Minutes - Standing Policy Committee on Downtown Development - April 4, 2005

REPORTS

Minute No. 34 **University of Winnipeg - Transit Friendly Pedestrian Mall - Spence Street between Portage Avenue and Ellice Avenue**
File T

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMENDATION:

The Standing Policy Committee on Downtown Development concurred in the administrative recommendation, and recommends to Council:

1. That the City of Winnipeg endorses the University of Winnipeg Spence Street "Transit Friendly" Pedestrian Mall in principle.

2. That the Administration be authorized to work with the University of Winnipeg to develop By-law amendments and agreements required to establish Spence Street between Ellice Avenue and Portage Avenue as a "Transit Friendly" Pedestrian Mall with enhanced street level amenities.

3. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Gerbasi,

That the administrative recommendation be concurred in and forwarded to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

Carried

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On February 28, 2005, the Standing Policy Committee on Downtown Development considered a communication dated February 22, 2005, a PowerPoint Presentation, dated February 28, 2005 and a formal letter, submitted by Jennifer Rattray, Director of Strategic Initiatives, on behalf of The University of Winnipeg, requesting that the City of Winnipeg endorse in principle the University of Winnipeg's Spence Street "Transit Friendly Pedestrian Mall", which would significantly reduce vehicular traffic on Spence Street between Portage Avenue and Ellice Avenue.

Re: UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG- SPENCE STREET TRANSIT FRIENDLY PEDESTRIAN MALL

For submission to: **Standing Policy Committee on Downtown Development**

Original report signed by: **Director of Planning, Property and Development**

Report date: March 18, 2005

Recommendation(s):

1. **That the City of Winnipeg endorses the University of Winnipeg Spence Street "Transit Friendly" Pedestrian Mall in principle.**
2. **That Administration be authorized to work with the University of Winnipeg to develop By-Law amendments and agreements required to establish Spence Street between Ellice Avenue and Portage Avenue as a "Transit Friendly" Pedestrian Mall with enhanced street level amenities.**

REPORT SUMMARY

Key Issues:

- The University of Winnipeg has expressed their desire to significantly expand the student population within the downtown Campus.
- The University cannot expand without establishing new student lecture space and staff offices within the campus.
- The University would like to create a larger Campus in order to accomplish their expansion requirements, improve the Transit Service and usage, and create a safer, more walk able, vibrant, and green Campus, by establishing Spence Street as a "Transit Friendly" Pedestrian Mall.
- Conceptually, Spence Street would be changed by making it one way southbound, limiting use of the street to Transit buses, and eliminating at least 2 of the existing 4 paved lanes through landscape and streetscape improvements.
- Existing student services such as bookstore, pharmacy, restaurant, and housing services would be relocated from within the University Services Building into newly developed buildings that would face onto Spence Street.
- The expanded University with an internal "green" pedestrian mall would provide an improved more vibrant western entry image to the downtown, provide the room necessary to expand the student and staff population which may lead to increased support for downtown retail, the establishment of new student housing in the area, as well as allow for new private investment on the Campus creating an expanded municipal tax base.
- The University has engaged the Community in a series of consultation sessions that has successfully led to a consensus of support for the University's plans as well as mitigation strategies to address any remaining community concerns.
- The University has engaged the services of a Traffic Engineering firm to analyze current drop off / pick up and loading / delivery patterns, determine mitigation strategies, as well

as address the traffic and community issues that will be caused by changing Spence Street to one way (south), limiting traffic usage other than Transit buses, eliminating a significant number of on-street and off-street parking stalls, while forcing a change of existing traffic patterns around the University.

- Once the City better understands the extent of the changes necessary to accomplish the University's goals (i.e. revised traffic signage and signals, revised pavement cross section, removal of parking meters, address impacts on adjacent streets, etc.) an amendment of the Streets By-law incorporating the necessary changes may be drafted for Council approval.
- Outstanding issues with regard to the Initiative will be addressed as a part of the negotiation of future Leave and Licence and Use Agreements.
- The University is applying for implementation funding under various Programs including the Urban Partnership Agreement.

Implications of the Recommendation(s):

General implications:

	None
X	**For the organization overall and/or for other departments**
	For the community and/or organizations external to the City of Winnipeg
	Involves a multi-year contract

Comment(s):

- The implementation of the "Transit Friendly" Pedestrian Mall will improve the Transit Service to the University of Winnipeg.
- The Public Works Department has identified issues impacting mainly on snow clearing and landscape maintenance within the proposed Spence Street "Transit Friendly" Pedestrian Mall.
- Outstanding issues with regard to the Spence Street Mall will be addressed as a part of the negotiation of future Leave and Licence and Use Agreements.

Policy implications:

X	**No**
	Yes

Comment(s):

-

Environmental implications:

X	**No**
	Yes

Comment(s):

-

Human resources implications:

X	**No**
	Yes

Comment(s):

-

Financial implications:

X	**Within approved current and/or capital budget**
	Current and/or capital budget adjustment required

Comment(s):

- The University of Winnipeg has not requested funding towards the implementation of the Spence Street "Transit Friendly" Pedestrian Mall.
- Implementation of the Spence Street project including the proposed change to traffic patterns could not proceed without a source of funding being identified by the University.
- Parking meter revenues will be reduced with the elimination of several parking meters along Spence Street in order to facilitate this Initiative. It is not known at this time whether traffic and parking mitigation measures proposed by the Traffic Engineering consultant will replace or even enhance parking revenues in the area.

REASON FOR THE REPORT:

On February 28, 2005, a delegation led by Dr. Lloyd Axworthy, President and Vice-Chancellor from the University of Winnipeg appeared at the Standing Policy Committee on Downtown Development to request that the City of Winnipeg endorse the University of Winnipeg Spence Street "Transit Friendly Pedestrian Mall" concept in principle. The Presentation Brief is attached.

The Standing Committee referred the matter to the administration for review and report back.

HISTORY:

In June of 2001, a Campus Development Plan was developed by consultants for the University of Winnipeg where it was realized that there would be significant benefits to the University in the areas of safety, active programming with its community, encouragement of a vibrant streetscape and green space if the traffic on Spence Street could be significantly reduced.

Since the fall of 2004, the Planning, Property, and Development Department have been involved with the administration from the University to determine the opportunities and constraints associated with the concept of a "Transit Friendly" Pedestrian Mall being established along Spence Street.

DISCUSSION:

The Campus Concept

The University of Winnipeg (University) has recently determined that they should significantly expand the student and staff population of the University from approximately 10,000 to 14,000. Due to the extent of the proposed University expansion, the impact on downtown Winnipeg would arguably be greater than the significant and positive impact that the new Red River Downtown Campus has had on the Exchange District. In order to expand, the University requires additional classroom and office space. The existing Campus is virtually at capacity.

The Campus Concept calls for the inclusion of Spence Street within the University Campus rather than Spence being a Street that effectively bi-sects the Campus. By transforming Spence Street to a green, "Transit Friendly" Pedestrian Mall, it effectively expands the Campus area and provides the University with many options for the expansion of classrooms, student services, staff offices, as well as student and staff housing.

The University and the City Administration have cooperated on the development of the Spence Street "Transit Friendly" Pedestrian Mall since the fall of 2004. The latest concept (refer attached File Option 5A) was mutually developed between the University and Winnipeg Transit.

The Concept would see the transformation of Spence Street between Ellice Ave. and Portage Avenue as follows:

- Spence Street would become a one-way south Transit only Street.
- Spence Street would not need to be legally closed, however, vehicular use would be limited by By-law (similar to portions of Graham Ave.).
- Through design (taking into account transit, emergency vehicle, snowclearing, construction, and maintenance equipment requirements, land drainage, as well as access to utilities) the existing 4 lanes of pavement would be brought down in scale to allow for improved and increased pedestrian use, greenspace, sidewalk cafes, programmed recreational use (skateboarding, etc).
- As the majority of the property in the area is owned by the University, the design effectively increases the extent of the University Campus beyond its existing footprint from Balmoral Street to Spence Street, to span right through to include the east side of Young Street.
- The additional Campus area will allow the University more flexibility in the ultimate design of their Campus.

University Role to Date

The University has been very proactive in pursuing the implementation of the Concept. To date the University has:

- Engaged the community / neighbourhood organizations / stakeholders (including the Ward Councillor, the BIZ's, etc) / as well as students in a series of open houses and committees.

- Utilized the Institute of Urban Studies / students to conduct surveys and research that suggest that they have 83 % support for the initiative.
- Met with the Mayor and the City's Executive Policy Committee as well as held an information Workshop for individual Councillors.
- Met with key City staff / Department representatives in order to understand the issues, opportunities, and constraints associated with their proposed Initiative.
- Met with the Chief Operating Officer of Parking Services to discuss parking solutions within the Campus Precinct and surrounding district.
- Dialogued with the two property owners that have property on Spence Street (CBC and one other private resident) and gained their support for the initiative.
- Investigated possible programming alternatives and recreational activities that will bring the community to utilize and enliven the newly proposed streetscape.
- The University is currently considering the concept of a Campus Development Corporation that will be responsible to implement the Campus Plan.
- Contracted a Traffic Engineering consultant to analyze current drop off / pick up / loading / delivery patterns, as well as the impact of closing Spence Street to passenger vehicles on the surrounding streets, and to propose measures to mitigate negative impacts.
- Held meetings with the other levels of Government with regard to potential funding sources (Urban Partnership Agreement, Western Diversification, etc.).

Possible City Benefits of the Proposal

Once implemented, the University's Initiative will address several policy benefits for the City of Winnipeg including:

- Growth of the student population and staff will strengthen support for Portage Avenue and Ellice Street retail and service businesses including restaurants, clothing, book and music, and office supply stores.
- More students and staff will lead to more pedestrians, safer streets, increased vibrancy, and more transit usage. Currently approximately 60% of the students utilize transit on a regular basis.
- Additional private investment (book store, drug store, daycare, etc) along Spence Street may grow the City's tax base on campus while serving to connect University services (housing, continuing education, recreation programs) to the broader community.
- Increased greenspace in the area providing more opportunity for area residents to enjoy leisure and passive recreational pursuits while promoting new investment.
- The new expanded Campus may provide a more positive gateway image as you enter downtown while also providing an anchor destination on the western periphery of the downtown.

City of Winnipeg Considerations

The City Administration has reviewed the University's proposal. It is anticipated that the City would be required to consider the following action in order to facilitate the implementation of the Spence Street Transit Friendly Pedestrian Mall:

a) **Streets By-law**- The vehicular traffic on Spence Street would be removed through an amendment of the Streets By-law. The By-law would likely be similar to that for portions of the Graham Avenue Transit Mall. It is not known at this time if the

University will want vehicles to be allowed back onto the street after school hours or on weekends. Access for Transit buses and emergency vehicles would still be allowed. A portion of Spence Street at Ellice Street may still be required for delivery and service vehicles. The design of the street and the amendments to the Streets By-law will be impacted by the University decision concerning these matters. The City will also wish to have existing owners including the CBC and a private property owner sign off approving such amendments prior to Council consideration.

b) **Traffic Impacts**- Any amendments considered for the Streets By-law will require an analysis of the impacts of such amendments to existing traffic patterns as well as the possible negative impacts to the adjacent neighbourhood. The University has retained a Traffic Engineering consultant that is responsible to analyze the impact of the Spence street closure and increased vehicle traffic on the surrounding streets as well as drop off / pick up / loading / and delivery patterns. Specifically, there is already concern on the impact of parking on Langside Street between Ellice and Portage Avenue due to the number of neighbourhood and community activities and special events occurring at Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre. It can be difficult to find parking now considering the minimal ten car parking lot at the MERC currently available. The Traffic Engineering consultant must also consider the future additional traffic generated by an increased student and staff population and propose mitigation measures to address the negative impacts before the Administration proposes any amendments to the Streets By-law.

c) **Leave and License Agreements**-The preparation of long term leave and license agreements allowing the University access to those portions of the former Spence Street public right-of-way to accommodate the proposed uses including landscaping and streetscaping (including possible sidewalk cafes, plazas etc). Council may chose to waive the normal lease cost associated with these agreements in return for maintenance sharing, active programming, encouragement of a vibrant streetscape, and the creation of additional green space in a neighbourhood lacking in such amenity. Obviously these agreements would have to reflect the need for city and private utilities to gain access to their infrastructure for maintenance and operational considerations. Under the Encroachment By-law, Council may consider, by agreement, an encroachment of a Commercial or Unusual Nature. This would facilitate the use of Spence Street, subject to the terms and conditions of an agreement.

d) **Partnership Agreements and Programming**- Potential partnerships with the University will need to be further explored regarding the sharing of maintenance responsibilities in order to maximize the effectiveness of both City and University resources (i.e. snow clearing, urban forestry, and turf maintenance). As well, all recreational programming should be planned cooperatively to ensure maximum use of existing neighbourhood facilities and program opportunities. With the Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre in such close proximity, the City and the University will need to work in partnership along with other recreation service providers.

e) **Transit / Handi-Transit considerations**- The Initiative requires continued and on-going partnerships with Winnipeg Transit in order to improve Transit usage for the Campus including the development of a new Handi-Transit facility on Spence Street. Approximately 190 buses currently utilize Spence Street while approximately 480 buses utilize Balmoral Street on a daily basis. The possible re-location of the Greyhound Bus Terminal from Balmoral Street to the New Airport Terminal in 2009 may provide

significant opportunities for Transit and the University to partner on projects that could dramatically improve transit service to the Campus.

f) **Parking Considerations**- Recent development around the University and the proposed change to Spence Street may result in the loss of approximately 150 parking spaces. Although new parking facilities off of Young Street have been discussed, there appear to be no specific plans for new parking at this time. The City must be cognizant of this situation so that there is no added parking pressure placed on the surrounding neighbourhood. Several existing parking meters will also be removed from Spence Street to accommodate the Initiative. This may have a financial impact with reduced parking meter revenues. It is not known at this time if proposed mitigation measures on surrounding streets will replace or enhance parking revenues in the area.

g) **Personal safety** - The evening walk to a vehicle is one of the safety concerns expressed by students and staff. Fewer parking spaces closer to doors and limited drop-off at main entrances may mean that users of the University must go further into the surrounding neighbourhood to access parking. The University is considering safe walk programs and partnerships with the Downtown BIZ Patrol to address these issues.

h) **Zoning / Development Approvals**- The subject area is zoned, Multiple-Use Sector under the Downtown Zoning By-law No. 100/04. This zoning sector permits a wide range of uses, including institutional, commercial sales and services, office, residential, park and park related uses to name a few. Any development involving exterior modifications of existing buildings, streetscape development, or the construction of new buildings will require "Urban Design" approval as a part of the Downtown Design Review Process. To establish, change or expand occupancies must comply with the provisions of the Manitoba Building Code. The University has already discussed with the COO of Parking Services the possible removal of some parking meters on Balmoral Street in order to accommodate a new building entry and student drop-off zone. This new accessible entry along Balmoral Street is encouraged from an urban design perspective and it will assist in the transition of traffic patterns when Spence Street is closed.

i) **Citizen engagement and communication-** Continued consultation during the planning and implementation phases of the University Campus Plan remains imperative. The project is viewed as potentially having a very positive effect on the neighbourhood. Continued collaboration and discussion will ensure its success.

Recommendation:

The proposed expansion of the University of Winnipeg Campus will be positive for the surrounding community as well as the downtown. It is therefore recommended that Council endorses the University of Winnipeg Spence Street “Transit Friendly” Pedestrian Mall in principle, and that the Administration be authorized to work with the University to further develop their plans in advance of Council consideration of any necessary By-law amendments or legal agreements as required to ensure the success of the Initiative.

Financial Impact Statement Date: March 18, 2005

COMMENTS:

The recommendations in this report include that the City of Winnipeg endorses the University of Winnipeg Spence Street "Transit Friendly" Pedestrian Mall in principle and that the Administration be authorized to work with the University of Winnipeg to develop the necessary By-Law amendments and agreements for the approval by City Council. There are no financial implications associated with these recommendations.

"Original Signed By"
Mike McGinn, CA
Manager of Finance

IN PREPARING THIS REPORT, THERE WAS CONSULTATION WITH AND CONCURRENCE BY: LEGAL SERVICES, PUBLIC WORKS, COMMUNITY SERVICES, TRANSIT, WATER AND WASTE, PLANNING AND LAND USE DIVISION, PARKING SERVICES SOA.

THIS REPORT SUBMITTED BY:

Planning, Property and Development Department
Division: Office of the Director
Prepared by: Jim Paterson

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