



Introduction

The Institute of Urban Studies (IUS), in partnership with the Portage Community Network (PCN), undertook a public engagement process to produce a *social planning framework* for the city of Portage la Prairie. This document represents the Phase One report on this process.

This report highlights the findings of this process and includes a demographic profile and mapping study of the city, a summary of findings from the stakeholder and public engagement processes, and a review of social planning theory and practices. The overall intent is to gain an initial understanding of the issues at hand, and to set out the theoretical and practical issues involved in social planning. The Phase One report should then be able to aid the city in preparing for, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the social planning process in Portage la Prairie.

It is important to note that this document was conceptualized as supporting initiatives that are currently underway in Portage la Prairie including:

- Development of a Social Plan for the City of Portage la Prairie;
- The Portage la Prairie Community Revitalization Corporation's Community Plan for submission to Neighbourhoods Alive!
- Assisting other local organizations in establishing program priorities or understanding gaps in current services.

1.1 Background and Governance of the Social Planning Initiative

In 2000, a coalition of service agencies and concerned citizens formed the Portage Community Network (PCN) to identify and address community challenges. During this early phase of the PCN, staff from the IUS met with concerned citizens and local organizations to begin the process of developing what would lead to the Portage la Prairie Social Planning Initiative (SPI). Some six years later, in September of 2006, the PCN held an important strategic planning session that had representation from 25 local agencies. The session resulted in PCN identifying the need for a community-wide social plan and developing a closer partnership with municipal government as two top priorities. In addition PCN identified the domains they felt needed to be explored in the social planning process.

On January 25th, 2008, staff from the Institute of Urban Studies (IUS) attended an orientation session with PCN members. A general understanding was reached as to the purpose and nature of the task ahead. The key output identified from this meeting was for IUS to produce a proposal outlining how Portage's Social Planning Initiative would be carried out, and how the needs of the diverse membership would be accounted for in the document.

As the members of the PCN are diverse, each having their own program goals and mandates, it is anticipated that the Phase One Report will, in addition to being a stand-alone document, help support other initiatives currently underway.

The purpose of the report is to assist the community in setting out long-term objectives, establishing priorities and defining the broad strategies for social programs and services. It will assist in the development of long-term social policy and help to define the relationship among and between organizations in the voluntary and public sectors.

To develop the report, the staff of the Institute of Urban Studies:

- engaged in reviews of best practices in social planning, emphasizing small Canadian cities;
- analyzed demographic data relating to social conditions in Portage la Prairie;
- engaged in a broad consultation with key informants and residents about social needs and assets; and
- proposed elements, dimensions, values into an evaluative framework to guide the production of a social plan, and suggested indicators to gauge its effectiveness.

1.2 Methods

The Phase One document sets the context for social planning by reviewing previous relevant plans, in order to identify recurring themes and sources of information. Existing social plans from other small cities were reviewed to identify useful precedents and approaches. Selected Census data were analyzed and mapped to show the spatiality of social conditions in the city. Stakeholder interviews were conducted with members of the PCN to establish institutional priorities. Then several public engagement events were conducted to elicit resident input and set the foundation for understanding the current social circumstances in the community. All told the researchers spoke to **126 people**:

- **Stakeholder interviews** – 16 people
- **Six Focus groups** – 40 people
 - **Health care**
 - **Aboriginal persons**
 - **New immigrants**
 - **Families**
 - **Seniors**
 - **Persons with housing challenges**
- **First Town Hall** – 20 people
- **Second Town Hall** – 50 people

The feedback received by the researchers were organized, synthesized and reported on in **Section 4**. It should be stressed that this material is presented as it was reported to the researchers and therefore **represents only the opinions and beliefs of these informants and should not be misconstrued to be the opinions of the researchers.**

1.3 Data Sources

Most of the data analyzed in this report was taken from the 2006 Canadian Census from Statistics Canada with a full data analysis completed in **Section 2.2**.

A few methodological notes are first in order. The demographic analysis is based on a review of Dissemination Area (DA) data². This is one of the smallest geographic units in the Canadian Census, and allows for the most particular level of analysis. However, note that DAs only approximate the boundaries for Portage la Prairie's existing neighbourhood designations (see map on page 21). The actual DA boundaries are provided in the maps throughout this document.

When dealing with a unit as small as the DA there are some data gathering issues that must be noted. Statistics Canada maintains privacy within smaller populations by releasing final figures rounded to either the next or previous 5 – so that a population of 537 could appear as either 535 *or* 540. This has the effect of impacting some proportions in the following text, for example, giving the impossible result indicating that, of all families in dwellings in DA 0079, 103.1% of them own their dwelling. This has been left uncorrected to maintain consistency, since other, less obvious, data anomalies will be left unadjusted.

The review of existing planning documents does not constitute a formal analysis of each report, but highlights key elements in order to acknowledge the recent work that has been previously done on the community.

Other data include internal numbers generated by service providers on food security (Section 2.3), as well as extensive qualitative inputs gained from the community

² The identification numbers associated with these DAs (e.g. 0058) are known as DAUIDs, and these refer to the DA within the Census Division for this area of Manitoba (09), which in turn is set within the Standard Geographical Classification for the Province of Manitoba, which is 46. So a DAUID for DA 0058 would normally be indicated as 46090058. However, the prefix 4609 has been omitted to make the following Maps more readable.

consultation (Section 4). Potential data sources for further research are discussed in Section 5.2.

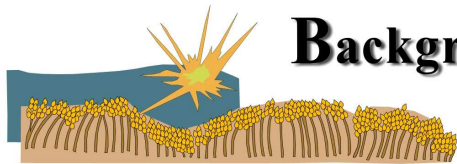
1.4 Limitations

The Phase One Report is not a social plan as such, but rather the framework (or roadmap) for carrying out such a plan. It is a basis from which Portage la Prairie can move forward. To this end, more work will be needed to refine the priorities; to identify means of addressing them; to set targets; and identify the necessary resources. Perhaps the most important point to be made is that, above all else, the social planning agenda must have a political champion (in the form of either a person or an institution) to ensure that it is well funded, supported and carried through.

Without a champion to guide this work into fruition it will not be actualized nor will it be effective (See **Section 5**).

1.5 Outline of Report

Section 2.0 provides the necessary demographic background on Portage la Prairie, based on an analysis of the latest 2006 Statistics Canada data and a review of existing planning documents pertaining to the city. In Section 3.0, the concept of social planning is explored, in terms of both theory and application. Key examples of existing social plans are analyzed with a view to identifying elements, processes and governance principles. The nature and purpose of social planning organizations are also explained. In Section 4.0, the findings of the public consultation are synthesized, key issues identified and priority areas articulated. The next steps, as explained in Section 5.0, move towards a social planning process in Portage la Prairie. This includes not only findings from the analysis of existing social plans and review of the literature, but also from recommendations heard during the community consultation. The report concludes in Section 6.0 with direction for the future.



Background on Portage la Prairie

In this section existing documents and demographic data are analyzed.

2.1 Key Findings from Previous Portage Reports, Plans and Studies

While formal social planning would represent a new initiative for Portage la Prairie, many of the issues relevant to such a process have been examined in recent years by other agencies, consultants and planners.

2.1.1 Winnipeg Harvest Report on Child and Household Poverty in Manitoba's Federal Ridings (2000)

As part of a larger study of Manitoba, the 2000 *Child and Household Poverty Report Card* found that in the City of Portage la Prairie 1,165 out of 5,090 households (or 22.9%) in the community live under the Low-Income Cut-off (LICO)³; furthermore, 27.2% of the city's children live in poverty.

2.1.2 Lombard North Planning Process, 2003

The architectural and planning firm of Lombard North Group, in conjunction with The Portage Planning District Board Office, engaged with the RM and City of Portage la Prairie as well as the City on a Development Plan and Zoning By-Law review process in 2003. This report was primarily oriented to the built environment rather than on social conditions. Among their findings: Between 2003 and 2016, they expected the population to decline from 13,086 in 1981 to 13,046 in 2016 (or -0.31%). However, an increasing number of seniors, and fewer children, point to a slightly aging population.

³ Income levels at which families or unattached individuals spend 20% more than average on food, shelter and clothing. See: <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/Products/Reference/dict/fam021.htm>

2.1.3 Regional Health Authority, Central Manitoba: Community Health Assessment (2004)

This study is concerned with the Central Region of Manitoba, rather than the City of Portage la Prairie proper. It found low levels of physical activity, especially for males and seniors. One-fifth of adults over 18 years were found to be obese, 39% of males were overweight, and 21% obese. Some 20% of the region's population smoke, and an increasing number of non-smokers were being exposed to second hand smoke. Almost 90% reported some level of mental stress. Levels of teen pregnancy were lower than the provincial average and dropping. The health of First Nations individuals was a concern, particularly related to diabetes rates, as was the fact that the rate of accidental injury mortality for First Nations children was 9 times that of the non-First Nation population. Injury and poison were found to be the leading cause of death for First Nations males to 45 years of age, with vehicle crashes and suicides the most common cause of injury. While the Region has the Province's lowest prevalence rates of diabetes, the extent of higher risk factors and lifestyles points to an increased rate in the future.

To address health issues in the region, the report recommends focusing efforts on the main causes of premature death: cardiovascular disease, cancer, accidents, suicides. The report stated that community programming should focus on making and maintaining healthier lifestyle choices. For females: screening programs for breast and cervical cancer were recommended. More education and support for women and kids is needed to ensure poverty is not so prevalent. For males, healthy public policy with messages about diet, smoking, exercise, mental health and well-being and suicide prevention were advocated. To improve the health of children, public awareness needs to be raised concerning the impact of poverty, broken homes, and stress on child health. Youth need to be made more aware of lifestyle choices (smoking, sex, alcohol, driving, and exercise). The elderly need adequate services and access to meaningful activities and social supports. The health of Aboriginal people can be improved through diabetes prevention and management via culturally appropriate messages and ongoing education.

2.1.4 Downtown Development Concept Plan (Radstrom, 2005)

This report by independent planning consultant Susan Radstrom focused on increasing the liveability of the City by encouraging the development of inviting, safe, clean and aesthetically pleasing places in the downtown. Based on a consultation process, her report recommended promoting the city's local identity, including the broader "prairie" context by emphasizing the City's agricultural connections. Recommendations included improving the City's walkability by enhancing pedestrian and cycling facilities, building to pedestrian scale and making the City more appealing through less surface parking. She also called for investments in public transit, with a minimum of two routes, and having bike paths on major roads. Improvements to public safety could be undertaken through programming such as street patrols and green teams.

2.1.5 Portage la Prairie Recreation Needs Study: 2006/2007 Stantec/ PERC

Stantec Architecture of Winnipeg was hired in 2006 to determine the nature of Portage la Prairie's recreation needs, with a view to developing a future indoor recreational facility, (now under construction). It determined that the most frequently cited unmet recreational need was more "trail connections and bicycle corridors" and "indoor recreation facilities" such as an indoor pool, tennis, walking track and fitness facilities.

The report also highlighted important social trends: the aging population will mean the mainstreaming of the elderly in facilities shared by all other age groups; the widening gap between the rich and poor means that efforts are needed to ensure that low-income households have access to recreation; and that a major recreation facility can serve the "public good" by becoming a single access-point to other services.

2.1.6 The Centre on Aging's Age-Friendly Cities Project, Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, Canada: A Report Prepared for the City of Portage la Prairie (2007).

Portage la Prairie is a participating community in the World Health Organization's Global Age-Friendly Cities Project. As a part of this initiative, the Manitoba Seniors and

Healthy Aging Secretariat asked the University of Manitoba's Centre on Aging to conduct a consultation process. In October and November of 2006 four focus groups were held with participants ranging from between 61 to 92 years in age.

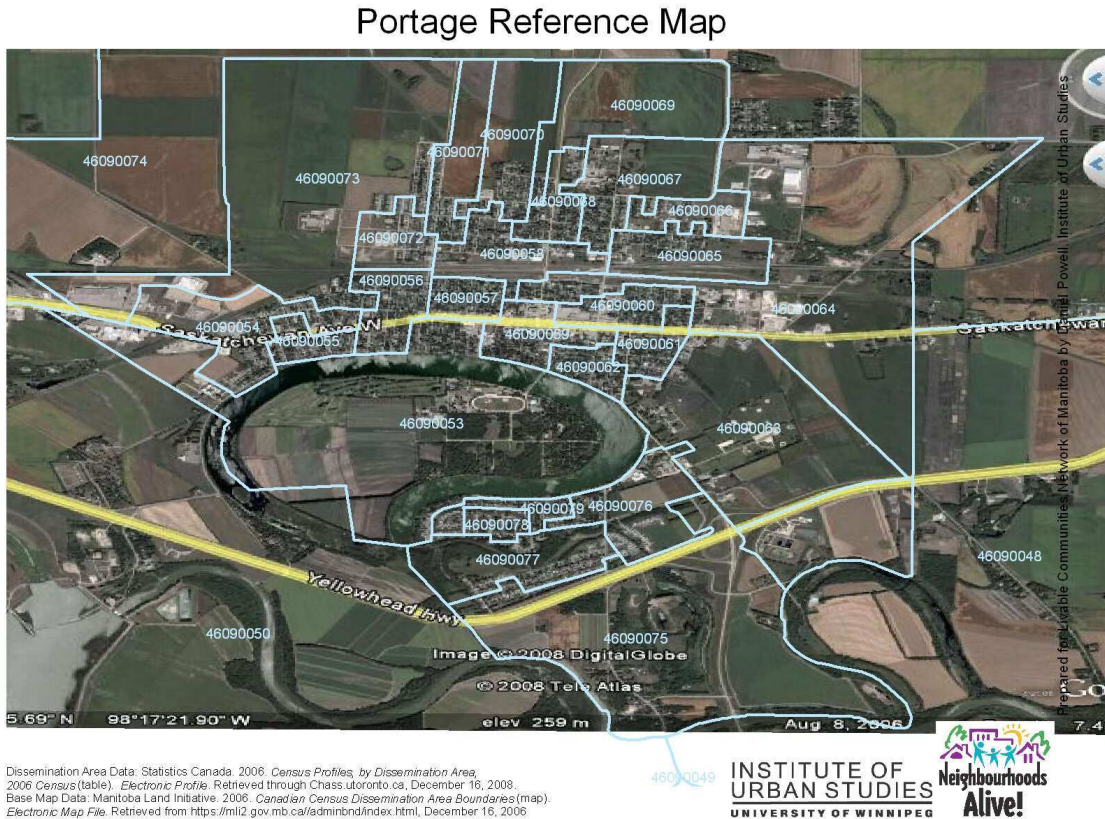
The report found that some participants were very positive about a number of the City's features, including the new walking paths, good lighting and benches. There were a variety of affordable seniors' housing developments as well as some senior-friendly transportation options, including the Handi-van and services offered by volunteer drivers. The quality and dedicated nature of the volunteer base in general was praised. The size and friendliness of the city were both seen as assets, as were the range and variety of social and church-run programs available. In terms of health care respondents praised the range of services and supports available locally.

However, other participants were concerned about basic mobility in the city, that sidewalks were either poorly maintained or absent altogether. Transportation options (such as the Handi-Van) are limited, relatively inflexible and a real barrier to social participation. The shortage of housing was criticized, as was the lack of in-house support, including on-site caretakers. The general shortfall in health care workers was seen as a barrier. There were also concerns about crime in public places and a general lack of respect towards seniors on the part of young people, and in extreme cases, elder abuse. More opportunities for youth to interact with seniors were recommended. Seniors' isolation is worsened by the presentation and format of information relevant to their needs: TV blurbs were either too fast or difficult to hear, and internet-based information may not be accessible. However, many of those seniors that are involved and volunteering in the community are feeling over-committed and under-appreciated by the community at large.



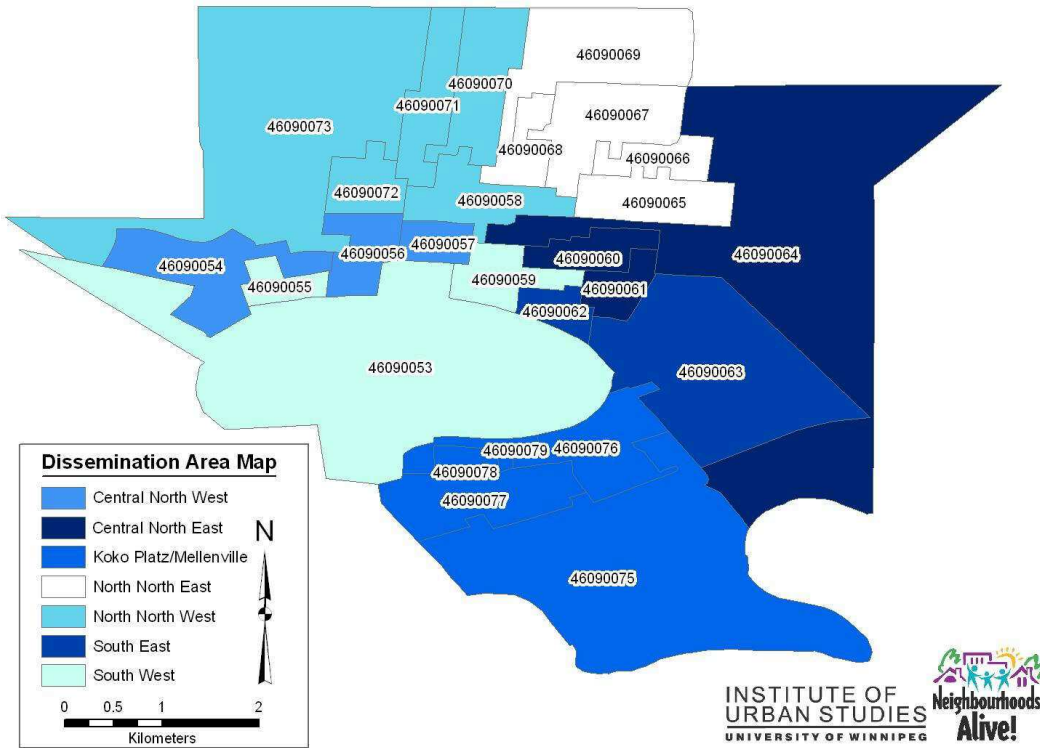
2.2 Community Socio-Demographic Profile

Census data are displayed as colour-coded maps with accompanying graphs⁴. Data is displayed according to Census Dissemination Areas, rather than neighbourhoods. The map below indicates both DA and neighbourhoods in Portage la Prairie.



⁴ For detailed data summaries see tables in Appendix A

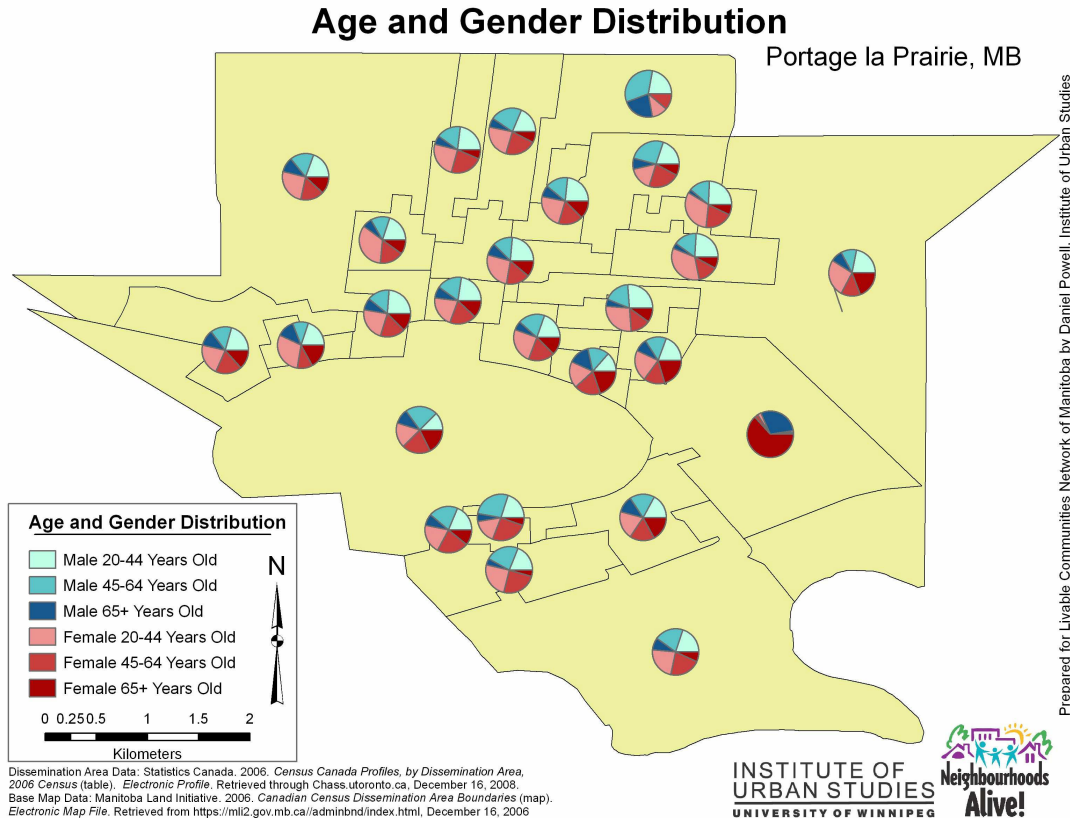
Dissemination Area Map



Prepared for Livable Communities Network of Manitoba by Daniel Powell, Institute of Urban Studies

2.2.1 Population

Age

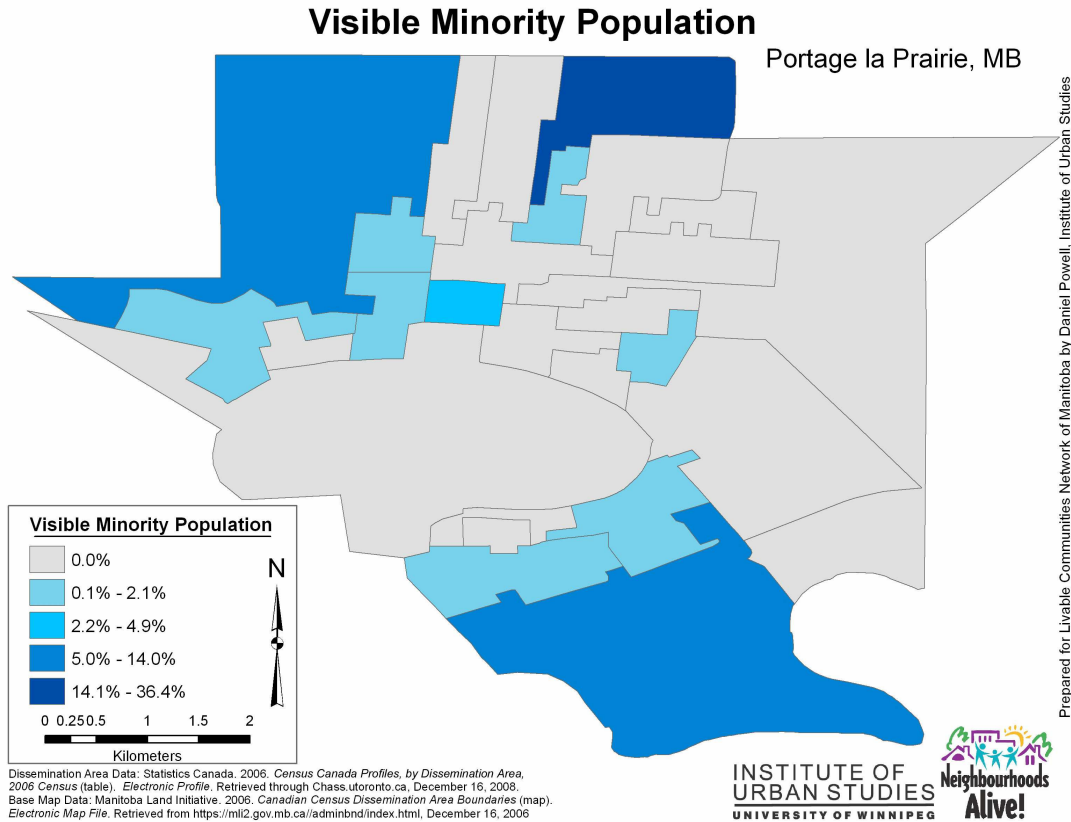


According to the 2006 Census, Portage la Prairie has a population of 12,728 people. With more than half of this population (57.5%) under 45 years old, Portage can be considered to be a fairly young community. Nearly 20% of the city's population is comprised of children (those under 14) while nearly 38% fell between 15 and 44. Geographically, the city's northern neighbourhoods are predominantly much younger than the rest of the city. The North North West, Central North East and Central North West neighbourhoods each have a large proportion of their population between the ages of 15 and 44. The highest concentration of old adults (65-85+) was found in the South East neighbourhood with almost 60% of its population falling under this category.



Despite the relatively low age of the population, Portage’s median age of 40 years is the third highest of all Manitoba cities. According to the 2006 Census, only Selkirk (42.3) and Flin Flon (40.7) had higher median ages.

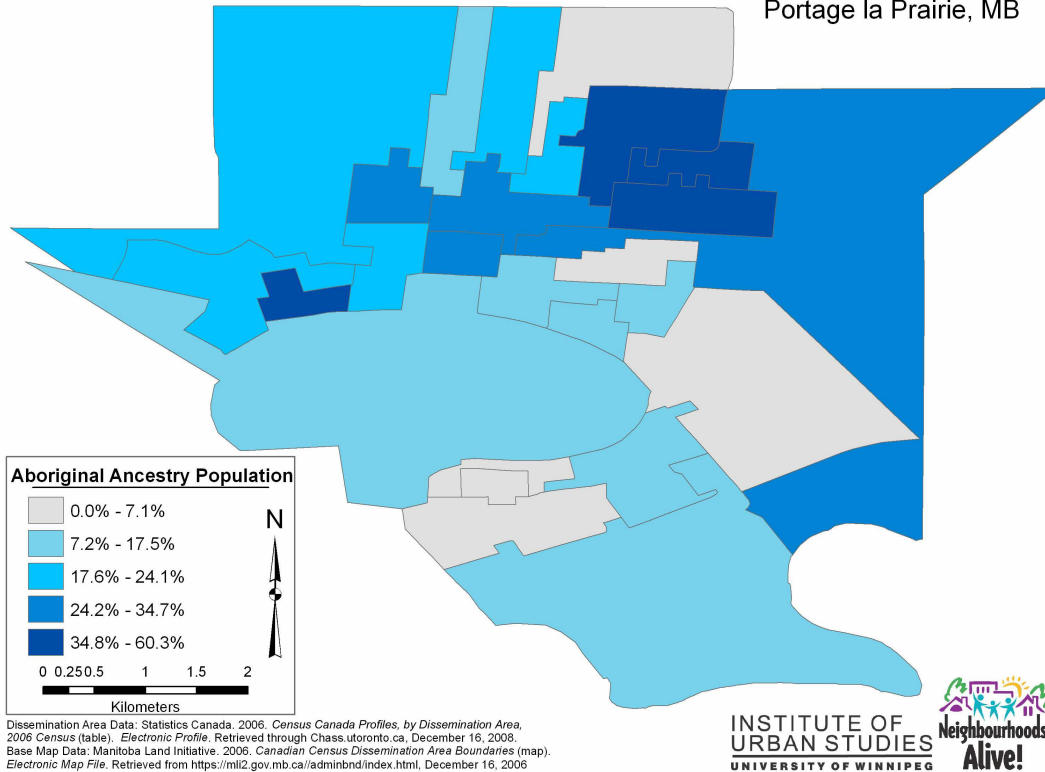
2.2.2 Ancestry



Similar to other small prairie cities, Portage la Prairie’s ethnic composition is highly homogenous. Despite a 56% increase in the number of persons identified as being a visible minority, no neighbourhood within the city has more than 3.2% of their population identified as such. Two neighbourhoods, South West and South East, contain statistically insignificant visible minority populations. (Note that this map does not refer to persons of Aboriginal ancestry).

Aboriginal Ancestry Population

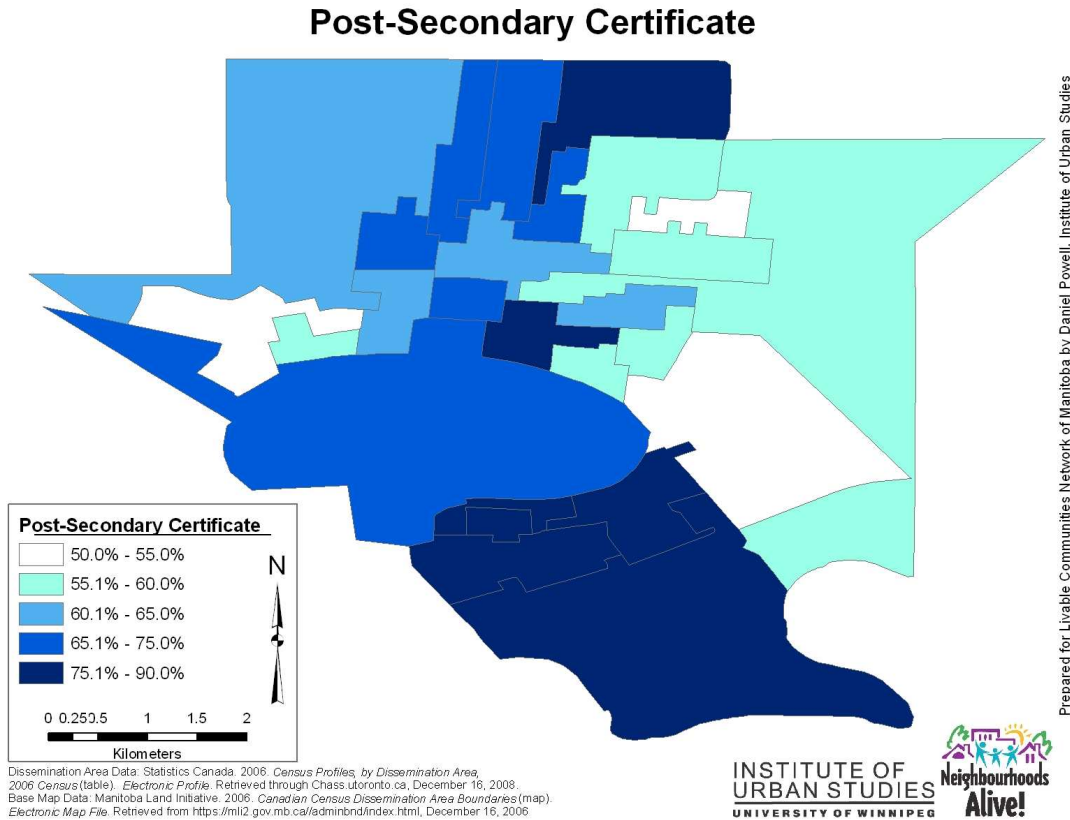
Portage la Prairie, MB



Comprising just over one-fifth of the population, the number of Aboriginal persons within Portage increased 11% from 2001 to 2006. However, the distribution of this population is far from uniform. Nearly 40% of the North North East's population identifies themselves as Aboriginal while the Koko Platz/Mellenville neighbourhood has a city wide low of only 7%.

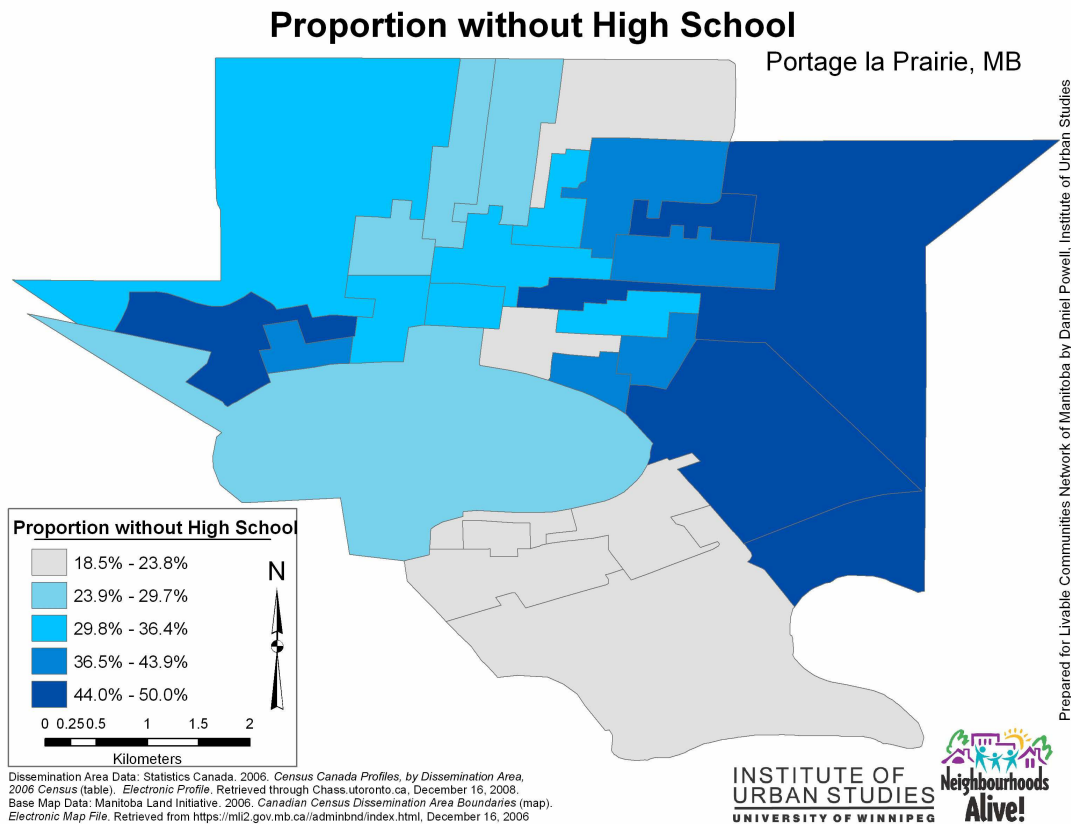


2.2.3 Education



When compared to Manitoba's five largest cities, Portage's rates of educational attainment rank in the middle in the field. With approximately one third of the city's adults aged 15 and older without a high school diploma or equivalent, this statistic is significantly higher than Winnipeg's rate of 23.1% and lower than Thompson's rate of nearly 40%. Similarly, Portage ranked third out of the province's five largest cities in terms of high school, university degree and apprenticeship or trades attainment.

Within the City, certain neighbourhoods have lower rates of educational attainment: in the South East (which contains a high concentration of senior citizens) over 45% of the residents do not hold a high school diploma or other certificate. The highest rate of attainment is in Koko Platz/Mellenville, where almost 8 in 10 adults have some form of recognized educational attainment.

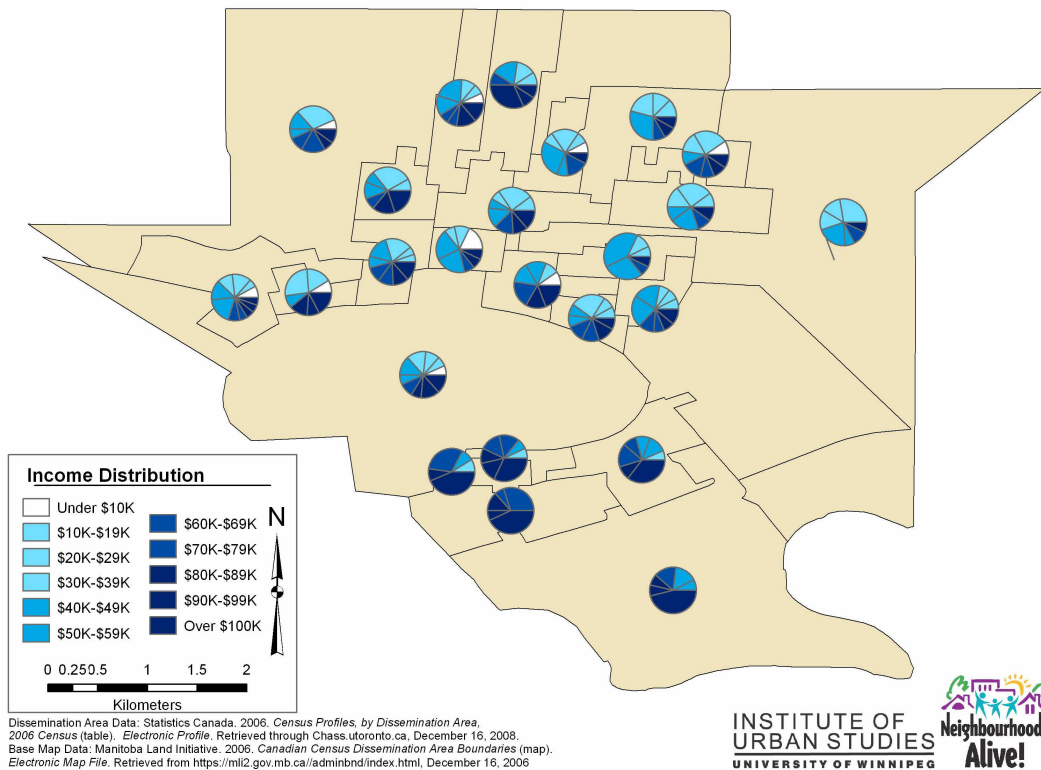


It should be noted that these numbers will be skewed slightly, as (like in any community) there are 15-20 year olds that are following the standard high school curriculum and have not yet graduated.

2.2.4 Income

According to the 2006 Census in 2005, the median household income for households in Portage la Prairie was \$43,015, an increase of 18% from 2000. The same data also indicated that, of Manitoba's five largest urban areas, only Selkirk had a lower median income with \$42,502. Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson each had higher median incomes than Portage la Prairie.

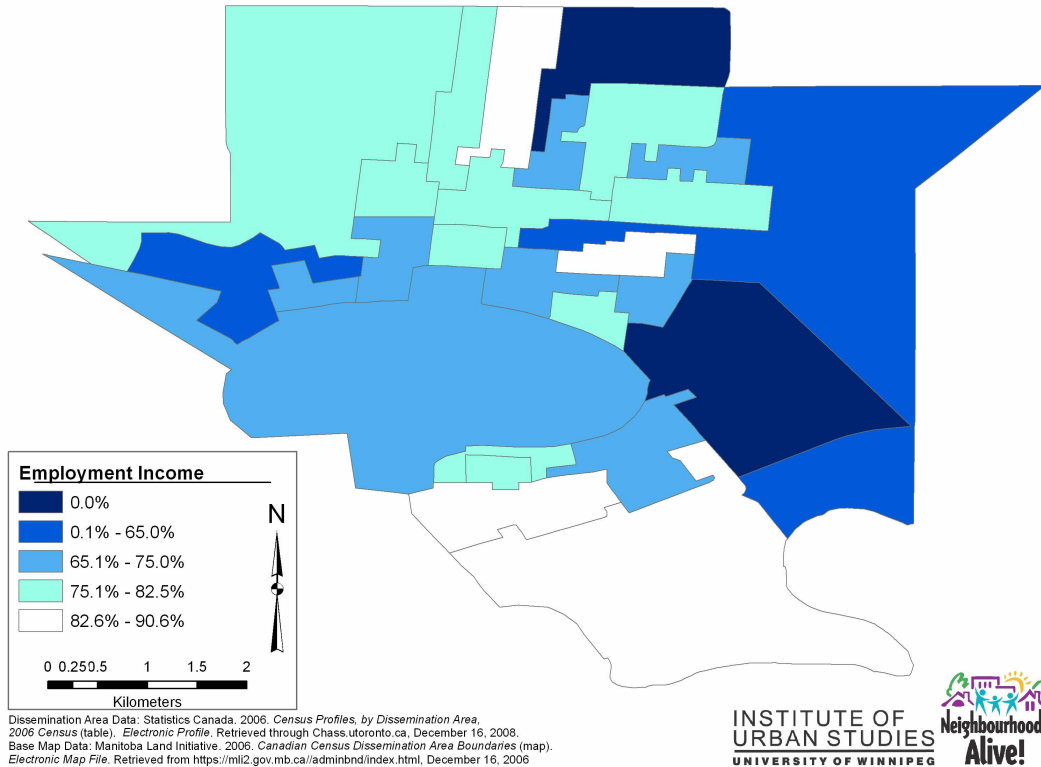
Income Distribution



Within the City there is a large geographical variation within income. According to the statistics provided by Neighbourhoods Alive!, the average median income ranges from a high of \$83,171 in Koko Platz/Mellenville to a low of \$42,082 in North North East. At a more detailed analysis, the difference in income becomes much larger; average income by DA reaches as high as \$96,889 in 0075 (Koko Platz/Mellenville) and as low as \$36,539 in 0064 (Central North East).

Income may come from a variety of sources. On average, Portage families make 74.6% of their income from employment. The remaining 25% of income is generally drawn from government transfers or other sources, which can take the form of pension payments, social assistance, unemployment insurance or any other form of income from the government, with the exception of income tax refunds.

Employment Income as Proportion of Total Income

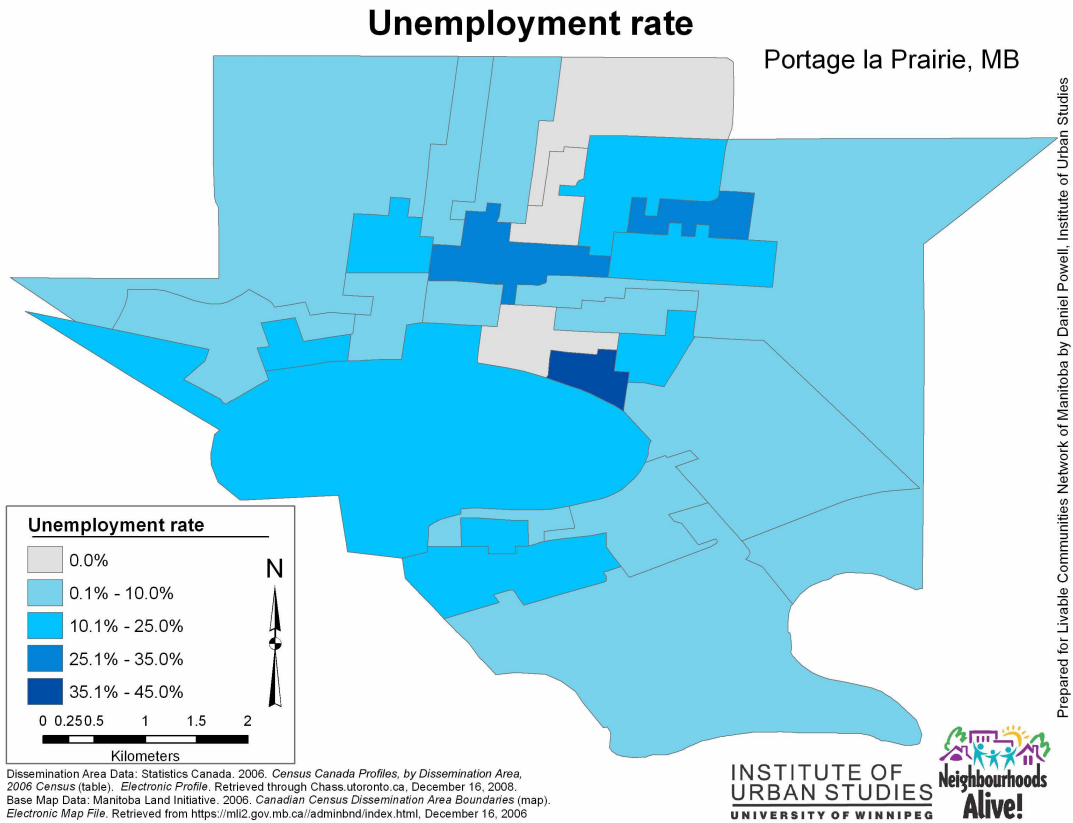


Prepared for Livable Communities Network of Manitoba by Daniel Powell, Institute of Urban Studies

With its high levels of education and income the Koko Platz/Mellenville neighbourhood had the highest average of individuals receiving their income from employment (82%) and the lowest proportion of residents receiving income via the government (6.6%). In contrast, the highest level of government transfers was found in the Central North East neighbourhood, with nearly 20% of income coming from the government.

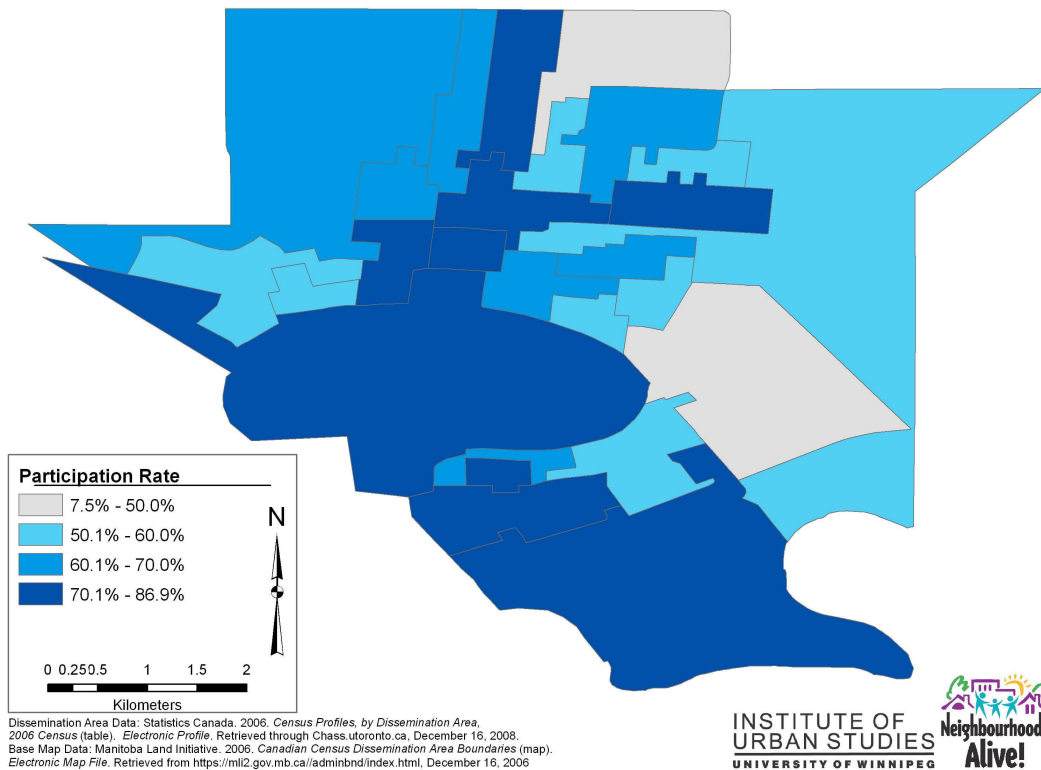


2.2.5 Employment



With an unemployment rate of 6.3%, Portage’s rate is slightly higher than the Manitoba average of 5.5%. The participation rate (65.5%) is also slightly lower than the provincial average of 68.2%. With a rate of 31.8%, the South East neighbourhood has the lowest participation rate in the city. The Koko Platz/Mellenville neighbourhood has the highest labour participation rate with almost 74% of residents over 15 employed and just 3.9% actively searching for employment.

Proportion of Adults in Labour Force

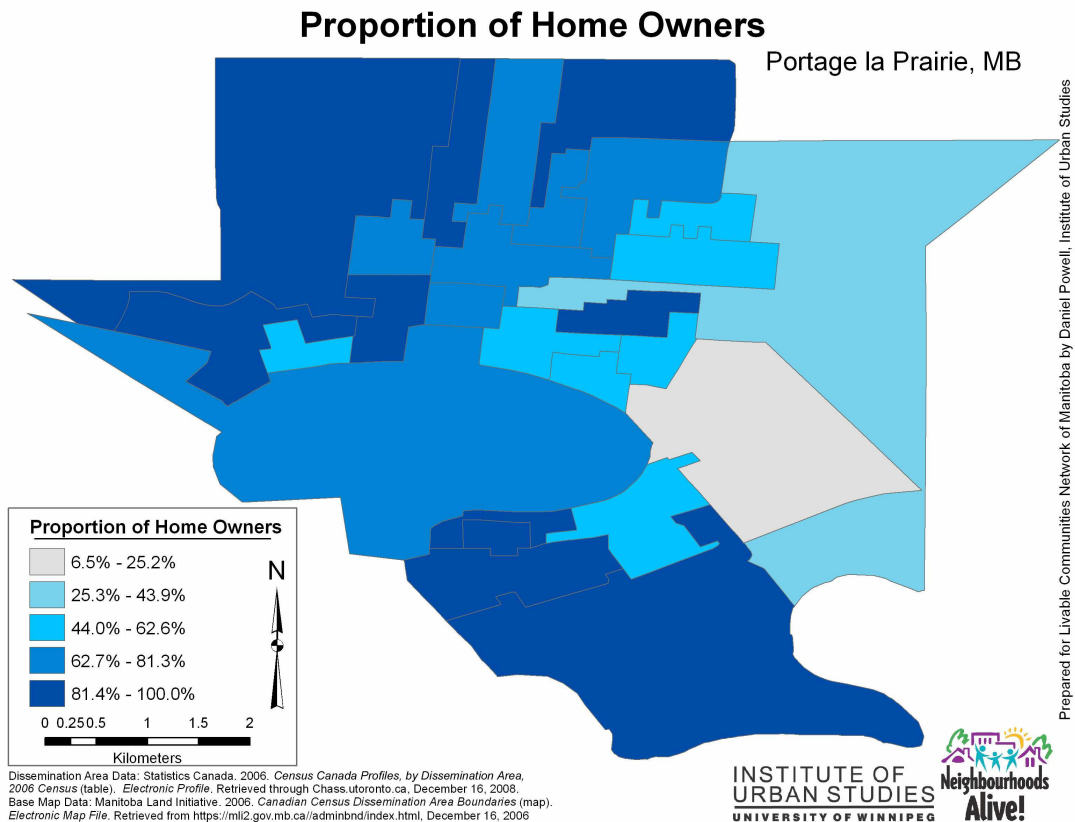


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Those DAs with low employment participation rates typically have high unemployment rates. For example, in DA 0066, the unemployment rate is nearly 24% while its participation rate is 58%. As a result, despite having fewer people who consider themselves available for employment than the city average, nearly one quarter of those who are searching for work are unemployed at any given time. The overall low participation rate of the South East neighbourhood, and in particular DA 0063, is due in large part to the average age of residents in the area: With nearly 60% of the neighbourhood's population over the age of 65, the low participation and unemployment rates are the result of seniors choosing to remain absent from the work force.



2.2.6 Dwellings



While the majority of residents (71.5%) in Portage la Prairie live in owner-occupied accommodations, a significant proportion (29.5%) reside in rented dwellings. The Koko Platz/Mellenville, Central North West and North North West neighbourhoods have the highest proportion of owners in the city (87.4%, 81.4% and 79.6% respectively). In contrast the lowest levels of home ownership is found in the South East with less than half (45.8%) of the neighbourhood's 295 dwellings owned by their occupants. This neighbourhood also has the highest rate of homeowners paying more than 30% of their income on shelter (18.5%).

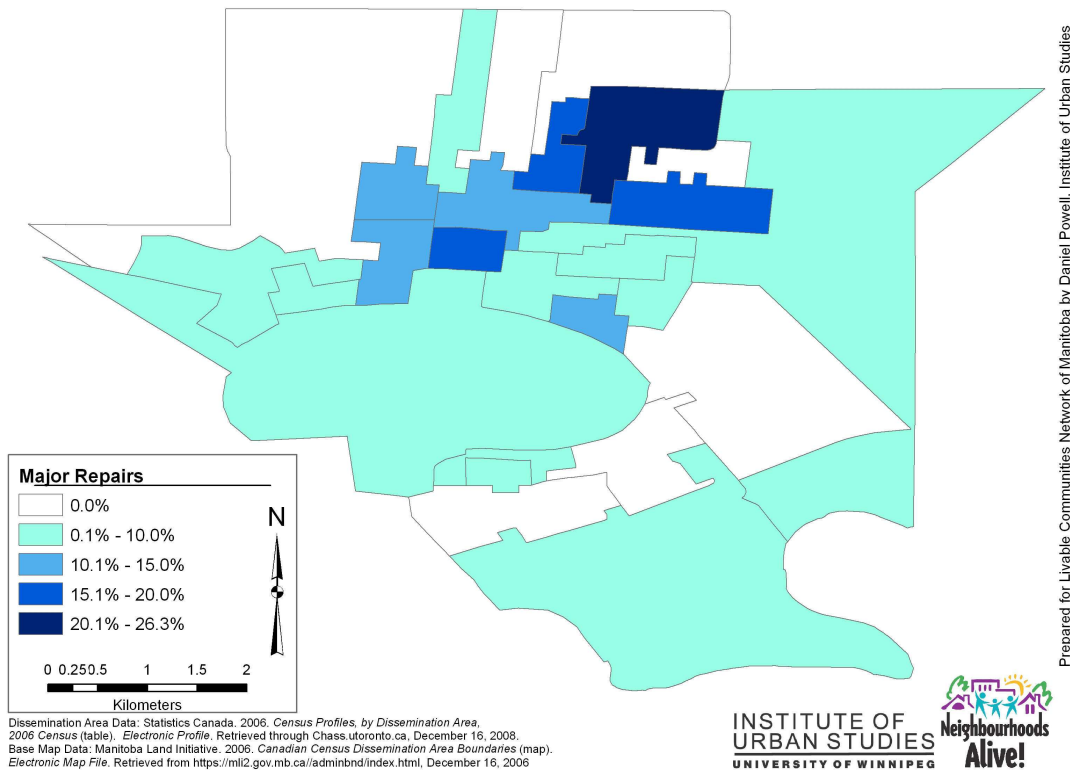
By DA, the lowest home ownership rates are in the Central North East neighbourhood, with just over a third of dwellers living in homes they own, as well as the lowest home

value of \$57,000. The 5 DAs in Koko Platz/Mellenville are the top 5 DAs in terms of home value, and have among the lowest rates of homeowners paying over 30% of their income on mortgage/shelter costs.

Of the 29% of residents who rent their dwelling, the highest proportions are found in the neighbourhoods of the South East (54.2%), Central North East (40.9%) and North North East (39%) neighbourhoods. The least number of rental properties in the city are located in Koko Platz/Mellenville where only 13% of the neighbourhood's dwellings are not owned by their occupants.

In terms of affordability, renters may face much more financial difficulties in making their monthly payments. On average, nearly 11% of the city's home owners are paying more than 30% of their monthly income on mortgage payment with the highest proportion occurring in South East (18.5%). The number of renters facing a similar situation jumps dramatically with nearly 37.5% with the South East, Central North East and South West neighbourhoods each experiencing above average rates (56.3%, 40.9% and 39% respectively). A possible explanation for the higher levels of financial stress found in those renting could be the lower levels of income many renters experience. For example, two of three above mentioned neighbourhoods are characterized by above average levels of government transfers as the primary income source (Central North East 19.8% and South East, 16.1%)

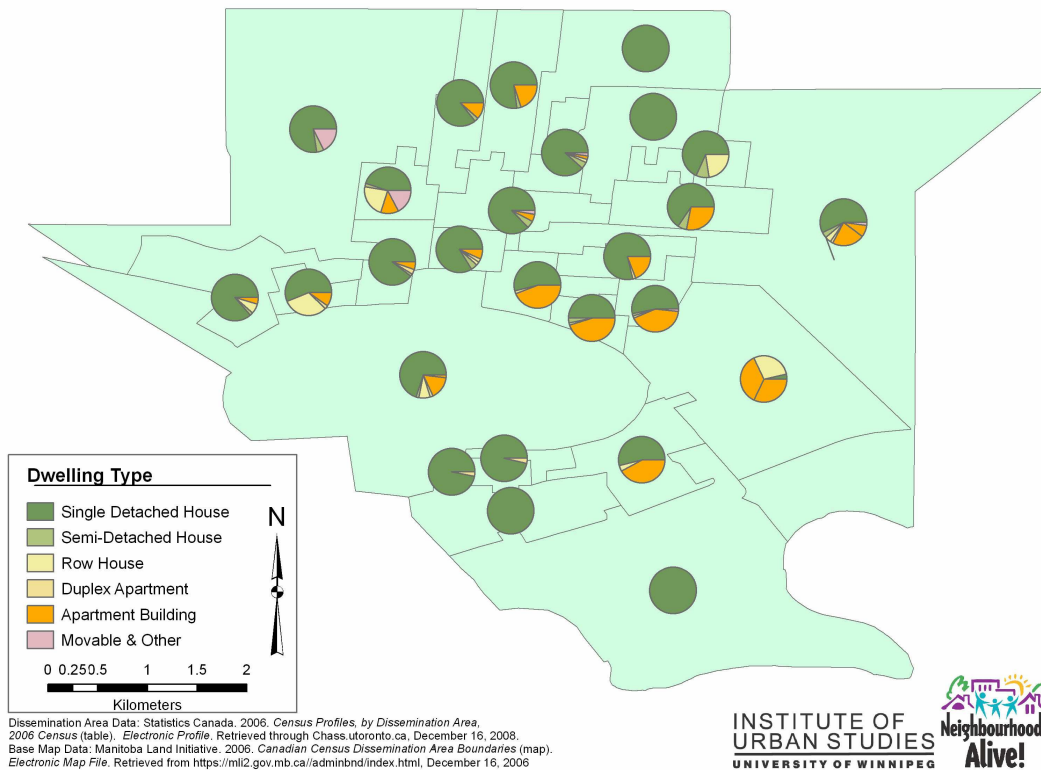
Proportion of Dwellings Needing Major Repairs



In terms of condition of the housing stock, it was found that the Koko Platz/Mellenville neighbourhood had the highest rate of homes in good condition at 76.0% and the lowest needing major repairs, 3.4%. Meanwhile, the North North East and Central North West neighbourhoods contain the city's poorest housing stock with 15.6% and 12.3% of their structures requiring major repairs. Both neighbourhoods also showed the lowest proportion of houses needing only regular maintenance (51.8% and 51.4% respectively).

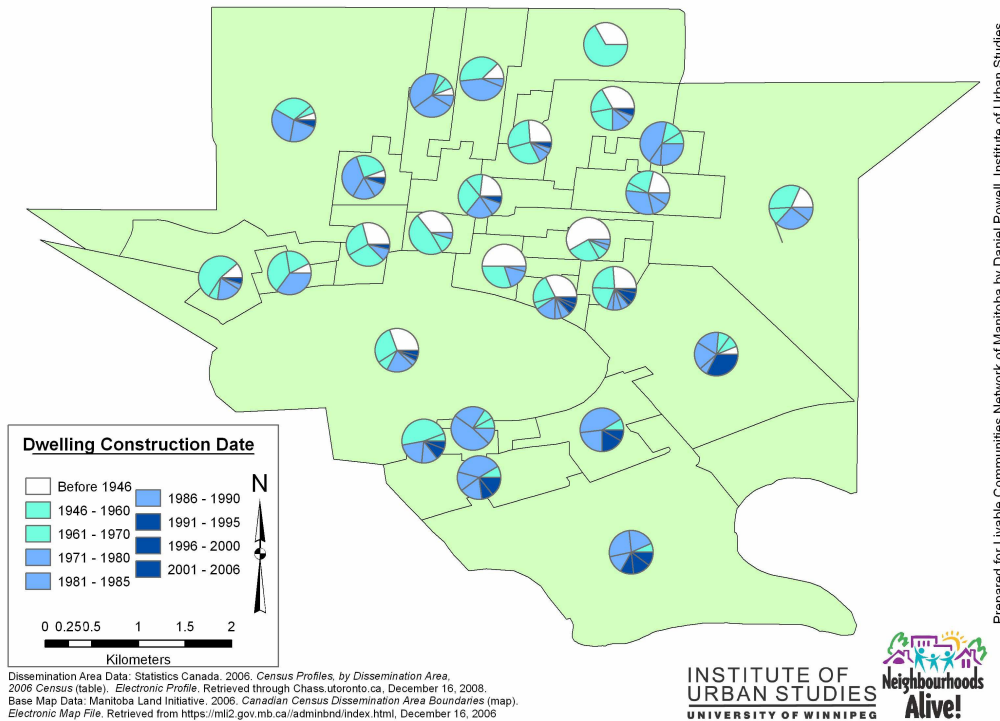
On a more detailed analysis by DA the physical condition of houses becomes much more pronounced. With nearly 93% of DA 0063 houses needing only minor maintenance, the DA in the South East neighbourhood has the healthiest stock of housing in the city. In addition, 7 of 26 DAs show no need of major repairs. At the other end of the scale, there are several DAs where over 50% of their homes need minor or major repairs. Over one quarter of the homes require major repairs in DA 0067 (North North East).

Dwelling Type



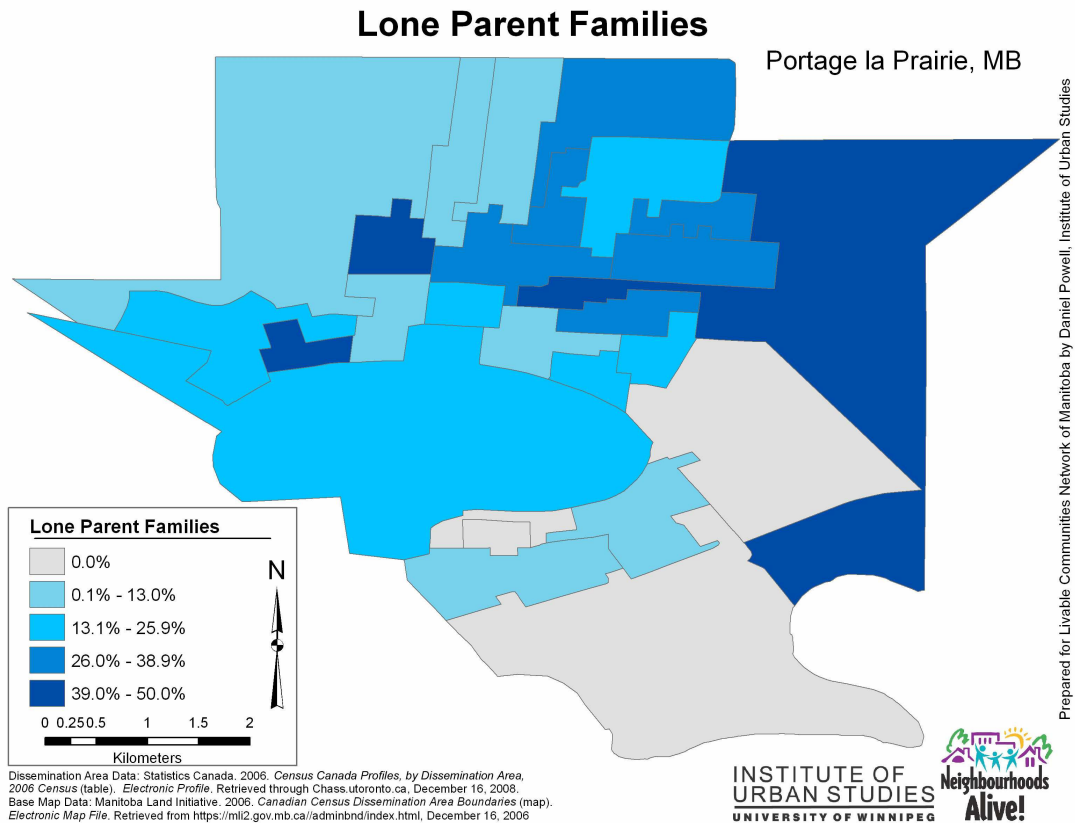
The healthy housing stock of Koko Platz/Mellenville is due primarily to the relatively new age of the housing stock (only 4.1% was constructed before 1960) and the high levels of income found in the neighbourhood. The relatively poor condition of the housing stock in the North North East neighbourhood could be due to a combination of socio-economic conditions. In addition to having one of the highest levels of houses built before 1960 in Portage, the neighbourhood also has the city's lowest median household income and one of the highest rates of government transfers and unemployment.

Dwelling Construction Date



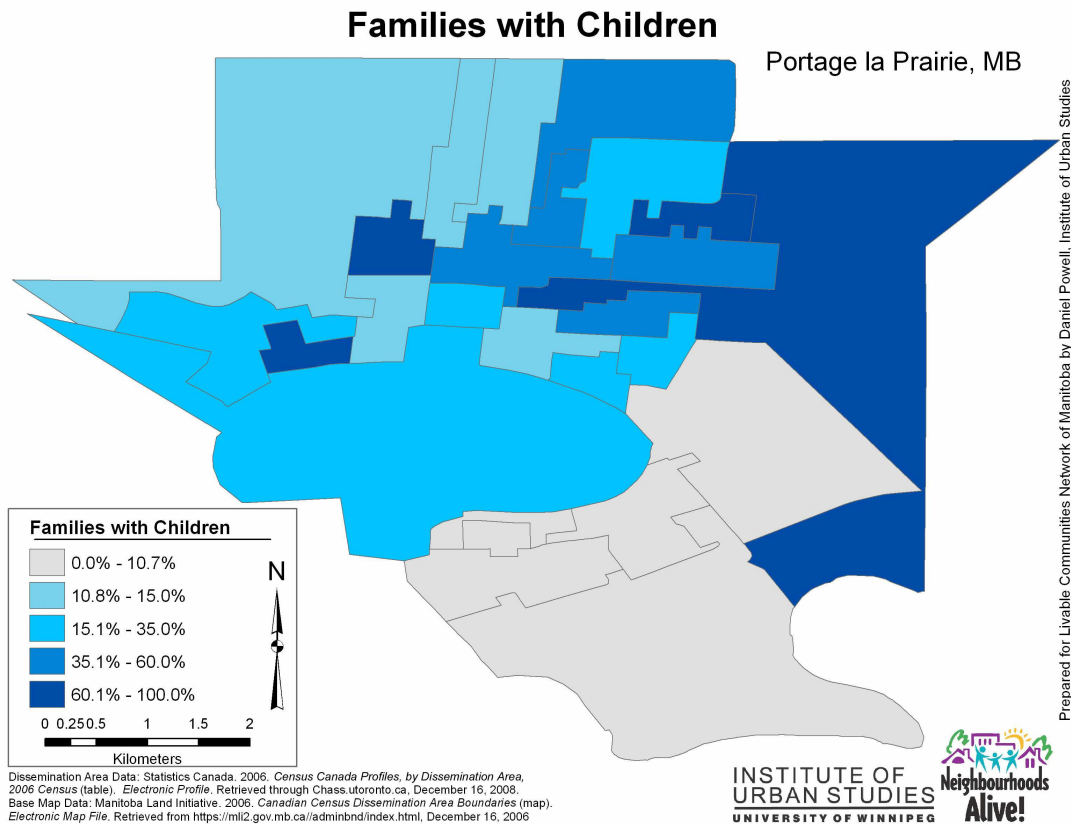
The age of the housing stock generally decreases as one moves farther from the traditional core of the city. Neighbourhoods with the oldest housing stocks are the Central North West (68.1%), the Central North East (59.9%) and the South West (57.6%). Not surprisingly, the youngest neighbourhood (and farthest from the traditional downtown) is Koko Platz/Mellenville with over half of its homes built since 1981. The most balanced neighbourhood appears to be the South East, with nearly the same proportion of homes built before 1960 as have been built since 1981.

2.2.7 Family Structure



On average 60% of families (defined as more than one person living in the same residence related by blood, marriage or common-law partnership), have children. Of these, 36% are lone parent families. Several neighbourhoods have significant percentages of lone parent families: Central North East (56.4%) and North North East (51.7%). Both neighbourhoods also have the city's lowest average median income, share the second lowest rates of high school completion or equivalent degree and have the highest rates of government transfers as a form of primary income.

Some other characteristics of the city's family structure includes the absence of families in Dissemination Area (DA) 0063. This is likely because the age group represented in that DA is much older, indicating a senior population, which is unlikely to have young children still at home. As a result, the statistics for the South East neighbourhood are skewed and show it being a low-family area with under 40% of families having children.



Conversely, on the other side of Tupper Street, the South West has 72.4% of families reporting children. This is partly the result of just one DAs contribution, which has 88.5% of families reporting children. A ‘hidden’ pocket of families here is in the North North East, which has 3 DAs with 80% or greater families with children, but they’re offset by the other, low-children DAs.

2.2.8 Food Security

One of the themes identified in the course of the consultation on this report is food security, and these will be discussed in more detail below in Section 4. At the present time, the issues associated with food security are addressed in the community primarily through the soup kitchen and the food bank.

Founded in 2000, the soup kitchen at First Presbyterian Church now regularly serves about 5,000 people per year. According to figures provided by the soup kitchen, in 2008

it served 6,467 meals. The numbers each day vary, and can range from as few as 12 and to as many as 55 or 60, with an expected daily average of 24.

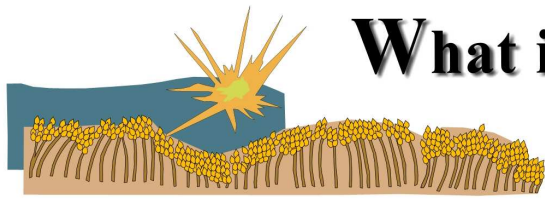
The Salvation Army's Food Bank relies entirely on donations to provide hampers for their clientele. Major suppliers include CO-OP, Sobeys, and Walmart, as well as companies like Can-Oats, and McCains. The food bank is open once a week, Wednesday from 9-11 for clients to pick up their hampers. Identification is required, as clients may only use the bank only once every two months. However, once a file is set up, a client can send someone with a signed note authorizing them to pick up their hamper. According to figures provided by the Salvation Army, approximately 750 families are on file, with an average of 40 being served in a given week.

2.3 Conclusion

As the above maps illustrate, the city of Portage la Prairie features some dramatic spatial disparities; for almost every indicator, positive and negative trends are each concentrated in certain areas. This points to socio-spatial division within the community, that advantage and disadvantage can depend greatly on where one lives. It is not an ethnically diverse community, but does contain a significant proportion of Aboriginal residents, who again are concentrated in certain neighbourhoods.

Yet for all these concentrations of advantage and disadvantage, a social plan will need to serve the needs of the whole community, it cannot be simply aimed at one or two neighbourhoods. What is needed is a holistic, broadly-based cohesive and integrated plan to better meet the quality of life needs of all of Portage la Prairie's residents. To address these disparities and other related social problems, agencies, citizens and policymakers will need to use this information as a basis for engaging in a social planning process.

Before this may be accomplished, however, a more thorough explanation of what social planning is needed in terms of what it involves, and how it may be carried out.



What is Social Planning?

Social planning involves the collection and analysis of social information about a community, including not only general population characteristics but also the issues facing specific population groups. A social plan addresses a community's conditions, concerns, and resources in order to strengthen their ability to meet social programming needs.

Social plans are multifaceted tools that can not only help in attracting additional funding and driving local policy but also in assisting “front-line” staff in allocating limited resources. Social plans contain specific information about local community assets and policy statements/direction supported by solid community based research. They are aimed at finding ways of ensuring that existing programs are properly focused, effective and accessible to those who need them; and aid in identifying new programming areas. Social planning involves practices directed towards cooperation between the producers of social services and the maximum feasible participation of the consumers of these services (Dubey 1979).

A community's social plan is intended to guide the formation and implementation of social policy, which concerns...

processes, transactions and institutions which promote an individual's sense of identity, participation and community. Good social policy promotes freedom of choice and social solidarity. It is the embodiment of values and relationships which enhance human well-being. Social policy is also about the allocation and distribution of resources for the benefit of all people. It plays a critical bridging role during times of economic and social change. It should focus on people's needs by building a strong social infrastructure (Newfoundland and Labrador, p 9).

Bromley (2003) highlights five traditions which have influenced social planning: social services; social sectors; participation; redistribution; and societal transformation.

- *Social services* planning involves focusing specifically on disadvantaged groups of the population.
- Planning for social sectors of the economy, such as health, housing and education, is *social sector* planning.
- *Participation* ensures planning occurs by and for people through the monitoring of public opinion, increasing public awareness and participation in government decision-making and grass-roots planning initiatives;
- *Redistribution* aims to address socio-economic inequalities as a way to eliminate poverty while stimulating economic growth.
- Finally and most radically, *social transformation* attempts to remodel and transform society as a whole. All of these traditions contribute to the richness and diversity of social planning.

Because social issues are always to some degree complex, social planners often engage in “complexity reduction processes” (Bromley 2003). This process begins with **identifying and analyzing the problem**, as “social problems” are often not easily measurable and can be defined in a variety of ways by multiple interest groups. They often have a variety of causes which can be viewed as simple, compound, complex or meta problems (Bromley 2003). These are:

- **Simple Social Problems:** caused by known number of specific variables (for example, undesired *loitering* at a convenience store may be the result of a lack of more interesting alternatives in the neighbourhood).
- **Compound Social Problems:** Caused by a number of variables; once you have identified them you can identify their contribution to the problem (for example, *food insecurity* can be related to a number of identifiable factors, including household income levels and the availability of nutritious and affordable food in one’s neighbourhood).

- **Complex Social Problems:** Caused by a number of variables but you cannot determine how each contributes to the problem (for example, *homelessness* has multiple causal factors, and can result from circumstances that are as unique as each individual experiencing homelessness).
- **Meta Problems:** Problems of such underlying significance that they affect all others, and that emerge from a confluence of major forces (*poverty* is a meta problem rooted in structural, environmental, social health, personal risk and economic factors and, in turn, plays a role in other social problems).

After social planners identify and analyze problems, they establish *short and long term planning goals* aimed at addressing those problems. Identifying and analyzing *alternatives* to address the problem and selecting one of these alternatives follows the establishment of these goals. The development of a *program for service delivery* completes the process. This final stage involves answering a number of questions, including:

- Should services be provided in cash or in kind?
- Should services be provided on a universal or selective basis?
- What should be the role of the beneficiaries in the planning and the delivery of services?
- What should be the design of the organizational structure responsible for the implementation of social welfare programs? (Bromley 2003).

To ensure these processes are oriented to meeting the widest possible range of needs, high-quality citizen participation processes and the opportunity for providing input is of great importance throughout. Utilizing methods for gathering citizen perspectives and harnessing public decision-making abilities increases the motivation and quality of participation. Public engagement methods can inform the process, generate ideas, and encourages people to express their viewpoints on social conditions, causes and outcomes. Social planners must then connect these findings with the results of more quantitative analysis, in terms of census and administrative data sources.

3.1 What is meant by ‘social development’?

Social development is a comprehensive approach for promoting social well-being which links social welfare directly to economic development policies by harnessing economic growth for social goals. With this emphasis on active economic development, social development differs from more traditional and institutionalized approaches such as social work and social policy, which are more oriented to creating social interventions that are secondary to the economy or government and not generally concerned with how resources for social welfare are generated (Midgley 1995).

How does social development differ from social philanthropy, social work, and social services? *Social philanthropy* relies on private donations, voluntary effort and non-profit organizations to meet needs, solve problems and create opportunities. *Social work* relies on trained professionals to cultivate welfare goals by working with individuals, groups and communities. It focuses on direct intervention on the part of professionals to deal effectively with social problems. The social services approach relies on government intervention through a variety of legislated social programs to improve public welfare.

Social development differs from these approaches in a number of ways. It does not deal directly with individuals through treatment, rehabilitation or the provision of goods as philanthropy and social work do. Instead, there is a focus on wider community social processes and structures. Similarly, it does not cater only to the most vulnerable individuals in society but seeks to better the welfare of the entire population.

Social development shares some common features with these three approaches however. It emphasises the need for intervention and the promotion of social welfare for the entire population. Social welfare is not seen as a ‘natural’ process, and all of the other methods are seen as contributing positively to the enhancement of people’s well being. The Social Planning Network of Ontario (2008) states that social development is to be measured in terms of achievement in the following conditions of community well-being:

- personal and public health;
- satisfaction of basic material needs;
- economic security and opportunity;
- protection from violence, abuse, threat, and discrimination;
- sense of identification and belonging with others;
- availability of choices and self-determination throughout life path;
- active participation and decision-making in community life and larger societal processes;
- access to knowledge and personal skill development; and
- sustainable natural and physical environments (SPNO: “Integrated Planning”).

Given this wide scope of social planning, it would seem advisable to place the responsibility for these activities with some entity with the capacity to carry them out.

3.2 What are Social Planning Organizations (SPOs)?

As a result of cutbacks to social programming and the devolving of responsibility to local municipalities, there has been a growing concern that communities may not be able to respond effectively to the social welfare of their citizens (McGrath 1999). At the same time, these measured outcomes are demanded from funders and various levels of government as necessary products to justify renewed funding. To fill these needs, a number of communities have formed social planning organizations (SPOs).

As independent bodies, social planning organizations can engage in independent research on social conditions in their communities, without deferring to particular political interests. They can make use of both professionals and volunteers to produce policy-relevant research concerning social problems which can then be drawn upon by levels of government and media. They are able to link research and community experience to pragmatic solutions to social problems. Their independence make social planning organizations ideal for representing broad community interests and serve as a neutral party in resolving community disputes and building consensus. They are also seen as useful coalition partners by other organizations in the community. Through their research, partnerships and advocacy, social planning organizations are essential in raising awareness and increasing understanding on a variety of social issues affecting local

quality of life. With such understandings in hand, a community's social service providers are better able to improve service programming, delivery and evaluation.

In order to achieve these objectives, SPOs need to have independence so as to be able to critique existing conditions and to propose alternatives. However, they need to be accountable to their community through their membership base and their Boards, while encouraging broadly-based and inclusive citizen participation in planning and decision-making processes. Through the work of SPOs, community members may be empowered to take greater control over decision-making which affects the quality of life in the community (Halton Social Planning Council).

A large part of social planning involves what is called 'social witnessing.' Moffatt et al. (1999) describe this as the "creation and dissemination of knowledge that tracks major social trends in order to encourage engaged and enlightened citizenship" (p10).

All of these valuable functions and more can be usefully filled by social planning. To better illustrate some of these potentialities, some precedents are offered below.

3.3 Precedents in Social Planning

For the purposes of this review, examples of existing social plans are reviewed below in order to illustrate how the communities in question developed their social planning processes, explore the issues they addressed and outline what criteria and values guided their initiatives. The plans are discussed briefly in terms of their *rationales*; the *content* of the plans; the *purpose* of the plans; how the plans are to be *implemented, maintained* and *monitored* (is it a one-time publication vs. flexible document); and the *connections* the plans have with other plans. Throughout the sections below key terms are **highlighted**. The lessons drawn from this survey will be discussed below in **Section 5.0 Towards a Social Planning Framework**.

1.) “*Building Our Community – The Canberra (Australia) Social Plan*”

Source:

<http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/policystrategic/socialplan>

Rationale, Values and Principles

The *vision* of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Social Plan for Canberra is to “become a place where all people reach their potential, make a contribution and share the benefits” of the community. The Government’s commitment to *principles* of access, equity and participation forms the basis of this plan (Canberra, 2004, 3).

To address these principles, the social plan seeks to:

- value and invest in people;
- ensure a decent standard of living for every citizen;
- safeguard freedoms, and allow all to live a life of dignity and value

The Plan seeks to take a broad-based approach that touches on many issues related to community well being. There is emphasis throughout the plan is on *addressing disadvantage*, and therefore *ameliorating social exclusion* (Webster, 4).

Content

The 70-page ACT social plan addresses the key issues that relate to well-being in the community, including current community conditions, then outlines priorities and goals, and provides an *implementation strategy with indicators*. The plan-at-a-glance outlines both *long-term* priorities (to be worked towards in 10-15 years) and *shorter-term* goals, which have a 5-10 year time frame. Each priority/goal set includes a list of what government *will* do in response this issue. In addition, this plan also sets up *specific targets* that are set up to coincide with Canberra’s Centenary in 2013.

Process

Following a two-year process of background work, *research* and policy discussions across *different government agencies*, consultations, and round table discussions, a *draft paper* was created, titled *Towards the Canberra Social Plan*.

An extensive *community consultation process* formed the framework for the ACT social plan. Public comment was sought on the draft paper entitled *Towards the Canberra Social Plan*, and focus group research was undertaken with service providers, youth, and groups concerned with issues such as aging, multiculturalism, and health (Canberra, 2004, 16). These consultations formed the basis for the Priorities, Goals, and Actions section of the social plan.

Implementation and Maintenance

It suggests that a *board and supporting fund* be created to respond to social inclusion issues (Webster, 3).

Connections

Building our Community links closely to the *Canberra Spatial Plan* and the *Economic White Paper*. These three form “a comprehensive blueprint” for the future development of Canberra (Canberra, 2004, 1).

2.) *Meeting the Needs of Our Community: Lane Cove Social Plan*

Source:

<http://www.lanecove.nsw.gov.au/Your%20Council/Lane%20Coves%20Future/Our%20Long%20Term%20Plans/SocialPlan.htm>

Rationale, Values and Principles

The guiding principles adopted by Lane Cove Council in Lane Cove, Australia, are Community, Creativity, Sustainability, and Best Value. These principles:

- promote inclusivity, equity and participation;
- nurture diverse expression;
- foster innovation; and
- balance economic, environmental, cultural and social elements.

This plan seeks to:

- take account of existing and future needs of communities;
- design strategies to respond to and predict current or projected needs;
- identify current and emerging issues; and
- increase capacity amongst government, community agencies, businesses, and individuals (Sussman, 2005, 1).

Content

This 60-page document consists of two parts:

- Part A outlines the “Social Planning Profile”, providing project rationale and giving a ‘snapshot’ of key social trends and issues in Lane Cove; and
- Part B is the plan itself, and it focuses on actions related to “*relevant target groups*” (Sussman, 2005, 4), including Children and Families, Young People, Women, Seniors, People with Disability, and People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds. Each of these sections can be treated as a stand-alone document, although recommendations drawn from each target group are compiled within the plan.

For each demographic group, priorities are listed. Specific actions correspond to each priority. No *responsible bodies are identified*, and no legally binding language is used (Sussman, 2005, 10-13).

Process

Demographic trends, such as population composition, income, education, mobility, and ethnicity were researched and included within this Plan. The community consultation process for this plan included more than 400 people over a three-year period in a process designed to assess needs, and allocate priorities to needs and actions. These consultations happened in two stages;

- community profiling; assessing needs and allocating priorities to needs
- *social plan formation*; forming recommendations for action, and allocating resources to recommendations (Sussman, 2005, 4).

Implementation and Maintenance

Progress on meeting the targets found in the Social Plan is evaluated and reported to the Council every quarter. *Monitoring and evaluation* is undertaken by the Lane Cove *Social Development Group* (SDG), and the Department of Local Government requires that the Social Plan be *reviewed and reproduced* every five years. Reviews include input from the SDG, as well as consultation with staff, stakeholders, and the community.

Connections

Actions in the Social Plan are included as targets of the Council's Management Plan.

3.) *Social Development Strategy for Nanaimo*

Source:

<http://www.unitedwaynanaimo.org/documents/sdsdiscussionpaperfeb04.pdf>

Rationale, Values and Principles

The vision of Nanaimo, British Columbia's Social Strategy is to create "a community which nurtures a caring, healthy, inclusive and safe environment; while empowering its citizens to realize their aspirations and hopes" (Talbot & Associates, 2004, 8).

This plan was commissioned in *response to specific social issues that were of concern to the community*, including high rates of income assistance, increasing homelessness, high unemployment levels, and substance misuse (Talbot & Associates, 2004, ii). Five major themes emerged during the consultation, which included:

- asset-based development
- early intervention and prevention
- root causes
- inclusiveness
- collaboration and partnership

These themes celebrated the contributions already existing within the community, and outlined the necessity of partnering to reach common goals.

Content

This 40-page strategy document outlines a social vision for Nanaimo, as well as goals to achieve the vision, and *strategies* to achieve these goals. The plan is broken up into six areas, defined through the consultation process. These are:

- education and learning
- employment and income
- community and health services
- housing and shelter
- safety and security
- community life

Every area has a proposed goal, and each goal includes a number of suggested strategies. Following the strategies is a list of possible *benchmarks* which will be used to *monitor progress* toward the identified goal. Also included in each chapter is a list of *community assets and strengths*, identified by community members during the consultation process. These assets identify *potential partners and existing initiatives* that are already connecting to the community.

Process

This process was *overseen by the Social Development Strategy Steering Committee.* This committee, consisting of 16 members from a variety of social and economic organizations, met on five occasions to oversee the preparation of the strategy. This strategy involved the work of many different partnering agencies. A consultant was hired to oversee the creation of this strategy.

The community consultation process was seen as a ‘first step’ of this work. This seven-month process involved the input of about 500 residents. These community members helped identify existing projects, reports and studies which would inform the strategy and help avoid ‘reinventing the wheel’ (Talbot & Associates, 2004, 7).

Implementation and Maintenance

Within each area of this strategy, potential partners are identified as assets that already exist in the community, but no responsible bodies are identified in conjunction with specific strategies. In addition, no legally binding language is used.

Connections

The social plan connects to both the Economic Development strategy for Nanaimo, and the Parks, Recreational and Culture/Environmental plans.

4.) *A Strategic Social Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador*

Source:

<http://www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural/pdf/ssp.pdf>

Rationale, Values and Principles

The themes that emerged from the community engagement process were themes of *integration*, prevention and early intervention, the inter-relatedness of financial and social policy objectives, and how one set of policies may impact many outcomes (SPAC, 1997, 104). These themes formed the basis of the Social Plan. This Plan was developed to establish a *framework for its social policy*. The plan sets out long-term objectives, establishes priorities, and defines broad strategies for the Province's social programs and services (SPAC 1997, p.105).

Content

This Strategic Social Plan consists of two volumes. The first volume is a 100-page summary of the community consultation process. The second volume (65 pages) of this plan includes current issues and trends, and moves on to include a “framework for Social Development,” and a plan on how to implement this framework. Sections V, VI, VII and VIII discuss specific issues of youth, volunteerism and different programmatic responses. A final section names government responsibilities.

Process

A Social Policy Advisory Committee was formed in 1996 to oversee the consultation process and to provide a report that the Government would consider while developing the Social Plan.

The Social Policy Advisory Committee members participated in 100 meetings, and met with more than 1500 people from 130 different communities. They received more than 600 briefs, workbooks, questionnaires, e-mails, letters, and telephone comments (SPAC 1997, p. 107). Sessions included:

- private one-on-one meetings;
- round table discussions;
- public meetings;
- gatherings organized by specific groups;
- formal presentations of briefs.

Implementation and Maintenance

This plan was discontinued in 2005, and no previous implementation strategy could be found.

Connections

When it existed, Social Planning concepts and principles were an integral part of the Official Community Plan (city.pg.bc.ca) and was used in combination with the Strategic Economic Plan (106).

5.) *Prince George Social Plan: Supportive Data Document*

Source:

http://www.city.pg.bc.ca/city_services/ocp/pgsocialplan/pgsocialplan.pdf

Rationale, Values and Principles

The purpose of this plan is to provide a counterweight to Prince George's Official Community Plan. It seeks to balance the spatial, physical and infrastructure needs of the

community with the social and quality of life needs essential for sustainable community development.

During a 1999 review of Prince George's existing Community Plan, the City encouraged the Community Planning Council of Prince George (CPC, established in 1996) to develop the social plan. It is currently under consideration by the City. The CPC believes that social planning happens at two levels; responsive social planning and long-range social planning, and is therefore both reactionary and visionary (Prince George, 2002, 6).

Content

The first two chapters discuss social planning rationale and research methods employed. The third chapter provides a 'snapshot' of existing issues in Prince George, as identified in the social service agency survey that was circulated. Following this is an outline of issues facing neighbourhoods and youth, and a chapter dedicated to the downtown core. Ten pages of recommendations close this document. Each recommendation outlines:

- the issue;
- ways to address the issue;
- initiatives to address the objectives, along with a time frame; and
- suggested partners.

Process

The Community Planning Council is an independent non-profit organization, formed in 1996. When it was asked to undertake the City's social plan, this Council already had knowledge of the community's assets and challenges. The background involved research into nine existing social plans, and particular attention was paid to the consultation processes in these plans, as well as the successes of each community's recommendations.

The community-wide consultation used many different types of methods including:

- surveys of 38 social service agencies;
- focus groups with youth and university students;
- discussions with stakeholder groups;
- neighbourhood safety audits and social mapping systems;
- neighbourhood discussion consultations; and
- open houses and public forums

Implementation and Maintenance

No implementation plans could be found.

Connections

The Social Plan is meant to complement the Official Community Plan (city.pg.gc.ca).

6.) “Keep in Touch” - Hervey Bay (Queensland, Australia) City Council Social Plan

Source:

http://www.herveybay.qld.gov.au/documents/herveyBay/Social_Plan_-_Endorsed_-_October_2003.pdf

Rationale, Values and Principles

The first step of the plan-creation process was to establish key *values, established by community members*. These include:

- participation and inclusiveness;
- pride in the community;
- diversity;
- protection of the environment; and
- safety and accessibility

This plan also relies heavily on the concept of community well-being, which is a concept developed by the Local Government of Queensland.

This plan is considered as a “first step” in what will be an ongoing process to build on existing programs. It will be a guide for Community Development for future years (Hervey Bay Council 2003, p.2).

Content

The first part of this 60-page document focuses on the development of Hervey Bay's Social Plan, and the research methods utilized. The second part outlines the Plan's key principles and findings, and includes Action Plans on the following topics;

- community participation;
- sense of community;
- cultural heritage and diversity;
- arts and recreation;
- community health and safety;
- housing;
- community services and facilities;
- groups with particular needs;
- accessibility and mobility;
- community impact;
- economic vitality and employment;
- urban design/town centres; and
- natural environment.

Each of these topics includes suggested action items, a timeline, indicators, and delegated responsibilities. The final segment of this plan is an implementation strategy, which concludes with stories of what is working well in the community (Hervey Bay Council, 2003, 1).

Process

A ten-person *Social Plan Committee*, including representatives from the Non-profit agencies and Hervey Bay's Planning Department, was formed in 2002 to guide the process. An extensive literature search was undertaken to organize information about how to best develop a social plan. A comprehensive community engagement process was led by a Project Officer, but some community members were included in the leadership of this process. Methods of community input involved:

- Survey – a total of 266 surveys were collected from community members.
- Focus groups – attended by 99 people in total. People who represented specific interests were invited.

- Community Forum – attended by 50 people. Photos taken by community members were used to represent community values, and prioritized the values represented.

Implementation & Maintenance

A *Social Plan Implementation Committee* was formed, and tasked to develop more detailed plans for some actions. They are also *in charge of monitoring progress*. This committee meets monthly. *Reports on the Social Plan must go to Council* semi-annually. In addition, annual community forums will be planned, and both focus and working groups will be formed.

Connections

This plan intentionally links to other planning processes to “ensure that the needs and aspirations of Hervey Bay’s people are considered and that the *capacity of the community...is advanced*” (Hervey Bay Council, 2003, 2). The social plan is linked to the *Integrated Planning Act* (1999), which requires that social dimensions be included in planning (Hervey Bay Council, 2003, 7). This plan also connects to Hervey Bay’s Community Plan, which outlines many implementation strategies. This plan will also be used as a basis for the Community’s Business Plan, and information from it will be used in the Town Planning Scheme.

3.4 Conclusion

The preceding outlines major themes in the literature which can inform the social planning process in Portage la Prairie. This process should:

- **Take a social development approach:** Emphasize community and social development by harmonizing social interventions with economic development efforts, essentially harnessing economic growth for social goals.
- **Focus on wider community social processes and structures:** Move beyond addressing social problems in a piecemeal fashion to examine underlying structural problems, power imbalances and dysfunctional social arrangements.

- **Drive overall policy and enable effective resource allocation:** Social policy should not be formulated on an ad-hoc basis but rather derive from an overall framework based on consensus. This will help ensure an equitable and effective use of limited resources.
- **Base recommendations on solid community-based research:** Resource allocation will be informed by what the community's stated needs are.
- **Develop existing community assets:** Limited resources may be augmented by developing existing – and perhaps previously unidentified – assets.
- **Focus on processes, transactions and institutions:** Because social policy and programming is concerned intimately and fundamentally with people, it cannot be adequately guided or measured by a focus only on units of service, numbers of visits, or waiting lists. Instead social planning should focus on the quality of the actual processes and transactions in which people are engaging. This requires examining every aspect of an organization's public service operations.
- **Emerge from the community:** Rather than being arrived at and implemented by outside agents, social development should be motivated and developed from within the community.
- **Shift service orientation:** Instead of merely seeing that social services are provided, the social plan should be part of an *enabling process* of welfare provision by making connections between service providers and developing creative ways of bridging service gaps.
- **Balance transformative and pragmatic impulses:** While it may not be enough to redistribute resources, it may also not be possible to transform social processes either. While addressing needs on a short-term basis is clearly important, addressing underlying structures (and working towards transformation) is a necessary long-term goal.
- **Measure progress:** Develop a set of community-based measurement indicators geared towards the unique characteristics of Portage la Prairie.

With these principles now established, the report turns to an initial overview of community concerns emerging from the consultation process.



Social Planning in Portage

What we Heard

In order to establish the nature and extent of the key areas of concern, IUS researchers engaged in a strategy of public consultation. First the researchers met with stakeholders representing the various member agencies constituting the Portage Community Network. Concurrently, six smaller focus group sessions were held with: health care providers; new Canadians; Aboriginal persons and individuals with housing challenges. Then a broader community was consulted in two public “town hall” forums. All told the researchers met with 126 people.

The stakeholder interviews were conducted with individuals representing some of the agencies comprising the Portage Community Network (for a list of interviewees, please see **Appendix B**). These interviews were intended to better establish the interests and perspectives of member agencies as they related to issues facing the community, as well as resources they could offer the initiative in terms of in-kind support or data. The interviews began by first asking about the strengths of the community before moving into specific issues. Then inquiries were made about more methodological concerns: how should a social planning process be carried out in Portage, what should it consider, what should it measure and what would constitute progress? (contributions referring to social planning methodologies are presented in **Section 5.3**).

A note about the thematic organization: While findings are grouped according to certain themes (poverty, housing etc.) it must be stressed that, because these social issues are interrelated, it is not always possible to separate them. It was also decided to discuss these as issues, and not in terms of constituencies. This means that where issues concern

a particular constituency, such as Aboriginal persons, children or families, they are discussed in terms of the theme, rather than the group of people primarily affected. This avoids duplication as well as the effect of treating of identifiable groups as an “issue.”

The results of all of these engagements are synthesized below, and augmented where necessary by footnotes to relevant resources. Each section is followed by key recommendations for addressing the issues identified. For a full summary of the points raised at these engagements, please see **Appendix C**.

4.1 Poverty

“Not all citizens understand the issues facing those living in poverty”

Respondents noted that many social issues connect to poverty; so much so that they can’t be addressed without understanding the root causes. Poverty was seen as affecting all aspects of life, from social relationships to education outcomes to transportation. An increasing number of households struggle with low wages, are unable to get ahead and don’t qualify for many programs that might otherwise help them improve the quality of their lives. Some people in need are, for a variety of reasons, unable to access services adequately and so are “falling between the cracks.” The use of food banks is not seen as a sustainable solution to poverty and the community must seek ways to reduce the reliance on such institutions.

Recommendations:

- ***Develop a holistic approach to understanding and dealing with the issues and root causes of poverty, including working poverty. Include identifying gaps and barriers in service provision and a food security policy.***⁵

⁵ See for example: Creative alternatives are needed to the food bank. Look at the “sustainable food systems” approach (see “Combining Social Justice and Sustainability for Food Security” by Elaine M. Power [http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-30587-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html#]). This model emphasizes alternative food-distribution and marketing projects (such as farmer’s markets) and “self-provisioning” initiatives.

4.2 Housing

“I have to put blankets up across windows and doors to stay warm”

One of the most frequently recurring themes raised by the community was that of a lack of affordable and quality housing. Addressing this need needs to include meeting the needs of a diverse population, including larger families.⁶ Much of the affordable housing stock was thought to be in poor condition, requiring investment and supports. The Community’s social challenges were seen as being exacerbated by housing, including “concentrations of poverty.” Affordable rental units are felt to be in too few hands. It was suggested that more landlords be encouraged to build and manage units within Portage. Relations between residents and the owners and managers of some residential properties were cited as a source of conflict. People often fall through the cracks because their life circumstances make them ill-prepared for independent living, and this includes young adults leaving the child welfare system.

Recommendations:

- *Seek ways to fund the construction of new and affordable housing that meets the diverse needs of all members of the community.*
- *New housing types must recognize the changing needs of residents and must include more examination of both extended family models as well as meeting the need for compact affordable units for single persons.*
- *Support existing owners with accessing repair and renovation programs to ensure that quality and sustainability of the stock is maintained and enhanced.*
- *Deconcentrate poverty by distributing affordable housing throughout the community.*

⁶ Standard housing units (2 or 3 bedroom apartments) are either inappropriate for larger families immigrating to Canada or coming from reserves, so creative, non-standard and perhaps more communal housing types should be explored. For singles, look for example at the innovative “pocket suite” model used in Winnipeg. (see <http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/inpr/graw/hoawpr/upload/Pocket-Housing-Nov12.pdf>)

- *Explore ways to improve the perceptions and relationships among owners/managers, tenants and the general community through creative programs. This should include looking to the Manitoba Residential Tenancies Branch for support.*
- *Seek ways to create a more positive environment such as West Broadway's Tenant Landlord Cooperation Model.⁷*
- *Provide incentives to expand the choices and location of rental housing along with exploring new funding models to encourage additional development.*
- *Focus on the development of supportive and transitional housing to meet the needs of individuals who are currently difficult to house.*

4.3 Transportation

“It’s very hard to be without a car, especially with several kids. You have to walk a lot.”

Many residents reported having inadequate access to key activities in the community as a result of poor mobility options, such as not owning a car or being too far from needed destinations to walk. As a result, access to employment, services, shopping and recreation opportunities imposes an unnecessary burden on already struggling families and individuals. The closure of some of the retail operations in the downtown and the flourishing of suburban big-box retail were raised as a major reason why shopping and services have become impractical destinations for many limited-income households. Big box stores were felt to be too far to walk to, especially in winter.

Recommendations:

- *The city should explore in more detail the possibility of a public transportation system as both a social equity issue as well as part of a more sustainable future.*
- *Frame transportation as an urban and economic development opportunity that can enhance the quality of life and economic well-being of Portage.*

⁷ Look at the Tenant-Landlord Cooperation model used in Winnipeg's West Broadway and Spence neighbourhoods. <http://www.westbroadway.mb.ca/>. See also <http://www.winnipegrentnet.ca/tenant-landlord-coop.cfm>

- *Seek also to creative partnerships for households that would like to take advantage of big-box retailers by exploring the cost-benefit/effectiveness of shuttle services from downtown.*

4.4 Racial Equity Issues

“In elementary school, non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal kids mix well, but once in Jr. High, that all changes.”

There was a strong sense from participants that a division exists between the Aboriginal population and the other residents. Some viewed this as an indication that more visible or formal collaboration is needed between the Aboriginal leadership and Portage decision makers. The divide between Aboriginal and non- Aboriginal peoples was repeatedly cited as one of the most significant barriers to addressing a host of social issues.

- *Embed race and “racialization” as a principal factor in all social planning initiatives.*
- *Investigate and implement planning models aimed explicitly at overcoming barriers through building cross cultural awareness, bridging divides and building trust.⁸*

4.5 Community Economic Development

“I need some kind of child care after school to cover parents on shift work. Need reliable and safe child care for a variety of hours. If I didn't have family in town, I don't know what I'd do.”

The inability of people to access employment was felt to be hindering the potential of the local economy. It was suggested that the employment potential of some residents could be enhanced through appropriate skills-building that focused on basic literacy, numeracy and job readiness. However, many parents are reportedly unable to participate in the

⁸ For models, look at: “Planning and Engaging with Intercultural Communities” <http://www.interculturalcity.com/Intercultural%20Communities.pdf> See also : Schneekloth, L. & Shibley, R. *Placemaking: The Art and Practice of Building Communities* (available on Google Books)

work force because they are unable to find affordable and safe child care. This was seen as a barrier not only for families but for the businesses that are unable to benefit from hiring skilled people. Another barrier to economic development that was commonly cited was the lack of public transportation.

Recommendations:

- *Make locally available training opportunities part of economic development initiatives so that potential workers are provided with the skills needed.*
- *Community economic development initiatives should strive for balance by supporting a strong retail presence in the downtown.*
- *Provide more day care spaces. Work with employers and training centres to ensure that day care space becomes part of the long range planning process.*
- *Promote public transportation as an economic development tool.*

4.6 Public Safety

“There was a woman next door who was being beaten and it took 4 calls before the cops showed up. I thought she was going to die.”

Many people report being afraid to walk the streets at night. This is not just about public safety, it is also a public transportation, racial equality and public perception issue. For example, it was suggested that if buses were available people wouldn't need to be walking at night. However, the basic safety of the community needs to be improved so people can feel free to walk at night. Aboriginal informants reported feeling harassed by police if they were out at night, and this made them feel unsafe while contributing to racial tension in the city.

- *Identify areas perceived as unsafe. Consider conducting a Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) audit as one way to assess the local issues.⁹*

⁹ see <http://www.cpted.net/>

- *Explore how new or existing structures such as the Community Consultative Group and Community Justice Group can aid in improving Aboriginal-police relations.*

4.7 A Family-Friendly City

“There’s no opportunities for my kids so we’re moving to Winnipeg”

Many families reported being unable to afford, or too remote from, recreational activities. Many recreational facilities require fees, and numerous participants reported missing free community skating rinks. Life circumstances can also prevent attendance in recreational programs. The most frequently cited barrier to greater participation in recreational activities was the lack of mass public transportation. There was also a suggestion that young peoples’ interests in activities and sports are diverse and may not be the same as the ones we grew up with, nor might these be deemed “acceptable” to adults.

- *Invest in family-friendly places. Children and families need more no- or low-cost public spaces for kids to hang out, such as skating rinks, parks and plazas, and they need to be placed where needed across the city.*
- *Consult young people when creating recreational opportunities.*
- *Engage and empower youth. Consider a youth committee that has a budget and authority to make real decisions.*

4.8 Social Services

“I don't really know what social services are available”

Many social services are located in Portage – so many in fact that some worry that Portage is a “social services city.” Yet people stated that many are still falling through the cracks because of the narrow range of mandates in existing programs. As well, some providers acknowledge that they don’t know what is available locally, limiting their ability to refer clients.

- *Coordinate and Communicate: More knowledge, awareness and an institutionalized means of communication and information-sharing is needed*

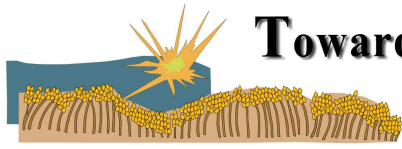
so that social service providers are able to refer their clients to needed resources.

- *Develop a Social Planning Council [Portage la Prairie Social Planning Council (PLP-SPC)] which could engage in ongoing needs assessments, program evaluation, lobbying and coordination.*
- *Engage in ongoing consultation with the community. It could also help to identify structural barriers.*

4.9 Consultations – Conclusions

While many voices were heard, there was a fairly consistent coalescing around major themes, including the need for more affordable housing, mass public transportation, and child care spaces. Young people need more affordable recreational opportunities. The public realm needs to be made safer. The community would benefit from improved relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal persons.

With these themes and recommendations in hand, the report now discusses “next steps” – working towards starting a social planning process.



Towards a Social Planning Framework

What could a social plan do for the City of Portage la Prairie?

A Social Plan would not be a comprehensive plan for the City itself, but would complement one. It would help the community set out long-term objectives, establish priorities and define broad strategies for social programs and services. It would assist in the development of long-term social policy and help to define the relationship among and between organizations in the voluntary and public sectors.

Key to the relevance of such a plan would be ensuring that it is sufficiently oriented to identifying and addressing actual causes of social problems, and not just applying short-term solutions to symptoms. The following section highlights how such a framework could be developed, what it should include, and the steps necessary to implement it.

5.1 *Developing the Framework*

Based on the review of social plans in Section 3.5, the following summary of principles are identified in terms of what a social plan is for, what it can do, and how it can be accomplished.

5.1.1 **The Social Plan as Framework**

Broadly speaking the social plan is not social policy per se, but rather should be considered to be a *framework* for the creation and implementation of social policy, one that can articulate a **vision** for the community, as well as underlying **principles** for achieving that vision. This framework, in being participatory and community-driven, should derive its issues and values from members of the community.

5.1.2 The Social Plan as Process

Key to accomplishing these roles for the social plan is the establishment of a process appropriate to the challenges it identifies. It should adopt an integrated planning approach that links it to other planning processes in the municipality and region, so that it is consistent with existing institutional structures and engages relevant local actors. The necessary processes to achieving this holistic approach would include preliminary and ongoing research, including data gathering and analysis; a robust and multi-platform community consultation process; the identification of key target groups; and ongoing communication with multiple governmental departments and agencies so that they are apprised of the goals, objectives and elements of the plan.

5.1.3 The Social Plan as Purposive Action

The social plan must address disadvantage in the community, and set out specific goals, targets and strategies for ameliorating social exclusion. It should not just be a statement of desirable outcomes but actually set out an implementation strategy that identifies available resources, existing initiatives, potential partners and commits local actors to taking responsibility for actionable items. These targets should be both short- and long-term, with a set of indicators that may be used in the coming months and years to measure progress towards the goals of the plan.

5.1.4 The Social Plan as Governance

The processes described above cannot be carried out in an ad-hoc manner, without sufficient capacity and institutionalization. Ideally the planning process must be overseen by a social planning board, committee or council, and its work will need to be properly financed. This institutionalization will need to extend beyond a particular body, however and reach into the municipality and key provincial departments and agencies. The connections illustrated in the examples above show that, to be successful, social plans need to be integrated with the other major operations and governance structures in the community.

5.1.5 The Social Plan as Monitoring and Evaluating

It is not enough to produce a social planning document that sets out issues and desired outcomes; and it is also not enough to set out how these outcomes will be accomplished. A social plan must be demonstrated in the future that progress is being made towards reaching these outcomes. Therefore indicators must be identified during the planning process, benchmarks of progress established, and progress then monitored afterwards. A regular “report card” might be produced. The body responsible for overseeing the social planning process could supply the city with semiannual reports. Finally, as a living document, the plan will need to be revisited and revised in subsequent years on a schedule to be determined. Key to the ability to monitor the social plan’s progress is the development of relevant and robust indicators.

5.2 Developing Indicators

Indicators provide evidence of success or problems and they may be qualitative or quantitative. In a neighbourhood or community context, they can help evaluate whether local actions are having the desired effects (Neighbourhood Sustainability Indicators Guidebook 1999). A community can use indicators to assist in determining what conditions exist and whether the direction the neighbourhood is headed is consistent with community goals. Indicators of social welfare are often statistics which measure the various contributing factors to well-being; these can be compared against one another or combined into a single index of social welfare, such as the Human Development Indicator created by the United Nations in 1990 or a Quality of Life indicator.

Indicators are necessary and useful in reaching a number of aims. This includes:

- making neighbourhood concerns more visible at a national level;
- generating statistics that measure meaningful change in neighbourhoods;
- building capacity to collect and disseminate indicators that inform and support local initiative taking;
- developing dynamic models of neighbourhood change;
- setting goals for neighbourhood and resident improvement;
- evaluating the likely impact of existing and/or proposed policies on neighbourhoods and/or their residents;

- developing surrogate census-like measures between Census years;
- understanding the role that the geographic mobility of residents plays in their own welfare and the welfare of their (new and old) neighbourhoods (Sawicki and Flynn 1996).

It needs to be understood that no single system of neighbourhood indicators could meet all these aims. There are various criteria for assessing the usefulness of an indicator to a community. This includes:

- Does it measure progress/ is relevant towards a goal?
- Does it compel, interest, and excite?
- Does it focus on resources and assets in a positive way? (focus on causes and not symptoms)
- Does it make linkages between various community relationships?
- Does it relate to the whole community?
- Is it understandable to all?
- Is it accessible and affordable?
- Is it comparable (standardized) to other indicators?
- Is it credible, consistent and reliable?
- Is it measureable? (is it truly measuring what it is intended to measure?) (adapted from the Community Indicator Handbook 1997)

Essentially, indicators need to be viewed as a form of communication between organizations and their community. Examples of success measures or indicators of social issues from a local context are found in ‘Community-Based Measurement Indicators: Resource Development Project’ prepared by Blake (2003) for five Manitoba community associations, corporations, and initiatives. Three indicators common to all five Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations include quality of housing, monthly housing cost to affordability ratio, and participation in neighbourhood organizations.

Prior to the creation of this Phase One Report, the Portage Community Network had identified the following areas of concern:

- poverty;
- food security;
- crime prevention;
- public transportation;
- community and neighbourhood development;
- availability and accessibility of services and resources;

- recreation/youth programming; and
- affordable housing and homelessness.

For the purposes of future data gathering as part of a social planning process, some rationalization, interpretation and operationalizing of these theme areas will be required. “Community development” can refer to many social planning areas, so it would need to be defined more specifically. As well, there is also considerable practical crossover between “poverty,” “food security” and “homelessness.” Inquiries into the “availability and accessibility of services and resources” would likely yield insights into the availability and accessibility of “recreation/youth programming.” Social planning researchers would also not be gathering data on “crime prevention” but rather “crime.” To more clearly articulate what data will need to be gathered, the table below identifies the relevant dimensions of these theme areas. Potential measures to be further investigated include:

DOMAIN	DIMENSIONS
Poverty	Income; unemployment; household expenses, including utilities; household debt service payments and financial obligations as a percentage of disposable personal income; % population dependent on government transfer payments; % households under the Low-Income Cut-Off; public perceptions and attitudes.
Food security	Groceries as % of household expenses; food bank usage; household coping strategies; household caloric intake; public perceptions and attitudes.
Crime	Rates as compared to comparably sized communities; incarceration rates; age of offenders; number of crimes reported over time; number of crimes against persons reported; number of crimes against property reported; number of crimes without victims reported; number of other crimes reported; public perception of crime.
Transportation	Car ownership rates; transportation infrastructure; mode of commuting; accident types and numbers; public perceptions and attitudes.
Social service accessibility	Number and type of agencies; waiting lists; geographies of clientele base; public perceptions and attitudes.
Recreation/youth programming	Number and type of facilities; type of programming; waiting lists; participation rates; public perceptions and attitudes.
Housing/Homelessness	Vacancy rates; homeownership ratios; housing starts; mean housing values; housing prices; % housing stock in need of major repairs; affordability (% of monthly income to rent/mortgage); rates of homelessness; shelter use; crowding; vacant houses; public perceptions and attitudes.

5.3 Applying a Social Planning Framework

During the consultations, stakeholders were asked what they saw would be the key elements of any social plan, and what the nature of its framework should be.

What should a Social Plan do?

- Plan for the overall community to ensure that X agency is dealing with X gap
- Make connections, and form partnerships
- Establish priorities that will drive activities, resulting in clearly identifiable goals
- Improve the overall social health of the community
- Create a social component for the city's plan
- Bring the community together
- Create positive relationships between the city, service providers, and the community
- Provide a forum to let clients have a voice in the process
- Identify resource requirements, and barriers to implementation
- Create a better understanding of client needs. The presence of transient populations mean that community needs can change yearly, seasonally, and month-to-month
- Result in a more collective approach, building support networks and collaboration.

At Town Hall Meeting #1 participants were further asked, “How should a social planning process be undertaken?” Ideas expressed at this meeting included:

- **It should have a clear match between goals and indicators** (*the Plan should have clear goals and have some way to measure them*).
- **It should be an ongoing process** (*the Plan should have some kind of continuity. When the plan is done, there has to be a mechanism for carrying it forward*).
- **It should have independence and autonomy** (*it's important to not tie the social plan into government funding, so government isn't the sole source of funding*).

- **It should use existing social and governmental infrastructure** (*there may already be some useful tools at the city's disposal*).
- **It should have strong communication** (*people will need to be educated on what a social plan is and what it can do.*)

Participants observed that one of the things that people in Portage do really well is share resources and let each other know what is going on and what needs to get done. It is easy to get the word out: one can cover the town with the newspapers and the radio stations. The tough part according to some will be boiling this down to something that is simple to explain and easy to articulate. However, it was stated that once this is done all the “do-ers” in town will see there is something to be done, and people will respond.

Members of the Portage Community Network were asked, “What is your organization’s vision of Portage la Prairie 5 years from now?” Comments included:

- Stronger Portage la Prairie
- More youth focus
- Kids not being taken into care for shortage of housing
- People being able to access the services they need
- A safer community
- More partnerships
- More housing
- More community development approach
- Gardens and self-sufficiency, not just food banks
- Enough appropriate housing
- Less family violence
- Enough affordable recreation
- A bus system
- Better “branding” for the city, as a city of its own, not a bedroom community for Winnipeg
- To be more open, address needs more thoroughly

Members of the Portage Community Network were asked, “As they concern these priorities, what does your organization believe would be the most appropriate way to measure progress in these areas?” Comments included:

- Local Gross Domestic Product
- Higher wages
- Shoppers staying in the City rather than driving to Winnipeg
- Waiting lists shrinking
- More culturally appropriate services
- Deconcentrated poverty
- Fewer people using the food bank

Members of the Portage Community Network were asked, “What other considerations should be taken into account as these issues are studied in the social planning process?” Comments included:

- Developing opportunities to meet with concerned citizens. Make sure due diligence is given to get input.
- Increase public awareness of the issues – they don’t understand the depth of problems, and extent of need. If there isn’t this knowledge base, people won’t understand the value of any new proposals.
- Economic development not possible without social development.
- Service providers need to know about the services that are out there.
- Present information sources on service providers (contacts, etc) are outdated and/or difficult to use. Even long-time residents have trouble finding things.
- Lots of people don’t get the newspaper or own a computer .
- To engage youth successfully, setting is important.
- People need achievable goals.
- Why not have a Facebook page?
- You have to have food at events to attract people.
- Don’t just talk to poor people, you need a holistic view.

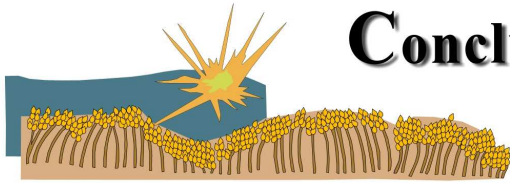
- The City’s MLA and MP need to see the report. They should be included in the consultation.

5.4 Governance

To meet these and other expectations, a social planning initiative will need a clearly-articulated governance structure, with authority, accountability, and resources. Whether this takes the form of a Portage la Prairie Social Planning Council, a department in the municipal government or working collaboratively through existing entities in the city, it is essential that the plan have a “home,” some agency that is responsible for developing it and carrying it out.

Whatever form the project’s governance takes, one of the essential functions it will need to ensure is the coordinated gathering, storing, analysis and communication of data. This function will necessitate creating linkages with other levels of government, business and the volunteer sector, as well as ongoing public consultation, accomplished through the implementation of a coherent engagement and communication strategy.





Conclusion and Next Steps

This report provided a review of the approaches necessary to develop a social planning framework for Portage la Prairie. To support this, information and data were collected regarding the establishment of a set of initial priorities and the tools to actualize social planning in the city. What this report suggests is that to move forward on a social planning process a number of critical steps will be needed:

- Formalize social planning as a necessary process for the community;
- determine the right champion to move the Social Planning Initiative forward;
- draw in significant community representation and ownership of the process;
- base the work of the Social Planning Initiative on a community visioning process;
- ensure an adequate level of long-term, stable funding;
- determine the structure of the Social Planning Initiative, including where will it be housed and what it will do;
- confirm the allocation of the necessary resources regarding qualified staff and supports;
- strategize the approach (review and confirm the priorities and data as an ongoing process);
- set targets and determine the measures of success to achieve these targets;
- report back to the community frequently;
- identify key partnerships to build social infrastructure for the planning process;
- capitalize on Portage's strengths and watch positive change happen!

As this document has shown, the act of social planning is complex and involves many steps that are each necessary to achieve the end of creating a stronger and more socially sustainable Portage la Prairie.

This report needs to be considered the beginning of a larger and ongoing process that will need to involve more community members. While this report established some baseline priorities supported by spatial mapping, more work will need to be done to determine how to best deal with each; to set the funding and supports to achieve each goal; and to determine what indicators will be used to measure success.

The Institute of Urban Studies has provided the first critical move in the direction towards the development of a social planning process with the provision of the tools, analysis of selected data and the identification of some potential means with which to address the priorities. Key data has been collected from multiple sources and by multiple means (Census, focus groups, community meetings and other local sources).

Data collection and priority refinement must be ongoing and be as inclusive as possible to ensure that all community members are able to express their needs. Establishing priorities was only the first step. The community must decide now how to best allocate the resources, how to achieve the priorities and the means by which to measure success.

Above all else, the social planning agenda must have a political champion to ensure that it is well funded, supported and carried through. Without someone to move forward on the items outlined in this report, no social planning structure can be established, nor the means to assess and address community needs. The social challenges observed will, at best, remain as they are or in a worst-case scenario deepen. However, if there is the resolve for someone to lead this process, change will happen, it will be measurable and it will undoubtedly change lives for the better.

The road to putting in place a social planning process will not be easy, but this report should provide a useful roadmap that can help navigate the bumpy and unpredictable terrain ahead. Now all that is needed is a capable driver and a reliable vehicle to start the real journey.

Appendix A: Data Tables

* indicates incomplete aggregations. One DA from each neighbourhood did not have census info in the source category, so they did not participate fully in their neighbourhood stats.

** indicates data not sorted by neighbourhood.

Table 1: Age of Population by Neighbourhood

Neighbourhoods	Total Pop	Child (0-14)	Young Adults (15-44)	Mid Adults (45-64)	Old Adults (65-85+)
CD	23065	20.9%	37.5%	26.5%	15.1%
Portage	12645	19.9%	37.6%	25.5%	17.0%
North North West	2385	22.6%	41.1%	24.6%	11.7%
Central North East	1600	17.8%	42.5%	21.4%	18.2%
North North East*	2160	24.6%	36.8%	27.0%	11.5%
Central North West	1735	20.1%	39.2%	24.9%	15.8%
South West	1545	20.5%	36.2%	25.0%	18.2%
South East*	905	6.9%	18.3%	15.2%	59.5%
Koko Platz/Mellenville	2315	19.8%	36.8%	31.4%	12.1%

Table 2: Age of Population by DA

DA	Total Pop	Children (0-14)	Young Adults (15-44)	Mid Adults (45-64)	Old Adults (65-85+)	Neighbourhoods
CD	23065	20.9%	37.5%	26.5%	15.1%	**
Portage	12645	19.9%	37.6%	25.5%	17.0%	**
0058	520	24.0%	41.3%	21.2%	13.5%	North North West
0070	425	16.5%	40.0%	32.9%	10.6%	North North West
0071	480	21.9%	42.7%	27.1%	8.3%	North North West
0072	490	30.6%	40.8%	18.4%	10.2%	North North West
0073	470	20.2%	40.4%	23.4%	16.0%	North North West
0060	555	19.8%	46.8%	22.5%	10.8%	Central North East
0061	555	15.3%	37.8%	23.4%	23.4%	Central North East
0064	490	18.4%	42.9%	18.4%	20.4%	Central North East
0065	415	32.5%	42.2%	18.1%	7.2%	North North East
0066	390	35.9%	41.0%	17.9%	5.1%	North North East
0067	830	12.0%	34.3%	40.4%	13.3%	North North East
0068	470	24.5%	39.4%	22.3%	13.8%	North North East
0069	55	18.2%	27.3%	36.4%	18.2%	North North East
0054	580	21.6%	37.9%	23.3%	17.2%	Central North West
0056	650	20.0%	40.0%	24.6%	15.4%	Central North West
0057	505	18.8%	39.6%	26.7%	14.9%	Central North West
0053	520	17.3%	28.8%	32.7%	21.2%	South West
0055	495	28.3%	38.4%	14.1%	19.2%	South West
0059	530	16.0%	41.5%	28.3%	14.2%	South West
0062	505	13.9%	31.7%	26.7%	27.7%	South East
0063	400	0.0%	5.0%	3.8%	91.3%	South East

0075	435	25.3%	35.6%	28.7%	10.3% Koko Platz/Mellenville
0076	560	17.0%	33.9%	26.8%	22.3% Koko Platz/Mellenville
0077	495	20.2%	40.4%	33.3%	6.1% Koko Platz/Mellenville
0078	395	19.0%	36.7%	36.7%	7.6% Koko Platz/Mellenville
0079	430	17.4%	37.2%	31.4%	14.0% Koko Platz/Mellenville

Table 3: Ancestry by Neighbourhood

Neighbourhoods	Aboriginal Ancestry	Minorities
CD	28.5%	1.5%
Portage	21.2%	1.9%
North North West	23.3%	3.2%
Central North East	18.5%	0.6%
North North East*	40.1%	1.6%
Central North West	22.3%	2.6%
South West	22.1%	0.0%
South East*	13.9%	0.0%
Koko Platz/Mellenville	7.0%	3.2%

Table 4: Ancestry by DA

DAUID	Non-Visible Minority	Visible Minority	Aboriginal Ancestry	Neighbourhoods
CD	98.8%	1.2%	22.2% **	
Portage	98.1%	1.9%	21.1% **	
0058	100.0%	0.0%	30.0%	North North West
0070	100.0%	0.0%	24.1%	North North West
0071	100.0%	0.0%	12.6%	North North West
0072	98.0%	2.0%	27.3%	North North West
0073	87.6%	12.4%	21.7%	North North West
0060	100.0%	0.0%	7.0%	Central North East
0061	98.3%	1.7%	14.8%	Central North East
0064	100.0%	0.0%	34.7%	Central North East
0065	100.0%	0.0%	42.5%	North North East
0066	100.0%	0.0%	59.5%	North North East
0067	100.0%	0.0%	42.4%	North North East
0068	98.0%	2.0%	23.7%	North North East
0069	73.3%	26.7%	0.0%	North North East
0054	98.2%	1.8%	22.3%	Central North West
0056	98.5%	1.5%	19.2%	Central North West
0057	95.3%	4.7%	26.5%	Central North West
0053	100.0%	0.0%	11.7%	South West
0055	100.0%	0.0%	40.4%	South West
0059	100.0%	0.0%	15.4%	South West
0062	100.0%	0.0%	17.5%	South East
0063	100.0%	0.0%	4.8%	South East
0075	89.5%	10.5%	11.7%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0076	98.2%	1.8%	12.6%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0077	98.1%	1.9%	5.8%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0078	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0079	100.0%	0.0%	2.3%	Koko Platz/Mellenville

Table 5: Education by Neighbourhood

Neighbourhoods	No Certificate
CD	23.4%
Portage	33.6%
North North West	31.7%
Central North East	40.3%
North North East*	40.3%
Central North West	39.2%
South West	30.1%
South East*	45.2%
Koko Platz/Mellenville	20.4%

Table 6: Education by DA

DAUID	No Certification	Any Certificate, Diploma or Degree	Neighbourhoods
CD	23.4%	76.6% **	
Portage	33.6%	66.4% **	
0058	35.8%	64.2%	North North West
0070	28.6%	71.4%	North North West
0071	29.7%	70.3%	North North West
0072	27.9%	72.1%	North North West
0073	35.9%	64.1%	North North West
0060	35.6%	64.4%	Central North East
0061	40.9%	59.1%	Central North East
0064	44.9%	55.1%	Central North East
0065	41.8%	58.2%	North North East
0066	50.0%	50.0%	North North East
0067	40.9%	59.1%	North North East
0068	33.8%	66.2%	North North East
0069	18.2%	81.8%	North North East
0054	49.4%	50.6%	Central North West
0056	36.0%	64.0%	Central North West
0057	31.7%	68.3%	Central North West
0053	28.0%	72.0%	South West
0055	41.4%	58.6%	South West
0059	23.2%	76.8%	South West
0062	43.0%	57.0%	South East
0063	47.5%	52.5%	South East
0075	18.5%	81.5%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0076	20.9%	79.1%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0077	23.5%	76.5%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0078	18.5%	81.5%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0079	20.0%	80.0%	Koko Platz/Mellenville



Table 7: Average Median Income and Average Income

Neighbourhoods	Average Median Income	Average Income
CD	\$57,308	\$63,084
Portage	\$56,855	\$61,751
North North West	\$57,936	\$61,443
Central North East	\$44,321	\$48,621
North North East*	\$42,082	\$48,814
Central North West	\$50,508	\$53,234
South West	\$59,814	\$62,285
South East*	\$44,175	\$53,629
Koko Platz/Mellenville	\$83,171	\$91,574

Table 8: Income Source by Neighbourhood

Neighbourhoods	Employ. Income	Gov't Transfer	Other Income Sources
CD	75.4%	12.9%	11.7%
Portage	74.6%	13.4%	0.1%
North North West	78.9%	12.6%	8.5%
Central North East	73.1%	19.8%	7.1%
North North East*	75.0%	18.0%	7.1%
Central North West	72.1%	16.1%	11.7%
South West	71.8%	13.1%	15.1%
South East*	75.3%	16.1%	8.6%
Koko Platz/Mellenville	82.0%	6.6%	11.4%

Table 9: Median and Average Income by DA

DAUID	Median Income	Average Income	Neighbourhoods
CD	\$57,308	\$63,084 **	
Portage	\$56,855	\$61,751 **	
0058	\$53,063	\$54,747	North North West
0070	\$74,995	\$69,006	North North West
0071	\$56,480	\$60,356	North North West
0072	\$58,449	\$63,872	North North West
0073	\$48,626	\$60,817	North North West
0060	\$49,975	\$54,840	Central North East
0061	\$48,122	\$54,039	Central North East
0064	\$34,462	\$36,539	Central North East
0065	\$46,248	\$52,107	North North East
0066	\$33,823	\$46,697	North North East
0067	\$44,828	\$48,507	North North East
0068	\$43,429	\$47,945	North North East
0069	N/A	N/A	North North East
0054	\$49,112	\$48,327	Central North West
0056	\$55,792	\$63,876	Central North West
0057	\$44,684	\$44,224	Central North West
0053	\$75,777	\$68,597	South West
0055	\$44,616	\$52,978	South West
0059	\$57,460	\$65,249	South West
0062	\$44,175	\$53,629	South East
0063	N/A	N/A	South East
0075	\$92,877	\$96,889	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0076	\$79,092	\$82,852	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0077	\$84,270	\$95,185	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0078	\$86,440	\$95,614	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0079	\$73,658	\$88,597	Koko Platz/Mellenville

Table 10: Income Source by DA

DAUID	Employ. Income	Gov't Transfer	Other Income Sources	Neighbourhoods
CD	75.4%	12.9%	11.7% **	
Portage	74.6%	13.4%	9.9% **	
0058	78.2%	12.6%	9.2%	North North West
0070	82.9%	12.3%	4.8%	North North West
0071	76.8%	13.2%	10.1%	North North West
0072	81.3%	13.5%	5.3%	North North West
0073	75.2%	11.6%	13.2%	North North West
0060	83.1%	12.2%	4.7%	Central North East
0061	74.4%	15.7%	9.9%	Central North East
0064	61.8%	31.4%	6.8%	Central North East
0065	75.4%	17.1%	7.5%	North North East
0066	73.7%	23.3%	3.0%	North North East
0067	77.6%	15.1%	7.3%	North North East
0068	73.3%	16.3%	10.4%	North North East
0069	NA	NA	NA	North North East
0054	64.4%	18.1%	17.5%	Central North West
0056	73.8%	16.0%	10.2%	Central North West
0057	78.1%	14.3%	7.5%	Central North West
0053	72.6%	8.4%	19.1%	South West
0055	72.4%	19.8%	7.7%	South West
0059	70.5%	11.1%	18.4%	South West
0062	75.3%	16.1%	8.6%	South East
0063	NA	NA	NA	South East
0075	90.6%	3.6%	5.9%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0076	75.0%	10.5%	14.5%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0077	83.0%	5.4%	11.6%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0078	78.8%	4.9%	16.3%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0079	82.5%	8.7%	8.8%	Koko Platz/Mellenville

Table 11: Participation Rate by Neighbourhood

Neighbourhoods	Participation Rate	Unemployment Rate
CD	66.9%	4.7%
Portage	63.9%	6.3%
North North West	69.9%	6.9%
Central North East	59.1%	6.1%
North North East	63.1%	10.1%
Central North West	66.7%	3.7%
South West	64.4%	5.4%
South East	31.8%	8.4%
Koko Platz/Mellenville	73.8%	3.9%

Table 12: Unemployment Statistics by DA

DAUID	Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate	Neighbourhoods
CD	66.9%	4.7% **	
Portage	63.9%	6.3% **	
0058	74.4%	11.5%	North North West
0070	74.7%	5.4%	North North West
0071	66.7%	4.0%	North North West
0072	64.5%	10.0%	North North West
0073	68.8%	3.8%	North North West
0060	66.7%	3.4%	Central North East
0061	59.1%	7.3%	Central North East
0064	50.6%	7.7%	Central North East
0065	72.4%	9.5%	North North East
0066	58.0%	24.1%	North North East
0067	66.2%	11.1%	North North East
0068	57.1%	0.0%	North North East
0069	30.0%	0.0%	North North East
0054	56.2%	4.0%	Central North West
0056	71.2%	3.8%	Central North West
0057	72.8%	3.4%	Central North West
0053	70.2%	3.4%	South West
0055	55.6%	10.0%	South West
0059	65.9%	3.7%	South West
0062	56.6%	16.1%	South East
0063	4.9%	0.0%	South East
0075	84.6%	3.6%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0076	56.0%	0.0%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0077	87.1%	5.4%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0078	81.5%	7.5%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0079	65.7%	4.3%	Koko Platz/Mellenville

Table 13: Renter Characteristics by Neighbourhood

Neighbourhoods	Total Dwellings	Renters	Renters paying >30% of Income on Rent	Average Rent
CD	8070	25.7% (2070)	32.4% (670)	\$507
Portage	5010	29.0% (1455)	37.5% (545)	\$499
North North West	930	21.5% (200)	22.5% (45)	\$440
Central North East	795	40.9% (325)	43.1% (140)	\$522
North North East*	680	39.0% (265)	26.4% (70)	\$496
Central North West	725	18.6% (135)	33.3% (45)	\$516
South West	710	35.9% (255)	41.2% (105)	\$465
South East*	295	54.2% (160)	56.3% (90)	\$493
Koko Platz/Mellenville	875	13.1% (115)	43.5% (50)	\$604



Table 14: Renter Characteristics by DA

DAUID	Total Dwellings	Renters	Average Rent	Renters paying >30% of Income on Rent	Neighbourhoods
CD	8070	25.7% (2070)	\$507	32.4% (670) **	
Portage	5010	29.0% (1455)	\$499	37.5% (545) **	
0058	200	22.5% (45)	\$451	44.4% (20)	North North West
0070	180	19.4% (35)	\$418	42.9% (15)	North North West
0071	175	14.3% (25)	\$482	0.0% (0)	North North West
0072	185	35.1% (65)	\$436	0.0% (0)	North North West
0073	190	15.8% (30)	\$420	33.3% (10)	North North West
0060	235	12.8% (30)	\$510	33.3% (10)	Central North East
0061	310	43.5% (135)	\$572	48.1% (65)	Central North East
0064	250	64.0% (160)	\$483	40.6% (65)	Central North East
0065	160	53.1% (85)	\$500	11.8% (10)	North North East
0066	115	52.2% (60)	\$488	33.3% (20)	North North East
0067	190	28.9% (55)	\$490	27.3% (15)	North North East
0068	215	30.2% (65)	\$505	38.5% (25)	North North East
0069	No Data				North North East
0054	220	18.2% (40)	\$466	0.0% (0)	Central North West
0056	290	13.8% (40)	\$558	37.5% (15)	Central North West
0057	215	25.6% (55)	\$522	54.5% (30)	Central North West
0053	250	22.0% (55)	\$396	27.3% (15)	South West
0055	205	46.3% (95)	\$479	31.6% (30)	South West
0059	255	41.2% (105)	\$489	57.1% (60)	South West
0062	295	54.2% (160)	\$493	56.3% (90)	South East
0063	No Data				South East
0075	150	6.7% (10)	No Data	0.0% (0)	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0076	250	42.0% (105)	\$662	47.6% (50)	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0077	185		No Rentals		Koko Platz/Mellenville
0078	130		No Rentals		Koko Platz/Mellenville
0079	160		No Rentals		Koko Platz/Mellenville

Table 15: Owner Characteristics by Neighbourhood

Neighbourhoods	Total Dwellings	Owners	Average Payments	Owners paying >30% on Mtge	Average Value of Residence
CD	8070	74.3% (5995)	\$658	10.8% (650)	\$110,809
Portage	5010	71.5% (3580)	\$710	11.3% (405)	\$108,645
North North West	930	79.6% (740)	\$690	7.4% (55)	\$85,551
Central North East	795	59.1% (470)	\$560	16.0% (75)	\$85,109
North North East*	680	62.5% (425)	\$638	12.9% (55)	\$92,303
Central North West	725	81.4% (590)	\$640	11.9% (70)	\$99,130
South West	710	64.1% (455)	\$644	14.3% (65)	\$118,352
South East*	295	45.8% (135)	\$1,026	18.5% (25)	\$78,575
Koko Platz/Mellenville	875	87.4% (765)	\$898	7.8% (60)	\$161,396



Table 16: Owner Characteristics by DA

DAUID	Owners	Average Payments	Owners paying >30% on Mtge	Average Value of Residence	Neighbourhoods
CD	74.3% (5995)	\$658	10.8% (650)	\$110,809	**
Portage	71.5% (3580)	\$710	11.3% (405)	\$108,645	**
0058	77.5% (155)	\$614	0.0% (0)	\$80,183	North North West
0070	83.3% (150)	\$691	6.7% (10)	\$91,557	North North West
0071	85.7% (150)	\$949	10.0% (15)	\$94,690	North North West
0072	67.6% (125)	\$544	12.0% (15)	\$67,799	North North West
0073	84.2% (160)	\$634	9.4% (15)	\$90,420	North North West
0060	89.4% (210)	\$557	11.9% (25)	\$65,978	Central North East
0061	54.8% (170)	\$628	17.6% (30)	\$123,623	Central North East
0064	36.0% (90)	\$437	22.2% (20)	\$57,000	Central North East
0065	50.0% (80)	\$646	18.8% (15)	\$74,415	North North East
0066	47.8% (55)	\$657	18.2% (10)	\$74,158	North North East
0067	73.7% (140)	\$575	10.7% (15)	\$94,933	North North East
0068	69.8% (150)	\$686	10.0% (15)	\$106,041	North North East
0069					North North East
0054	81.8% (180)	\$600	5.6% (10)	\$131,587	Central North West
0056	84.5% (245)	\$691	12.2% (30)	\$86,645	Central North West
0057	76.7% (165)	\$609	18.2% (30)	\$82,260	Central North West
0053	78.0% (195)	\$625	15.4% (30)	\$135,878	South West
0055	53.7% (110)	\$574	9.1% (10)	\$83,052	South West
0059	58.8% (150)	\$720	16.7% (25)	\$121,454	South West
0062	45.8% (135)	\$1,026	18.5% (25)	\$78,575	South East
0063					South East
0075	93.3% (140)	\$858	0.0% (0)	\$158,939	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0076	58.0% (145)	\$871	6.9% (10)	\$177,316	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0077	100.0% (185)	\$889	5.4% (10)	\$155,547	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0078	100.0% (130)	\$904	15.4% (20)	\$171,883	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0079	103.1% (165)	\$959	12.1% (20)	\$147,786	Koko Platz/Mellenville



Table 17: Dwelling Condition by Neighbourhood

Neighbourhoods	Maintenance Only	Minor Repairs	Major Repairs
CD	57.9%	31.2%	11.0%
Portage	60.5%	31.0%	8.5%
North North West	62.6%	30.5%	7.0%
Central North East	57.2%	35.8%	6.9%
North North East	51.8%	32.6%	15.6%
Central North West	51.4%	36.3%	12.3%
South West	60.3%	31.2%	8.5%
South East	61.1%	32.2%	6.7%
Koko Platz/Mellenville	76.0%	20.6%	3.4%

Table 18: Dwelling Condition by DA

DAUID	Maintenance Only	Minor Repairs	Major Repairs	Neighbourhoods
CD	57.9%	31.2%	11.0%	**
Portage	60.8%	30.4%	8.9%	**
0058	65.0%	22.5%	12.5%	North North West
0070	69.4%	30.6%	0.0%	North North West
0071	54.3%	37.1%	8.6%	North North West
0072	50.0%	36.8%	13.2%	North North West
0073	73.7%	26.3%	0.0%	North North West
0060	44.7%	48.9%	6.4%	Central North East
0061	64.5%	30.6%	4.8%	Central North East
0064	60.0%	30.0%	10.0%	Central North East
0065	45.2%	38.7%	16.1%	North North East
0066	73.9%	26.1%	0.0%	North North East
0067	46.2%	28.2%	25.6%	North North East
0068	50.0%	34.1%	15.9%	North North East
0069	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	North North East
0054	61.4%	29.5%	9.1%	Central North West
0056	55.2%	32.8%	12.1%	Central North West
0057	36.4%	47.7%	15.9%	Central North West
0053	59.2%	30.6%	10.2%	South West
0055	56.1%	34.1%	9.8%	South West
0059	64.7%	29.4%	5.9%	South West
0062	45.0%	45.0%	10.0%	South East
0063	93.3%	6.7%	0.0%	South East
0075	77.4%	16.1%	6.5%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0076	86.0%	14.0%	0.0%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0077	77.8%	22.2%	0.0%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0078	73.1%	19.2%	7.7%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0079	59.4%	34.4%	6.3%	Koko Platz/Mellenville



Table 19: Dwelling Age by Neighbourhood

Neighbourhoods	1981 - 2006	1961 - 1980	Before 1960
CD	37.0%	35.5%	18.4%
Portage	22.3%	38.1%	39.6%
North North West	24.6%	59.2%	16.2%
Central North East	14.8%	25.3%	59.9%
North North East*	16.0%	41.0%	43.1%
Central North West	5.7%	26.2%	68.1%
South West	5.8%	36.7%	57.6%
South East*	37.6%	22.6%	39.8%
Koko Platz/Mellenville	51.2%	44.8%	4.1%

Table 20: Dwelling Age by DA

DAUID	1981 - 2006	1961 - 1980	Before 1960	Neighbourhoods
CD	27.5%	35.5%	37.0%	**
Portage	22.1%	37.7%	39.2%	**
0058	15.0%	47.5%	35.0%	North North West
0070	5.6%	75.0%	11.1%	North North West
0071	41.2%	47.1%	14.7%	North North West
0072	31.6%	57.9%	5.3%	North North West
0073	26.3%	57.9%	10.5%	North North West
0060	4.2%	12.5%	83.3%	Central North East
0061	27.9%	26.2%	52.5%	Central North East
0064	10.0%	38.0%	50.0%	Central North East
0065	21.2%	36.4%	42.4%	North North East
0066	34.8%	56.5%	8.7%	North North East
0067	10.5%	34.2%	50.0%	North North East
0068	9.1%	38.6%	56.8%	North North East
0069	0.0%	80.0%	40.0%	North North East
0054	9.1%	25.0%	65.9%	Central North West
0056	3.4%	36.2%	55.2%	Central North West
0057	4.5%	11.4%	79.5%	Central North West
0053	12.0%	28.0%	58.0%	South West
0055	0.0%	70.7%	26.8%	South West
0059	3.9%	15.7%	78.4%	South West
0062	25.4%	20.3%	54.2%	South East
0063	64.5%	29.0%	16.1%	South East
0075	73.3%	26.7%	0.0%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0076	46.0%	50.0%	0.0%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0077	52.8%	36.1%	8.3%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0078	57.7%	30.8%	7.7%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0079	28.1%	71.9%	6.3%	Koko Platz/Mellenville

Table 21: Family Characteristics by Neighbourhood

Neighbourhoods	Total Families	Families with Children	Lone Parent Families
CD	6015	58.8%	29.8%
Portage	3360	60.6%	35.9%
North North West	705	61.7%	36.8%
Central North East	430	64.0%	56.4%
North North East*	470	63.8%	51.7%
Central North West	505	55.4%	33.9%
South West	380	72.4%	40.0%
South East*	165	39.4%	46.2%
Koko Platz/Mellenville	705	57.4%	6.2%

Table 22: Family Characteristics by DA

DAUID	Total Families	Families with Children	Families without Children	Lone Parents	Couple Parent Families	Neighbourhoods
CD	6015	58.8%	41.2%	29.8%	70.2%	**
Portage	3360	60.6%	39.4%	35.9%	64.1%	**
0058	160	71.9%	28.1%	52.2%	47.8%	North North West
0070	130	50.0%	50.0%	23.1%	76.9%	North North West
0071	140	57.1%	42.9%	18.8%	81.3%	North North West
0072	135	77.8%	22.2%	52.4%	47.6%	North North West
0073	140	50.0%	50.0%	21.4%	78.6%	North North West
0060	150	66.7%	33.3%	50.0%	50.0%	Central North East
0061	140	53.6%	46.4%	46.7%	53.3%	Central North East
0064	140	71.4%	28.6%	70.0%	30.0%	Central North East
0065	100	80.0%	20.0%	43.8%	56.3%	North North East
0066	85	82.4%	17.6%	50.0%	50.0%	North North East
0067	120	45.8%	54.2%	54.5%	45.5%	North North East
0068	140	53.6%	46.4%	60.0%	40.0%	North North East
0069	25	80.0%	20.0%	50.0%	50.0%	North North East
0054	175	45.7%	54.3%	50.0%	50.0%	Central North West
0056	195	61.5%	38.5%	16.7%	83.3%	Central North West
0057	135	59.3%	40.7%	43.8%	56.3%	Central North West
0053	140	64.3%	35.7%	38.9%	61.1%	South West
0055	130	88.5%	11.5%	52.2%	47.8%	South West
0059	110	63.6%	36.4%	21.4%	78.6%	South West
0062	120	54.2%	45.8%	46.2%	53.8%	South East
0063	45	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	South East
0075	135	70.4%	29.6%	0.0%	100.0%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0076	160	46.9%	53.1%	13.3%	86.7%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0077	155	64.5%	35.5%	15.0%	85.0%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0078	125	52.0%	48.0%	0.0%	100.0%	Koko Platz/Mellenville
0079	130	53.8%	46.2%	0.0%	100.0%	Koko Platz/Mellenville

Appendix B: List of Interview Participants

Stuart Alcorn, Executive Director
Portage Friendship Centre

Elicia Funk, Executive Director
Portage la Prairie Community Revitalization Corporation

Percy Gregoire-Voskamp, Librarian
Portage Public Library

Chuck Harper, Director
Youth for Christ, Factory Youth Centre

Dr. Kathleen Jones, Executive Director
Child and Family Services of Central Manitoba

Heather Leeman
Tupper Street Family Resource Centre

Captain Krista Loder
Salvation Army Food Bank

Tina Lequier, Secretary
Portage Community Network

Dianna Meseyton-Neufeld, Healthy Living Coordinator
Regional Health Authority of Central Manitoba

Leisa Miness, Regional Manager
Canadian Mental Health Association – Central Region

Tara Pettinger, Executive Director
Portage Plains United Way

Barry Rud, Prevention Education Consultant
Addictions Foundation of Manitoba

Joyce Schrader, Executive Director
Portage Abuse Prevention Centre

Janet Shindle
Portage Community Network President / City Councilor

Daren Van den Bussche, President
Portage Labour Council

Kathy Wightman
Family Services and Housing

Appendix C: Stakeholder Interview and Focus Group -- Notes

(The following is a chronological and thematically-organized summary of respondent inputs obtained during stakeholder interviews and public consultations.)

Strengths

Significantly, throughout the consultation process, participants were quick to talk about Portage la Prairie's many strengths. Among them is the considerable capacity of the community to come together on projects, to offer support and to rally funding from the private sector and local philanthropists. For example, some key community-minded business and retailers have contributed funding for sporting equipment for kids. There is a strong sense of caring, of volunteerism and commitment in the community. Organizations were said to be willing to work together, and when there is an issue the community feels strongly about, people don't get discouraged easily.

It was suggested that part of this is owed by many to the size of the city: it's small enough to have limited number of players who all know each other, so it's easy to network with one another. Others owed this strong sense of community to the presence of a community of faith. The Portage Community Network itself was also cited as a force for positive change, as it has functioned as a means for encouraging people to talk and connect on solving problems. Closely related to this is the enthusiasm for Neighbourhoods Alive! and its ability to leverage revitalization dollars.

Portage was seen by some as a youth-friendly community – there is the skate park, water slides and the new multiplex. Other positive elements cited include the city's good water supply, industrial base and the fact that the city has attracted several major employers, with healthy local businesses and a strong emphasis on the agricultural sector. It was suggested that the workforce has done a very good job of integrating disabled employees.

The Portage Friendship Centre was named as a good place for non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people to mix, and City Hall has a good relationship with the Centre, having come out for a number of Friendship Centre events.

Poverty and Social Problems

According to a number of participants, there are many ‘working poor’ families in Portage la Prairie, and the problems they face cross race, age and gender lines. Furthermore, because the working poor must pay for services offered at no charge to social assistance recipients, they are often worse off than those on social assistance. It was suggested that there may be some people who have such limited resources they aren’t even on social assistance. Some families were reported to have very poor coping skills, such as parents suffering from FAS, who don’t act on situations until there is a crisis. Others observed that children growing up in areas of concentrated poverty tend to have lowered expectations and become gang-involved.

Food Security

Food security was an issue that respondents repeatedly came back to – people are reportedly spending food money on rent. One person blamed part of the problem on there being no real competition among grocers so prices are higher in Portage than might be found in Winnipeg. The food bank is well-used, and participants cited numerous reasons for this, including poverty, housing costs and unfortunate life circumstances. Similarly, problems such as addictions, gambling and elder abuse are seen to be tied to broader socio-economic problems. Many of the problems people face are interconnected and can’t be viewed in isolation.

Several people repeated the characterization of Portage la Prairie as the province’s “child poverty capital.” Some participants noted that many young people in the city are not eating properly – one informant reported that she knew of kids getting into trouble just so they can get into detention and eat three meals a day.

Housing

Housing was consistently named as a factor that affects so many other quality of life outcomes in the city. Cited by almost everyone was the lack of affordable, decent, safe and appropriate housing. Because housing (or lack thereof) connects to so many other social issues, it is felt that many community problems may be more readily resolved if people had access to good housing. There is not just a lack of units, but many of those that are available were thought to be expensive, with high rents being used by some landlords as a deterrent to keep out those they deem “undesirables.” Participants reported the city’s very low vacancy rate and cited problems with overcrowding. As well, it was reported that there is very limited access to emergency shelter.

The poor housing options are not just a serious problem for local residents, but it is seen by some to be a problem for the local economy, as some employers have reported finding it difficult to attract prospective employees to move to Portage. New housing is almost exclusively being built in suburban locations such as the Koko Platz/Mellenville development. Another problem noted repeatedly is that rental housing is concentrated in a few hands, and only a couple of landlords offer what is deemed “affordable” housing. It is therefore all too easy for renters to “burn their bridges” with the local landlords, leaving them with few options. The low vacancy rates mean there are substantial waiting lists for housing.

Several participants who work with youth noted that it is difficult for young adults emerging from the child welfare system to obtain housing, as most landlords are reluctant to rent to 18 year olds.

With housing on reserves deemed to be overcrowded, it was felt by several participants that this represented a significant “push” factor driving newcomers into the city. Those moving into the city from reserves with a large family are also reported to have difficulty securing housing, as most units simply aren’t large enough. There is apparently a need for transitional housing as well as larger, more flexible units.

Transportation

Next to housing, the most frequently-cited issues mentioned related to transportation. There are some privately-operated shuttle services that serve both in-town destinations and Southport, with rates ranging between \$5.00 to \$10.00 a ride. However, there is no mass public transportation, which was seen by most stakeholders as a barrier to social service provision. Needed services may indeed exist, but may not be accessible, especially for lower-income people who do not own automobiles. To address this barrier, some of the social service agencies report incorporating transportation into their programming to get people to and from events, but this can cost the agencies \$50 - \$75 on transportation per program.

Some of the barriers to mobility, it was noted, may be psychological: some people feel they are too far away from things – especially those who live across the train tracks from the rest of the city. And many people report not feeling safe walking at night, so if they can't afford a bus or shuttle somewhere in the evening, they tend to stay home.

Weather was also cited by many as a major factor: long-distance walking might be feasible in the summer but not in the winter. If multiple children need to be taken to multiple destinations, walking can be too onerous. The closing of relatively accessible downtown stores was referred to by a number of participants without vehicles as a major inconvenience, necessitating very long journeys to the big-box development on the west end of the city, an expensive trip by taxi or shuttle.

Economic Development

An agenda for human resource development was also a recurring theme. Several people cited the city's skilled labour shortage. Some of those who need employment are poorly-educated, innumerate and even illiterate. There is a need for local training in trades; at present people need to travel to Winnipeg or Southport for training.

The other barrier cited to further developing the economy was that it is difficult to attract new immigrants to the city. There are insufficient resources – and those that are in place are not felt to be as well-coordinated as they could be.

Social Service Infrastructure

Portage la Prairie's size and centrality means that it is seen as a service hub for the region. There is a great demand for services beyond those of the city's residents. Residents from the surrounding RMs use city services and it was suggested that as much as 70% of the clients at some social service agencies are from regional First Nations bands.

There was a perception on the part of a number of informants that Portage tends to get overlooked by the province, and funding for social services goes instead to Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson. Portage's relative proximity to the much larger city of Winnipeg is seen to have resulted in a lack of certain medical, mental health or social services that are assumed to be accessible in Winnipeg. Child mental health, family counselling services and play therapy were named by several participants as locally-needed programming areas. If one needs such services, this requires long and expensive trips to Winnipeg.

As was the case with other perceived strengths in the city, informants acknowledged that there are lots of organizations doing very good things. However, they were seen to be struggling with inadequate funding, as well as overly-narrow mandates. A frequently-cited example was that (owing to funding and resource limitations) people can only access the food bank once every two months. Restricted funding aside, agencies are also seen to struggle with the restrictions imposed by the type of funding they do receive: they often must apply to and meet the demands of multiple funders, but this limits the scope of their services, as funds can only go to specific things. This leads to reported service gaps that affect a variety of different constituencies, especially those from reserves and rural areas.

Several people cited numerous types of services for seniors, but noted that there is not a lot for youth, or people with disabilities. One informant suggested that there should be more in the way of harm reduction services, (for example, needle exchanges, etc). There were calls for stable provincial funding, although it was conceded that this would give service organizations a broader mandate to undertake certain services for which they would need to obtain more expertise.

There were other structural problems noted that create unnecessary obstacles for people requiring social services. A number of participants spoke of fees for services, or for missed appointments (which often occur for want of transportation) which then become a barrier for low-income families who can't pay them. Another common problem that came up was the loss of access to benefits when one no longer qualifies for social assistance, requiring these be paid for out of pocket, creating a barrier to transitioning off of social assistance. Another structural problem occurs when children get taken into care: their parents lose their child support dollars as well as their right to public housing. If parents are not able to "sort out" their personal difficulties in a reasonable amount of time they could lose their kids, who are then raised "in the system" and are shuffled between foster homes.

Numerous participants cited the lack of child care and long waiting lists. This is seen to be not just detrimental to families, but also has a negative impact on economic development, as parents aren't able to apply for or accept employment.

While many referred positively to existing interagency communication and collaboration (witness the formation of the Portage Community Network), more coordination was felt to be a priority. There appears to be a lack of information and awareness on the part of some service agency staff and volunteers in terms of what other agencies are doing. A specific example cited was that there is a need for more knowledge about medical services and pharmacare. Furthermore, consistent with the high level of engagement cited elsewhere, there are many people who are interested in volunteering, but it's hard to

know what to volunteer for. All this points to a need for a coordinating role for social services in the city.

Town Hall Meeting #1

On Thursday, October 16th, IUS staff were on hand to facilitate a community forum, which was attended by approximately 20 local residents, plus members of the PCN and local media. Dr. Jino Distasio facilitated the meeting, which was informally structured around the same key questions used in the previous focus group settings. The responses are organized below in point form according to theme. As before, the wording below reflects what the researchers heard, not the researchers' own opinions.

Poverty

- Poverty is the most significant issue facing the community, and contributes to so many other social problems: if we have more better-paying jobs in the community there will be less poverty, and less problems with food security.
- A lot of people cannot afford the \$10 dollars needed to take a shuttle to the mall, and when it is 40 below, walking to the store isn't really an option.
- More and better economic development in the community is needed. But these have to be more than just more minimum-wage jobs, which don't do much for the community.
- A shared understanding is needed of what "poverty" means: if poverty alleviation is simply framed in terms of raising income levels to be above the "poverty line" then it won't mean much. The "working poor" above the poverty line still face many problems.
- Those who haven't experienced poverty and marginalization, can't really conceive of all the barriers that such people face on a daily basis. Creating more recreation opportunities, for example, will mean little to a young person whose family situation makes it impossible to take advantage of them.

Housing

- Poverty is closely related to housing;
- Rents have increased dramatically in recent years,
- Low-income people are finding themselves shut out of the mainstream rental housing market.
- There are houses where 2 or 3 families are living, and they're not "on the radar."

- There are too few units available and many are in very poor condition. There's not enough affordable housing being built.
- It seems the only way to develop any kind of housing is through non-profit groups.

Culture

- There seems to be a sense of hopelessness in the community.
- A social plan should try to create some sense of hope.
- Having people feel that if they are being heard is one way that we can create some hope.
- Lots of people fear being victimized by crime.
- Everyone in the room has probably experienced crime at one point
- Portage does have a very strong volunteer base, and lots of generosity in the community. The local merchants and trades people are very helpful – they helped to fund children's recreational equipment costs.
- A small nucleus of people are very creative in stretching resources to meet local needs.
- The willingness of people to lend their time, efforts and money are dependent on there being a plan that they can see really works, and they can see there is some value in what they are doing. When there are projects with a plan and there's an end to it, people will get behind it.

Recreation

- The new multiplex is an example of Portage being able to rise to a challenge.
- The city once had 5 community rinks at one time, families from all over got together and they created a sense of community.
- There are sports and recreation facilities around the city that are really good, but they seem to be under-utilized.
- If we look at what youth are involved in we'll see that kids are as much into skateboarding as they are hockey, but there are so many more resources going to hockey but nothing to skateboarding.
- Maybe there needs to be more awareness about the facilities available,
- What motivates people to get out to recreation facilities?
- Social barriers associated with poverty likely prevent a lot of families from being able to use those facilities.
- The library works really well, and the Tupper Street Family Resource Centre is an asset to the community.

Town Hall Meeting #2, January 29th 2009

This engagement was much less formal than the one held previously. It was structured around one-on-one conversations over pizza at North Memorial School, and the researchers gained a great deal of candid opinion from those in attendance. As before, the inputs from this session are provided as paraphrases of quotes.

Housing

- I have some trouble making ends meet, had a job, had 4 kids, now on mat leave. Would like to have better daycare so kids can be taken care of while working
- Subsidized housing, have problems with quality of homes, and renovations caused huge rent increases.
- Need more rooms! Bigger apartments for bigger families.
- Apartment-hunting takes a long time.
- I have to put blankets up across windows and doors to stay warm
- Landlords don't do much for their tenants
- My rent is about to double on account of it being renovated...next month I might be homeless.
- We have to double up and live with friends to make the rent.
- Credit rating checks for applications are a barrier. Experience of getting approval very long and tedious with documents having to go to Winnipeg and back.
- Manitoba housing units in desperate need for overall repair and maintenance.
- Housing unit very drafty, though recently renovated
- There are a lot of homeless in Portage staying with friends and family but they have nowhere to go
- Some people have used ATMs and the postal outlet to sleep
- There are no shelters or halfway houses
- Affordable housing here is only really appropriate for single people, but not for families. Wrong kind of housing for families overall
- Hard time finding housing -- long waiting lists for people wanting to move into town
- I know families who are living together in the same place
- No emergency shelter, and we really need one.
- Churches take people in, but a real shelter is needed.



Transportation

- There's good taxi and shuttle services
- Mostly use community shuttles to get around; are cheaper than taxis, but still expensive to use (\$5-8 per trip, or \$12 return)
- It's very hard to be without a car, especially with several kids. You have to walk a lot.
- We pulled our laundry on a sled.
- A bus would be nice.
- I have a 61 year-old uncle who rides his bike around town.
- Carpooling and shuttles are the primary mode of transportation, and are cheaper than taking taxis.
- Groceries quite a ways away, I walk a lot.
- Without shuttles, it wouldn't be worth it to try to get to the grocery store.
- The cheap stores are on the edge of town and hard to get to.
- A Bible study group needed to use a taxi to shuttle the kids
- Don't often get out to facilities at Southport unless it's an organized event.
- Getting across the train tracks is a safety concern. Not safe to be walking alongside the road.
- Bikes are a good form of transport, everything is in cycling distance.
- There's a bike trail at the park that's nice, but it doesn't connect to anything.
- Most cycling is recreational.
- It'd be nice to have a cheaper alternative, or a bus system
- The cab/shuttle system could be cheaper

Employment

- Finding work could be easier, but it was pretty easy as it was.
- Workers need more day care spaces
- Have used the services available for training
- Hard for kids to find jobs
- Even with extensive experience in trades and training it can be hard to find work
- Race an issue in training – Aboriginal students need Aboriginal instructors
- There are jobs for kids on the farms during the summer
- There are lots of jobs in the hospital if you're a health care aide

Youth-Friendly Community

- All of the day cares are full, and its hard to get in.
- Long waiting lists for daycares.
- More daycare, more daycare, more daycare, more daycare!
- Need some kind of child care after school to cover parents on shift work. Need for reliable and safe child care for a variety of hours. If I didn't have family in town, I don't know what I'd do.
- Need for half-time child care, or on-demand child care.
- More after-school programs (sports, soccer)
- There's a few good places for young people

- Need programs for post-young child, pre-youth
- More things to do is always better
- After school programs badly needed.
- Area around school poorly served by recreation.
- During the summer there isn't much to do.
- Bullying is a problem – young people can't walk around at night alone. Kids are scared of gangs.
- Need a Boys and Girls Club!
- School should keep its gym open after hours, even if it's once a week.
- There needs to be more to do, other than play in the bush
- Skateboarding is popular, but there are no appropriate places for it
- Either more or bigger playgrounds
- Being on shift make it hard to avoid needing daycare
- Playing street hockey is not safe due to traffic
- It would be nice to be able to take the kids swimming in Southport.
- Not a lot to do in the winter
- Its really easy for kids to get drugs. I hear about kids being on drugs in school. They're doing drugs younger and younger. More anti-drug programs are needed.
- Where do kids go at lunch if we're working?
- During the summer I can send my son to camp, but definitely not my daughter. Its not safe.
- There's not a lot of support for single parents, especially for single men.
- There's no opportunities for my kids so we're moving to Winnipeg
- I'm raising my kids on my own.

Safety

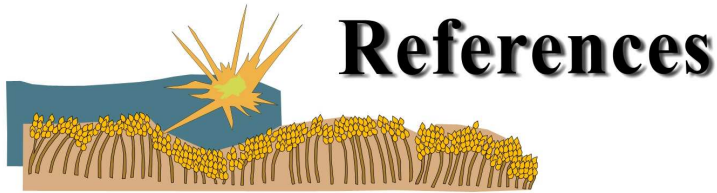
- Most areas quite safe
- Good police services.
- Not safe near subsidized housing – slow Police response
- Nearby neighbourhood has improved over what it was 5 years ago
- Glad to have walking security patrols at the “coops”

Social Services

- Don't know how to get that information
- Don't really know what social services are available
- Police are slow
- There was a woman next door who was being beaten and it took 4 calls before the cops showed up. I thought she was going to die
- We need more paediatricians
- Social networks primary source of information about social services.
- Churches offer services, but there's no real coordination between them.
- Not all citizens understand the issues facing those living in poverty or other challenges such as exclusion from amenities.
- Community awareness about these issues needs to be improved

Race

- In elementary school, non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal kids mix well, but once in Jr. High, that all changes.
- Non-Aboriginal people experience racism too – find that Aboriginal parents don't talk to them in public, at school events.



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