

STREETS

SERVING WINNIPEG'S WEST END

FEBRUARY 2022

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM OUR COMMUNITY | VOL 1 NO. 6 | FREE TO WEST END RESIDENTS

WOLSELEYLEAF.CA

Hien Tran stands next to a door lifted off its hinges last November by intruders. He holds hallway light fixtures that intruders regularly remove.

Photo Sean Ledwich



Saigon Centre battles squatters, lack of funding

By Sean Ledwich
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Free Vietnamese Association of Manitoba (FVAM) spent most of 2021 fending off sometimes violent intruders who were breaking into the Saigon Centre housing complex, squatting in and damaging unoccupied suites, and worsening a financial crunch that threatens the future of their building.

Hien Tran, president of the FVAM and the Vietnamese Non-profit Housing Corporation, which manages the six-story, 54-unit building at 458 Balmoral Street, told Streets last November that squatters would pry open exterior doors or manipulate the building's mostly senior

...Continues page 10

West End BIZ optimistic on post-pandemic picture

By Sean Ledwich
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The pandemic has hurt West End businesses, but Joe Kornelsen is optimistic.

Kornelsen, executive director of the West End Business Improvement Zone (West End BIZ), says it's reasonable to expect the pre-pandemic business growth seen in the area will be back.

"Potential business owners or people that are investing in the neighbourhood—we think that they can have a lot of confidence that those kinds of conditions can return."

In November, the West End Biz released its West End Economic Conditions Report, detailing impacts of the pandemic and recovery potential for the area. It shows a net loss of 57 businesses from the start of the pandemic to May 2021—wiping out growth seen over the previous five years and dropping the number of businesses to about

870. A West End BIZ count in the first week of 2022 puts the number down another 10 businesses to 860—a significantly lower rate of loss over the previous period.

Kornelsen says COVID-19 has robbed businesses of customers, even when they're allowed to be open.

"Restrictions are one thing, but it's also consumer confidence and getting out and using businesses...when the case numbers rise people get nervous and it does prevent people from getting out and patronizing their local business community."

He says West End BIZ has worked to prevent business

closures by providing direct phone assistance for members to help them access federal, provincial and municipal COVID-19 relief programs. They also paid special attention to about 60 businesses that opened in 2020—an opening level in line with pre-pandemic years and a sign of the West End's desirability as a place to do business, Kornelsen says.

...continues page 5



Looking for a special Valentine's treat? Laura Gurbhoo opened Gato Bakery in 2021 despite the pandemic. See Donald McKenzie's review, page 4.

Photo Terese Taylor

Thrive Thrift Shop

\$5 BAG SALE

Everyday!

Fill a bag of clothes for just \$5!

555 Spence Street
Monday to Saturday 10 am to 4 pm