Re: Smith Street Realignment, Agenda Item #7 under ADDENDUM - REPORT OF THE STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS DATED FEBRUARY 7, 2023

February 13, 2023

Executive Policy Committee
Council Building
510 Main Street
Winnipeg, MB R3B 1B9

Dear Executive Policy Committee,

My submission today is in support of agenda item seven under the Report of the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works from February 7, 2023: the Realignment of Smith Street.

The Downtown Winnipeg BIZ is working hard with our partners and the downtown community to bring people back to the heart of our city, because the economic activity and revenue generated here benefits our entire city and all Winnipeggers.

Key facts to consider on the proposed project to realign Smith Street:

1. **WHY THIS AREA?** This area was identified as a major obstacle in pedestrian connectivity between the SHED and the Exchange District (from community design charette held by Storefront Manitoba, October 2022).
2. **WHY THIS PROJECT?** This project was identified as a potential action item in the Downtown Recovery Strategy and the City's Covid-19 Economic Response and Recovery Plan approved by Council in April of last year.
    - The City identified this section of Smith Street in its Downtown Road Renewal plan, so rather than use of taxpayer dollars to reconstruct a road, funds could be redirected to create a more usable space for people.

3. **A SPACE FOR EVENTS:** This project would take the small, underused Odeon Park and turn it into a new public plaza almost three times the size.
    - This will give more flexibility to increase programming and more space for people to gather and connect in the community.
    - Improved seating, lighting, trees and sightlines in Odeon Park would improve vibrancy, safety, and desirability to live in the area.
    - Over the past seven years, the number of events at the Burt have tripled to over 90 events that bring more than 100,000 people downtown each year.
    - For two summers, thousands of Winnipeggers and visitors gathered in this area for the Burt Block Parties, which bring community together and drive economic activity. The realignment of Smith Street would allow this successful temporary pilot project to become permanent.
4. **LESS CITY RESOURCES USED:** Active adjacent businesses can act as stewards for the park, and events would not longer need to use City resources to temporarily close this small section of street.

Downtown is about people, and we know people want places to connect with one another. Creating public parks, plazas and streetscapes that encourage people to spend time here, not just drive through, is what will help our downtown, and our city, see more benefits of economic development, cultural creativity and personal potential.

Thank you for you time and consideration today.

Kate Fenske,



CEO, Downtown Winnipeg BIZ

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