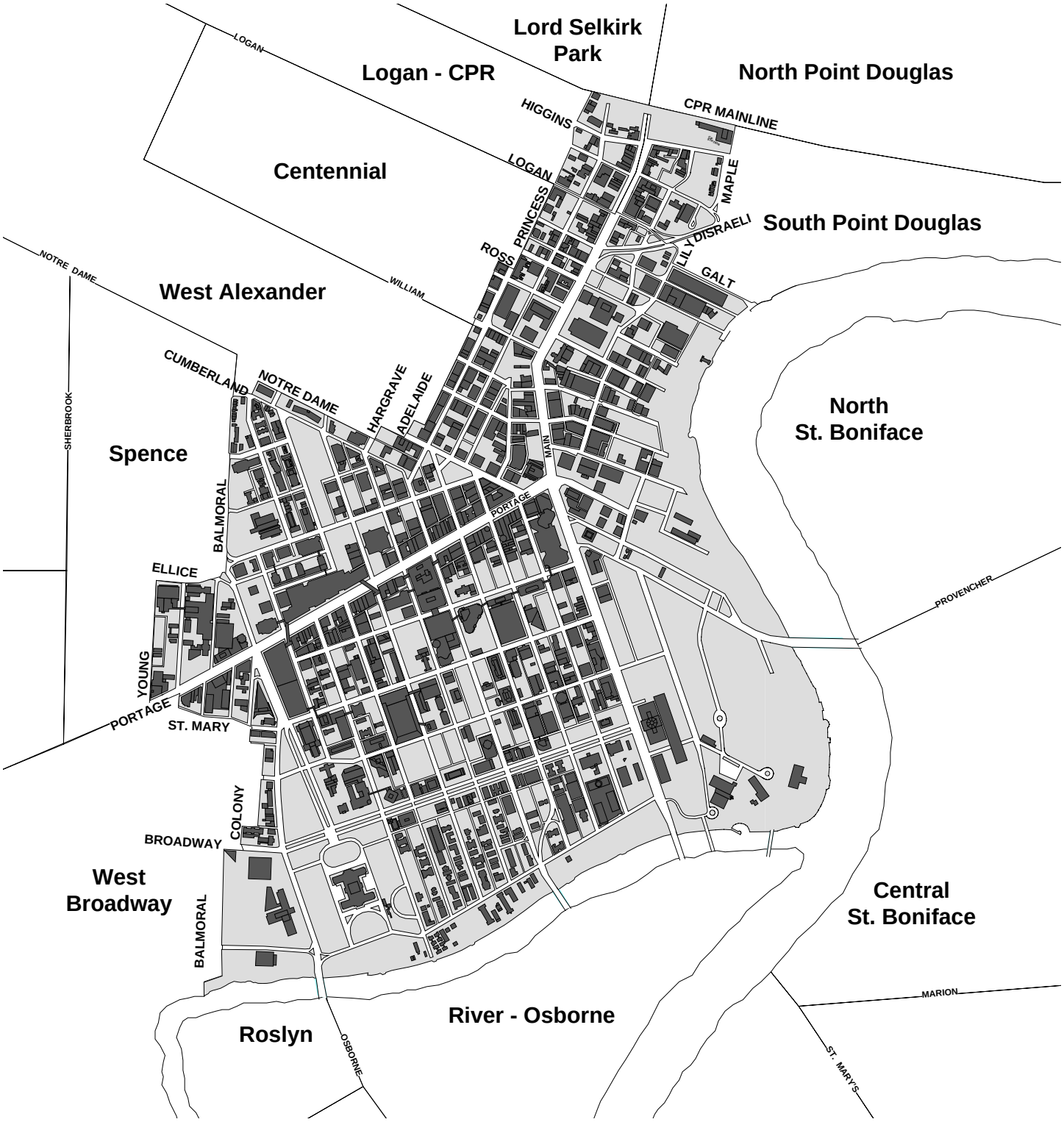
CentrePlan



WORKING TOGETHER FOR WINNIPEG'S DOWNTOWN

Downtown Winnipeg





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Plan Winnipeg ...toward 2010

Plan Winnipeg is the most important document prepared by the City. It is a long-term plan intended to guide Winnipeg into the twenty-first century by addressing the physical, social, economic, and environmental conditions in Winnipeg. CentrePlan is a sub-set of Plan Winnipeg. It builds upon the foundation established in the "Downtown" section of the plan. The following text is extracted from that section.

"Winnipeg's downtown is its heart. And, like a heart, it must be healthy if the city as a whole is to be fit and strong. Those elements that make up the downtown — the streets and buildings, the people and activities — merge to fashion the image that Winnipeggers hold of their city. It is also the image visitors take home with them. As a result, our reputation as a city rests with our downtown. But to retain and enhance that reputation both at home and abroad, the downtown has to remain accessible and attractive. Residents of the city should find in the downtown opportunities in employment, residential living, shopping, and entertainment. Visitors should find pleasure, beauty, and safety. Because the downtown is a special place with a responsibility to all Winnipeggers, its roles and functions need to clearly be defined. The result — a shared vision — will benefit the city as a whole by creating a predictable investment climate.

'A healthy downtown requires a long-term commitment to a vision and a plan. Isolated projects and short-term programs do not meet that requirement. The foundation of a long-term commitment must be a coherent concept, both to protect existing investment and to direct growth. A plan can provide for a vibrant downtown only if it is based upon a consensus of all downtown interests."

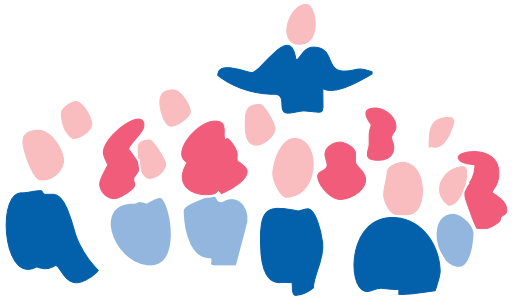
Statement of Principle:

(from Plan Winnipeg ...toward 2010)

The City seeks to make the downtown an attractive, distinctive, and vibrant place for Winnipeggers and visitors alike.

Policy 5B-18: Prepare Downtown Plan *(from Plan Winnipeg ...toward 2010)*

The City shall prepare, implement, and periodically review a downtown plan in consultation with the business community and other downtown interests.



Planning for Downtown

Winnipeg's downtown is expansive and diverse. With the historic Portage and Main intersection at its heart, the downtown area stretches from the Osborne Bridge in the south-west to the Disraeli Freeway in the north-east; from the Forks in the south-east to the Central Park community in the north-west. This area encompasses 780 acres or 1.2 square miles, is framed along two sides by 2.2 miles of riverbank, is criss-crossed by 24 miles of roadway, and is accessed by 7 bridges accommodating pedestrian, rail, and vehicular traffic.

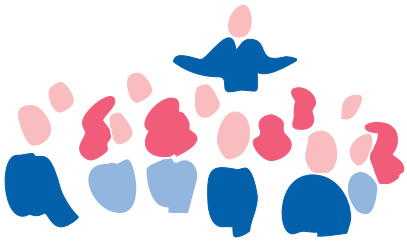
Home for City Hall and the Provincial Legislature, the downtown also boasts a large 20-block historic warehouse area called The Exchange District, a rejuvenated Chinatown, 2 long-standing residential enclaves, a newly developed public market, the largest interconnected shopping area in the city, a prestigious business boulevard, a variety of cultural facilities, an active convention centre, an extensive sheltered walkway system, numerous parks including a national historic park in the Forks, and many waterfront facilities including riverwalks, boat docks, and cruise boat launches.

The downtown has a population of 14,000 and, increasingly, is the home for recent immigrants and aboriginal people. Downtown employment, now over 68,000, consistently has accounted for one-quarter of the city's total employment. The downtown contributes approximately 23% of the city's net business tax and 7.5% of the city's total realty assessment. Construction in the downtown averages $60 million annually.

The downtown is an important symbol for our city. It establishes the city's image and identity, and it determines Winnipeg's competitive position within the rest of the country. The future of the whole Winnipeg region hinges to a very great degree on what is going to become of the city's downtown in the future.

The downtown establishes the city's image and identity, and it determines Winnipeg's competitive position within the rest of the country.

PLANNING FOR DOWNTOWN



People are drawn to the downtown for different reasons. It is the centre of employment in Manitoba and it also offers an abundance of institutional, recreational, cultural, and entertainment experiences to satisfy those seeking services, education, or personal enrichment. And, for many, the downtown is home. In both a physical and cultural sense downtown promotes diversity, including a variety of different people, opportunities, and special places.

The downtown is well-positioned for future development. Land is available at affordable prices, the downtown's infrastructure is in good condition to support future development, and the downtown is strategically linked to a transportation network which is well planned and accommodating. Furthermore, the downtown continues to exhibit economic potential.

But, downtown Winnipeg, like other downtowns, is facing an array of challenges common to urban Canada. Winnipeg is now at the point where it must build a new character and a new reputation which will command confidence if it is to attract the type and magnitude of investment which will enable it to continue to occupy a place among the first rank of Canadian cities. Such a character and such a reputation can only be created in the downtown.

The downtown is well-positioned for future development.

Most cities are accused of not having an adequate plan for their downtown. They are typically out of date and are seldom comprehensive. This is true of Winnipeg. The last Downtown Plan was prepared in 1969 when the Metropolitan government was still in existence. It was a long range plan intended to guide development over a 20 year period.

Over the past twenty years, many dedicated people have invested a great deal of effort in striving for a better downtown. Progress has been steady and the downtown now boasts many improvements. The result of these efforts provides a solid base from which to build the future. Yet many challenges remain. A healthy downtown requires a long-term commitment and sustained effort.

It takes time, money, and real effort to prepare a meaningful downtown plan. The plan, and the planning process leading to its development, must be based on the real facts, and the correct evaluation of those facts. Solutions and implementation strategies must be pulled together into a unified concept. Furthermore, the plan must be dynamic ... allowed to grow and change within accepted parameters. That is the challenge.



CentrePlan

Winnipegger's have participated in a concerted planning effort called CentrePlan to provide directions and decisions for the future of our downtown. Through CentrePlan, a vision for the future of downtown has been determined. It forms the basis for a series of strategies that, incrementally, will build toward the vision. That, in turn, forms the basis for an action plan that outlines a series of commitments that will be undertaken in the short term.

The name given to this initiative, ***"CentrePlan"***, with the sub-text ***"Working Together for Winnipeg's Downtown"***, is meaningful. The plan for downtown is not intended to be a public sector plan but rather a partnership agreement with participation from all three levels of government, numerous downtown organizations, non-profit agencies, interest groups, and residents. The process was committed to concensus-building and inclusion, through intensive public consultation.

For CentrePlan to be effective and credible, it needed strong direction from community leaders. The CentrePlan Committee comprised over 30 representatives of downtown stakeholder organizations and interest groups. CentrePlan Committee, equivalent to a board of directors, directed the planning process and set the overall policy direction. It was the final decision-making body.

CentrePlan Committee has established a comprehensive vision for downtown, developed strategies for attaining that vision, and put in place an Action Plan to initiate progress in support of the vision.

Two documents have been prepared, that, together, comprise CentrePlan. The first, ***"Vision and Strategies"*** lays the foundation. It articulates the long-term vision for the downtown together with strategies intended to see the vision realized over the long-term. The second encompasses a two-year action plan that responds to priorities identified through the planning process. The ***"Action Plan"*** will be rewritten annually to assess progress and to reflect future priorities. The two year time frame provides for flexibility in the implementation of the actions and establishes a longer term commitment.

Two documents comprise CentrePlan:

- *Vision and Strategies*
- *Action Plan*

CENTREPLAN



People want to have a say in decisions and actions that affect their lives. The CentrePlan process committed to the principles of inclusion and full community involvement. Everyone — individuals, community associations, business organizations, groups of neighbours and friends — was encouraged to participate. CentrePlan offered a range of opportunities for that participation. Some of these opportunities were structured, such as forums, workshops, and questionnaires, while others were less formal to encourage the free sharing of ideas. Everyone's input was considered.

Participation

Committees	240
Workshops (40)	465
Forums (2)	368
Individuals	61

Validation

Survey	502

Committees

CentrePlan Committee included over 30 community leaders. To examine issues and develop strategies, 5 Strategy Teams were formed. As well, an Advisory Committee of public and private sector administrators assisted CentrePlan Committee in its deliberations.

Directed Workshops

CentrePlan staff helped organize and facilitate workshops with a number of groups and organizations wishing to bring their collective ideas forward.

Self-Directed Workshops

A Downtown Workbook was provided to associations, agencies, and organizations that preferred to direct their own discussions.

Individual Workbook

The Downtown Workbook also afforded interested individuals the opportunity to submit their opinions and ideas following a structured format.

Individual Ideas

Individuals were challenged to be creative in their approach. They were asked to write a letter, draw a sketch, fax a memo, leave a message, or take a photograph to illustrate their point of view.

Forums

Public forums were held to allow the opportunity to discuss ideas and to share opinions about issues, priorities, and solutions.

Survey

A public attitude survey was conducted to validate the findings of the numerous consultative activities.



The Vision

The purpose of CentrePlan is to bring about positive change in Winnipeg's downtown, change that is rooted in community values. In other words the plan must be based upon a unified vision for the downtown.

That vision is an ideal. It is an inspired picture drawn from our most sincere thoughts, our highest aspirations. It carries valued messages and speaks of great potential, and it reflects our values as a community. The vision for Winnipeg's downtown reflects the hearts and souls of the people that make our city special.

A Vision of Community and Belonging

In our vision of the future, the downtown exhibits a strong sense of community and belonging. People are safe, secure, and welcome. The downtown prides itself in the strength of its neighbourhoods providing them with stability and opportunities for personal enrichment. Strong networks are in place to facilitate interaction and support among citizens, the business community, and local government. The downtown is a compassionate, caring, humane place characterized by tolerance and social harmony. People are valued, included, accepted, and treated with dignity. The downtown welcomes new Canadians. It is proud of its ethnic diversity. It respects and honours its aboriginal ancestry recognizing their pivotal role in the success of the downtown. The downtown is a place for everyone, where opportunities are shared equally.

A Vision of Prosperity and Innovation

In our vision of the future, the downtown is characterized by prosperity and a spirit of innovation. It offers a range of opportunities for commerce, culture, and living all integrated to form a rich and diverse environment. It is the centre of employment, new technology, life-long learning, and education. New ideas are continuously explored and developed in a manner that is interlocked with the environment, the economy, and the social fabric — sustainability. The downtown offers optimism for future generations.

In our vision of the future, the downtown, as the heart and pride of the city, encompasses all that is good about Winnipeg. It is a welcoming and caring place for all people, it provides an optimistic economic environment, it is an exciting,vibrant place that works well for everyone. Furthermore, the downtown community clearly understands and acts upon shared responsibilities.

THE VISION



A Vision of Effectiveness and Efficiency

In our vision of the future, the downtown is a model of effectiveness and efficiency. It provides appropriate services to residents, workers, and visitors, and provides them in a way that demonstrates a commitment to excellence. All downtown uses are well integrated to create a very livable, comfortable, clean, and aesthetically-pleasing environment. The downtown is very accessible from all parts of the city and provides good orientation and convenient linkages to activity centres within its boundaries. The downtown works well for everyone.

A Vision of Soul and Personality

In our vision of the future, the downtown has a soul and personality all its own, one that is vibrant and energetic, yet warm and caring. It reflects Winnipeg's status as a capital city and the heart of government, law, and commerce for the province. The downtown embraces its unique landmarks — Portage and Main, the Forks, the Golden Boy, the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. It exhibits pride in its special qualities — the clean air, the trees, the climate. It cherishes its ethnic and cultural diversity and its reputation of friendliness. It honours its heritage and tradition and builds upon them as a legacy and inspiration for future generations. The downtown encompasses all that is good about Winnipeg.

A Vision of Direction and Commitment

In our vision of the future, clear direction and commitment cultivate ongoing development of the downtown as a vibrant, welcome, and secure place where people want to be and stay. Direction is made clear through the pursuit of a defined purpose agreed upon collectively by the community. Leaders work to realize the direction and express commitment through consistent and coordinated action. Building upon past experiences, cooperation through partnerships is an operating principle. Resources are sufficient and expended wisely to obtain maximum benefit. The entire downtown community understands and acts upon its shared responsibilities.



Building the Vision

The vision for Winnipeg's downtown will not happen overnight — it must be built over time through incremental change. Participants in the CentrePlan process have told us that the manner in which the vision is pursued is of utmost important. More specifically, they have told us that the following principles must guide all actions as they build the vision for downtown.

Principles

- ***Inclusion and Concensus***
  The CentrePlan Committee committed to an inclusive process and agreed to make decisions by concensus. Participants felt that these principles should continue to be observed as we build toward the vision.
- ***Participation and Communication***
  Planning for downtown is never complete. The bonds created through the CentrePlan process should be our connection to a renewed commitment to participation. And, communication must be open and constant.
- ***Equity and Fairness***
  Participants felt strongly that imbalances in the social system could negate other efforts to improve the downtown. The principles of equity and fairness need to be considered in all that is done.
- ***Community Self-Reliance***
  Participants told us that in the pursuit of improvements in the downtown, the solutions should not create dependencies for support but should promote community self-reliance — whether dealing with geographic communities or communities of interest.
- ***Sustainability***
  Participants have committed to the principle of sustainability and are united in their opinion that any action taken in support of the vision must strengthen the downtown's ability to sustain itself over the long term.
- ***People-First***
  We heard clearly that the downtown must be a people place and that a "people first" approach should guide decisions. There must be a balance between the needs of all people using the downtown.
- ***Integration***
  We heard time and again that there is no single approach to realizing a vision for downtown. The vision is multi-dimensional and the actions that build toward it must similarly be multi-dimensional. A balanced approach is necessary, one that recognizes the interdependency of people, issues, responses, and actions.

People have said that the following principles must guide actions as they build the vision for downtown.

Principles

- *Inclusion and concensus*
- *Participation and communication*
- *Equity and fairness*
- *Community self-reliance*
- *Sustainability*
- *People-first*
- *Integration*



A VISION OF Community and Belonging

THE VISION:

In our vision of the future, the downtown exhibits a strong sense of community and belonging. People are safe, secure, and welcome. The downtown prides itself on the strength of its neighbourhoods, providing them with stability and opportunities for personal enrichment. Strong networks are in place to facilitate interaction and support among citizens, the business community, and local government. The downtown is a compassionate, caring, humane place characterized by tolerance and social harmony. People are valued, included, accepted, and treated with dignity. The downtown welcomes new Canadians. It is proud of its ethnic diversity. It respects and honours its aboriginal ancestry recognizing their pivotal role in the success of the downtown. The downtown is a place for everyone, where opportunities are shared equally.

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A VISION OF COMMUNITY AND BELONGING



Introduction



The social well-being of all Winnipeggers including those who live downtown or access the services of downtown depends on our collective ability to develop a sense of community and belonging. It has been suggested that this will have been accomplished if we create a social space in which citizens associate in their own individual and collective interests; a space in which citizens in association do the work of problem-solving, celebration, consolation, and creation; a space in continuous creation by its citizens who claim by the very fact of their citizenship, authority and responsibility in this space.

It is through attention to these factors that the resident population will be encouraged to grow, not only in numbers, but also as a strong and healthy community with a shared sense of pride and well-being. In working toward that end, it is important to bring together all who can contribute – existing residents, government, established social and recreational agencies, community-based groups, religious organizations, downtown businesses, and others.

We need to make the downtown people-friendly and accessible and protect the essential qualities that sustain healthy residential areas. Providing quality housing is an essential step, and part of a comprehensive approach, in establishing neighbourhoods and fostering a sense of community among downtown residents. Efforts also should support the realities of the downtown population — its mix of household types and income and social groups, and its racial and ethnic diversity. These and other characteristics have implications for the kinds of infrastructure, services, and programs that must be put in place.

A VISION OF COMMUNITY AND BELONGING



PROMOTING INTEGRATION...

... recognizing interdependence of issues, people, responses, and actions.

An integrated approach to planning recognizes the interdependence of social, economic, physical, cultural, and environmental factors in building a healthy, safe, sustainable downtown. An imbalance in attention to these components has the potential of increasing the vulnerability of certain citizens, of pitting one group or interest against another, of erratic, segmented "progress" that is not sustainable.

An integrated approach recognizes also the synergy that results from all stakeholders, all sectors, working together to address issues impacting on our individual and collective quality of life — individuals, groups, business, labour, all levels of government.

Integration of the healthy community concept recognizes that communities can only regenerate from within and fosters a grass-roots, community-based, holistic approach whereby the community determines its own needs and how those needs will be met. It is critical that this approach become part of day to day decision-making and planning.

Integrating thought and action requires courageous, principled leadership which demonstrates by example the behaviour that is expected — leadership that includes both public and private-sector individuals. Integration also requires the sharing of information, knowledge, and experience so that the entire downtown community can learn and benefit from the successes that are achieved.

It is expected that people will take control of their community, that they will contribute to the common good through a willingness to be involved, that there will be greater access to collective resources and a greater sense of ownership from the community.

Strategy: ***Integrate the healthy community concept into day-to-day activity and decision-making affecting the downtown through strong, effective leadership in both the public and private sectors, and through guidelines for cooperative action.***



PROVIDING SAFETY AND SECURITY...

... creating a safe downtown environment.

Personal safety and security of property can only be achieved if policing and security, the physical environment, and the issue of perception are addressed.

A safer Winnipeg requires new attitudes, actions, and partnerships. The partnerships must include the commitment of all sectors — individual citizens, community groups, Council, service providers, police, business, and labour. This kind of integrated approach, based in community involvement, will require patience, innovation, and creativity to implement.

Personal Safety

Downtown Winnipeg is a relatively safe place to live, work and visit in comparison to other North American cities. Yet many people who live in Winnipeg do not feel free to use the downtown at certain times because they are afraid of being attacked or harassed. People must be safe downtown. They must feel secure and comfortable, otherwise they will go elsewhere.

The fear of crime also disrupts the downtown economy by altering the way people behave — it promotes the desertion of the downtown area after working hours; it affects the distances people are willing to walk on the street; and, it increases auto use and the demand for close-by parking.

It is expected that personal safety in the downtown can be improved and that perceptions of the downtown as an unsafe place can be changed.

Strategies:

- ***Take measures to increase personal safety in the downtown.***
- ***Implement the recommendations of the Safe City Committee as outlined in the report "A Safer Winnipeg for Women and Children."***

Crime Against Property

Building owners and property managers in Winnipeg know that the costs for security to prevent and reduce crime against property are higher in the downtown than elsewhere in the city. Private security services and more sophisticated security systems are needed for enhancing personal protection for office and store workers, and for providing better protection of property and merchandise.

Fear and the perception of crime impact investors, business, and property owners in the same way that it affects everyone else in the city. Fear and the percep-



tion of crime depresses investment and discourages small business creation. Reducing crime against property and changing perceptions can only help to improve the downtown economy. The continued involvement of downtown organizations and the regular introduction of innovative programs are needed to improve efforts in the fight against crime.

Strategy: ***Take measures to reduce crime against property in the downtown.***

Perceptions

Efforts can be made to increase personal safety and to reduce crime against property, but, the downtown must not only be a safer place, it must be perceived as such. It is expected that by addressing the issue of perception there can be an increase in use of the downtown. Cooperative efforts between the public and private sector can result in impressive ways to correct the misperceptions about the incidence of crime in the downtown.

Strategy: ***Develop a public relations campaign to address perceptions of the downtown as an unsafe place.***



DEVELOPING STRONG NEIGHBOURHOODS...

... maintaining and supporting residential neighbourhoods in and around the downtown.

Residential neighbourhoods are the building blocks of the city, providing a sense of pride and belonging to those who live there. The following challenges present themselves: how to foster and preserve those qualities which are essential to building residential neighbourhoods; how to balance and complement the needs of residents, other Winnipeggers, and visitors who use the downtown; how to ensure the area remains diverse and inclusive with its unique characteristics, at the same time improving the safety and quality of life of all persons. Downtown Winnipeg is framed by a number of older residential neighbourhoods all of which have a significant impact on the downtown. Many of these neighbourhoods have a stable residential community and a well maintained housing stock and physical infrastructure. Other boundary neighbourhoods are experiencing serious physical deterioration characterized by a poorly maintained housing stock, high absentee ownership, and pressures from non-residential uses. Consequently these deteriorating areas are more likely to become home to the poor, unemployed, or disadvantaged.

Neighbourhood Life

Neighbourhood life must include adequate shelter, a secure job, and a basic level of education to allow participation in community decisions.

Shelter is a fundamental need that plays a stabilization role in people's lives. Housing is a basis for better integration into mainstream society.

People need to feel financially secure. Local community economic development initiatives, supported by government, can stimulate local growth. Employment training can assist individuals in becoming active participants in the labour force. Income subsidies, if applied creatively, can generate security and self-worth.

A quality education is critical to personal development and growth. All residents of the downtown and adjoining boundary neighbourhoods must have access to an education that provides them with the skills and knowledge to obtain meaningful employment, and that develops citizenship and social skills so they can lead fulfilling lives. Education also has a role in developing values of respect and tolerance.

Strategies:

- ***Address specific needs of the homeless in the downtown.***
- ***Increase access to secure quality employment opportunities.***
- ***Provide a basic level of education for all downtown residents.***

A VISION OF COMMUNITY AND BELONGING



Neighbourhood Planning

A successful downtown requires that people live in the heart of the city. A significant stock of rental, condominium, and co-operative housing has been developed as a result of new construction and adaptive reuse of heritage buildings. More can follow. The effect has been to reverse a previous net movement of residents away from the downtown. In addition to increasing the housing stock it will be important to enhance the downtown so that it will be an attractive place for a diverse population to live.

Improvements in public transportation, an increase in leisure-time activities, improved services, are all important factors in encouraging people to live downtown.

It is expected that the downtown can be made more livable and that neighbourhoods can be made more self-sufficient and stable, that community services can be tailored to specific neighbourhood needs, that the downtown resident population can be balanced and diversified, and that individual and families can be more successfully integrated into the downtown community.

Strategies:

- ***Implement a neighbourhood management approach for existing neighbourhoods in the downtown.***
- ***Create pleasant, viable, and diverse neighbourhoods.***
- ***Provide appropriate community services that meet the needs of downtown neighbourhoods.***
- ***Increase the supply and variety of housing in the downtown for rental or purchase.***
- ***Prepare a comprehensive revitalization plan for Main Street and its surrounding neighbourhoods.***
- ***Encourage a mix of new downtown residents by attracting specific diverse groups including students, seniors, immigrants, and people with disabilities.***



Surrounding Neighbourhoods

The extent of the physical and social deterioration in the neighbourhoods which frame downtown Winnipeg has, in some part, gone unnoticed. Although some boundary neighbourhoods have been the subject of programs such as the Winnipeg Core Area Initiative, Neighbourhood and Community Improvement Programs, and the Manitoba/Winnipeg Community Revitalization Program, some of the problems experienced by these neighbourhoods continue.

The solution to the physical and social deterioration occurring in the neighbourhoods which frame Winnipeg's downtown lays in the implementation of comprehensive programs designed to address the multitude of issues manifest in these communities. It is important to understand the relationship and impact of the boundary neighbourhoods on Winnipeg's downtown and to address these fundamental issues as they relate to the downtown. Long term support is needed.

Strategy: ***Implement a long-term neighbourhood management approach for dealing with boundary communities.***

A VISION OF COMMUNITY AND BELONGING



ESTABLISHING SELF-RELIANCE...

... encouraging residents and businesses to be more self-reliant.

A healthy downtown constantly develops the capacity of all its citizens to live, learn, play, work, interact, cooperate, and grow. People and groups come together to communicate, collaborate, and provide mutual support. Strength is found in the people of downtown, and they must be self-reliant. Self-reliance can be strengthened by establishing mutual support systems and self-help groups, and fostering community economic development. Self-reliance also places the responsibility on the downtown community to determine its own needs, and how those needs will be met.

This offers a pragmatic approach for developing appropriate initiatives that address the many intertwined and broad social, environmental, and economic issues that are impacting on the quality of life of the residents of the downtown and on the stability of its boundary neighbourhoods. Strong networks and community participation are needed.

Strong Networks

Strong networks must be in place to facilitate interaction and support among citizens, the business community, and local government. Collaboration must create partnerships. Integrating thought and action requires leadership (including both public and private-sector individuals) and a sharing of information, knowledge, and experience. Without strong networks the downtown community cannot learn and benefit from the successes that are achieved.

Strategy: ***Facilitate the formation of community-based networks to collaborate, communicate, and provide mutual support.***

Community Participation

Community participation in making decisions about issues affecting people's lives is fundamental to creating both a healthy and vibrant downtown, as well as creating healthy, empowered people. The process to involve people in making decisions about downtown issues must include not only those groups of people that have traditionally been involved, but also other groups that have been ignored or unable for one reason or another to participate. Providing people with the information and opportunity required for their active participation is essential.

Strategy: ***Encourage people to participate in decisions which affect their communities, workplaces, local services, and daily lives.***



PROMOTING SOCIAL HARMONY...

... establishing the downtown as a compassionate, caring, and humane place.

Winnipeg is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in Canada. The city has derived tremendous benefits from the arrival of many people from many parts of Manitoba, Canada, and indeed the world. We have broadened our range of cultural interests and facilities. And, we have altered our sense of our city and its place in Canada. The process of absorbing migrants is not, however, without problems.

The downtown must respond to the needs of new immigrants. Sensitivity, and a general willingness to work together to address the issues are required now, as perhaps never before.

Aboriginal Population

By far the most rapidly growing sector of the downtown and boundary neighbourhoods population is the aboriginal community. It faces challenges related to poverty, unemployment, and low education attainment as well as the need to strengthen traditional cultural and spiritual values. It is expected that the quality of life can be improved for aboriginal residents living in the downtown.

Strategy: ***Address the specific needs of aboriginal residents in the downtown.***

New Immigrants

The downtown continues to be the most significant location in the city and the province for migrants. Since the mid-1980s international migration has been on the increase. However the countries of origin for immigrants, have shifted from those in Europe to those in South-East and East Asia. It is expected that new immigrants can be more successfully integrated into the downtown community.

Strategy: ***Address the specific needs of new immigrants living in the downtown.***

A VISION OF COMMUNITY AND BELONGING



Youth

The existence of street youth in Winnipeg is both well documented and plainly visible. These youth are either extremely vulnerable to, or are already enmeshed in, a lifestyle of unmet basic needs, high risk activities, and alienation. In order to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter, street youth often resort to illegal activities. It is expected that improvements to the quality of life for youth living or frequenting the downtown can lead them to become more active participants in the downtown community.

Strategy: ***Address the specific needs of youth who live in or frequent the downtown.***



A VISION OF

Prosperity and Innovation

THE VISION:

In our vision of the future, the downtown is characterized by prosperity and a spirit of innovation. It offers a range of opportunities for commerce, culture, and living all integrated to form a rich and diverse environment. It is the centre of employment, new technology, life-long learning, and education. New ideas are continuously explored and developed in a manner that is interlocked with the environment, the economy, and the social fabric — sustainability. The downtown offers optimism for future generations.

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Introduction

If the downtown of the future is to be characterized by prosperity and innovation then opportunities must be explored, and specific actions taken, in a number of areas that extend beyond the traditional emphasis on business development. To begin, it is critical that a rich and diverse environment is created to entice people to want to be downtown beyond the traditional business day hours. Certainly, the business climate must be active and strong in terms of both retail and office, but there must be an emphasis on developing the downtown as a people place, where residents and tourists alike come to spend their leisure time.

Innovative solutions must be sought that reflect the strengths of Winnipeg's downtown. Following current trends toward life-long learning, perhaps the single greatest opportunity to explore is that of education and training which, for convenience, is best located near areas of employment. Entertainment is also viewed as a critical element in addressing the need to make downtown Winnipeg a vibrant, attractive location that will draw people from all walks of life, as well as from all over the city.

In all instances, the long-term viability of the downtown must be considered. Sustainability must be a guiding principle building upon Winnipeg's strategic advantage as the centre of international sustainability efforts. The adaptive re-use of the existing building stock, particularly the heritage structures that are characteristic of Winnipeg's downtown, must be the first option in any development proposal. By embracing sustainable practices, gains can be made that will carry optimism into the future.

The downtown must remain Winnipeg's focal point, providing for the needs of the city and functioning as the centre of commerce, government, education, the arts, culture, and entertainment. This means the downtown must retain its concentration of economic activity and employment, including a pre-eminent role in accommodating the grain trade, financial, professional, and public services, and other specialized organizations. New businesses must be recruited and federal, provincial, and municipal offices must be retained. Similarly in the retail and personal/community services sectors, the downtown must attract additional specialty shops and businesses of a type and scale not found elsewhere in the city. Also to be encouraged are more facilities and activities such as post-secondary education, regional sports and recreation, cultural festivals, and other major public events.

The downtown's physical face should reflect the intensity and diversity of activity within. This area should continue, for example, to have the city's most dense and mixed land uses, and its tallest and most architecturally distinctive buildings.

A VISION OF PROSPERITY AND INNOVATION



OFFERING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES...

... ensuring that the downtown maintains its status as the centre of business and employment.

People must see economic opportunities in the downtown. At present, 68,000 people are engaged in trade, governance, social and commercial services, manufacturing, transportation, communications, education, and other sectors. Employers range from new entrepreneurs to long-standing family firms and from local businesses to multi-national corporations. It is critical that these businesses remain economically viable.

Business stability is the key to long term employment. There must be consideration given to the changing nature of the work force – it is expected that over the next 15 years more than 30% of new labour force entrants in Winnipeg will be either aboriginal people or recent immigrants.

The traditional strength of the downtown economy lies in its retail and office uses. For these uses to continue to be major economic generators, the cost of doing business in the downtown must become more competitive with the suburban shopping malls. The downtown needs to be actively promoted to encourage the creation and relocation of new businesses within its boundaries, and to ensure that it is well used by citizens and visitors alike. Furthermore, all levels of government should be encouraged to commit to downtown relocation, thus lowering the vacancy rate and encouraging the redevelopment of heritage buildings.

Office Development

Trends toward corporate downsizing together with technological advances, particularly those related to communications, appear to have changed the nature of the office market. These trends will likely have less of an impact on the Winnipeg market as opposed to other major urban centres because of the comparatively small office inventory within the downtown. In fact, in most Canadian cities vacancies are increasing, whereas in Winnipeg they are declining. The construction of new office space in Winnipeg is expected to focus on the specific needs of new clients with little additional space built on speculation.

Government office space also has a significant impact on the downtown. Combined, the three levels of government own or lease over 8 million square feet of office space and provide employment for over 11,600 persons. As more government agencies locate downtown, benefits accrue through concentrations and spatial proximity of mutually supportive government functions. As a focus for employment, it is critical that the downtown remains the centre of government.

Strategies:

- ***Maintain a healthy and viable office market downtown.***
- ***Alter government policy in order to locate appropriate government offices and services in the downtown.***



Retail Sector

Winnipeg is fortunate to have within its downtown two large department anchors, the Bay and Eaton's, and two shopping centres, Eaton Place and Portage Place, that are interconnected. Combined, they form the largest retail centre in the city. However, the nature of retailing is changing and it is unlikely that substantial retail growth will be part of future downtown development. A concerted effort must be taken to ensure that the employment base and shopping opportunities generated by the retail sector continue to contribute to the total downtown economy.

Strategy: ***Maintain a healthy and viable retail market downtown.***

Education and Training Industry

There is economic potential in promoting the downtown as a learning centre. In this role the downtown faces the challenges of treating education as an infrastructure. These days, businesses wishing to remain competitive are emphasizing lifelong learning for their employees. There is a benefit to be gained by having educational facilities located in close proximity to business. Diversifying the use of floor space by promoting the establishment of a critical mass of educational facilities in the downtown would not only reduce the overall vacancy rate but would also help promote long-term stability within the area. Attracting people in search of an education would go a long way toward establishing downtown Winnipeg as a sustainable activity centre. As well, student housing and other campus related services would be in demand.

Besides the traditional full-time university and community college students, continuing education for seniors and business mentor programs could broaden market opportunities for a downtown educational centre by attracting Winnipeggers of all ages from all parts of the city. A first nations educational centre could become a critical element in the downtown educational network. So too could be a facility that capitalizes upon the high technology industry.

Strategies:

- ***Encourage the location of educational facilities (including housing for students and related services) in the downtown.***
- ***Establish a "one-stop" education centre in the downtown for educational information and assistance (modelled after the Canada Business Service Centre).***
- ***Establish an education centre that is relevant to the downtown's cultural and demographic needs.***

A VISION OF PROSPERITY AND INNOVATION



Information Technology

New technology is increasing flexibility in communications and ease of access to information. In particular, there is an increased capacity to link people and ideas across great distances. Winnipeg, because of its central time zone location and available labour force, is emerging as a telecommunications centre. There is an opportunity for tremendous growth in this area but the pursuit of that opportunity is partly dependent on having the appropriate infrastructure in place. This should happen in the downtown. "Smart buildings" are integrating traditional operating systems — water, power, lighting, energy, fire, safety and security with innovative systems of enhanced communications, such as fibre optics. This is expected to spread through all large private and public institutions in the 1990s.

Strategy: ***Actively pursue information technology and telecommunications as an opportunity for economic growth in the downtown.***

Arts, Entertainment, and Culture

The arts and cultural community has made substantial direct investments in the downtown with the construction of several facilities. New or restored buildings have become notable landmarks and several derelict sites have been transformed into active and dynamic centres.

Not only does arts and culture put Winnipeg "on the map" and enrich the downtown, it benefits Winnipeggers economically. In addition to providing customers for nearby restaurants, the arts and cultural community creates business opportunities for support industries. These, in turn, employ a large number of people. And direct employment in arts and culture is significant. The five largest performing arts companies created an average of 900 jobs per year. It is expected that we can build upon our strength in the performance and visual arts, and that a critical mass of arts, entertainment, and cultural facilities can be created to attract people of all ages and interests, including residents, visitors, and tourists, to the downtown.

Strategy: ***Encourage and support the consolidation of major arts, entertainment, and cultural facilities in the downtown.***



Urban Tourism

Downtowns have always been involved to a certain extent in tourism, some more than others. In the years ahead, tourism will become even more important to a wide variety of downtown locations. The reason is that the nineties will see continued rapid growth of the tourism industry. It will become a dominant economic force.

Tourism is changing, not just in terms of the number of people travelling and their economic impact, but in other ways as well. The tourism industry is becoming more sophisticated and the depth and breadth of tourism offerings is expanding rapidly.

Travellers and visitors are becoming more sophisticated and value-oriented. At the same time, cities are becoming more competitive in trying to attract visitors, while maintaining the authenticity, quality, and environment that is so important to the local resident who is impacted by tourism. If the objective is to make tourism work effectively for downtown economic development and the well-being of the city, then we must be aware of the importance of tourism internationally and nationally.

Strategy: ***Actively promote the downtown's assets as a means of stimulating growth in urban tourism.***

A VISION OF PROSPERITY AND INNOVATION



COMMITTING TO ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY...

... pursuing economic development in a manner that integrates the environment and the social fabric.

As efforts are made to revitalize the downtown and to ensure that it remains the economic generator for the city, it must be kept in mind that the concept of sustainability must guide all actions. This means that the existing environment, both natural and man-made, must be respected and integrated into any and all interventions. It also means that there must be an inescapable commitment to social equity. This requires not simply the creation of economic activity and the conservation of the environment, but their fair distribution and redistribution. The health and vitality of the downtown must be sustained over the long term — this does not necessarily mean growth— there must be a commitment to qualitative as well as quantitative improvement.

Economic sustainability can only be realized if our communities are livable. Public and private sector efforts, therefore, need to address those issues that cause people to want to stay in their community, in this case, the downtown. It is critical to the long term viability of the downtown that efforts are made to maintain and build upon its economic successes.

Retention and Recruitment

One of the top priority battles for all downtowns is the fight to recruit new businesses and retain existing ones. All other promotional activities will not accomplish a successful downtown unless downtown buildings are filled with strong, dynamic businesses.

An important trend in downtown recruitment is toward the involvement of many people, businesses, agencies, and governmental departments and their coordination into a major, well-organized effort. This is based on the understanding that downtown recruitment is good for the downtown, the local economy, and often for the regional economy as well.

Effective recruitment involves many local entities working cooperatively in support of the downtown, public/private partnerships, and the focusing and attention on a specific sector of the downtown economy. Retention is as important as recruitment of new businesses. The best attraction for businesses is other strong businesses. Business retention and upgrading must be as high a priority as recruitment.

Strategy: ***Keep and attract targeted businesses and activities in the downtown.***



Development and Redevelopment

With local governments facing constrained budgets, it is politically and fiscally difficult for local government to provide significant financial support for development and redevelopment initiatives. Therefore, developer interest in the downtown is essential.

Getting developers active in downtown projects is rarely easy. It requires special "know-how" on the part of the city. The most important tool that can be used to attract developers into downtown is a clear understanding of the economic realities of downtown development. This enables cities, downtowns, and developers to work together intelligently to shape workable projects.

Strategy: ***Foster a positive climate for new investments and redevelopment in the downtown.***

Marketing and Promotion

Marketing the downtown is essential for several reasons. First, marketing will be needed to attract area residents and area visitors to become patrons of the downtown. Second, marketing must be used to create a community allegiance to the downtown. And, third, marketing will be needed to develop a community loyalty to the downtown by stressing the value of a prosperous downtown to the health of the entire community. Marketing and promotion can lead to an increase in the downtown's market share, improve the downtown's market position, and increase public and private investment in the downtown.

Strategy: ***Develop a strong, practical marketing plan for the downtown backed by research and supported by effective communications.***

A VISION OF PROSPERITY AND INNOVATION



Work Force

The downtown, to grow economically, must pursue opportunities in emerging growth areas — information technology, urban tourism, education, arts and entertainment. Traditional economic generators, including retail and office, can, and should, be sustained but present little opportunity for meaningful growth. In the pursuit of new opportunities, industry must have access to a work force with the skills necessary to meet the new challenges. People are the generators of economic growth.

Strategies:

- ***Develop better links between downtown business and education services and facilities offered in the downtown.***
- ***Develop training programs that facilitate labour force entry into high-tech industries such as information systems and telecommunications.***

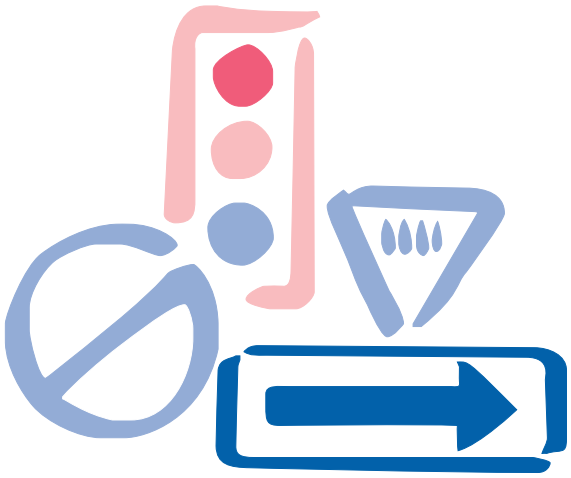
Measurement

As efforts are made to improve the downtown, we need to evaluate progress. How will we know that changes we implement are resulting in improvement? There must be an agreed-upon set of measures established to monitor the downtown over time in order to assess whether or not we are headed in the right direction.

We are in the midst of an information revolution. The amount of information available is ever-increasing and the need to selectively evaluate that information presents an enormous challenge. The first question that must be asked is "What information do we need to properly monitor the downtown?"

Strategy:

- ***Establish measurable indicators for the downtown.***



A VISION OF

Effectiveness and Efficiency

THE VISION:

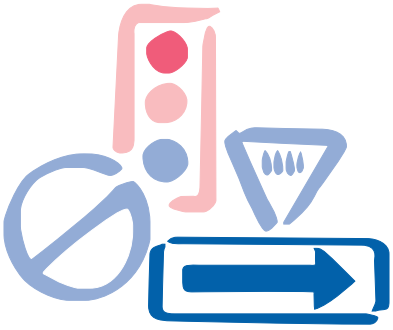
In our vision of the future, the downtown is a model of effectiveness and efficiency. It provides appropriate services to residents, workers, and visitors, and provides them in a way that demonstrates a commitment to excellence. All downtown uses are well integrated to create a very livable, comfortable, clean, and aesthetically-pleasing environment. The downtown is very accessible from all parts of the city and provides good orientation and convenient linkages to activity centres within its boundaries. The downtown works well for everyone.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR POSITIVE CHANGE:

ENSURING ACCESSIBILITY _____ 36

INTEGRATING USES _____ 40

COMMITTING TO EXCELLENCE _____ 41



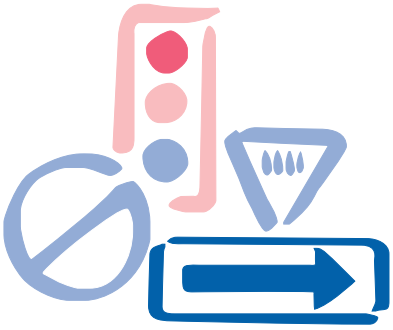
Introduction

To be effective, the right things must be done for the downtown. To be efficient, those things must be done well.

Doing the right things means that the needs of all downtown users are well met. To begin, the downtown must be made more sensitive to the needs of pedestrians. The reliance on automobiles and its corresponding emphasis on parking must be reduced. The speed, reliability, and comfort of public transit also must be improved and links between centres of interest must be created. An integrated transportation system is needed that improves the flow of traffic and the movement of people and goods to, within, and through the downtown. Major access routes must be functionally improved and well-maintained. Abundant, easily-accessible, and reasonably priced parking must be available to accommodate the needs of short-term users. The downtown must provide proper orientation to allow users to explore it with ease and its services, facilities, and activities must be enjoyed by all. Finally, the downtown must be carefully organized to be more compact and diverse.

Doing things well means committing to excellence in all that we do. The look and feel of the downtown must reflect that commitment. The downtown must be well designed and complemented with superior standards of maintenance. All that the downtown offers in terms of services, facilities, and activities must exhibit quality by being highly responsive to user needs and by doing so with a commitment to excellence.

A VISION OF EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY



ENSURING ACCESSIBILITY...

... providing convenient access to all downtown services, facilities, and activities and ensuring that they are enjoyed by all.

When activities, services, and facilities are offered in the downtown for public use, accessibility becomes a major concern. Because the downtown is Winnipeg's commercial centre, it must be accessible to the many people who travel there everyday as a matter of business. Similarly, it must be accessible to those who travel downtown less frequently to attend specific functions or to make use of its distinctive services and facilities. Convenience must be a strong consideration. The City is committed to providing transit service to the downtown and new initiatives to strengthen this commitment must be considered. Within the downtown, however, full consideration will be given to the pedestrian. Because the downtown is large, and because destinations are diverse, links between centres must be created.

Pedestrians

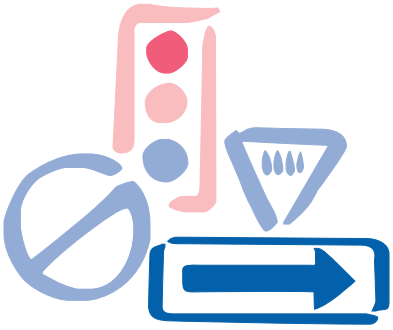
Everyone who uses the downtown spends at least some of their time as a pedestrian. Pedestrians lend vitality and vibrancy to the city's core. Walking the sidewalks can be a refreshing and enjoyable experience offered at a scale and pace that allows people to create lasting memories. Unfortunately, however, this is not the consistent experience in downtown Winnipeg.

Too often, the downtown seems to be for through-traffic, not people. Its street-level environment is dull, discomforting, threatening, or alienating — vacant storefronts, run-down buildings, aggressive panhandlers, rows of surface parking, poorly maintained sidewalks and open spaces, structures closed off from the street, areas physically isolated and lacking a sense of safety and security. It is expected that the downtown can be made more sensitive to the needs of pedestrians.

Strategy: ***Create a more convenient, comfortable, and accessible pedestrian system in the downtown.***

Public Transit

Transit should be developed as the preferred form of transportation to and from downtown. Service that is faster, that requires fewer transfers, and that operates on schedule attracts passengers. Equally important, higher operating speeds and improved service reliability permits better control of operating costs. Improved



waiting areas, an up-to-date fleet, and quality user information are also important in the provision of competitive service. It is expected that transit usage can be increased and that the reliance on automobiles and parking can be reduced.

Strategy: ***Develop the public transit system as the primary mover of people into and out of the downtown.***

Links

The downtown is large and destinations are diverse. Therefore, links between centres of interest must be created. In consideration of our climate a portion of the linkage system must continue to be weather-protected. The Walkway System, which links much of the downtown retail and office component, is not yet complete and the system requires better orientation and signage. Furthermore, there is no longer a downtown shuttle service to provide convenient access to various destinations. Links can unify the downtown, can allow the activity centres to benefit from one another, and can encourage users to experience all that the downtown has to offer.

Strategies:

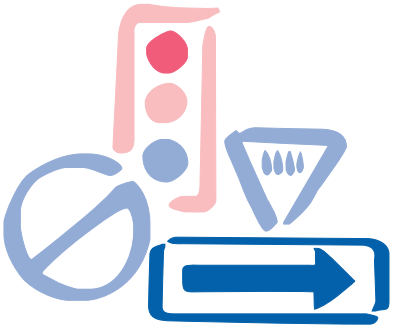
- ***Develop better links between activity centres in the downtown.***
- ***Complete the designated Walkway System.***

Transportation Planning

Today, transportation planning has progressed to where the broader view of moving people and goods has replaced moving vehicles, with its corresponding focus on infrastructure. Integration is essential — of transportation with land use, the environment, and the economy. Integration involves improving the flow of traffic and the movement of goods to, within and through the downtown; the use of alternative modes of transportation for general access to the downtown; and, managing parking to take into account both transit capacity and parking demand. An integrated system also includes the planning, development, and inter-connection of all modes of passenger transportation.

Strategy: ***Review the street system to define the function of streets in the downtown and to establish a hierarchy of their use.***

A VISION OF EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY



Access Routes

The downtown boasts the most famous intersection in Canada — Portage and Main. These two major streets form part of a downtown network of streets that includes other major links to the remainder of the city. The maintenance of the downtown street network has been a high priority with Portage Avenue, in particular, having undergone a complete reconstruction in the recent past and many of the other major downtown streets having been resurfaced and repaired in recent years. In addition, if the downtown is to attract Winnipeggers who live elsewhere in the city, attention must be given to major traffic bottlenecks that impede movement to and from the central core.

Strategies:

- ***Give high priority to the major access routes into downtown for maintenance and functional improvements.***
- ***Give special status to Portage Avenue to be functionally responsive to pedestrians.***

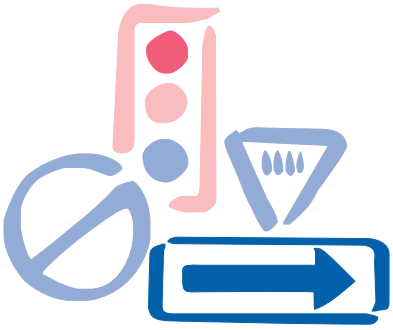
Parking

The economic stability and growth of the downtown area, in part, depends on the provision of convenient and available on-street and off-street parking. Parking is a service operation. It functions solely to supply a service in support of basic activities in the downtown. This applies not only to shopper parking, but patients, visitors, tourists, employees, and anyone else who comes to the downtown by car. Abundant, easily-accessible, reasonably-priced, and appropriately-located parking to meet the needs of short-term users must be provided. Accommodating these needs is a big part of the total customer satisfaction — or dissatisfaction — with downtown.

Strategy: ***Improve the provision of short-term parking in the downtown.***

Orientation

Proper orientation creates legibility. It results in an environment that can be explored with ease. The most obvious method of providing proper, convenient orientation into and within the downtown is through appropriate and effective



signage. Signage can provide unity to the downtown by tying all disparate components together. It can also greatly increase mobility and ease of access.

Established views and recognizable landmarks are important for orientation. They provide a familiarity for long-time users and provide points of reference for new users. It is important that views and landmarks are considered as integral to the ease of use with which people associate the downtown.

It is important for residents and visitors alike to know what is going on in the downtown. If the downtown is to be the focus of activities such as arts, entertainment, and culture, then those activities must be promoted widely. By disseminating information on the downtown, a broader understanding of its importance can be gained together with greater participation in the services and activities it affords.

Strategies:

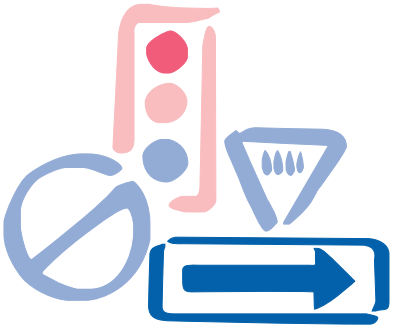
- ***Develop a comprehensive signage program for the downtown including parking, walkways, destinations, activities, and special events.***
- ***Recognize the importance of views and landmarks in providing orientation downtown.***
- ***Provide a comprehensive information program for the downtown including parking, services, destinations, activities, and special events.***

Barriers

People must feel that downtown services and facilities are easily accessible. Physical disabilities, gender, sexual preference, level of education, and ability to pay, preclude access to full participation for many who might otherwise benefit. Effective communication also is an essential aspect of accessibility. The downtown must have services, facilities, and activities that can be enjoyed by all.

Strategy: ***Work toward the elimination of barriers that preclude access to services, facilities, and activities in the downtown.***

A VISION OF EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY



INTEGRATING USES

... ensuring that the downtown is carefully organized.

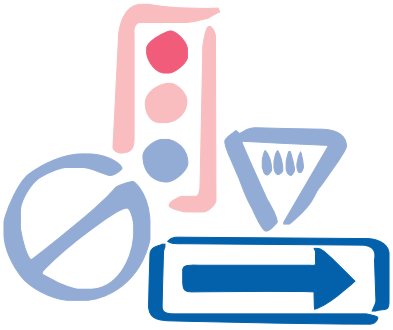
The downtown will work best if the activities within it are compact, dense, and diverse. Such a downtown is better for the user and easier and less costly to operate and maintain. Within a compact and dense downtown, the maximum diversity of mutually supportive activities is essential. More activities attract more people to do more things and to stay longer for each downtown visit. Integrating uses in accordance with these principles ensures a more productive and efficient downtown.

Spatial Organization

The size and spatial organization of Winnipeg's downtown have been identified as limiting factors. The downtown is expansive, spatially unorganized, and subject to a variety of developments and redevelopments which have not been focussed. Over the years attention has been directed to City Hall, North Portage, The Exchange District, and The Forks. Interest now has been expressed in areas south of Portage Avenue and along North Main Street. The result is a scattering of resources into various pockets of the downtown without a strong sense of how these various efforts relate to one another.

Strategies:

- ***Pursue the concept of clustering as a guide for future downtown development.***
- ***Ensure that downtown zoning promotes compact, dense, and diverse development.***



COMMITTING TO EXCELLENCE...

... establishing pride in the quality of service and in the quality of the downtown environment.

The downtown, as the heart of the city, must embody the best that the city has to offer. There must be a commitment to excellence in the manner in which the downtown operates. With a commitment to excellence, a quality downtown can be achieved. It has been shown that high standards entice rather than threaten potential developers because they recognize that their investments will be protected. Nowhere must standards of quality be higher than in the downtown.

Urban Design

Good urban design is an important ingredient in a successful downtown. It can enhance the aesthetic appeal of the downtown while helping to address issues such as safety. Urban design refers to the manner in which all physical aspects of the urban environment come together. The primary concern of urban design therefore is aesthetics (the way downtown spaces look) although it is strongly influenced by functional requirements (how the various components work together). Economic, cultural, and social considerations exert additional influence.

The exterior of buildings, selected public interior spaces, public and private spaces around and between buildings, open spaces, and streetscapes are all urban design concerns. Consequently, it is the thoughtful relationship of all these components to one another that constitutes good urban design. When it is done well it can enhance the economic success and livability of the downtown.

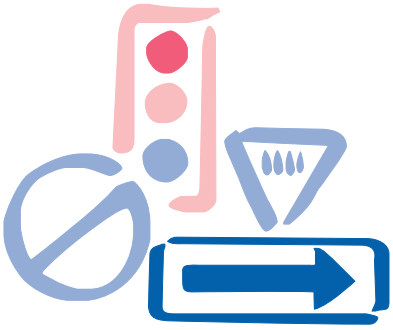
Strategy: ***Create expectations of high quality urban design in the downtown and ensure that they are met.***

Cleanliness and Maintenance

We all benefit from a well-maintained downtown. An overall clean and positive image of the downtown projects vitality, creates a solid impression of the city to visitors, and inspires pride in the city's residents.

Maintenance of the downtown is a complex undertaking involving a large variety of functions provided by several municipal departments and a number of downtown organizations. There is a growing public and political awareness of the deteriorating conditions of streets and sidewalks, the need for greater expenditure on mainte-

A VISION OF EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY



nance, the necessity of coordinating functions, and the requirement of planning longer-term. There is a sense that collectively we can do a better job maintaining the downtown.

Strategy: ***Give special consideration to the downtown for basic maintenance and cleanliness.***

Quality Service

To be effective, the downtown must focus on quality — in the services it provides, in the products it creates, and in the manner in which those services and products are delivered. The most successful downtowns are those that offer quality goods and services, in a quality environment with quality management. In communities that establish standards of quality for their downtowns, and demand that those standards are met, the results have been better downtowns that better serve their markets. By adopting quality as a strategy it is expected that both customer satisfaction and visitation can be improved.

Strategy: ***Develop a culture of quality service in the downtown to provide customers with excellence in service and information.***



A VISION OF Soul and Personality

THE VISION:

In our vision of the future, the downtown has a soul and personality all its own, one that is vibrant and energetic, yet warm and caring. It reflects Winnipeg's status as a capital city and the heart of government, law, and commerce for the province. The downtown embraces its unique landmarks — Portage and Main, The Forks, the Golden Boy, the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. It exhibits pride in its special qualities — the clean air, the trees, the climate. It cherishes its ethnic and cultural diversity and its reputation of friendliness. It honours its heritage and tradition and builds upon them as a legacy and inspiration for future generations. The downtown encompasses all that is good about Winnipeg.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR POSITIVE CHANGE:

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CELEBRATING OUR SPECIAL FEATURES ____ 47

HONOURING OUR HERITAGE AND TRADITION ____ 49

PROJECTING A VIBRANT CHARACTER ____ 51



Introduction

Cities, like people, have soul and personality — that is, how they look and act, and the persona they project, reflect qualities that in combination give them a distinctive identity. That overall character generally dominates a person's memory of the city. London is not Paris. Toronto is not Montréal and Winnipeg too is unlike any other urban area.

The soul and personality of the city derives from its history, tradition, and development. It evolves from geography and settlement patterns and from the ways in which people shape, and are shaped by, the city's physical layout, appearance, economy, politics, social conditions, racial and ethnic make-up, and cultural traditions.

Some aspects of urban character are readily visible and objectively defined — specific buildings, business streets, neighbourhoods. Other attributes are less tangible — an atmosphere, a spirit, shared myths, community values, subjective personal perceptions and reminiscences.

Whatever a city's character, its essence will be embodied in the downtown. That's usually where the geographic and historic core lies, where activity is most intense and diverse, and where wealth and poverty are concentrated.

The downtown also is where people meet, establish bonds, and create special memories. Christmas parades. First dates. Family celebrations. Official ceremonies. Favourite restaurants and night spots. Music and stage performances. Art exhibits. Lectures and political speeches. These experiences and many more are what develop consciousness of place and connections between the past and present.

The downtown, in short, is at the heart of what the city is, has been, and wants to be. It is the epitome of the urban soul and personality.

A VISION OF SOUL AND PERSONALITY



STRENGTHENING OUR HEART...

... establishing Portage and Main as the predominant celebration and gathering place in Winnipeg — the heart of our city.

For the first century of its existence, Portage and Main was very much a people place and defining city landmark. This was where independent entrepreneurs set up shop to challenge a trade monopoly held by the Hudson's Bay Company. It's where settlers lived, drank, held meetings, were entertained, and acquired basic provisions. It's where many professional and corporate newcomers first clustered their offices. It's the axis from which the city grew outward, then ultimately upward. It's where generations tested themselves against the elements, especially the wind, cold, and heat. And, for many outsiders, Portage and Main has long stood for the city as a whole.

Portage and Main

Today, the corner of Portage and Main accommodates the most dense commercial development and a high concentration of daytime activity, with more than 30,000 workers in its immediate vicinity. But, they're barely visible. They're inside and underground. As well, little of the site's history and legends are apparent, except for the physical fact of the intersection itself. The opportunity exists to recapture our history and to restore pride of place to this integral junction.

Strategies:

- ***Redesign the Portage and Main intersection in a manner that celebrates its unique status.***
- ***Open up the Portage and Main intersection to pedestrian use at street level.***

A Unifying Message

In recent years we've heard the Winnipeg message to be "Where the New West Begins", "One Great City", "One Hundred Reasons to Love Winnipeg" among others. Each is a great concept but the message keeps changing. In Winnipeg's downtown, a single unifying message must be developed, endorsed, and promoted collectively. The Bay, Eaton's, Eaton Place, and Portage Place have begun marketing themselves as a single retail unit. This kind of effort needs to be expanded to include the entire downtown. For visitors, a single message facilitates tourism promotion; for residents it fosters pride and identity.

Strategy: Coordinate the "message" for the downtown.



CELEBRATING OUR SPECIAL FEATURES...

... recognizing and building upon those features that contribute to the downtown's character.

Whether moving from the Exchange District to Chinatown, strolling along Broadway Avenue, or enjoying the riverbanks downtown, these distinct areas offer the unique opportunity for a different experience for visitors and residents alike. It is therefore impor-tant to build upon their character and to ensure easy access in order to encourage pedestrian travel to these attractive areas.

The downtown contains many positive symbols and magnets that relate to a wide range of interests. Perhaps the best example is found at The Forks. But situated as it is on the geographic periphery, that area also illustrates a major weakness in how the downtown has developed. Our focal points tend to be quite dispersed, separated by distance, surface parking lots, and other dead spaces. This discourages the flow of people, it contributes to a sense of fragmentation instead of unity, and it dissipates the degree of collaboration that otherwise might occur were they situated in a more compact, dynamic context.

We need to find innovative alternatives that will tie the downtown together, provide a range of focal points from the passive to the active, and stimulate a more effective interplay among the various parts. One way this can be accomplished is by establishing better physical and visual connections between focal points. In addition, the downtown can be developed into a more unified whole through the strategic creation of new features, or by restoring or enhancing existing ones which have the potential to be more vibrant urban spaces.

Character Areas

Character areas help define the downtown. They are those precincts that offer distinct and unique experiences for residents and visitors alike. The most obvious character areas in the downtown are the Exchange District, Chinatown, and Broadway. Each of these character areas is recognized as such in the Downtown Winnipeg Zoning By-law which makes special provisions for design review of development proposals in these areas. Chinatown and the Exchange District particularly have benefitted from public attention in the past but it is clear that a long term commitment is required if these areas are to continue to contribute to the vitality of the downtown in the future. The creation of new character areas can add further interest to the downtown but, again, this should only be pursued with a commitment to on-going attention and support.

Strategy: ***Build upon past initiatives that have helped establish the uniqueness of character areas in the downtown.***

A VISION OF SOUL AND PERSONALITY



The Forks

The Forks has quickly become the city's most popular attraction for residents and tourists alike. Between 5 and 7 million visits take place over the course of a year. As the site continues to develop, it is certain to increase in popularity. It is beneficial, and therefore necessary, to integrate the Forks development with the rest of the downtown in order to capitalize upon the opportunities that it provides.

Strategies:

- ***Continue to build upon the character and strength of the Forks as the major attraction in the downtown.***
- ***Integrate the Forks development with the rest of the downtown.***

The Rivers

Winnipeg's historical development at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers has provided the downtown with a tremendous asset. Framed as it is on the east and south by waterways, the downtown is provided with a valuable natural, aesthetic, and recreational resource which adds greatly to the quality of life of residents and which serves well as an attraction to tourists. At present virtually all of the 2.2 miles of riverbank in the downtown is accessible in the form of a developed riverwalk system.

Strategy: ***Continue the progress made in establishing the Red and Assiniboine rivers as special places and community assets in the downtown.***



HONOURING OUR HERITAGE AND TRADITION...

... promoting the historical importance of the downtown.

Along and adjacent to just one stretch of Main Street extending from The Forks to City Hall are found physical reminders of the broad sweep of Winnipeg's history. There are the aboriginal artifacts recovered by archaeological digs at The Forks, the fur trade era's Upper Fort Garry Gate, the Winnipeg and Woodbine hotels whose roots date back to the 1870s, and buildings representative of industries that were critical to the city's rapid growth in the early 1900s — Union Station, bank chambers, warehouses, the Winnipeg Grain Exchange. These, among many other examples, connect us with our past.

It is through such connections that we garner a distinctive sense of place and identity. Moreover, Winnipeg's pace and patterns of physical development have enabled it to retain a large stock of heritage structures, including one of North America's most historically intact collection of turn-of-the-century warehouses (the Exchange District) and other buildings whose qualities of design, material, and construction are locally unique. We have only begun to tap the richness of this physical and historical legacy in order to project and enhance the character of our city and the downtown.

Heritage Buildings

Important public and private-sector efforts have been made over the past two decades to preserve heritage structures within and outside the Exchange District. It is now evident, however, that the city, like other major urban municipalities in Canada, must make a more strategic, pro-active, and long-term commitment to heritage conservation if the potential benefits of the building stock are to be maximized, and if disinvestment, blight, and abandonment of older structures and areas are to be avoided.

Strategy: ***Actively support the conservation of heritage structures in the downtown through the implementation of the "Heritage Support, Policy, and Programs" report.***

A VISION OF SOUL AND PERSONALITY



Our History

Winnipeg is a relatively young city, yet its history is rich and colourful. The downtown, as the centre of early settlement, was the stage upon which our history unfolded. From the city's incorporation in 1874, to the general strike of 1919, to the 1950 flood, to recent Grey Cup celebrations, the downtown has many stories to tell. It would be beneficial to both residents and tourists alike to have our history come alive and be integrated into the day-to-day activities that are found in the downtown.

Strategy: ***Take advantage of our unique history in developing innovative programming and activities in the downtown.***

A VISION OF SOUL AND PERSONALITY



PROJECTING A VIBRANT CHARACTER...

... supplementing the physical aspect of the downtown with animation that enlivens the downtown and inspires participation.

People need to feel comfortable within their environment. The downtown's physical face should consistently tell residents, other Winnipeggers, and visitors that it is an attractive and secure environment — a place people care about, and care for. The downtown must be a festive place — in terms of activities and events as well as aesthetics.

Winnipeg can achieve a more vibrant downtown by acknowledging and strengthening the richness and diversity of its people. Enhancing the cultures of the city's ethnic communities will help to provide a healthy downtown neighbourhood. Its character should reflect the warmth and friendliness of its people. It must be acknowledged, however, that poverty and social issues are a very real part of the downtown community which must be addressed in the overall strategy for the downtown.

People Places

It's people who make downtowns work. Buildings, open spaces, shops, services, and formal events only set the stage. It is people who must carry on the performance and thereby build the character of the place.

There are many examples of popular stages within our downtown — Broadway, The Forks, Assiniboine Riverwalk, Centennial Library, Window Park, Old Market Square, Main Street. Each has its own character, established over time through a blend of 'natural' attributes, deliberate planning, and actual use. But as a group, these stages also display some common features. Comfortable images which fit with how people see themselves, their neighbourhood and city; people-oriented scale and design, inviting participation and a sense of ownership; the capacity for multiple uses, encompassing and integrating entertainment, socialization, recreation, and education; flexibility and openness to diverse people and interests; and opportunities for organized and spontaneous interaction for individuals to create their own space and memories.

It is expected that a more vibrant urban environment can be created by concentrating activities in the downtown at specific key locations.

Strategy: ***Strengthen and enhance existing focal points and create new focal points in the downtown.***

A VISION OF SOUL AND PERSONALITY



Animation

Spontaneity should be a welcome ingredient in building downtown character. But, that alone is unlikely to sustain a sufficient range and intensity of activity to attract more people to the district and keep them there, or at least keep them coming back.

What is required is to supplement an appropriate physical plant (focal points, streetscaping, transportation infrastructure) with proactive, concerted efforts ('animation') to enliven the downtown and inspire participation. That means organizing continuous events, entertainment, special services, and media promotions that motivate, orchestrate, and dispel stereotypes about the character of the downtown. Here, the city's unique features, such as its climate, can be the basis for promotion.

The downtown can be a lively and festive locale where something positive always seems to be happening and people are exposed to many new or different experiences, and where they feel, and are, secure.

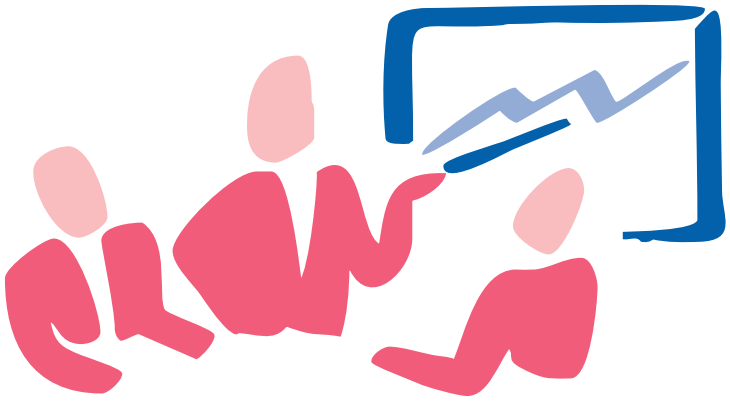
Strategies:

- ***Develop programs that promote street level activities in the downtown.***
- ***Animate and promote the Winter City concept in the downtown.***

Aesthetics

Much as the soul and personality of an individual is reflected in the clothes he or she wears, so too does the aesthetic appearance of the downtown reflect upon its soul and personality. To project a vibrant character, the downtown must appear colourful and festive. Banners, posters, murals, street art can all add to that aesthetic quality and should be promoted. The downtown must look like a fun place to be.

Strategy: Create an attractive, festive-looking downtown environment.



A VISION OF

Direction and Commitment

THE VISION:

In our vision of the future, clear direction and commitment cultivate ongoing development of the downtown as a vibrant, welcome, and secure place where people want to be and stay. Direction is made clear through the pursuit of a defined purpose agreed upon collectively by the community. Leaders work to realize the direction and express commitment through consistent and coordinated action. Building upon past experiences, cooperation through partnerships is an operating principle. Resources are sufficient and expended wisely to obtain maximum benefit. The entire downtown community understands and acts upon its shared responsibilities.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR POSITIVE CHANGE:

CREATING A UNIFIED VOICE _____ 56



Introduction

The fundamental problem facing the downtown is how to provide effective leadership, direction, and organization. For the downtown to secure its future, aggressive, innovative, and intentional action is needed on the part of the private sector, the public sector, and the people living in the downtown.

Today, the continued absence of a clear, common, and community-driven vision is contributing to a sense of drift and uncertainty about the downtown's prospects. Many groups are involved directly or indirectly in shaping downtown Winnipeg. They include several business and quasi-public organizations such as the Forks Renewal Corporation, North Portage Development Corporation, and the Downtown Winnipeg and Exchange District Business Improvement Zones.

Although their constituencies and mandates vary, they all tend to be operational, not policy-oriented. Communication and cooperation between them generally occurs on an informal, ad hoc basis. There is no regular forum to stimulate exchange and partnerships, or to ensure that all voices, including those of residents, are heard. It is necessary to bring all stakeholders together, to advocate on behalf of the downtown as a whole, and to coordinate plans and activities to ensure consistency with the shared vision for the downtown.

Experience with previous downtown planning efforts showed how difficult it can be to sustain long-range focus and momentum when there is disagreement over what needs to be done. The mandates of government policy-makers are short term and subject to competing pressures while turnover among other key participants often breaks the bonds of commitment and ownership. Recent experience also has underscored the need to shift political focus to the downtown which is politically under-represented relative to the integral role it plays within the fabric and economy of both the city and the province.

A VISION OF DIRECTION AND COMMITMENT



CREATING A UNIFIED VOICE

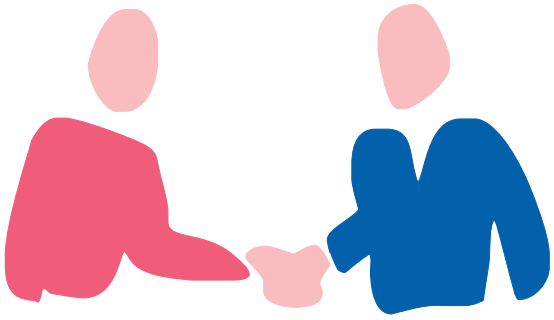
Generally, North American cities have found that one ingredient of successful downtown revitalization is the extent to which the vision for future development is shared and aggressively pursued by all stakeholders, as well as citizens at large.

Implementation of CentrePlan recommendations is expected to restore focus and provide a more predictable environment for investors, businesses, residents, and other downtown stakeholders.

CentrePlan, through its accompanying Action Plan, has identified concrete ways to convert ideas into manageable action and has identified groups committed to take responsibility for implementation. However, there is no formal mechanism to give a unified voice to the downtown's concerns.

It is not necessary to establish another formal agency operating in the downtown. Rather, a coalition of downtown stakeholders is needed to maintain constant momentum and focus on the downtown and to make things happen in accordance with the strategies identified by CentrePlan. This coalition must be the keeper and driver of the vision for the downtown yet must not duplicate the work of others nor become another level of unwanted bureaucracy. Its influence and authority must derive from its broad membership, its attention to consensus-building, and the credibility and legitimacy it establishes through what it does and achieves.

Strategy: ***Establish a representative coalition of downtown stakeholders that is policy-oriented and vision-guiding and that can provide clear direction, strong leadership, and a unified voice for the downtown.***



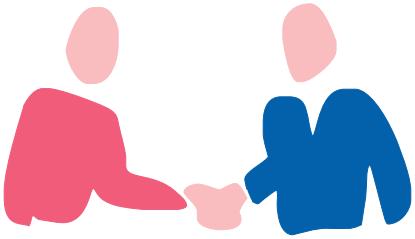
Acknowledgements

Winnipeggers are impassioned about their downtown. Much of it makes them proud and, where problems exist, they are quick to offer suggestions for improvement. Through the CentrePlan process many individuals gave up countless hours of their time to share ideas, to help in the work, and to lead the charge in setting a new course for the downtown. To these we are extremely grateful and acknowledge their contributions.

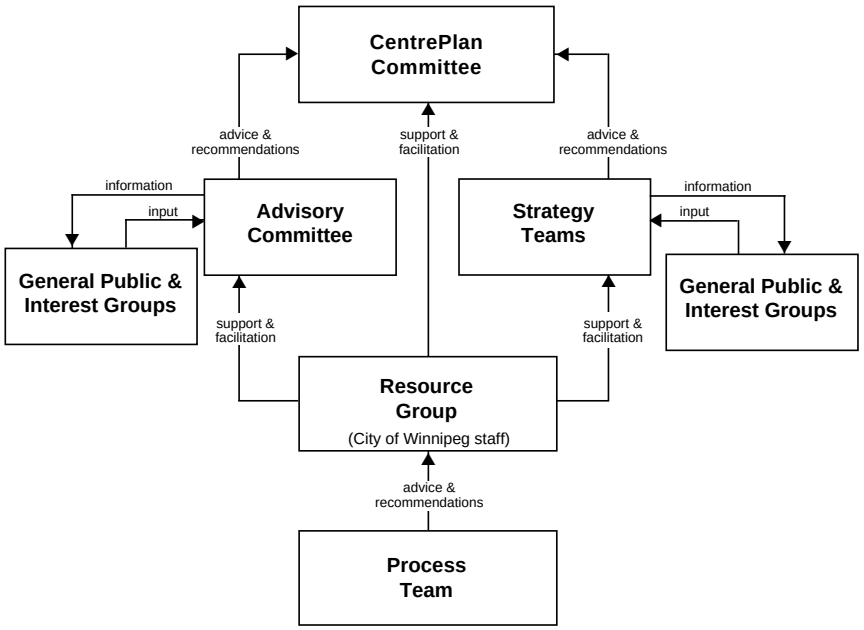
Furthermore, CentrePlan could not have taken place without the significant allocation of financial and in-kind resources provided by the following agencies:

- The City of Winnipeg
- The International Institute for Sustainable Development
- The Downtown Winnipeg Business Improvement Zone
- The Exchange District Business Improvement Zone
- The Forks Renewal Corporation
- The North Portage Development Corporation

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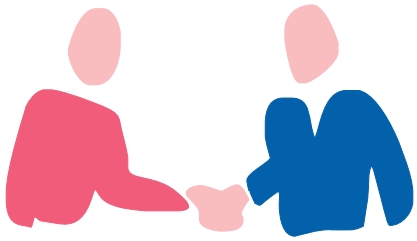
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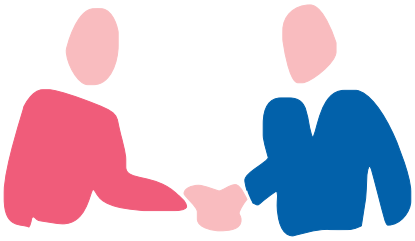
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Public Forums

1. Vision and Strategies
   March 1, 1994
   Convention Centre
2. Actions and Priorities
   September 10, 1994
   Institute of Urban Studies

Workshops

1. Downtown Improvement Team (DOIT)
2. Voyageur Toastmaster Club
3. Health Department - East Branch
4. Planning Department
5. Transit/Streets & Transportation Department
6. University of Manitoba, City Planning - Graduate Students
7. Parks and Recreation Department
8. International Institute for Sustainable Development
9. Winnipeg 2000
10. Healthy Communities
11. Ecole Sacre Coeur (Grade 6 class)
12. Heart and Stroke Foundation
13. Downtown Business Improvement Zone
14. Age and Opportunity
15. Operations Department - South Central District
16. Health Department - South Branch
17. Manitoba Safety Council
18. People in Equal Participation
19. Mulvey School (Grade 5 class)
20. Health Department - North Branch
21. Canadian Red Cross Society
22. Prairie Housing Co-op
23. Institute of Urban Studies - students
24. Heritage Interests
25. Women's Health Clinic
26. Fokus Housing/Ten Ten Sinclair Housing
27. Chamber of Commerce - City Planning Task Force
28. Manitoba Association of Architects
29. Winnipeg Real Estate Board
30. Independent Living Resource Centre
31. Association of Commerce and Trade
32. Inter-Agency
33. Mayfair Resource Group
34. Immigrant Women's Association
35. River Heights School (Grade 9 class)
36. City Centre Resident Advisory Group
37. International Association of Business Communicators
38. Manitoba League for Physically Handicapped
39. Tourism Winnipeg
40. Exchange District Business Improvement Zone

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