Portage & Main Revitalization Study

Phase 3 Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Background

Portage & Main, Winnipeg's iconic intersection, has long been a part of our City's narrative, playing a key role in both its physical and cultural landscapes.

The City must make significant investment in aging infrastructure at the intersection. We are studying Portage & Main to determine the cost of replacing the membrane (waterproofing layer) that protects the underground concourse. As part of this study, we are also creating a vision to enhance the public space at the intersection.

Since spring 2022, feedback has been collected from property owners, stakeholders and the public. This feedback has been used to inform and shape ideas for the design of the public space at the intersection.

This report summarizes what we heard from stakeholders during the final phase of engagement.

Engagement

The project team met with property owners at the intersection to review the draft design, answer questions, and get feedback. In addition, a final stakeholder meeting took place via video conference on August 23, 2023, to present the recommended design to stakeholders and answer questions.

16 stakeholders attended the meeting. They represented a wide diversity of groups, including:

- Business development organizations
- Resident association
- Tenants of the properties at the intersection
- Provincial government
- Community organizations
- Homelessness organizations
- Environmental organization
- Accessibility organizations
- Healthcare government agency

A list of organizations that were invited to attend and/or attended the meeting can be found in Appendix A.

The presentation provided a summary of the project to date. The recommended design was presented, showing views of the intersection from different directions at street level and overhead. At the end of the presentation, participants had the opportunity to ask questions, which were answered by the project team.

What We Heard

Overall, participants expressed support for the design. The questions and answers from the stakeholder meeting are summarized in the Table 1, organized by topic.

Table 1: Stakeholder meeting Q&A

Topic	Question and Answer
Durability and maintenance	**Q:** How have you thought about the durability of paving materials? **A:** The project team has looked at different examples nationwide, including successful examples in northern communities. Public Works also has experts that will help to source the right material. These decisions would be made in the next stage of design (detailed design), pending Council approval and funding for the recommended design.

Topic	Question and Answer
	Q: Will the final report include an estimated maintenance budget to ensure this information is available to Council when they are considering the recommendations? **A:** This is an important consideration for the recommendations. Our report will likely not include a dollar figure, as the City has their own formulas for maintenance costs, but we can highlight the maintenance requirements that would be in addition to the construction cost.
Pedestrian crossings and accessibility	**Q:** Would the draft design allow for Portage & Main to be opened to pedestrian crossing? **A:** Yes, in the recommended design, the cables could be removed between the bollards and some bollards could be removed to provide wider openings if needed for pedestrian crossing.
	Q: Is the City negotiating currently with property owners to provide equitable access to the concourse via their elevators? Our concern is that the inclusion of public elevators in the draft design may lead the City to consider access via private elevators as less of a priority. **A:** The City understands the importance of elevator access to the concourse; however, we have very little influence over the hours during which private properties allow public access to their elevators to reach the concourse. The elevators shown in the concourse access points in the recommended design are one part of our long-term strategy to increase the hours during which the concourse is accessible to everyone.
Cycling	**Q:** Does the draft design include cycling access to and through the intersection, as well as the potential for bicycle parking at the intersection and proposed transit station? **A:** The draft design does not identify a specific area for bicycle parking; this would typically be part of the proposed transit station. Providing bike lanes through the intersection was not in scope for this study.
Process and next steps	**Q:** Has the Fairmont been consulted about the impacts to their property? **A:** The exact location of a Transit station at Portage & Main is not known at this time. We met with property owners on Portage Avenue East in partnership with Transit to understand concerns, constraints, and opportunities for how changes to the intersection might impact them. More engagement will take place when the Rapid Transit Downtown Corridors design study gets underway.
	Q: What key findings from the public consultation drove the draft designs? **A:** Participants were split between interest in very bold ideas and keeping the design simple and beautiful and using what we already have. The draft design balances the desire for something bold at the intersection with desire of making modest upgrades that consider weather and maintenance. We also found there wasn't a divide between people who live downtown and people who live in other parts of the cities; they had similar preferences in terms of the design ideas.
	Q: What are the next steps for the project and are there any plans for future public engagement? **A:** After this, we are finalizing our recommendations to Council. Future public engagement would be part of the next phase of this project, pending Council approval and funding. The City will email stakeholders when the agenda is posted for the Council meeting where this report will be presented.

Topic	Question and Answer
Other	**Q:** Are the turbines shown on top of the multi-media lights kinetic art or are they powering something? **A:** The intention is that the wind turbines would provide electricity for the multi-media lights.
	Q: What will the intersection look like in the winter? These images only show summer/warm weather. **A:** The project team will be including renderings that show the draft designs in winter in the report to Council.
	Q: How has the project team thought about activation and potential events at the intersection? **A:** There's very little public space in the sidewalks. In our conversations with the property owners, we learned they are active in programming their plazas or plan to be. For the sidewalks, the design focuses on helping people move through and access the spaces, improving accessibility and making them beautiful. Partnership with property owners to program the spaces will be part of the recommendations in our report.
Comments	Participants also made the following comments. • Using products for the pavilions (concourse access points) such as rock glass that are harder to damage would be preferable • The design, particularly of new barricades, should take into consideration the need for efficient snow clearing in winter

Next Steps

The project team will finalize the draft design and will recommend a design vision to City Council. City Council will consider the recommendations and costs for the underground waterproofing and above ground design. Before any further steps, such as detailed design and construction, Council would need to allocate funding.

Appendix A

Representatives of the following organizations attended the stakeholder meeting:

CentreVenture Development Corporation
Downtown Community Safety Partnership
Downtown Winnipeg BIZ
End Homelessness Winnipeg
Green Action Centre
Independent Living Resource Centre
Province of Manitoba
Residents of the Exchange District
RBC Royal Bank
Storefront Manitoba
Winnipeg Regional Health Authority

The organizations listed below were invited to the stakeholder meeting:

389 Main Street Heritage Corporation
Asper Group
Bear Clan
Booster Juice
CentreVenture Development Corporation
Cookies by George in the Square
Downtown Community Safety Partnership
Downtown Winnipeg BIZ
End Homelessness Winnipeg
Exchange Winnipeg BIZ
Fairmont Hotel
Gaberniks Cafe
Green Action Centre
Independent Living Resource Centre
Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre
Main Street Project
Mama Bear Clan
Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities
Manitoba Possible
RBC Royal Bank
Red River College Polytechnic
Residents of the Exchange District
Salvation Army Centre of Hope
Scatliff Miller Murray
Siloam Mission
Storefront Manitoba
Taylor McCaffrey
TetraTech
The UPS Store
United Way Winnipeg
Winnipeg Arts Council
Winnipeg Regional Health Authority