The Future of 219 Provencher and 212 Dumoulin

Public Engagement Summary

Background

The Saint-Boniface Civic Square is the heart of the former City of Saint-Boniface. The City of Saint-Boniface was amalgamated with the City of Winnipeg in 1972. The property and buildings remain an important space for francophone art, culture, and services, and represents the history of Manitoba and how francophone people shaped the province. Although the square is seen for its importance as a unified property, the focus of this project was on two of the buildings: 219 Provencher Blvd. (former Saint-Boniface City Hall) and 212 Dumoulin St. (former Saint-Boniface Fire Hall No. 1).

The Saint-Boniface Civic Square buildings were declared surplus (no longer needed for City offices) in 2007. Following a cancelled sale of 219 Provencher Blvd. and 212 Dumoulin St. in 2023, the City asked the community to help determine the future of these properties.

Engagement

The engagement process began by meeting with key stakeholder organizations. A series of meetings helped us understand the value of the buildings to the community and which options were supported by key stakeholders.

We then reached out to the broader community to ask what is important to them when it comes to the options, management, and future experience of the buildings.

Table 1 provides an overview of all public engagement opportunities.

Acknowledgement

The project team would like to acknowledge the efforts, time, and knowledge of all those involved in this process, and especially key stakeholder representatives. Their willingness to share the deep importance and interconnectedness of history, culture, language, and space was invaluable to this process.

Limitations

The project team recognized early on that centering francophone values and culture at every stage was important to the success of this process. Unfortunately, project team leads were not French-speaking and this was noted as a limitation. To overcome this limitation, the project team worked closely with the French Language Services division. The division supported the team to produce materials and communicate in both French and English. We also provided simultaneous translation at public events where project team members were communicating with French-speaking participants. The need for French-speaking project team members was brought up by several participants, and although this was recognized as a drawback, efforts were made to ensure participants could provide feedback in the language of their choice.

Promotion

See Appendix A for promotion examples. Public engagement opportunities were promoted using the following methods:

- Project webpage – launched in October 4, 2023; 4,730 visits (3,598 on the English site; 1,132 on the French site) from October 4, 2023 to February 15, 2024
- News release – January 3, 2024
- Social media – 14 posts on X, Facebook, and Instagram
- City of Winnipeg public engagement newsletter with over 5,300 recipients – January 2 and 16, 2024
- Postcard to 5,823 North St. Boniface addresses – delivered on the week of January 1, 2024
- Poster sent to thirty stakeholder organizations
- La Liberté print advertisement, advertorial insert and online advertisement

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Key findings

- 219 Provencher Blvd. and 212 Dumoulin St. are important (although 219 Provencher Blvd. is viewed as more important; see Figure 1) for their cultural, historical, and architectural value.
- Participants and key stakeholders are most supportive of a long-term lease to a community organization.
- Participants and key stakeholders are not supportive of selling the buildings. Key stakeholders clearly stated the surplus status of the buildings needs to be rescinded.

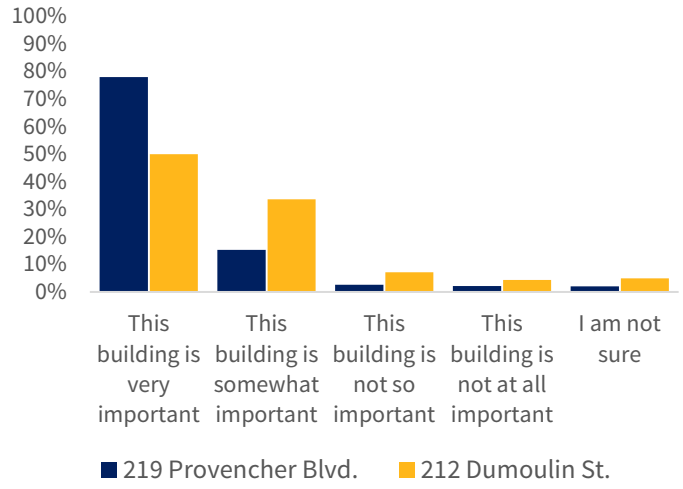
Table 1: Public Engagement Opportunities

Dates	Activity	Details
August 23, September 21, October 19, November 30, 2023 March 8, 2024	Five key stakeholder meetings	Eight organizations represented. Organizations are listed in Appendix B. Notes in Appendix C.
October 4, 2023 – February 15, 2024	Story collection	26 stories submitted in French; 15 stories submitted in English. Story submissions in Appendix D.
November 2023 to February 2024	Three stakeholder-led events	La maison des artistes visuels held a story collection event. Société de la francophonie manitobaine and Les Ami.e.s du carré civique de Saint-Boniface held workshops.
December 20, 2023 – February 15, 2024	Survey	1,284 responses. Self-selected participation (not a representative sample). Full survey results are in Appendix E.
January 17, 24 and 25, 2024	Workshops	In-person bilingual event on January 17; French virtual event on January 24; English virtual event on January 25 Bilingual presentation available online. Notes in Appendix F.

Figure 1: Comparing importance of buildings

How would you rate the overall importance of 219 Provencher Blvd. and 212 Dumoulin St.?

Total responses: 1,284



Who we heard from

We asked survey participants to self-identify so we had a better understanding of who we heard from when reaching out to the broader community. Thirty-two (32) percent of survey respondents identified as 'connected to or involved in the francophone community' (309 of 944). Nearly half (49% or 466 of 944) identified as a resident of Saint-Boniface, Saint-Vital, or Saint-Norbert.

Of the 1,284 surveys that were completed, 230 were completed in French and 1,054 were completed in English. Both those who completed the survey in French and English thought the buildings were important and supported a long-term lease agreement with a community organization to manage the buildings. See Figure 2 for a comparison.

Key stakeholders noted the importance of the growing francophone newcomer population throughout the process. Three (3) percent of survey respondents self-identified as a recent newcomer to Winnipeg. Recent immigrants (between 2016 and 2021) make up 5.7% of the population of Winnipeg (source: Government of Canada, 2021 Census). Appendix G includes a map of recent immigrants to Winnipeg which are not concentrated in the areas of Winnipeg that were most targeted by promotion.

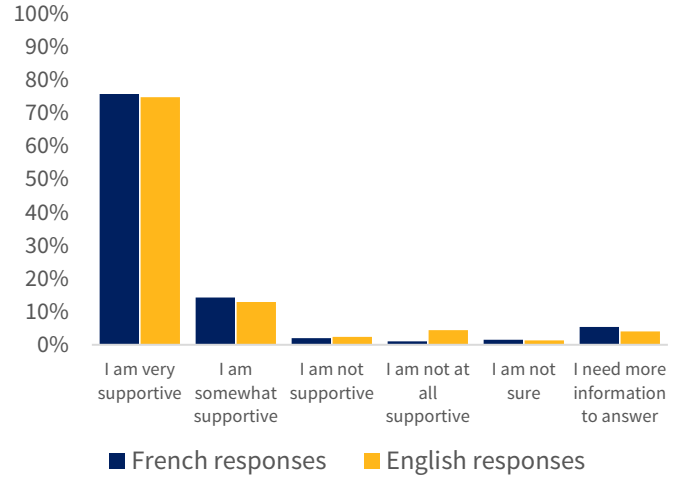
Of the 1,284 survey respondents, 129 self-identified as Métis, eleven self-identified as First Nation, and two self-identified as Inuit. That's eleven percent of survey respondents who self-identified as an Indigenous person, slightly lower than 12.4% identified in the 2021 census (Statistics Canada).

Figure 2: Comparing English and French support

What is your level of support for the option for the City to remain the owner of both buildings and enter into a long-term lease with a community organization to manage the buildings?

English responses: 837, 217 skipped

French responses: 203, 27 skipped



When asked for the first three characters of their postal code, the most common response was R2H (33% or 293 of 886 respondents), which is in Saint-Boniface. See Appendix G for a postal code map of who we heard from. Those who live in the R2H area were no more likely to recognize the importance of the buildings than the rest of survey respondents. See Figure 3 for a comparison.

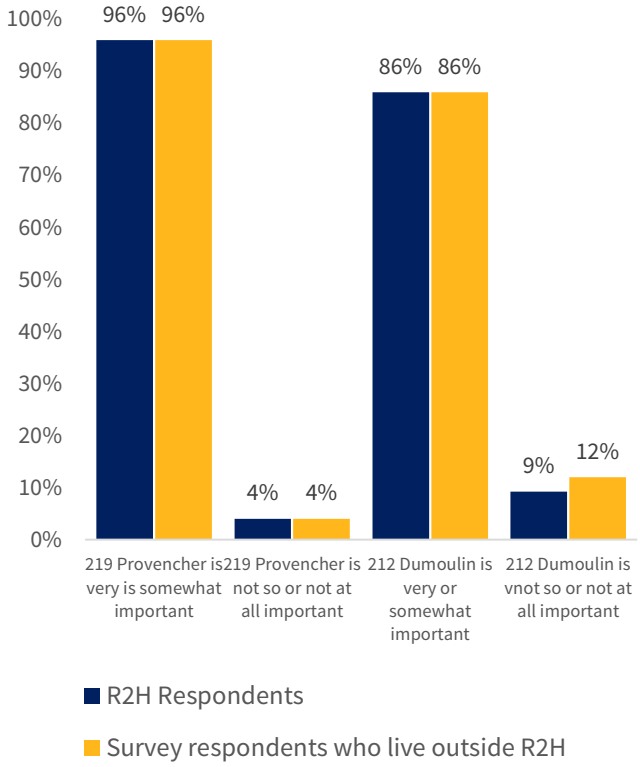
Figure 3: Comparing R2H residents with other survey respondents

How would you rate the overall importance of 219 Provencher Blvd. and 212 Dumoulin St.

R2H responses: 293

Responses from those who does not live in R2H: 593

**The response numbers above reflect those who self-identified their postal code. 398 respondents skipped the question asking for the first three characters of their postal code.*



What we heard

We heard from most participants that the preservation of the buildings is important and that there were a number of amenities and potential requirements for the City to consider when determining a long-term lease.

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We asked survey and workshop participants to come up with three words to describe how they want to experience when they visit in the future. The most common words were history and community. Figure 4 is a word cloud of the words we received, with the largest words representing the most common responses.

Figure 4: Word cloud from words provided by survey and workshop participants
Question: Provide three words to describe what you want to experience when you visit in the future



When asked what would serve the community into the future, survey and workshop participants provided a range of responses. See Appendix H for a breakdown of themes. The top five themes were:



Public Services

307 ideas, including:

- Daycare
- Services for unhoused residents
- Newcomer services
- Youth services
- Senior services
- Indigenous services



Commercial space

301 ideas, including:

- Restaurant/Café/ Brewery
- Grocery store
- Shops
- Hotel
- Low-cost rent for local businesses
- Language services



Public Space

193 ideas, including:

- Rental space
- Outdoor space
- Markets
- Museum



Arts and Culture

117 ideas, including:

- Gallery space
- Studio space
- Performance space
- Space to learn about and create art



Housing

117 ideas, including:

- Affordable housing
- Mixed-generational housing
- Co-operative housing

(14 respondents specifically noted this should not be housing)

When asked what it means to reflect francophone culture and heritage, the top themes were:

1. Represent, acknowledge, and preserve francophone history
2. Incorporate francophone art
3. Include French language

> "D'être chez soi, refléter qui nous sommes. De resentir l'esprit de la francophonie d'hier et d'aujourd'hui en entrant dans l'établissement"
> "To be at home, to reflect who we are. To feel the spirit of the Francophonie of yesterday and today when entering the establishment" – survey participant

Table 2 highlights some of the feedback received and provides a response to the feedback and how it was considered in determining recommendations for the future of 219 Provencher Blvd. and 212 Dumoulin St.

Table 2: What we heard and how it was considered

What we heard	How it was considered
Key stakeholders and workshop participants noted the importance of the buildings for a number of reasons and that they not be listed as surplus.	The Public Service recommends that the surplus status of 219 Provencher Blvd. and 212 Dumoulin St. be rescinded.

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What we heard	How it was considered
Most participants provided feedback that the buildings are important and noted their historical, cultural and architectural value. Key stakeholders also noted the duty of the City to maintain these assets as a public good and that they be accessible to the public. Survey respondents who did not see their importance (5 percent for 219 Provencher Blvd. and 12 percent for 212 Dumoulin St.) noted the cost to taxpayers and an interest in private uses.	The Public Service recommends that the City maintain ownership of the buildings and proceed with steps to establish a long-term lease to ensure the buildings are well maintained.
Most survey respondents (about 70% or 838 of 1,203) believe it is critically important to preserve 212 Dumoulin St. and 219 Provencher Blvd. as part of the Saint-Boniface Civic Square.	The Public Service recommends moving forward with a long-term lease agreement, which will include discussions around broader management of the entire site to reflect the importance of the Saint-Boniface Civic Square as a unified property.
Participants brought forward plenty of ideas for potential services and uses for the buildings in the future.	Ideas around public services, commercial space, public space, housing, and arts and culture will be considered in the next steps of drafting a long-term lease agreement, should Council approve the Public Service's recommendations.
A long-term lease with a community organization was the most supported option by workshop participants and the first choice by survey participants (over half of survey respondents).	The Public Service recommends developing criteria for a long-term lease agreement that includes involvement of the Société de la francophonie manitobaine.
Ensuring the future buildings reflect francophone culture and heritage was brought up throughout the engagement process. Survey respondents raised that this should be done through preserving and acknowledging history, and through incorporating francophone art and language.	Ideas around ensuring the buildings reflect francophone culture and heritage will be considered in the next steps of drafting a long-term lease agreement, should Council approve the Public Service's recommendations.
Survey participants saw the importance of all the proposed requirements raised by key stakeholders. They saw "The organization must create a welcoming space for everyone." As the most important (77% very important; 17% somewhat important) and "The organization must convert to a green/sustainable building." as the least important (30% very important; 42% somewhat important).	The ideas for lease requirements raised by key stakeholders and participants will be considered in the next steps of drafting a long-term lease agreement, should Council approve the Public Service's recommendations.

What we heard	How it was considered
Indigenous recognition, representation, and reconciliation were brought up by participants, especially in terms of recognizing Métis people. Including services for Indigenous people (12 comments), reflecting Indigenous art, culture, and heritage in addition to francophone (26 comments), and including requirements for reconciliation (7 comments) were all heard through open-ended responses to the survey.	The ideas for lease requirements raised by key stakeholders and participants will be considered in the next steps of drafting a long-term lease agreement, should Council approve the Public Service's recommendations.
When asked about other requirements a future owner or lessee should be responsible for, survey respondents noted the importance of ensuring buildings are well maintained and recognizes the duty to serve the community throughout the lease.	The ideas for lease requirements raised by key stakeholders and participants will be considered in the next steps of drafting a long-term lease agreement, should Council approve the Public Service's recommendations.
Stakeholders, workshop, and survey participants brought forward ideas around a Board or francophone oversight body to ensure ongoing community input into the future of the buildings.	The Public Service recommends establishing an advisory board that includes the Société de la francophonie manitobaine to ensure consistent and meaningful ongoing community input .
Workshop participants suggested establishing a trust to fund building upgrades and ongoing maintenance.	If a property manager is selected for the buildings through a long-term lease agreement, all affected parties will evaluate what type of funding model is necessary to preserve the buildings.

Next steps

Using the feedback provided by participants and key stakeholders, the project team will make recommendations to the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development on the future of 219 Provencher Blvd. and 212 Dumoulin St.

The project team will recommend that the surplus declaration be rescinded, that an advisory board be created, and that evaluation criteria for a long-term lease be drafted. The Standing Policy Committee and Council will decide on the recommendations. The project team will update stakeholders and project subscribers on the decisions of the Standing Policy Committee and Council.

Appendices

Appendix A – Promotion examples
Appendix B – Key stakeholder organizations
Appendix C – Key stakeholder meeting notes
Appendix D – Stories
Appendix E – Survey results
Appendix F – Workshop notes
Appendix G – Maps
Appendix H – Open-ended responses analysis and themes