



MARC GALLANT / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

## ie's? lesses important

anderson

y that Maria Ford possessive streak. site, www.illiterate a, charts errors in . Improper use of laments, is by far istake. rstand why the essive forms in lesome," Ford says trawa. "I used to English and I'll tell xplanation, creativ seems to be able to -young or old — in essive."

by those who don't heir businesses to is. "Many have riting, editing or ources," she says, ign in Atlanta cle's Only" as par- e. "It's a neat mar- le Lexus owners ing, but the punc- y makes it much Lexus likely s.

Apostrophe Pro- formed in 2001 specific aim of preserving ect use of this much abused tion mark in all forms of text in the English language."

**PS website**  
ostrophe.fsnet.co.uk  
primary rules of e usage:

re used to denote a missing letters.  
n't" instead of "I do not")  
re used to denote possession.  
dog's bone")  
ophes are never, ever used to urals.  
J's of dollars" or "Merry s from the Smith's")

airman John Richards — in Lancashire — weighs in on of Winnipeg miscues. "The possessive is always indicated ostrophe S and this applies the name ends in an S or not," s; says when asked about Elvis' op on Main Street. "Hence, the version is Elvis's Pawn Shop, he apostrophe comes after the ame if the object applies to n Tom and Mary's wedding," hen Nairn Avenue locale d Children's Paradise is men- hat one should read Moms ren's Paradise." (Unless the s to only one mom.)  
s, here's where you come in. volunteered to proof as many tuation goofos as we can send I even post shots of the most errors on her website. E-mail lings to me in the next week or .sanderson@freepress.mb.ca). some of the best/worst mis- i future Icons column. And to irth your while, I'll draw one m all entries received and at person a gift certificate t Hortons. Which, if you're e — or Ford or Richards — is n apostrophe.

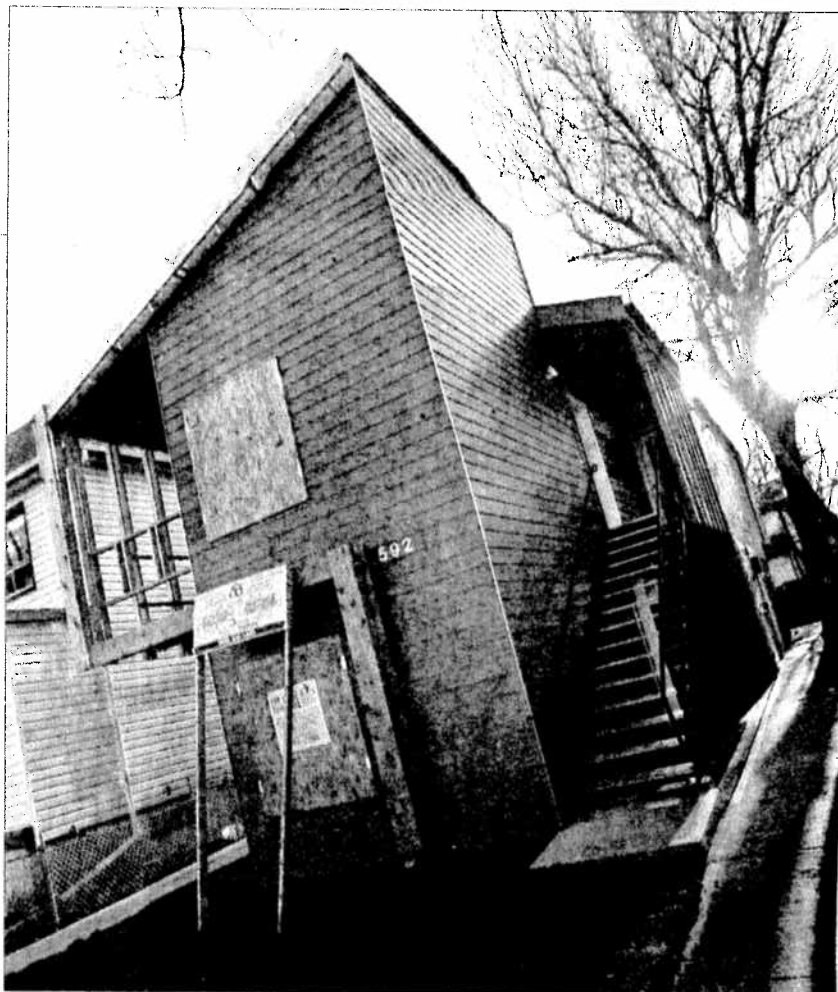


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## sitelines

BY IAN TIZZARD

Now, for \$350 a month, tenants can get 210 square feet of living space with an independent entrance, a private washroom, a two-burner stove, sink and a small fridge.



The unit at 592 Ross Ave. is almost fully rented; the windows will be uncovered when tenants move in.

Cleverly designed pocket suites give more space to low-income downtown renters

# Room to move



A tiny fridge is housed under the unit's stove/sink.



Each unit has its own private bathroom.

## Home Suite homes

**W**HILE downtown housing projects are being built for monied young professionals and empty nesters, one novel project is making homes for marginalized Winnipeggers.

About 5,000 people currently live in downtown rooming houses — usually old houses where all rooms possible have been converted to bedrooms for rent. Mostly legal, sometimes not, they provide spaces for seniors, new immigrants, minimum-wage workers and others. Living in one means cramped quarters, no privacy, sharing washrooms with strangers, and sometimes paying rent without a lease. It lacks dignity at best and is dangerous at worst.

The pocket apartments project is owned by S.A.M. Properties and administered by S.A.M. Management, a 32-year-old non-profit group specializing in "social housing." Their projects include life leases, co-ops and Manitoba Housing properties.

The buildings are spread around the Centennial and Spence neighbourhoods.

The completed ones are at 592 Ross Ave. and 154 Kate St. The first is almost full; the second is just taking in new tenants. Two more at 374 and 409 Maryland St. will be completed by the end of December.

Standard pocket suites are 210 square feet. Each building includes one 240-square-foot suite designed a little wider, with a seat in the shower for limited-mobility access.

Fifty per cent of the 32 units will be eligible for rent subsidy from Manitoba Housing.

One solution is demonstrated in four new buildings in the Spence and Centennial neighbourhoods near the Health Sciences Centre. Each contains eight "pocket suites" squeezed into a space smaller than many single-family homes occupy.

The idea came from Paul McNeil, a regional vice-president and partner at ND Lea, an employee-owned engineering, planning and project management firm.

"In rooming houses, every room is converted," McNeil says. "The old dining room is a bedroom; the old living room is a bedroom. People have about 150 square feet of private space with a shared washroom."

Now, for \$350 a month, tenants can get 210 square feet of living space with an independent entrance, a private washroom, a two-burner stove, sink and a small fridge. An open space at one end serves as bedroom and sitting room. It's all ingeniously packed into a space you can cross end-to-end in 10 steps.

Renters in the first completed building include a man working nearby, a recently moved-out student and an immigrant new to Winnipeg via two years on the street in Vancouver.

Since joining ND Lea in 1990, McNeil has been immersed

in consulting work related to urban housing and development. Before this, he worked with a company putting up single-family detached-frame housing on disused lots in St. James, St. Boniface and Elmwood. Before that, he led the Winnipeg Housing Rehabilitation Corporation as general manager.

After studying countless development ideas, McNeil says funding efforts and public attention usually focus on low-income housing for families moving back to particular areas, but not on people already there.

"I was struck by the number of low-income, single-person households downtown," says McNeil. "I saw a need and a challenge."

Sensing the bias against rooming houses, he remembered the 800-square-foot bi-level houses he helped build years ago. "I was intrigued about whether a similar design could hold a higher density of people," he says.

Early drawings showed a plain rectangular footprint, with stairs to the second-floor suites going the front and back. "It looked like a long trailer," says McNeil, much happier with the architects' final design.

"There was very little sense of opening in the original concept," admits Steve Cohlmeier, principal of Cohlmeier Architects, about the unusually challenging project. Aiming for a per-unit cost as close as possible to the \$287 social assistance housing subsidy, and on a 30-foot lot, building large was not an option.

"There's no magic to minimizing costs," says Cohlmeier. "The complexity is in figuring out how to do it all in such a small space."

"Through what Cohlmeier calls "geometric shenanigans," the designers nested the units, moving them like a puzzle to open up room for stairs and private entrances at the side while making the living rooms wider.

Cohlmeier says he found no guides or precedents for the project. "We think it's architecturally unique," he says, and McNeil agrees.

Indeed, McNeil calls it a pilot project, noting that contractors couldn't give definite estimates going in, and operational costs are still vague. "Nobody's built anything like this," he says, looking forward to discovering the results as the homes fill up.

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