Meeting of the City of Winnipeg Executive Policy Committee
Re: Portage and Main Interstation
Prepared by the Downtown BIZ, October 18, 2017

SUMMARY

The Downtown Winnipeg BIZ Board is in support of the Implementation of a phased approach to below and above grade improvements.

Why? Its simply time.....A way forward... An incremental approach towards a long-term vision for our Downtown.... Which does not commit the City to the vision of people crossing the intersection today, but yes, this is a small step in that direction....And in doing so, creating a better place for all those who work, live and visit downtown.

- The intersection of Portage and Main should be identified as a priority by City Hall, not only maintaining this asset, but also allowing all forms of transportation – car, busses, bikes, people, to utilize this downtown intersection in their day to day lives. A place celebrating our Culture, History and our Past. A place that is Authentic to our city.





- The Downtown Winnipeg BIZ commends City's CAO Doug McNeil, Director of Planning John Kiernan, and the Mayor for engaging the property owners on the corners and create an atmosphere and willingness to discuss the renewal of the corner(s) and the opening up Portage and Main to pedestrians.

OUR RATIONALE IN PROVIDING SUPPORT

1. If repairs are not made to the city infrastructure (above and below grade at Portage and Main intersection) in dire repair, now, we feel taxpayers will be forced to pay more for those same repairs in the future. The cost to taxpayers in delaying maintenance today is unavoidable. **So, Lets do it!**

2. We don't think it's good business to make the required repairs and then return the new barricades. If property owners are willing to create a better sense of place for pedestrians on their corner, let's align City investment now. Having to go backwards will cost taxpayers more. **So, Lets do it!**

3. This decision today, does not commit the City to opening up the Portage and Main intersection. Introducing people/pedestrian activity to Portage and Main incrementally, through the removal of a barricade and beatification of a sidewalk / plaza is a baby step, to help Winnipeggers believe (Like the Times Square approach). **So, Lets do it!**

4. With the proposed downtown developments, the timing is right to send the signal to the investment community that our City wants to build a complete and walkable neighborhood, the key to a successful downtown! Alignment of planning efforts and private / public interests is critical. **So, Lets do it!**

    a. The Artis Reit Tower
    b. Railway Lands at Forks
    c. Ongoing Waterfront Developments
    d. Fortress Development
    e. Portage Ave Redevelopment– Sterling Building / Dreamin Building / Other
    f. Public Safety building re-development

5. Downtown momentum continues: let's leverage almost $1 billion in investment envisioned in the future, and start connecting our districts together for people to walk, bike, take transit or a car, to their favourite restaurant, retailer, concert, or the Farmers' Market just across the street. **So, Lets do it!**

6. This will incremental also allow some time for the City to engage stakeholders and take a deeper dive on transit and traffic studies, and even broader design strategies, to get it right. **So, Lets do it!**

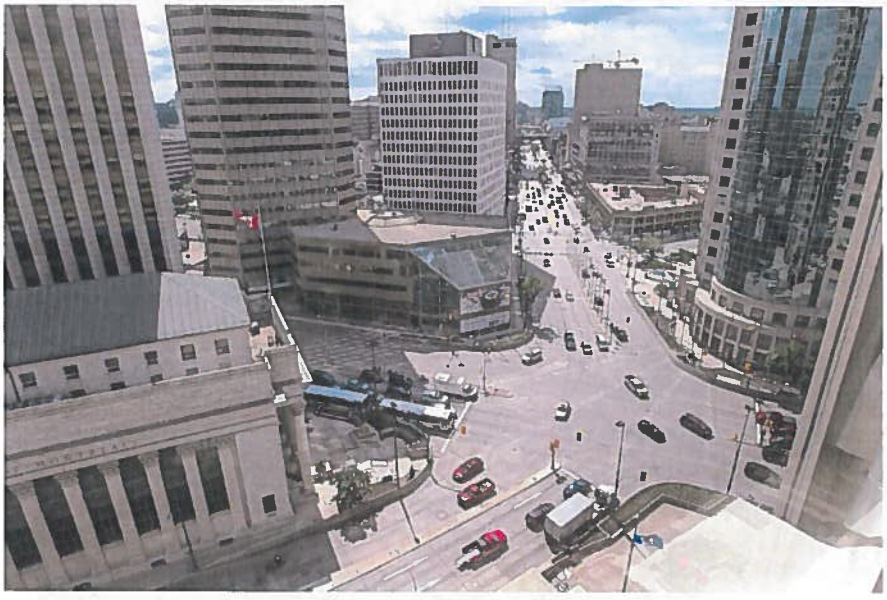
THE BIGGER PICTURE

Wikipedia - The land upon which Portage and Main sits was originally purchased by Henry McKenney on 2 June 1862. He chose land where the north-south and east-west ox cart paths crossed, in order to build a general store with his half-brother John Christian Schultz.[2][3]



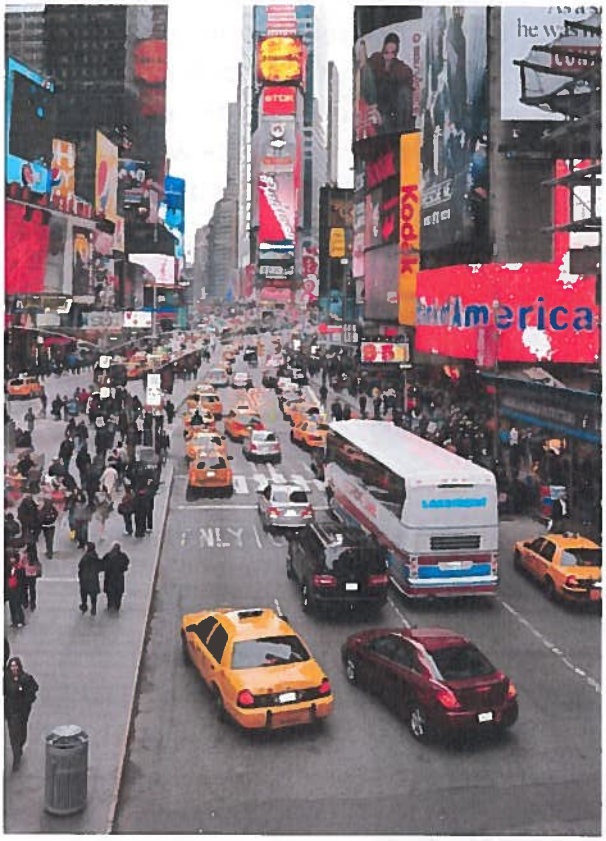
Often, the intent of our founding citizens / politician was grounded in common sense. Portage and Main was not only a place where oxcarts passed through, it was a place where people worked, shopped, banked, and celebrated. It was the heart of our City.

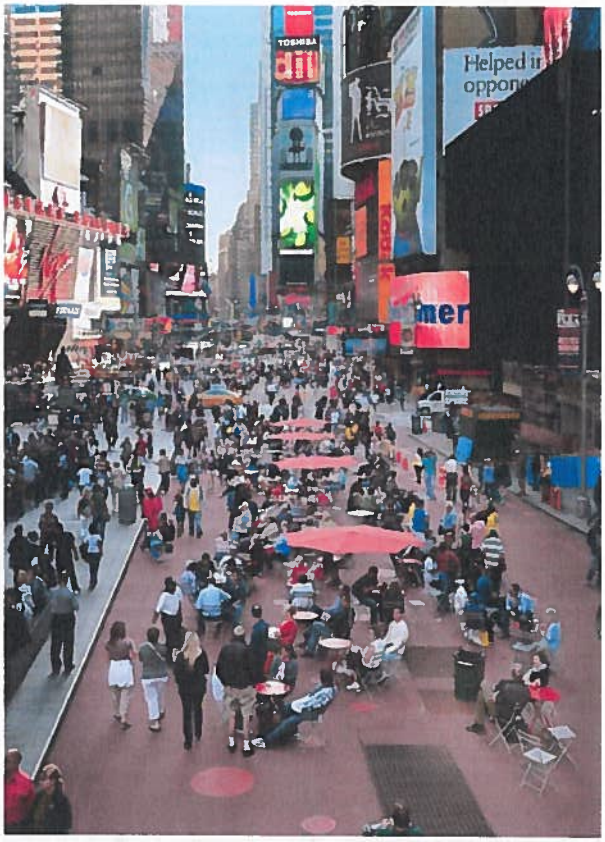
This sense of place, this sense of community, was replaced with the need to drive our cars as quick as possible to get to and from work, and through this important neighborhood, the Downtown.



The barricades cut off pedestrian movement, commerce and business and social interaction, the lifeblood of our Downtown, which creates the vibrancy people really want. This in turn chokes off urban revitalization and leaves missed opportunities for re-development, cutting off the city's four most vibrant neighborhoods/districts, East and West Exchange, Portage Avenue and the Forks. Everyone wants great places for people, but we built a place for cars in the busiest office district in our City!

"In an important paradigm shift around 1960, urban planning was undertaken at a very large scale in response to the challenges of rapidly growing cities. At the same time, traffic planning began to dominate planning at eye level, to address the rapid influx of cars into cities. The concern for the people using cities that had been maintained over centuries of tradition and experience was completely left behind. The idea of "cities for people" was overlooked and forgotten." - **Jan Gehl** - ***Times Square, is a best-case planning and execution example of how incremental steps towards creating a place for people worked!***







Submitted by
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