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July 14, 2010

The City of Winnipeg
510 Main Street
Winnipeg, MB
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Attn. Chairperson and Members of the Executive Policy Committee

Re: Our Winnipeg, Public Hearing – July 14, 2010.

On behalf of the Urban Development Institute Manitoba Division (UDI) I would like to thank EPC for the opportunity to provide this presentation on Our Winnipeg. UDI represents the professional development industry in our city. Our membership consists of residential, commercial and industrial land developers, along with professionals in the engineering, legal survey, banking and architectural communities. Our industry represents one of the largest segments of Winnipeg's economy. The value of new home construction alone is worth over ½ billion dollars annually.

Our members have taken a keen interest in Our Winnipeg. We will be the ones that take on the financial risks of implementing many of the" visions" created by the Plan. Members from UDI have been involved from the onset of the Our Winnipeg process. We have participated in the:

- mayor's summit,
- design charette process last summer, and
- formation of a number of the background studies.

Periodically throughout the process, the Administration has updated the development industry on the status of the Plan.

From a broad perspective, we are supportive of any plan or initiative that:

- recognizes the importance of market trends and conditions,
- helps in making development more sustainable,
- is flexible, but adds certainty to the development process, and
- is equitable.

THIS IS EXHIBIT " 13 " REFERRED TO
IN FILE NO. SP 3/2010
DATED THIS 14th day of July 2010
Manager of the Decision Making Process

THIS IS EXHIBIT " 15 " REFERRED TO
IN FILE NO. PW 1/2010
DATED THIS 14th day of July 2010
Manager of the Decision Making Process

Generally, UDI is supportive of the Plan and of the Complete Communities Strategy. However, we as an industry do have a number of concerns that we believe need to be addressed. Many of our comments are related to both Our Winnipeg and the Complete Communities Strategy and I will address these simultaneously.

The Plan is a visionary document looking forward 20 years into the future, yet it specifically identifies a residential land shortage, with only a 13 year supply. To us, this is not logical and somewhat misleading.

In order to accommodate new growth, the City will apparently have to rely heavily on a theoretical supply of residential land including centers, corridors, downtown, redevelopment lands, infill and transit oriented development (TOD). The Plan does not seem to refer to any cost-benefit or fiscal impact analysis of these various forms of development or to market preferences. We recommend that the City take a cautious approach to focusing growth onto unproven markets and remind Council that one of our greatest assets has been affordable housing and a high quality of living. We recognize that although there is a growing demand for alternative forms of housing, this is still a relatively small proportion of overall demand and furthermore, if subsidies are required to make such development marketable, one has to wonder if it is worth it.

The Plan also identifies that the City will require development of "New Communities". Council should be aware that much of this suburban land has servicing constraints or other restrictions to development such as fragmented ownership. There is no discussion on how these lands will be serviced or when this may occur. A development plan should provide the framework for the servicing of land. The City needs to take a proactive approach to planning its land supply, not a reactive approach. The City of Winnipeg cannot rely on developers to undertake large scale regional transportation and servicing planning. This is the responsibility of the City of Winnipeg and does not seem to be addressed in this plan, although there is reference to a transportation master plan, which we understand will be completed at a later date.

Regardless, these are initiatives that the City needs to undertake and UDI should be at the table as an active partner. Our members, including developers and consulting engineers, are probably the most knowledgeable and valuable resource that you have.

I would like to remind members of Council that there is no such thing as just in time supply when it comes to land development. We cannot simply turn on the development tap and there will be serviced lots available. If you recall, the Waverley West process took about 5 – 6 years (not to mention hundreds of thousands of dollars for engineering and planning studies) to get from concept, to shovel in the ground.

By identifying additional suburban land as "New Communities" in Our Winnipeg, the Plan does remove one small step in the development process. Contrary to popular belief (i.e. if you listen to critics of suburban development) this plan does not open the door for development in Winnipeg. There is still the need for large area study, land assembly, detailed planning, engineering and the previously mentioned servicing obstacles to overcome; all before much of this land could even be considered for development. What adding these lands as "New Communities" does do is increase speculation and increase expectation that this land can and will be developed. Without the City taking the lead on planning for servicing, much of this land may sit vacant for a very long time.

With that, one has to wonder if there are options and alternatives that have not been contemplated in this plan. For instance, the Plan identifies the Airport Area as a special planning area to be controlled by a Planned Development Overlay. However, we understand that there will be no residential development here. There is also no discussion on how this area could be considered a complete community without any residential development. This seems to contradict the primary objective of the Plan. There are opportunities for residential development in the airport area and the City needs to take an active leadership role in insuring that residential development is considered.

The Plan also calls for development to extend out to the City's boundaries in a number of areas. In some jurisdictions, this would be considered an urban growth boundary and a restriction on land supply. We would like to remind Council of the many unintended consequences that arise with a restriction on land supply, including artificial increases in housing costs and further increases in exurban housing development. I will ask the question, although it maybe premature to do so, but is it not time for Winnipeg to start looking at its boundaries for more sustainable opportunities for growth? While we recognize that there are numerous jurisdictional issues here, we wonder if a document such as this should be restrained by boundary issues and furthermore, would it not be in the best interest for the entire Capital Region to have this conversation.

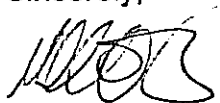
Finally, with respect to Complete Communities, as they say "the devil will always be in the detail". We won't truly know what is meant by a Complete Community until the by-law is in place and is tested as a regulatory tool. It is our understanding however – through discussions with senior planners and as identified in the Complete Communities Strategy (pg. 88) that the recent communities in Winnipeg that have gone through the Secondary Plan process (including South Pointe, Sage Creek, Bridgwater Forest, Kildonan Green etc.) would meet their tests for complete communities.

These are assuring comments coming from senior level administrators. However we have concerns with some of the language in the plan, including references to communities being "complete from the start" and various language discussing "levels of completeness". Knowing that markets will dictate when, where and what form of commercial, office, business, residential or other uses will be built, it leads us to wonder how these types of policies will be implemented.

The plan calls for the creation of an "Implementation Toolbox" and a "Complete Communities Checklist". These will be the implementation tools that will be used to evaluate projects and to provide direction on decision making. UDI expects to be full partners at the table in the establishment of all aspects of the Implementation Toolbox and Complete Communities Checklist, as we are the ones who will be creating these complete communities. We look forward to those discussions.

To conclude, on behalf of the Board of Directors and members of UDI, I thank you for your time and consideration. We are prepared to discuss any of these matters in more detail at anytime.

Sincerely,



Michael Carruthers.
President

cc. UDI Board of Directors