Downtown Winnipeg BIZ

Feedback to City of Winnipeg Downtown BIZ

Zoning Review Process

By way of background, the City of Winnipeg is making changes to its downtown and city-wide zoning to better reflect the vision of OurWinnipeg and the Complete Communities Direction Strategy. This project is intended to be text amendments, or small adjustments, to zoning regulations, rather than a comprehensive review. There will be no zoning map changes.

Downtown Zoning By-Law 100/04:

1. Allowing residential development in more areas
2. New minimum and maximum building heights
3. New size ranges for restaurants and bars
4. New standards for vacant lots
5. New design standards for surface parking
6. New limits to sizes and locations for new surface parking
7. New standards for digital signs
8. Providing for review of large-scale vinyl banners and window wraps/stickers
9. Providing for review of large pylon signs

Downtown Residential

General Proposed Change

Permit residential above the ground floor in all Downtown areas.

Permit residential on the ground floor in all Downtown areas except along Main St., Graham Ave. and Portage Ave., where this would be a Conditional Use

Downtown BIZ Feedback

1. This is a good addition
2. To promote downtown density, there needs to be a connection between stimulating the residential market downtown by better balancing the suburban residential growth in the suburbs. This can only be accomplished if each Winnipeg neighborhood has housing density goals that reflect this vision to build a complete communities. Policies would be

needed to facilitate same, but more importantly political will. E.g an Urban Limit Line.

3. There is also a need to guide where housing density would be ideal for our downtown to create that vibrancy and strong pedestrian activity that better connects with the existing services our downtown offers. Downtown housing could be encouraged everywhere, but where critical to achieve this goal, grants (Residential TIF Funding) would be made available to developers to better and quicker facilitate a complete neighborhood.
4. The most successful entertainment districts in North America are zoned Mixed-Use (3 or more land uses on one bldg). Housing is mandatory, as well as at grade storefronts for shops and restaurants. While this is encouraged in the current zoning, there is nothing preventing a developer from simply building an office structure, which does not fully achieve the vision of SHED, but in fact compromises its goals and objectives of the emerging district. Let's not leave this important effort to create a vibrant district to chance or negotiations. Let's ensure this indeed happens.
5. Tolerance and integration of people of different incomes and types, will lead to a stronger downtown which is adorned by everyone. Housing can be the tool which builds towards this goal. In other cities, affordable housing, even social housing, is mandatory when it comes to residential development, and facilitated by government grants to create the affordable housing which the private sector is not able to accomplish on its own. This should be considered, to build a complete community.

Building Heights

General Proposed Change

Require a minimum building height for Downtown development.

Rationale

Minimum buildings heights help discourage template chain store buildings and other pre-fab architecture. They encourage a scale of development appropriate to a downtown with existing services and infrastructure.

Details of Proposed Change

There is currently no minimum building height in the Downtown.

The proposed amendment would require that some portion of any new building on Portage Avenue, Main Street and Broadway be at 35 feet in height (equivalent to about three storeys), and on all other streets, 25 feet in height (equivalent to about two storeys).

Downtown BIZ Feedback

1. This is a good change, promoting density as one of the key aspects of creating a vibrant community.
2. This may not discourage retail uses which are not in-line with the downtown market of today. For example - Currently, a pawn shop or a discount dollar store can set up in the entertainment district or Portage if the landlord wants to. So how does this fit the vision for Downtown today?
3. This change may also not discourage poor building design as well. More of a Form-Based codes, or a hybrid approach would be needed, which more and more cities are moving towards,
    a. Some case studies: http://www.placemakers.com/project-services/coding/ .

       A broader view:
       http://www.formbasedcodes.org/

Vacant Lots

General Proposed Change

Provide more scrutiny around the creation of vacant land by demolition.

Details of Proposed Change

• Provide criteria around when demolitions may be approved.

• Provide clear landscape standards for interim site treatment when demolition is supported.

• Currently, these requirements are determined on a case-by-case basis through Urban Design Review. This proposed amendment would lay out the minimum expectations so it is clear and transparent.

Downtown BIZ Feedback

1. This is a good first step
2. The City could be more aggressive on this front though
3. In order to create a more vibrant downtown, and quicker - the only demolitions that should be approved are the one's that come with a re-development plan, or are a serious health and safety issue. (Excluding heritage bldgs of course).
4. The Dtwn at one time had a zero tolerance for demolishen.
5. Anything else should be considered land speculation and not in the bets interest of our BIZ members and our downtown. Demolishing to create a

park, a low re-development approach still about land speculation. Either way, the developer should be given enough time to get the project off the ground, and then face increasing fines for if the lot is not developed, as promised to the City. This should be enforced, and quickly.

6. Any demolition that is required for parking purposes, should 1st pass the "smell test". Are there really no other options a coordinated parking strategy/plan for the area could not take care off? We have seen buildings come down over the last few years, under the guise of parking needs for their business, only to see 3/4 of the spaces leases to office workers across the street. We have also seen buildings comes down, now vacant gravel yards, with no public plans for re-development. All of this is counterproductive to create a strong pedestrian environment.

Downtown Parking

General Proposed Change

New parking must include a proportion of accessible spaces.

Require surface parking areas to meet minimum standards for fencing, lighting, paving and landscape planting.

Details of Proposed Change

Currently, there is no requirement for the provision of parking Downtown. However, where surface or structured parking is being constructed, the proposed amendment would require that 4% of parking stalls meet universal accessibility standards and be signed accordingly. A minimum of one accessible parking space would be required for any parking area with over two spaces.

Downtown BIZ Feedback

1. This is a positive change
2. Consideration should also be given to encouraging developers to think differently about how people use cars, in our downtown. Many residents, renters, rent vehicles on weekends, or are part of a growing car sharing community. They do not need a car all of the time, just sometimes. New parking should take this into special consideration.
3. In areas of re-development (Exchange / SHED) consideration should also be given to allow Developers to opt into creating a pubic parkade in the district to meet their own development needs, as opposed to each developer attempting to build their own, at high costs, and at times not coordinated with the overall current and future parking needs of the district, in an integrated transpiration fashion.

Downtown Digital Signs

General Proposed Change

Establish operational standards for brightness, dimming, etc.

Allow digital signs (digital static copy and digital moving copy) in most Downtown areas, but prohibit them in residential areas, riverbank areas, on heritage buildings and along Broadway. In Character Sectors, limit their use to Event Signs.

Rationale

Digital signs can be part of a dynamic urban environment provided their placement respects traffic and pedestrian safety, residential livability and the character of the location in which they are situated.

Details of Proposed Change

“Per the recently adopted amendments to the Winnipeg Zoning By-Law, digital signs:

a) must not display graphics which imitate or resemble any traffic control device;

b) must not exceed a brightness level of 0.3 foot-candles above ambient light conditions; and

c) must utilize automatic dimming.

No such standards currently exist in the Downtown Winnipeg Zoning By-Law. Where there is potential for visual interference with traffic control devices, these will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.”

Currently, approvals for digital signs are determined on a case-by-case basis through Urban Design Review. The practice has been effectively the same as what is proposed to be written into the zoning by-law.

Digital signs would not be permitted on buildings on the Historical Buildings Conservation List or the Historical Buildings Inventory List. They would also not be permitted within Riverbank Sectors, Downtown Living Sectors or on properties fronting on Broadway. Digital signs could not be erected adjacent to residential properties where it would shine directly into windows. In the Character Sectors, they would be limited to Event Signs (See below). “

General Proposed Change

Revise Event Sign definition and allow for third party sponsor's content.

BIZ Feedback

1. This is good
2. But the entertainment district should be treated differently, for obvious reasons.

Downtown Temporary Signs

General Proposed Change

Limit vinyl fascia banner signs to a shortened timeframe, It is recommended that these types of banners be approved for 120 days only, after which time they must be removed

Increase size allowance for construction signs, but limit them to the duration of the construction project.

BIZ Feedback

1. An exemption should be applied to signs associated with new construction or site redevelopment, (for sale or for lease signs) as well as for banners of a non-commercial nature (art murals or civic campaigns).
2. The hording of sidewalks, during construction creates a negative image for the downtown – dirty, dark, dingy, ugly, and for a long period of time. Consideration should be given to promote a better image by enforcing a higher, uniform standard through better lighting and design.

Downtown Free Standing and Window Signs

General Proposed Change

Prohibit new freestanding signs except for ground-oriented signs.

Policy Supports from OurWinnipeg/Complete Communities

Promote walking as a mode of preference within the Downtown by focusing investment in pedestrian improvements along routes that… Contribute to the continuity of pedestrian-oriented, street-level activity

Rationale

Large pylon signs are typically suburban in character and are not suited to a street with large buildings that come right up to the sidewalk. The premise behind the sign regulations in the is that the Downtown is a pedestrian oriented environment, and signage should respect the human scale.

Details of Proposed Change

The Downtown Winnipeg Zoning By-Law currently allows freestanding signs up to 25 feet tall in the Multiple Use Sectors, as well as in the Forks Character Sector and on Waterfront Drive in the Downtown Living Sector. Elsewhere, “Ground-oriented” is permitted up to 10 feet in height. The proposed recommendations would reduce all freestanding sign heights to 4 feet. Signs attached to building surfaces are not restricted to these sign heights.

General Proposed Change

Require signs in a window covering over 50% of the window surface area to comply with zoning standards.

BIZ Feedback

1. This is good