

Rooming-house loss a crisis

July 12, 2013 | [Winnipeg Free Press](#)

WFP reporter Mary Agnus Welsh has started a series on rooming houses. For the first story, [click here](#).

The following sidebar is included in the story:

Ten years ago, the Institute of Urban Studies made 10 recommendations regarding rooming houses:

1. Increase shelter allowance.

Did it happen? No. The basic shelter allowance is \$285 and hasn't really changed for more than 20 years.

2. A government-subsidy program for employed tenants.

Did it happen? Yes. This province's rent-supplement program offers a housing subsidy for the working poor living in all kinds of rentals, including rooming houses.

3. Social service and supports for tenants with special needs.

Did it happen? No, at least not in any systematic way.

4. Ensure rooming houses have adequate in-house support in the form of live-in caretakers.

Did it happen? No. Some houses have excellent caretakers, but many do not.

5. Supports, financing, information and guidance should be provided to encourage the formation and running of associations for rooming-house tenants and rooming-house owners.

Did it happen? No. No such organizations exist.

6. Encourage communication between rooming-house owners and the community.

Did it happen? A little, mostly thanks to outreach by local agencies such as the Spence Neighbourhood Association and West Broadway Community Organization.

7. Government should review occupancy standards to ensure a reasonable minimum space allowance is enforced.

Did it happen? No.

8. Owners should ensure a reasonable tenant-to-bathroom ratio of four to one.

Did it happen? No. In the rooming houses visited in recent weeks by the Free Press, the ratio was more like six or seven to one.

9. Improve safety measures.

Did it happen? A little, again thanks to outreach by neighbourhood associations working to make sure rooms have proper locks, lighting and other basic crime-prevention measures.

10. A targeted government-funded program to assist owners in improving their properties.

Did it happen? Kind of. But few owners applied for it. The grant program gives landlords up to \$18,000 per unit for upgrades but only three landlords in Winnipeg have won grants in the last six years.

Posted on [WinnipegRentNet.ca](#)

