



Photo by Elisha Cumbers

**Realtor Jeff Stern says the West End's affordability and beautiful character homes are a hot ticket with buyers.**

## **WEST END THE NEW WOLSELEY?**

**By Elisha Cumbers**

## **HOUSING PRICES CONTINUE TO SKYROCKET**

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Housing prices in the West End have skyrocketed so dramatically that realtors and homeowners alike say they can't believe the demand.

"Basically, the West End is a very well-improved community," said Re/Max realtor Jeff Stern. "You used to have the derelict houses in some areas...now there's pride of ownership and more people owning rather than renting."

Stern credits the community's housing turnaround to several factors, including the non-profit Housing and Opportunity Program, which he joined as a board member when it first began.

"There were a lot of organizations, housing organizations that got together and worked together and we're seeing some of the effects of that," said Stern. "Then you get the investors who go in, buy a house, fix it up and sell it again, and low interest rates...pride of ownership is there."

Stern said the West End, in effect, has become the new Wolseley, Wolseley is the new River Heights and River Heights is the new Tuxedo.

Winnipeg has had an absolutely sizzling housing market for the past six years, said Stern, but he said prices in some areas, such as St. James, are skyrocketing to beyond affordability and that's why people are flocking to the West End.

"The West End, it's a really nice little community. The houses are (higher up and not as prone to flooding basements). It's close to shopping and it has tonnes of amenities," said Stern.

"It's safe, the lots are a good size and the houses are mostly well kept. We're seeing a real turnaround."

Glen and Barbara Mendell said they were shocked at how much their Dominion Street 900-sq.-ft. bungalow sold for in June.

"To get \$20,000 over asking price, it was just unbelievable," said Barbara, "never mind just getting what we were asking for."

The Mendells said they originally paid \$69,900 for their neat property in 2000 and when it sold for \$140,000 they were ecstatic.

Abigail Davidson said her Ashburn Street home's worth has gone up so much in the past few years that she was able to borrow against the equity in her house and do planned renovations years earlier than she anticipated.

The single mother of two said she has also noticed her neighbours doing more renovations than in past years.

"Once one person starts fixing up their homes, others follow," said Davidson, who is planning to put in a garage and new fence. "There's been a lot of work done on houses here, especially on the outside, lots of new siding and things like that."

Stern said the Mendell's and Davidson's stories are similar to experiences his West End clients are having. For example, a bungalow on Banning Street he hoped to sell for about \$150,000.

"I love showing homes in the West End because they're still affordable," said Stern.