Agenda - Executive Policy Committee – December 7, 2005

Item No. 3A **Development Approval in the Downtown**
File CR-5

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATION:

That this report be received as information.

Re: **Development Approval in the Downtown**

For submission to: **Executive Policy Committee**

Original report signed by: **Director of Planning, Property and Development**

Report date: October 24, 2005

Recommendation(s):

That this report be received as information.

REPORT SUMMARY

Key Issues:

- The City requires urban design review of all new development in the Downtown Area under Downtown Zoning By-law 100/04
- In April 2004 the Standing Policy Committee on Downtown Development appointed the Urban Design Advisory Committee (UDAC), made up of volunteer design professionals, to advise the Director of Planning, Property and Development (PP&D) on urban design aspects of new downtown development.
- CentreVenture, following consultation with developers and builders, PP&D and members of UDAC, has made recommendations intended to streamline and clarify the design review process and generally improving the efficiency and transparency of the City's downtown development review.

Implications of the Recommendation(s):

General implications:

	None
X	**For the organization overall and/or for other departments**
X	**For the community and/or organizations external to the City of Winnipeg**
	Involves a multi-year contract

Comment(s):

- The direction taken in discussions between PP&D and the CentreVenture will lead to greater clarity and certainty for applicants for downtown development and better coordination of development review and decision making between Departments.

Policy implications:

X	**No**
	Yes

Comment(s):

-

Environmental implications:

X	**No**
	Yes

Comment(s):

-

Human resources implications:

X	**No**
	Yes

Comment(s):

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Financial implications:

X	**Within approved current and/or capital budget**
	Current and/or capital budget adjustment required

Comment(s):

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REASON FOR THE REPORT:

The Executive Policy Committee recommended on April 20, 2005 that the Administration consult with CentreVenture regarding the intent of the Urban Design Advisory Committee and report back.

HISTORY:

- In 2004, pursuant to the recommendations of the Getting Down to Business report, Council established the Standing Policy Committee on Downtown Development, adopted a new Downtown Zoning By-law and endorsed Downtown Design Guidelines, all as part of a package of initiatives to improve decision making on downtown development. Included in this package was the intent to establish a downtown design review committee.
- April 4, 2005 - Under authority created in the Downtown Winnipeg Zoning By-law 100/04, the Standing Policy Committee on Downtown Development appointed the Urban Design Advisory Committee (UDAC). This is a Committee of design professionals advising the Director on urban design applications in the downtown. The Committee also recommended a minor correction to section 250 (13) of the Downtown Winnipeg Zoning By-law 100/04.
- April 20, 2005 – Executive Policy Committee (Minute 298) referred this matter back to the SPC on Downtown Development and requested that Administration consult with CentreVenture on UDAC and report back to the SPC on Downtown Development.
- May 2, 2005 – SPC on Downtown Development reiterated its April 4, 2005 recommendation concerning a minor correction to the Downtown Winnipeg Zoning By-law 100/04.

- The Director of Planning Property and Development and the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Urban Design Advisory Committee met with the CentreVenture to discuss improvements to Downtown design review and the City's development review process generally.

DISCUSSION:

The discussions with CentreVenture focused broadly on the City's development review process and the desire that City reviews should not create obstacles for the renewed interest in downtown building that is evident today. Processes that are clear, expectations that are well defined and approval steps that are identified early on are all things that can positively contribute to new building initiatives. The City's downtown design review and other approvals should continually seek to facilitate these processes.

Scope of the Issue:

The issue that triggered this discussion with CentreVenture is the need for effective, timely and transparent City decision making on major applications in the Downtown area. All new buildings, renovations and alterations require design review under Downtown Zoning By-law 100/04. However, only major applications are referred to UDAC under Downtown Zoning By-law 100/04 (or were formerly referred to the Downtown Design Board under Downtown Zoning By-law 4800/88). Major applications include all development with a significant impact on the public realm. The following table summarizes applications for the past 3 years.

Year	Total Applications	Major Applications
2003	95	6
2004	88	7
2005 (to date)	77	5

Major applications include development such as MTS Centre, Red River College Downtown Campus, Credit Union Centre on Donald, Manitoba Hydro, Dalnavert Museum expansion, Inn at the Forks, Adult Education Centre expansion, National Research Council Building and Waterfront Drive Condos. Minor applications include building signs and changes to windows, entrances etc. that do not significantly impact the public realm.

CentreVenture Recommendations:

CentreVenture has made 10 specific recommendations, summarized as follows:

1. Bring down total application time – concept to implementation
2. Integrated mandate for design review covering all development approvals
3. Clearly documented process
4. Design review is an administrative process with UDAC support
5. Design review is not a political process except appeals
6. More detailed guidelines and secondary plans
7. Clear majority decisions by UDAC accepted by City
8. All Departments identify issues through design review
9. Appropriate resources for review – file manager
10. Changes in composition of UDAC

These recommendations can be addressed by focusing on the following areas:

Integrated Review and Decision Making (2, 8)

- Goal: PP&D, under its review of development applications for urban design and other planning matters, should facilitate a connection between developers and other City agencies in order to create a more integrated City approval process.
- Actions:
    - Establish a pre-development review group consisting of representatives of all relevant City Departments capable of providing the proponent of major developments with a comprehensive understanding of all approvals associated with that development.
    - Analyse City development review processes for all Departments to identify opportunities to coordinate, consolidate and streamline reviews to reduce the times from initial concept to final approval.
    - Review internal City application intake procedures to identify opportunities for greater efficiency.

Greater Clarity and Transparency of Processes and Expectations for Design Review (3, 6)

- Goal: Applicants, Administration and the Community should have a clear understanding of the purpose and process of design review and the criteria that will be applied to that review.
- Actions:
    - Develop information packages that clearly communicate design review processes, including expectations of the applicant, role of the City's volunteer Urban Design Advisory Committee and decision making processes and appeals, so that all participants can be certain about roles and responsibilities.
    - Develop additional and more detailed guidelines for design issues.
    - Prepare Secondary Plans for the Downtown area where such plans will provide greater certainty about City development expectations and offer greater clarity for design review.

Timely and Appropriate Decision Making (1, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10)

- Goal: Design review should be a timely, administrative process supported by UDAC, integrated as much as possible with other City approval processes and involving political review only as part of an appeal process.
- Actions:
    - Provide a comprehensive briefing to UDAC on all issues related to design applications.
    - Work with other Departments and their development review staff to better integrate timing and decision-making.

- Recommend changes to the Urban Design Advisory Committee membership to include a nomination by the CentreVenture Board (in addition to the nomination already received from the Urban Development Institute).

Planning, Property and Development Department, with the support of CentreVenture, will endeavor to ensure that the efficiencies and integrated decision making anticipated with the establishment of the Standing Policy Committee on Downtown Development and other recent initiatives, is supported by an administrative structure and decision making processes that fulfill the intent of these Downtown First initiatives.

Financial Impact Statement

Date: October 4, 2005

COMMENTS:

As this report is for information purposes only, there is no financial impact.

"Original signed by"
Mike McGinn, CA
Manager of Finance

IN PREPARING THIS REPORT, THERE WAS CONSULTATION WITH AND CONCURRENCE BY:
CentreVenture; Members of the Urban Design Advisory Committee (UDAC)

THIS REPORT SUBMITTED BY:

Planning, Property and Development Department
Division: Planning and Land Use
Prepared by: John McNairnay
PPD File #:

Document name: O:\Reports Directive\Planning and Land Use\Downtown Planning Branch\2005 Reports\Downtown Development Application Process Improvements.doc