November 14, 2023 Executive Policy Committee Meeting
Item 19 Housing Accelerator Fund

My name is Pam Lucenkiw. I am a Co-chair of OURS-Winnipeg a greenspace advocacy organization. I will begin by acknowledging thanks for the motion to protect the high quality Lemay Forest in St. Norbert that will be on Thursday's Riel CC agenda.

There is positive work being done on the Master Greenspace and Natural Corridors Plan and Biodiversity Policy and the commitment by City Council to sign the Montreal Pledge for Biodiversity. (Attached for reference).

Winnipeggers care deeply about their trees, greenspace and natural areas.

Last week CBC Winnipeg's Up to Speed radio host asked the question "What is your vision for Winnipeg, and anything goes?. A listener's response was "A nature corridor along the Assiniboine River from the Forks to Assiniboine Park where you never have to stop to cross a road." That is a vision we could all appreciate and the host repeated it a number of times throughout the show. Cities such as Edmonton, Calgary, and Saskatoon come close. Yes, we did not have history in our favour to achieve something similar. Winnipeg has made countless decisions that continue to this day that fail to protect riverside land. We need vision, commitment and planning to protect riparian areas. Winnipeg's history of developer led planning did not get us there.

OURS originated in 2011 in response to a plan by the City of Winnipeg to make seven of the city-owned golf courses available for sale or lease for commercial or residential development and without public consultation.
The petition to save the golf courses garnered almost 10,000 signatures. The asks in the petition remain relevant for consideration of the Housing Accelerator Fund. The petition asked for

1. Genuine and timely public consultation to protect natural urban environment including natural areas, and riverbank areas that add value to our community.
2. For the city to build trust by working with citizen groups and not allow developers to side step the intent
3. And to be ensured that a plan to protect our natural environment incorporate sustainable development practices.

We agree fully that infill and densification are necessary for a growing city. We also know that development is the largest factor for the loss of trees and nature. Greenery and nature are foundational for a thriving, green, inclusive, biodiverse city. Nature must be part of our response to protect people from the effects of climate change and to help manage the city ecosystem. As nature is so crucial to our well-being cities have to plan carefully to allow it to thrive.

We cannot support the motion before us today for a number of reasons.

1. Removing the right of residents to appeal decisions that impact their homes and neighbourhoods is undemocratic. Residents bring forward genuine concerns and Councillors and society learn from this process.

2. We are in the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, which includes Urban Areas[1]" and says that "Green spaces need to be placed at the heart of urban planning". The housing accelerator fund will place developers at the heart of urban planning.
   The choicest lots; the river lots, the vacant lots in the mature neighbourhoods that could be pocket parks or contribute to cooling green corridors will be even more desirable choices for development with funding incentives, advantageous zoning and cancelled public hearings. Instead of restoration, tree removal is tuning neighbourhoods into urban heat islands without leaving space for parks.

3. Councillor Mayes' map (attached) shows that 80% of the Winnipeg area would meet the criteria for four-storey buildings without consultation as they are within 800 metres of frequent transit corridors. The HAF fund will reward high density development on Winnipeg's river corridors, water features and natural areas with the proposed zoning. As new communities are built and proximity to transit increases, more river side property will be zoned high density over time.

4. The fund will set high density development in motion before planning goals and protection tools are in place for the needed accompanying green assets.
   The Tree bylaw and urban forestry strategy are not final. The Master Greenspace and Natural Corridors plan is a few years from implementation. Winnipeg's actions are weak in connecting climate change mitigation and adaptation benefits to greenspace. Winnipeg does not have extensive river corridor parks such as Calgary, Edmonton. Saskatoon, and Ottawa have. Halifax has a green network. Toronto and Montreal are extending and adding to their water side parkland and corridors because they have strong plans and are acting on them.

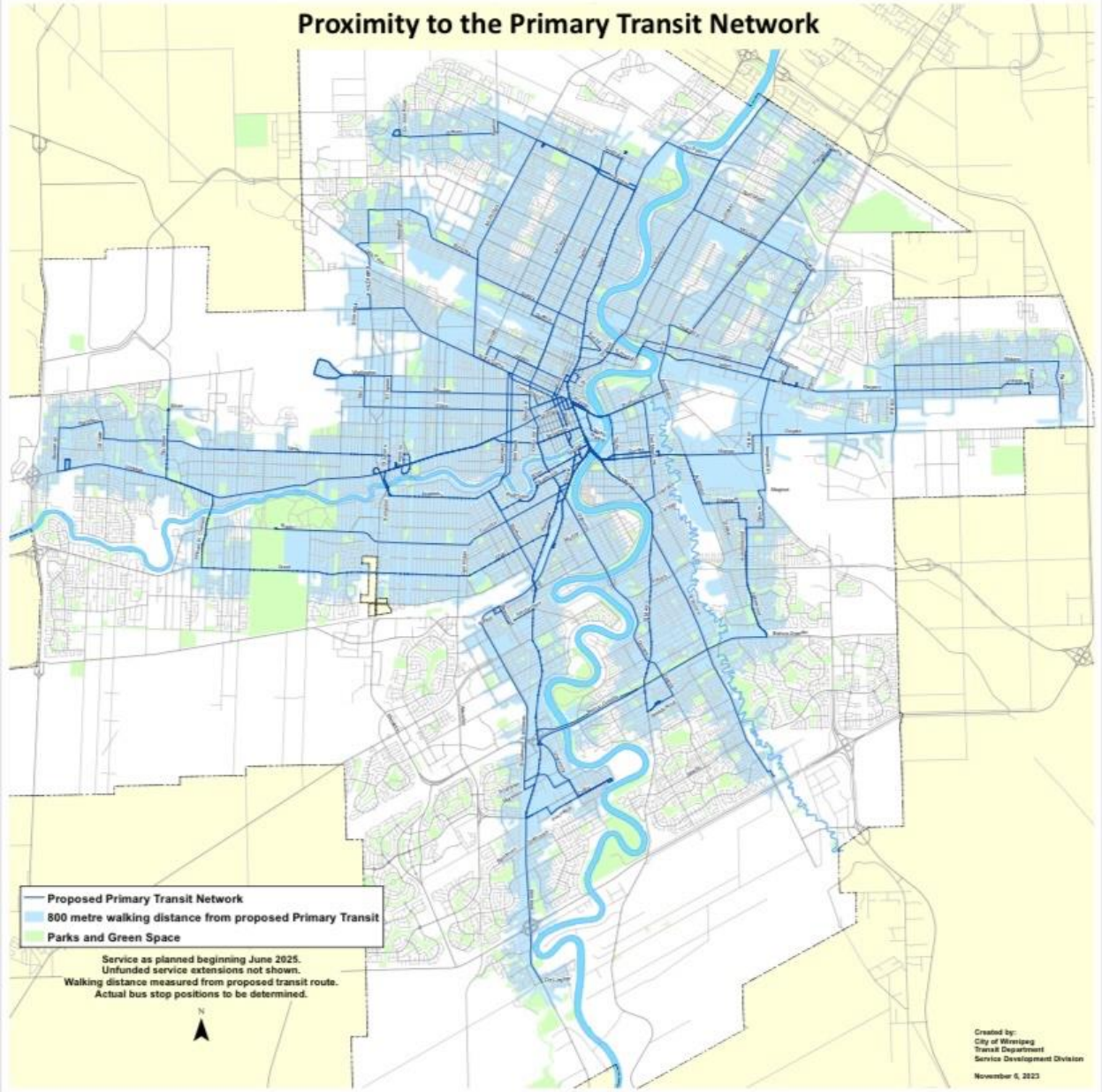
5. One size does not fit all. Last Friday, on CBC's the Current, the Mayor of Langley explained the one size fits all Housing Accelerator Fund does not work the same for his community as it does for Vancouver. He said they are at different stages in their development which requires distinct options for meeting infill goals that is not respected by the Fund. It cannot be assumed that this fund in its present form is the best option for Winnipeg.

Knowing that increased tree canopy, natural corridors and access to greenspace will be part of the development package, will go a long way to alleviating residents' concerns with development. The cumulative treatment of our river corridors over time as not instilled confidence.

We need smart density that does not sacrifice green space and reduce the urban forest. The infill density must be well designed to complement existing neighborhoods.

We can dream of a River corridor where we can walk and not cross any roads.

[1] Un Decade of Ecosystem Restoration Urban Area https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/types-ecosystem-restoration/urban-areas


Proximity to the Primary Transit Network
Proposed Primary Transit Network
800 metre walking distance from proposed Primary Transit
Parks and Green Space
Service as planned beginning June 2025.
Unfunded service extensions not shown.
Walking distance measured from proposed transit route.
Actual bus stop positions to be determined.
N
Created by:
City of Winnipeg
Transit Department
Service Development Division
November 6, 2023

THE MONTREAL PLEDGE

CITIES UNITED IN ACTION FOR BIODIVERSITY

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Cities are at the forefront in observing biodiversity loss and being impacted by its effects. As local governments, they are also well placed to take rapid, concrete action to halt this decline.

At the COP-15 conference on biodiversity, taking place in Montréal from December 7 to 19, 2022, the countries of the world will adopt the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. As this major event approaches, Montréal Mayor and ICLEI Global Ambassador for Local Biodiversity Valérie Plante is calling on cities to continue and accelerate their actions towards protecting biodiversity and ecosystems.

Cities are invited to commit to 15 concrete actions, in coherence with the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. These actions are also coherent with the CitiesWithNature initiative and the C40 Urban Nature Accelerator.

With this strong commitment, the signatory cities of the Montréal Pledge will demonstrate the leadership and ambition of cities around the world to act swiftly and influence their partners to do the same, in order to reverse biodiversity.

Montréal

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REDUCE THREATS TO BIODIVERSITY

1. Integrate biodiversity into territorial and regulatory planning
2. Restore and rehabilitate ecosystems and their connectivity
3. Conserve existing natural environments through protected areas and other effective and equitable measures
4. Ensure the conservation and recovery of vulnerable species, both wild and domestic, and effectively manage their interactions with humans
5. Control or eradicate invasive alien species to eliminate or reduce their impacts
6. Reduce pollution from all sources to levels that do not adversely affect biodiversity, ecosystem functions or human health
7. Aim to eliminate plastic waste
8. Aim to reduce pesticide use by at least two-thirds
9. Contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation measures through ecosystem-based approaches

SHARE THE BENEFITS OF BIODIVERSITY

10. Aim to ensure that urban agriculture, aquaculture and forestry zones are accessible, sustainably managed and contribute to food security
11. Prioritize nature-based solutions to protect against extreme weather events and hazards and to regulate air and water quality
12. Increase the amount of green and blue spaces and improve equitable access to them

SOLUTIONS, GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

13. Integrate biodiversity into governance frameworks and public policies, and increase financial resources allocated to its conservation and sustainable use.
14. Through citizen education and participation, help ensure that people and businesses are encouraged to make responsible choices toward biodiversity and have the resources and knowledge to do so
15. Ensure the equitable and effective participation of Indigenous peoples and local communities in decision-making and in the process of knowledge acquisition and transmission

THE MONTREAL PLEDGE In order to inspire other cities to follow in taking bold action for biodiversity, Pledge signatory cities will be invited to voluntarily track their progress towards the Pledge commitments on the CitiesWithNature Action Platform, a platform recognized by the CBD to report on cities' commitments to global biodiversity target.

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