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## Central area continues to draw interest

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The increasing promotion, as well as construction, appear to be paying off.

At least, that's what downtown boosters say of the population of Winnipeg's central core, which census figures show has grown by a modest 500 or so -- to about 13,500 -- in the past three to four years.

"People are moving here," Downtown BLZ director Stefano Grande said yesterday of the area. "And the more options there are for people to live here, the more they'll choose to make it their home."

Those options are a chief focus of the Downtown Living Tour that will run today until 5 p.m.

Heather Boyd, a condo owner in the area after moving to Winnipeg from Calgary 2 1/2 years ago, said opinions of safety remain a stumbling block to downtown's further growth.

Comfortable

"I don't find it dangerous at all. I'm quite comfortable wandering around the Exchange District and downtown," she said. "It's a big misperception that people have about the downtown area."

Shravan Reddy, a 34-year-old doctor and Chicago native, said he's looking forward to his new life in Winnipeg's core despite "mixed reviews" he's received on its crime dangers.

"I'm reassured that it seems like it's going to be a nice place for us," he said with wife Neelima, while checking out Waterfront Drive. "It looks brand new, looks clean and it's a beautiful location right on the river."

Realtor Bill Thiessen said a "critical mass" of people won't arrive until far more construction provides residential options.

"To do that, the province and feds have to come to the table with some initiatives, and probably with some funding," he said. "Market-driven, not enough is happening quickly enough."

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