Written Submission in support of Councillor Santos' request for a Secondary Plan from the City of Winnipeg requesting the inclusion of North Point Douglas

October 19, 2021

My name is Catherine Flynn. I am the chair of the Point Douglas Residents Committee, and I am writing today in support of Councillor Santos' motion for a secondary plan for South Point Douglas and to request that North Point Douglas be included in this process.

The need for a secondary plan for South Point Douglas should be glaringly obvious. This is a mixed use residential and industrial area with large tracts of undeveloped land along the river. It also has large, undeveloped areas that exist near major business zones and residential areas such as East Kildonan, St. Boniface, and Downtown. Clearly, this part of Winnipeg is ripe for development.

However, it is imperative that this development be undertaken thoughtfully, respectfully, and with careful consideration of the entire community so the diverse -- and sometimes conflicting -- needs of the residents, businesses, and developers can be fairly balanced. Over the last thirty years we have seen many positive changes to the Forks and Waterfront Drive. Thoughtful and positive development has enhanced these areas, made them safer, provided recreational opportunities, and beautified what was once a derelict and forgotten portion of the city. The Point, divided into North and South Point Douglas, could become another brilliant success story with similar careful planning.

The separation between North and South Point Douglas is artificial. The Point of the river is a single geographic unit. It has important historic connections to the city, to Manitoba's Indigenous Peoples, and to Manitoba as a whole. The division of the Point by the rail lines is a man-made one and many of the issues affecting South Point Douglas also affect North Point Douglas. We are a single unit with a rail line running down the middle.

The reasons North Point Douglas requires a secondary plan are numerous.

1) We share the same proximity to Winnipeg's downtown as South Point Douglas. Such a location makes development inevitable. A secondary plan would guide development in a planned and considered fashion allowing for creative solutions that could build on the significant accomplishments of the Forks and Waterfront Drive.

2) Our community suffers from numerous residential and industrial fires: We require guidelines that will honour and respect the historic and residential qualities of our community as development proceeds in these vacant lots.

3) North Point Douglas is designated as the preferred route for the new Eastern Transit Corridor. The route is to go through East Kildonan, cross the river into North Point Douglas at the Louise Bridge and proceed down Sutherland. This will bring new development to the area and has profound implications for the entire point. This area now consists of greenspace, a disused boat launch, derelict and active businesses, vacant lots, and residential communities. To respect the needs of all parties and integrate the two halves of The Point will again require proper guidelines and regulation for development to proceed in a coherent and respectful fashion.

4) North Point Douglas has numerous vacant lots. This brings with it the likelihood of much new development given rapidly rising real estate prices. We would like to see stricter regulations guide this development and help decide the types of housing that can be built in these vacant lots. A secondary plan would carry more regulatory weight than our current Five-Year Plan, Listening to Point Douglas.

5) Like South Point Douglas, North Point Douglas contains a sizable industrial zone. This zone exists beside the tracks, along the south side of Sutherland while the north side of Sutherland is largely residential. The separation between these zones consists of two narrow lanes of traffic. This causes conflicts over such things as garbage, noise, toxic emissions, foul odours, and traffic congestion. Many of these issues are a source of documented health hazards to residents. It is imperative that this be addressed in a more formal fashion with appropriate zoning, rezoning, regulation, and oversight to mediate conflict and to protect the health of community members.

6) Both North and South Point Douglas are historic neighborhoods with enormous heritage value. This requires consideration and protection from unplanned development. Referring once again to the Forks, here we have an example of how development can proceed in ways that respect the history and heritage of an area while allowing for multiple recreational uses by the entire city. A well-considered secondary plan for both North and South Point Douglas could see similar benefits to the city and existing residents alike and might result in a considerable increase in tax revenue for Winnipeg.

7) North Point Douglas requires guidelines that allow for the preservation and protection of existing greenspaces. Our area is slated for future active transport trail developments. So far these have been accomplished in the (almost complete) absence of community consultation. In the case of North Point Douglas, this involved the demolition of a sound and habitable home. We need regulations that will help guide the future development of these trails and mandate a formal consultation process.

8) North Point Douglas tends to be a locus for slum landlords and rooming houses. We have no desire to prevent low-income populations from accessing adequate accommodation in our community, but these houses require proper regulation and zoning. A secondary plan would add regulatory weight to future community planning.

9) We want to see the future development of North Point Douglas proceed in a way that is sensitive and respectful of our Five-Year Plan and is also sensitive and respectful of the character and needs of our residents. Please refer to:
pdrc_5_year_strategic_report_final_spreads_compressed.pdf (bridgmancollaborative.ca)

Summary:

Point Douglas is a passionate, active, diverse community and our residents deserve a say in how the next decades developments unfold. Our community has a vision for the future that includes a respect for our diversity, for our riparian environment which we desire to enhance and protect, and for our history and heritage

Sadly, the Point has a negative reputation. This negative reputation is perpetuated by stereotypes that are both racist and colonialist. As a result, we are a community that frequently has things done TO us rather than done WITH us. The Point tends to get overlooked or to have things done without consultation or any consideration of our needs and desires. Our residents deserve a more respectful process where future development is concerned – a process that sees structured community consultation, dialogue, and involvement with the residents as development proceeds. To this end, a comprehensive secondary plan would give the community a voice in how future development should proceed. And, in the spirit of meaningful reconciliation, such a plan could demonstrate in a meaningful way an appropriate level of respect for the sacred and historic nature of the land here and honour the contributions and culture of Indigenous Peoples.

Together, North and South Point Douglas are the historic heart of Winnipeg. While time and history have not always been kind to us, these communities remain interesting, affordable, vibrant, and historically important. We have a passionately committed, diverse group of citizens that include artists, teachers, designers, newcomers, single income households, and a large population of indigenous peoples. Sadly, our reputation does not adequately encompass the wonderful diversity and commitment of our residents and instead focuses on crime statistics. This is not a genuine reflection of who we are. We need a secondary plan to guide the development that will inevitably come with the Eastern Transit Corridor and expansion of downtown. A carefully considered secondary plan will aid our respective communities in co-creating an exciting, beautiful, historic Point that celebrates the beauty of the river, provides for clean and efficient public transit, enhances existing Active Transportation routes, builds in concern for the aquatic environment, reforests the area, and builds in goals that emphasize sustainability, food security, and safety.

Thank you for your time,

Catherine Flynn