Report of the Committee on Protection, Parks and Culture, dated May 13, 1991

Image Route Enhancement Strategy for the City of Winnipeg
Files SC-2 & PB-1.1

934 - 4. By report dated January 12th, 1989 to the Commissioner of Protection, Parks and Culture, the General Manager of Parks and Recreation requested authorization for the utilization of $95,000.00 remaining in the account for "Aesthetic Improvements to the Downtown Streets System" for the purpose of undertaking a study to define a new strategy and guidelines for aesthetic upgrading of streetscapes in the Downtown Area as well as the visual appearances of the primary Image Routes leading directly to the Downtown.

On February 20th, 1989, the Committee on Protection, Parks and Culture considered the aforementioned report and recommended to Council that the necessary Capital Program Change to the "Aesthetic Improvements to the Downtown Streets System" program be approved in order to enable the undertaking of the subject study.

Following the approval for the McGowan Design Group to undertake the Study, an inter-departmental steering committee, chaired by the Parks and Recreation Department, with representatives from the Streets and Transportation, Environmental Planning, and Parks and Recreation Departments was established to provide guidance and review of the work undertaken by the consultants.

Between January and March of 1990, the consultants provided a series of preliminary design presentations of the Study to the City's six Community Committees, the Standing Committees of Council, and the Provincial Highways Department.

During the course of the study the consultants have solicited the input of information and comments of no fewer than 35 individuals throughout the civic administration towards the preparation of the Study, as identified on the listing of "contact people" in the attached Appendix A.

Plan Winnipeg identifies policy statements regarding Image Routes, within the Parks and Recreation Department Section of the Plan, which state: -

"Image Routes and Scenic Drives shall offer a sense of the structure and organization of Winnipeg and its landscapes."

AND

"Image Routes and Scenic Drives should be used to define Winnipeg's Structure by creating a hierarchy of 'Points of Entry' and 'Points of Arrival' and by creating and preserving views and view sequences to major structures, the Downtown and major landscape features."

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Although it is acknowledged there are, potentially, several thoroughfares in Winnipeg which appropriately qualify as Image Routes of the City; nevertheless there are six routes which, unquestionably, qualify as "Primary" Image Routes, insofar as they are the thoroughfares most frequently utilized by tourists and visitors to the City as well as residents in directly accessing the Downtown. The Primary Image Routes have been defined as:

1. Portage Avenue (Trans Canada) West
2. Main Street North
3. Henderson Highway
4. Fermor Avenue/Osborne Street (Trans Canada East)
5. Pembina Highway/Donald Street South
6. Wellington Avenue/St. James Street/Portage Avenue (Airport Route)

For review and implementation purposes, the Study has been prepared as seven individual documents. The first document, termed the Executive Summary, encompasses all the general guidelines and recommendations of the Study; with the six successive documents each focusing on one of the six Image Routes for specific recommendations of streetscaping.

A major undertaking, the Study will provide guidance for the visual upgrading of the City's principal rights-of-way for the next two decades; resulting in a substantially improved image of the City to residents and visitors alike. The Study compliments the recent endeavours of both the "Take Pride Winnipeg" Committee and the recently Council-adopted "Guidelines on Aesthetics in Public Works Projects".

Of major significance to the overall visual impressions of the City's Image Routes are the visual aspects of the properties fronting along the public rights-of-ways. The public sector alone cannot fully achieve the objectives of favourably enhanced visual 'images' of the City's primary street environments; the co-operation and participation of the private sector in such image enhancements is essential. As an incentive towards private sector upgrading of property aesthetics, it is being proposed that the City institute an annual award, or awards, recognizing outstanding achievements by individual property owners towards improving the visual aesthetics of properties fronting along the City's Regional Street System. Such an award, to be termed 'The Mayor's Award', and accorded appropriate publicity, should be the first of several incentives considered by the City towards encouraging private sector co-operation in Image Route aesthetics.

Related to the Study, four issues of particular concern have been identified and presented hereafter for consideration in conjunction with the review and disposition of the Study. These issues are:-

1. Capital Funding
2. Maintenance Funding
3. Revisions and Updating
4. Administrative Implementation Process

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1. CAPITAL FUNDING

The "Guidelines on Aesthetics in Public Works Projects", as adopted by City Council, incorporates the commitment of the Committee on Works and Operations to provide adequate funding for aesthetic enhancement in conjunction with every major construction or reconstruction project in the various Capital Budgets. Such a budgeting process, directly integrating aesthetic enhancements with major Capital Projects of the Streets and Transportation Department, will ensure ongoing progress in upgrading the City's Image Routes. The "Downtown Aesthetic Streetscaping" Program of the Parks and Recreation Department is an optional source for funding the streetscaping of sections of roadways not scheduled for reconstruction within the foreseeable future. However, this Program is typically only recipient of approximately $140,000.00 annually. A portion of the annual revenue accrued from Tipping Fees affords a further funding option for streetscaping along the City's Image Routes.

2. MAINTENANCE FUNDING

Although the consultant has conscientiously attempted to reduce the additional financial impact of streetscape enhancements upon the City's various operating budgets; nevertheless, Image Route enhancement projects will incur additional maintenance funding responsibilities by virtue of adding to the City's inventory of street furnishings (signage, benches, waste receptacles, planters) requiring repairs and replacement over time.

Moreover, the placement of "special" streetscape features, such as fountains, pools, and statuary, in highly prominent locations; while intrinsically important to image enhancement; must certainly increase annual operating and maintenance costs to the City. As well, increased usage of shrub plantings, flower beds, and planters of colourful flowers, while essential components in the urban streetscape, must incur maintenance commitments for labour and materials.

It is fundamental that the initial investment of Capital funding for streetscape enhancements be "protected" thereafter by appropriate levels of ongoing maintenance if the overall intent of the Program is to be successful. As the Study defines "guidelines" which must be still translated into various site specific project designs, it is not possible at this time to realistically project representative annual maintenance costs for Image Route enhancements. Only with the benefit of site specific designs can maintenance cost be computed.

Current Operating Budgets have become increasingly constrained over the past several years. Within the context of persisting financial restraints on Current Budgets for the foreseeable future, the various maintenance services of the City are poorly equipped to "absorb" the degree of maintenance costs implied to sustain the enhancements of the several Image Routes. An alternative source of funding could be identified relative to the annual revenues accrued through Tipping Fees in conjunction with the City's landfill operation. As the Image Route Enhancement guidelines are translated on a project by project basis into design specifics, the projected annual maintenance costs could be determined and become a "first charge" against the subsequent years Tipping Fees revenue.

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As well, as an alternative source of maintenance funding for Image Route improvements, consideration could be given towards assessing a surcharge tax against properties fronting on Image Routes which present decidedly negative visual images when viewed from the public right-of-way (i.e. weed infested vacant lots, storage yards, expansive unlandscaped parking lots, dilapidated buildings/structures). Such tax surcharges could be used in funding maintenance of Image Routes.

3. REVISIONS AND UPDATING

As a resource basis for the establishment of guidelines and recommendations, the consultant was provided free access to all the related policies, procedures, practises, regulations and standards pertaining to public rights-of-ways as well as the composite knowledge and expertise of various professionals and specialists within the civic administration. However, voids and deficiencies in resource background knowledge do exist in certain areas such that the Study guidelines represent 'best judgments' on the part of the consultant based upon the current state of available information at the time of the Study. It must be recognized that various of the guidelines may be subject to review and revision over time as more precise and quantifiable background resource data becomes available.

As for example, the issue of setback distance requirements of the various structural components within the streets rights-of-ways, as proposed in Section 3.1.7 of the Executive Summary, is primarily reflective of a public safety concern of the Streets and Transportation Department based upon currently available resource data. During 1991, the Streets and Transportation Department will be conducting a special study to derive a Set of Roadside Safety Standards specifically pertinent to Winnipeg. Upon completion in 1992, the Streets and Transportation Department will submit a documented summary of conclusions and recommendations for the consideration of City Council in amending the relevant Study guidelines.

4. ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Referencing Section 3.4 of the Executive Summary of the Study, the Streets and Transportation Department has essentially already commenced consideration of the implementation process of the Image Route Enhancement Program through adaptation of the process for developing Annual Capital Estimates to reflect the recently approved "guidelines on Aesthetics in Public Works Projects".

Such a process will require further minor refinement to accommodate the guidelines of the Image Route Enhancement Study specifically. A procedure (Appendix B) has been prepared by the Streets and Transportation Department in conjunction with the 1992 Capital Program of the Department. While initially it is expected that the capital budget preparation process may cause timing constraints upon the staffing resources of the participating departments in order to conform to review deadlines, it will not be possible to accurately assess the degree of ongoing staffing impacts, if any, created by the added responsibilities of Image Route Enhancement for at least the next two year period. There may not be any long term additional staffing requirements

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associated with incorporating provisions for streetscaping enhancements into the budgeting preparation process.
There will however be additional costs incurred by the capital budget implementation process in order to hire qualified landscape consulting services to develop detailed streetscape designs which, due to time constraints, cannot be accomplished by in-house design staff. The additional time commitment of appropriately qualified staff towards administration and review of consultant streetscaping design proposals is an aspect which will require at least two years to accurately assess the potential staffing impact.

Just as the preparation of this major Study was an ambitious undertaking, unparalleled in scope and complexity with any other streetscaping program in North America, the successful implementation of the Study's recommendations and design guidelines will present a similar challenge to the ingenuity of the City's financial resources and administrative services.

The table outlined in Appendix C summarizes the key issues to be addressed in the process of implementing the 'Image Route Enhancement Strategy'.

Your Committee on Protection, Parks and Culture recommends:

1. That the "Image Route Enhancement Strategy", as prepared by the McGowan Design Group, be approved for implementation; subject to funding in the amount of $650,000.00 being provided from tipping fees;

2. That on-going maintenance funding for Image Route Enhancement projects be provided from the current estimates of the Parks and Recreation Department on an annual basis;

3. That consideration be given to the establishment of a "Mayor's Award", funded through the annual current estimates of the Parks and Recreation Department, for outstanding aesthetic landscape improvements to properties of private businesses fronting on the City's Regional Streets system, which includes the Primary Image Routes.

4. That the proper officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the foregoing.

Moved by Councillor Douglas,
Adoption of the clause.

Carried.

(Note: The appendices referred to in the above clause are below.)

Appendix A

Image Route Contact People

On file in the City Clerk's Department

Appendix B

PROCESS FOR THE REVIEW OF THE AESTHETICS/IMAGE ROUTE COMPONENT OF STREETS AND TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT CAPITAL PROJECTS *(Excluding Major Projects)*

The following is the procedure which will be used to review the Aesthetic/Image Route Component of Capital Projects undertaken by the Streets and Transportation Department:

(1) Project Information Sheets will be forwarded to both the Parks and Recreation Department and the Urban Design Branch of the Planning Department, at the same time as memos are sent to other Departments and the various utilities *(January 31, 1991).*

(2) The Parks and Recreation Department and Urban Design branch will be asked to recommend appropriate aesthetic treatments for each of the proposed projects *(by March 15, 1991).* Where a project involves an Image Route, the recommendations adopted from the Image Route Study will form the guidelines for the aesthetic treatments to be considered.

(3) First meeting of Streets and Transportation Department representatives with Parks and Recreation and Urban Design Branch to review and clarify the recommended aesthetic treatments *(late March).*

(4) Preliminary estimates for the aesthetic treatments will be prepared by the Streets and Transportation Department, with input from the Parks and Recreation Department and Urban Design Branch, for consideration as part of the preliminary budget package to be reviewed by the Streets and Transportation Department at the Capital Meeting of the Managers and Section Heads scheduled for April 17, 1991. Aesthetic treatment will be identified separately as both a dollar amount and a percentage in the estimates for each of the Capital Projects being considered.

(5) At the Capital Meeting, the proposed aesthetic treatments for each of the proposed Capital Projects will be reviewed by the Managers and Section Heads. Included in this review will be the feasibility of incorporating the proposed aesthetic treatments into each of the proposed Capital Projects, the costs of the aesthetic treatment both in terms of dollars and percentage of total project, future additional maintenance considerations and costs associated with the proposed aesthetic treatment, and the possibility of providing more aesthetic treatments than has been proposed by Parks and Recreation and Urban Design.

(6) Comments and decisions, along with the reasons for so doing, arrived at with respect to candidate projects and the proposed aesthetic treatments at the Capital Meeting, will be transmitted to the Parks and Recreation Department and Urban Design Branch so that the aesthetic treatments proposed can be modified so that they are feasible, taking into account incorporation into the proposed Capital Projects costs, future considerations and costs, etc.

(7) Second meeting with Parks and Recreation Department and Urban Design Branch to review comments and decisions of the Streets and Transportation Department coming out of the first Capital Meeting and to discuss possible revised aesthetic treatments that may be proposed *(late April).*

(8) Revised Aesthetic Treatments for the candidate projects will be identified by the Parks and Recreation Department and the Urban Design Branch, taking into account the comments and decisions arrived at by the Managers and Section Heads at the first Capital Meeting. These revised treatments will be required in time to revise the cost estimates for the second Capital Meeting *(mid-May).*

(9) Further refinement may be necessary after the second Capital Meeting in order to sort out last minute details prior to submitting the package for the Manager's review *(late May).*

(10) Final meeting, if required, with Parks and Recreation Department and Urban Design Branch prior to submission of the package to the Managers for their review *(mid-June).*

NOTE: *This procedure is intended to apply to street renewals, intersection improvements, bridge improvements, etc. Major projects, i.e. Charleswood Bridge, Main/Norwood Bridges, Regent Avenue and Provencher Bridge, are subject to a separate process, which includes a public review through the Community Committee(s), as part of the project design.*

(Notes & Tables #4: IMAGERTS.RJH)

Appendix C

IMAGE ROUTE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM
SUMMARY OF KEY ELEMENTS
OF IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

	INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION		MAINTENANCE
	AS PART OF A CAPITAL PROJECT	**AS A STAND ALONE PROJECT**	
PURPOSES	To undertake Image Route enhancement as part of a Capital Project which involves an Image Route.	To retrofit Capital Projects (completed prior to 1991) on an Image Route in order to "bridge gaps" in the Image Route Enhancement Program	To ensure that a high level of maintenance of the Image Route Enhancement Program is undertaken.
PROJECT ADMINISTRATION	Streets and Transportation Department with review/input from Parks and Recreation and the Urban Design Branch	Parks and Recreation Department with review/input from Streets and Transportation and the Urban Design Branch.	Parks and Recreation Department.
FUNDING SOURCES	Streets and Transportation Department Capital Budget.	Tipping fees. Parks and Recreation Department Capital Budget.	Tipping Fees. Parks and Recreation Current Budget.
APPLICABLE EXAMPLE(S)	Portage Avenue: Strathcona to Minto (1991) Wellington Avenue: Airport to St. James (proposed 1992).	Pembina Highway: Merriam to McGillivray (1990).	
COMMENTS	May increase cost/project and result in fewer projects/year.	Limited resources currently available. Use of tipping fees would allow development of more meaningful program.	Use of tipping fees essential due to limited Current Budget.