

# Downtown domiciles

## Tours to show sweet spots for buyers/renters

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Last Updated: 9th May 2009, 3:40am

They're driving a downtown sales pitch that Winnipeg hasn't seen before.

Condominiums and apartments across the city's major business district are in the spotlight today as downtown advocates ramp up efforts to advertise available homes and promote the central core as a desired place to live.

With chartered buses running every 15 minutes, CentreVenture Development Corp. and the Downtown Winnipeg Business Improvement Zone, with other partners, are taking would-be buyers and renters to at least 10 sites where homes -- large and small, expensive and not -- are on the market.

Bill Thiessen, a realtor specializing in condominiums, was beaming yesterday as Winnipeg's third annual Downtown Living Tour and Exhibition kicked off its two-day run.

"We have about 200 units that have been built here in the last two years, and the average sale price probably is approaching half a million dollars," Thiessen said of downtown multi-family suites during a break from showing off the last remaining condo at The Strand, a \$6-million, six-storey complex on Waterfront Drive.

"That's a lot of real estate to move, and we've moved it."

The busload of potential buyers looking over the upscale, top-floor unit -- and taking in its impressive views of the Red River roadway or downtown skyline, depending on the window -- descended on The Strand after beginning one of three mini-tours at Residences on York on Smith Street.

Two top-level apartments at the newly renovated Residences complex -- formerly York the Hotel and the Sheraton Hotel -- are part of the tour's first foray into rental units.

Before heading into The Strand to check out the \$400,000 condo, physician Shравan Reddy and his wife Neelima, moving to Winnipeg after living in Chicago and Madison, Wis., were already impressed by Waterfront's atmosphere.

'Middle of everything'

"We want all the conveniences and luxuries of our Chicago feel, in Winnipeg," said Neelima Reddy, a 33-year-old nutritionist. "We're big-city people. We like to walk out of our apartment or condo and feel like we're in the middle of everything."

BIZ executive director Stefano Grande countered concerns by downtown critics who say the area's population won't really take off until more supermarkets are there to serve it.

"A 10-minute walk away, you're at The Forks. And that's just from this location alone," Grande said on Waterfront.

"Within 15 minutes, there are 21 grocery stores -- a half-dozen in Chinatown. You won't go hungry if you live downtown."

The tour includes an exhibition of downtown services and organizations in the foyer of Manitoba Hydro's new Portage Avenue tower.

More information is at [www.myplaceisdowntown.com](http://www.myplaceisdowntown.com).

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