

EVOQ

STRATEGIES

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Heritage and Sustainability Report

Prepared as Part of the
Blueprint for a Sustainable
Exchange District Project

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EXCHANGEBIZ

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Cover image: Exchange District, Winnipeg, Manitoba
 source: Exchange Biz

Below: Bird's Eye View of Winnipeg (1881)
 source: Library and Archives Canada

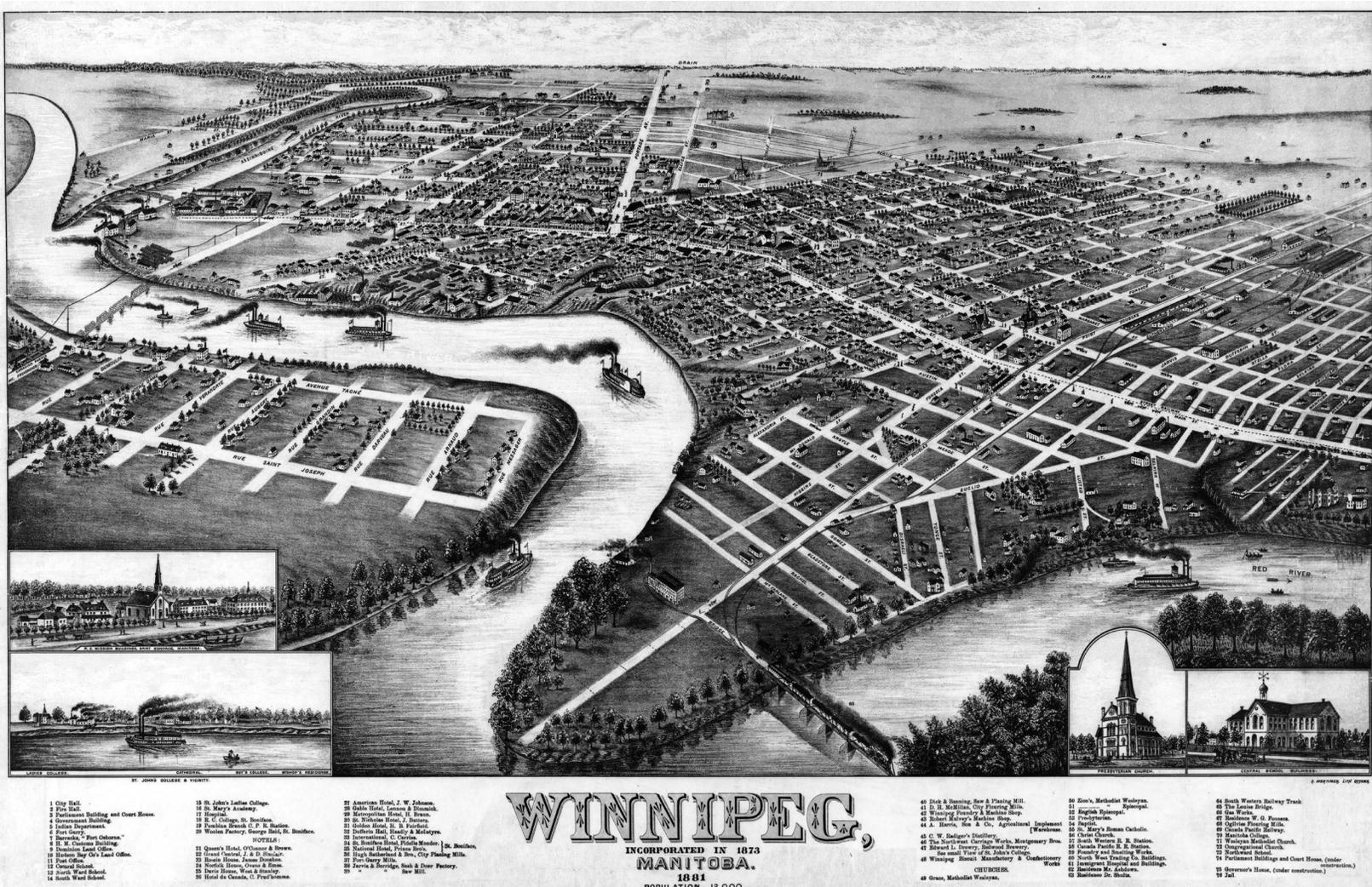


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Preamble

When EVOQ Strategies was invited by the Exchange District BIZ to provide its expertise in heritage conservation policies in the Exchange, we saw it as an opportunity to consider more closely the complexities of managing a historic environment in an evolving urban environment. Together with our energy efficiency partner, Carrig Conservation International, we looked at Winnipeg's heritage as an exceptional asset for the future.

A number of tools have been applied in past years to heritage properties in Canadian cities and abroad, be they related to protecting heritage districts, approaching management as urban landscapes, or considering the historic fabric in planning policies. These policies tend to favour an approach that either focuses primarily on heritage values to the detriment of other aspects of urban planning or are too imprecise to have a clear role in building neighbourhoods.

In the past decade, with the rise of significant economic, social, and environmental challenges, the international community has focused on sustainability. It developed international agreements that describe the means to achieve it in a range of contexts. These agreements all have in common that they integrate the conservation of cultural heritage within a broader set of policies. To achieve any sustainability goal whether environmental, economic, or social, the conservation of cultural heritage also has to be achieved.

Canada has signed on to these agreements, and many cities independently have adopted them. However, the integration of cultural heritage conservation as part of sustainability strategies is still in its infancy. The development of a vision and planning blueprint for Winnipeg's Exchange represents an ideal context to understand how to integrate cultural heritage in a sustainable planning framework.

With this report, which primarily aims to identify the potential intersections between sustainability and cultural heritage conservation, Winnipeg can once again demonstrate its ability to lead the way in shaping urban environments.

Christophe Rivet,
Director, EVOQ Strategies

1. Context

AN EXCEPTIONAL BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The Exchange District (the Exchange) is one of Canada's most remarkable historic urban districts, both in terms of the quality of the streetscapes and buildings as well as its reflection of the country's pre-World War I development. Set on its own street grid, the buildings spanning the 1880s to the First World War capture the planning concepts, architectural styles, and constructive systems found in central Canada and the Midwestern United States.

The high level of authenticity and conservation of the Exchange speaks to the adaptation of the area to changing economic forces, the versatility of the building typologies, stable metropolitan growth patterns, and the valuing of the Exchange since the 1970s. Despite a century of changing economic realities, the Exchange has remained largely a productive ecosystem where buildings that once dealt with the trading and storing of grain and dry goods now hosts a range of cultural production and commercial activities, while including rehabilitated and new residential units.

AN INTEGRATION OF HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

This report focuses on preserving these heritage and urban qualities. What it also aims to do is contribute to a sustainable approach to urban planning, one that considers the integrated nature of economic, social, cultural, and environmental realities.

There are existing international frameworks that guide the relationship between cultural heritage and sustainability, including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (2015), the Sustainable Development Goals (2015), its city focused framework, the New Urban Agenda (2016), the UNESCO Recommendations on Historic Urban Landscapes (2011) and on Culture for Sustainable Urban Development (2016). These frameworks acknowledge and demonstrate the relationship between a healthy and dynamic city and the conservation of heritage. This integration has made its mark in Europe and the US. It has yet to be fully considered in Canada, making Winnipeg a pioneer in the country.

A FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Urban trends by 2030, both around the world and in Canada, point towards the same reality: most people will live in cities, exerting pressure on social cohesion, resources, space, and economic opportunities. Cities have to adapt within their means but without a clear vision and innovation, the challenge is going to be important.

An approach focused on sustainability integrates all the considerations that are typically associated with municipal realities, including transportation, waste management, social inclusion, economic opportunities, and infrastructure. It spurs efficiency, innovation, and leverages the full abilities of policies and investments. Having a picture that connects the dots, makes for better use of resources and outcomes that are more effective.

With this goal in mind, this report considers the matters of heritage conservation through the lens of sustainability. This means that in considering the necessary tools to achieve conservation, this analysis aims to achieve positive economic, social, environmental, and cultural impacts.

1.1. HERITAGE AND THE VISION

Heritage is one of the building blocks of the vision outlined in the 2021 Exchange Plan prepared for the Exchange BIZ. It is critical to its identity, something that adds a unique value to Winnipeg that sets it apart from other neighbourhoods and that distinguishes the city nationally and internationally. It generates economic and social value for the city providing it with an asset around which to build additional value. It is embedded in the vision and states that

[...] Building on its incomparable character, acclaimed historic buildings, and the community of entrepreneurs, artists, makers, residents, businesses, and visitors that bring those buildings and streets to life, [the] Plan envisages the Exchange's enduring evolution as a celebrated urban destination and an animated, inclusive, and sustainable complete community.

Figure 1: Historic illustration of McDermott Ave. looking East. Winnipeg, Mon. (1908-1916)
Source: PastForward (Winnipeg's digital public history)



1.2. OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND OUTCOME

This report's objective is to scope out the key policy elements related to heritage conservation and to consider the role of heritage in the development of a framework for a sustainable neighbourhood in the Exchange. Looking at how to make the neighbourhood environmentally, economically, culturally, and socially sustainable and preserve its heritage identity. The analysis stands on its own and contributes to the overarching planning framework being developed simultaneously.

It achieves this by reviewing key tools in use in the past 20 years aimed at addressing the conservation of significant properties. The analysis resulting from this review identifies successes, gaps, and adjustments in order to achieve the city's stated objective of preserving heritage.

This analysis includes a secondary objective, which is to assess interest and support for a Heritage Conservation District (HCD) amongst stakeholders. The city has currently one recently designated HCD at Armstrong Point. The differences between the two neighbourhoods are considered in this analysis as well as the particular mechanisms of the city's HCD process.

STUDY AREA

The Plan Area is situated within Treaty 1 territory on the original lands of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation. The Plan Area corresponds to past planning definitions of the Exchange within the official boundaries of Downtown Winnipeg. The operational boundaries of the Exchange District BIZ and the National Historic Site fall within the area.

The study area covers two overlapping zones namely the Exchange, the larger one of the two with over 300 buildings from various periods, as well as a transitional zone that surrounds it and connects the Historic Core adjoining neighbourhoods. The National Historic Site is part of the Exchange and primarily includes turn of the century buildings, which justify its national significance. (see Figure 2 below for details).

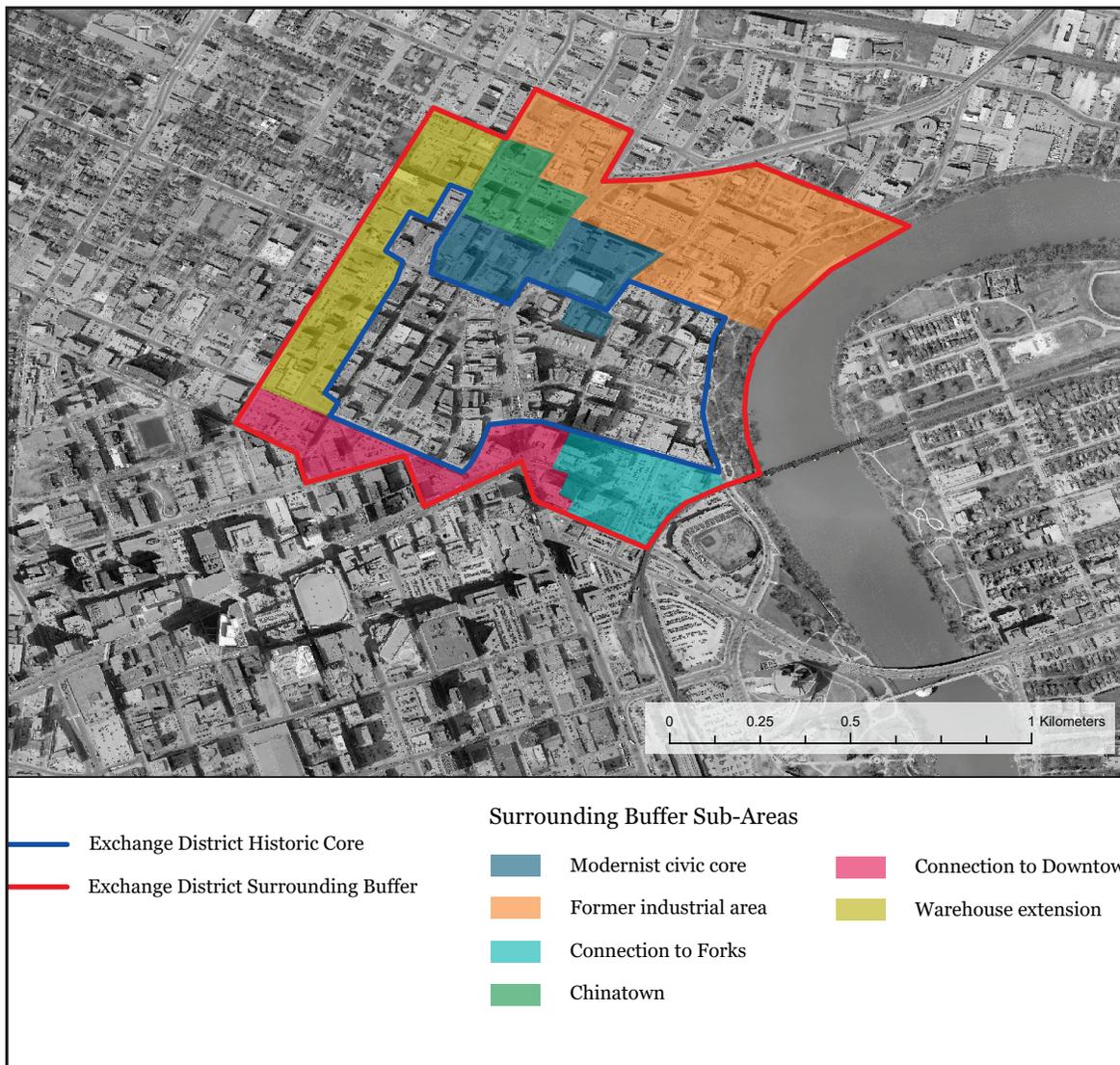


Figure 2: Exchange District Sub Areas

SCOPE

In pursuing the objectives, the scope of the review focused on:

Municipal plans and bylaws;

- Our Winnipeg 2045
- Complete communities 2.0
- Historical Resources By-law (55/2014)
- Heritage Conservation Districts (HCD) By-law (87/2018)
- Downtown Zoning By-law (100/2004)
- Vacant Buildings By-law (79/2010)
- Centreventure;

Incentive programs;

- Heritage Conservation Grant Program (Winnipeg)
- Gail Parvin Hammerquist Fund City-Wide Heritage Program (Winnipeg)
- Heritage Tax Credit Program (Manitoba) Heritage Resources Conservation Grant Program (Manitoba)
- Heritage Grants Program (Manitoba)
- Building Envelope Program (Efficiency Manitoba)
- National Cost-Sharing Program for Heritage Places (Parks Canada)

While this report considers some past heritage related policies once in place for the Exchange, the primary focus is on policies in force in the past 20 years. This is because policy environments typically evolve as ecosystems, meaning that one policy is typically tied to another and themselves to an overarching policy direction (e.g. an official plan). While it may be informative to consider the success and failures of past policies, they cannot be reproduced identically.

The scope of the recommendations considers the pillars of sustainability, meaning that to achieve this, policies have to integrate economic, social, cultural, and environmental considerations. Through these lenses, heritage conservation is achieved in ways that are supported by complimentary policies and confirms the contribution of heritage to achieving a socially, culturally, economically, and environmentally vibrant neighbourhood. The recommendations are high level and address the trends and pressures outlined for the neighbourhood.

OUTCOME

Since this is a first scoping report, the analysis results in high level recommendations on approaching heritage conservation from a sustainability perspective. They identify issues that constrain action and the path towards addressing these constraints.

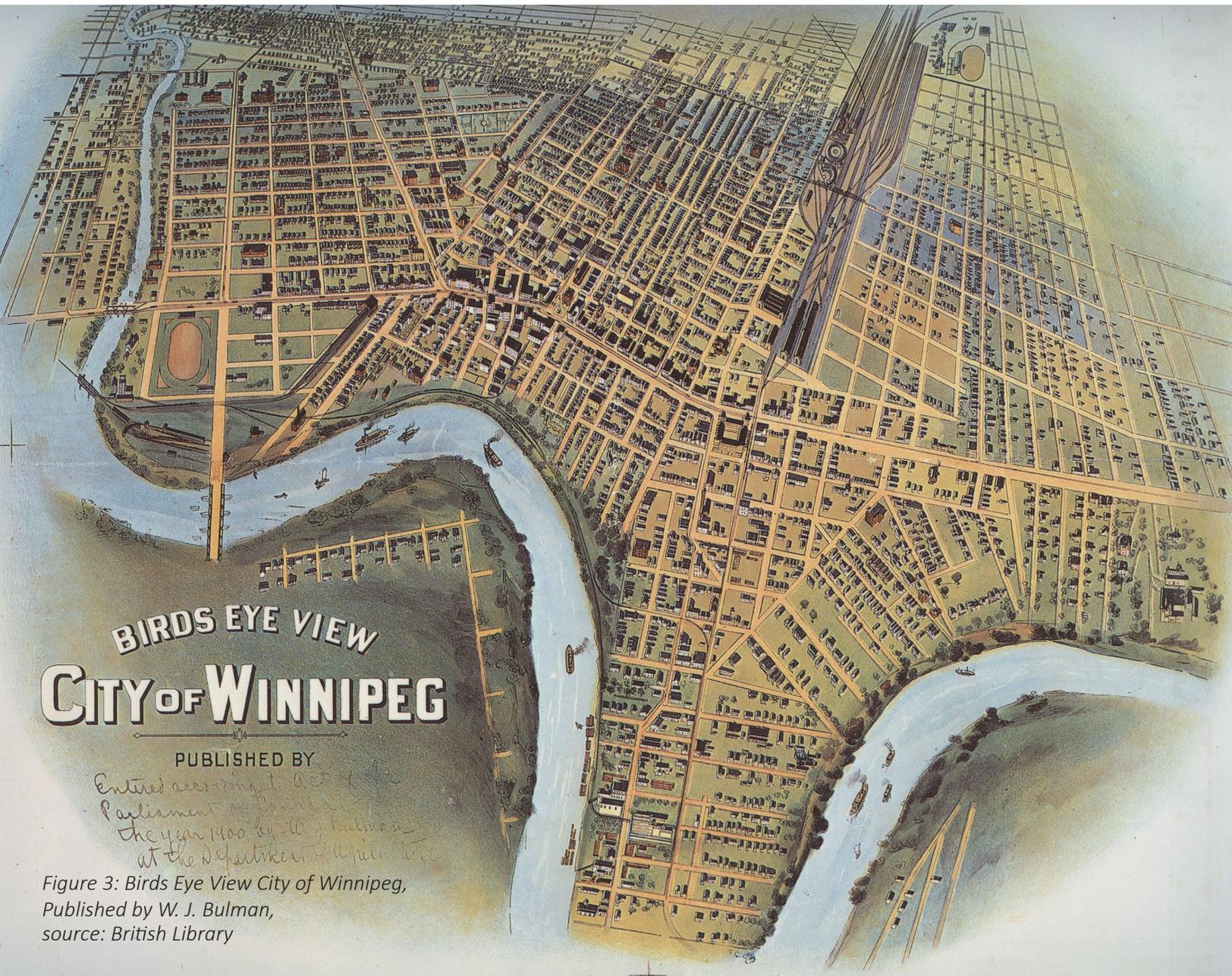
More specifically, it explores paths to the implementation of measures that can contribute to the area's enhancement as it transitions into a mixed-use urban community. These measures aim to help stakeholders confront the challenges of guiding appropriate development through new development to the rehabilitation of heritage properties, from targeting vacancy and demolition through neglect to understanding the ingredients that give life to the neighbourhood.

1.3. ROLE OF HERITAGE IN EXCHANGE DISTRICT PLANNING

Heritage is central to planning in the Exchange because the district and many of its individual buildings are recognized federally, provincially, and municipally for their value. The significance of these designations is an asset that no other neighbourhood or city in the country can claim or reproduce, placing the Exchange in a unique position.

The role of heritage in that context is to become a value to build on, to enhance, and to preserve for the Exchange to retain its advantage. Heritage is often perceived as an obstacle to overcome and a constraint on development. Here, stakeholders and the city alike recognize the potential for economic, social, and environmental benefits, but harnessing it remains a challenge. The difficulty of navigating planning processes and expectations, leveraging assets, and coordinating development opportunities makes heritage assets a misunderstood opportunity for the Exchange to fully blossom into a desirable neighbourhood.

The role of heritage assets in the Exchange planning exercise is to facilitate the unlocking of economic opportunities and contribute to the well-being of its residents and users.



BIRDS EYE VIEW
CITY OF WINNIPEG

PUBLISHED BY

*Entered according to Act of
Parliament in the year 1900 by W. J. Bulman
at the Department of Agriculture*

Figure 3: Birds Eye View City of Winnipeg,
Published by W. J. Bulman,
source: British Library

2. Methodology

The methodology both reviews key elements of existing policies and sets the stage for identifying the intersection between heritage and sustainability.

It focuses on four core methods:

- Gathering data through a review of documents that survey past and existing policies;
- Comparing the Exchange District with relevant urban heritage environments in Canada;
- Engaging with specific stakeholders; and,
- Analysing the intersection between heritage conservation and sustainability.

These four methods allowed an overview of the specificities and needs of the Exchange to be able to provide general recommendations on integrating the conservation of cultural heritage in a sustainability framework.

DEFINITIONS

This report focuses on considering the sustainability of the neighbourhood and the policies guiding its evolution while achieving the conservation of cultural heritage. In this report:

Sustainability is to be understood as approaches that aim to achieve a better world based on a holistic view of how societies function. Guided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals, this idea is critical to leaving no one behind and integrating the main ingredients of a healthy community by meeting their environmental, economic, social, and cultural needs.

Conservation is the umbrella term that refers to how cultural heritage can be preserved, rehabilitated and restored. The definition applied in this report is the one in use in the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, namely that it refers to

“All actions or processes that are aimed at safeguarding the character- defining elements of a cultural resource so as to retain its heritage value and extend its physical life. This may involve “Preservation,” “Rehabilitation,” “Restoration,” or a combination of these actions or processes.” (S&Gs 2010, p.253)

2.1. DATA GATHERING

The review of documents considered the planning landscape, current policies and incentives within the regulatory framework associated with heritage conservation in the Exchange. The emphasis was on establishing a base understanding of the tools and strategies currently applied by the different decision-making bodies.

The following documents were reviewed:

- Our Winnipeg 2045
- Complete communities 2.0
- Historical Resources By-law (55/2014)
- Heritage Conservation Districts (HCD) By-law (87/2018)
- Downtown Zoning By-law (100/2004)
- Downtown Winnipeg Urban Design Guidelines (June 2005)
- Vacant Buildings By-law (79/2010)
- Heritage Conservation Grant Program (Winnipeg)
- Gail Parvin Hammerquist Fund City-Wide Heritage Program (Winnipeg)
- Heritage Tax Credit Program (Manitoba) Heritage Resources Conservation Grant Program (Manitoba)
- Heritage Grants Program (Manitoba)

Each document offered insight into the tools available for decision-makers and to identify gaps.

2.2. COMPARING WITH OTHER HERITAGE DISTRICTS

Policies in urban heritage environments and districts elsewhere in Canada were considered to identify comparable challenges, best practices, policies and how HCDs fit into planning and governance frameworks. The information gathered was analyzed in the context of good heritage conservation practices, a sustainable development framework, and an integrated approach to planning.

The comparable districts chosen include:

- Old Montreal Heritage Site (Montreal);
- St-Lawrence Market District (Toronto);
- Core Historic Area (Victoria); and,
- Gastown Area (Vancouver).

These four districts were selected for the type of properties that were included in those areas, as well as the role they play as historic centres in their cities. All four include publicly available policies, guidelines or orientations for their conservation.

The comparisons are high level and aim to highlight a particular heritage conservation tool or approach that helps achieve sustainability.

2.3. ENGAGING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholder engagement was undertaken in collaboration with Scatliff + Miller + Murray and the Exchange Biz. Responses from residents, business owners, and other stakeholders consulted as part of the Exchange Plan process were also considered when looking at perceptions of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the Exchange.¹

EVOQ Strategies led the specific interviews with stakeholders who are most involved and impacted by heritage conservation planning policies. The stakeholders who participated offered a cross section of those public, community, and private sector groups who are directly connected with the physical, economic, cultural, and social aspects of the Exchange.

Interview questions revolved around:

- The nature of stakeholder activities in the Exchange;
- The value of cultural heritage in their work;
- The understanding of the conservation policies, tools, and incentives;
- The experience in relation to these policies, tools, and incentives; and,
- Perceived opportunities and challenges in conserving heritage and carrying out activities.

The questions were organized under two broad themes: perceptions regarding investments and perceptions regarding heritage policies. The last theme included a discussion on the understanding and usefulness of a HCD in the Exchange.

¹ Engagement for the entire process was detailed as a supporting report to the Exchange Plan.

The highlights of the answers are listed under each theme.

Perceptions regarding investments in the Exchange

- The architecture is stimulating for projects (66% of respondents)
- The Exchange has the potential to be one of the best neighbourhoods in Winnipeg/Canada (50% of respondents)
- The restaurants, bars and events and venues are a unique draw for urban living (83% of respondents)
- Unclear guidelines for rehabilitation, redevelopment or new development (100% of respondents)
- The lack of grants and financial incentives is a major issue in dealing with properties with historic structures (100% of respondents)
- There is lack of advocacy and guidance for projects (83% of respondents)
- There is perception of hurdles and delays for projects as they move forward (83% of respondents)
- The poor condition of the area, including the condition and quality of the public realm, is not protecting or stimulating investment (66% of respondents)
- Perception of a lack of safety reduces the value of investments (50% of respondents)

Perceptions regarding heritage policies for the Exchange

- Clearer guidelines for rehabilitation, redevelopment or new development, as well as streamlined processes for approvals are necessary (83% of respondents)
- Protecting the collection of buildings is important to the quality of the Exchange (83% of respondents)
- There is little understanding of what an HCD does or would do (83% of respondents)
- A plan for the area is a priority (66% of respondents)
- There is a limited appetite for what would be perceived as new regulations (66% of respondents)
- Few respondents understood what an HCD is or how it would benefit the district (33% of respondents)

While these grouped responses are based on the perspectives of a sampling of the stakeholders, they do shed light on the perceptions regarding the relationship between heritage and development. The misunderstanding of existing and absence of critical guidelines and processes coupled with the lack of incentives for conservation place both municipal and private actors at a deficit to guide impactful and sustainable change in the Exchange.

Additionally, there is a lack of understanding of the nature of and need for an HCD. Once the terms of an HCD were explained, the tool was perceived as a potential additional administrative burden with limited justification for its positive impact to address the current perceived challenges and further adding confusion around the planning environment. The two points that were stressed included the need for clearer guidelines for guiding change in the Exchange, and a framework to entice concerted action from the private and public stakeholders to improve the area.

2.4. ANALYZING THE INTERSECTION

The analysis of the intersection between heritage conservation and sustainability is possible by applying a sustainability framework. This framework was developed by adopting the UNESCO recommendations on Culture for Sustainable Development which state that

“people-centre cities are culture-centred spaces, quality urban environments are shaped by culture, and that sustainable cities need integrated policy-making that builds on culture”.

The UN’s Sustainable Development Goals and their objectives were adapted to the urban context of the Exchange. In particular, the following was identified:

- **Themes** - *Strong Institutions / Responsible Consumption, Clean Energy & Climate Action / Reducing Inequalities & Sustainable Communities / Economic Growth & Industry and Innovation*
- **Policies and resources related to these themes** - reflecting the interrelation between the themes

Figure 4: UN Sustainable Development Goals
Source: United Nations



These SDGs are based on a holistic approach that constitutes a transversal way to connect actions and policies to different types of planning tools. The approach highlights the interconnectedness of planning policies in pursuing the sustainable development of the neighbourhood. It also demonstrates how non-heritage related policies could leverage heritage policies to achieve coherent outcomes. Together they preserve heritage and achieve sustainability. The methodology used for analysis and the recommendations proposed at the end of the report are crafted to take into account these complex relationships.

2.5. CONSIDERATIONS

This report is a high-level analysis of heritage policies in the Exchange, including an initial examination of the potential for a Heritage Conservation District (HCD). As such, some considerations limited the scope and depth of the analysis.

- **Public health guidelines and travel restrictions.** Public engagement was limited to virtual events, surveys, interviews and discussions. These approaches were successful in achieving greater diversity than traditional open houses and public consultation even though the benefits of in person interactions were not attained.
- **The scale of the engagement and the diversity of stakeholders.** Despite the greater diversity achieved, a more extensive engagement that reached out to cultural communities, Indigenous groups, and groups concerned with social services would be required over a longer period of time to fully appreciate the meaning of the Exchange to different groups.
- **The economic analysis of the data and an alignment with other initiatives and tools, such as value planning.** An in-depth understanding of the economic parameters of sustainability applicable to the Exchange would enable a study that is better grounded in its specific economic viability patterns.
- **The definition of heritage primarily focused on the built environment.** In fact, the Exchange includes other aspects of heritage, including landscapes, archaeological sites, and associations with intangible heritage. This project was not able to proceed with a detailed inventory and condition of buildings and other forms of heritage due to time and resource constraints. Further analysis of these aspects would enrich the understanding of the potential values of the Exchange and refine the analysis of impacts.
- **The collection of data specific to the buildings and the neighbourhood.** Richer detailed data would allow a substantive analysis of the environmental, economic and social characteristics of the Exchange. Additional research would make it possible to understand these characteristics and lay out sustainability programs and policies tied to its heritage character.

Even with these considerations, there is a clear path forward for the City of Winnipeg, residents and users of the area, and key stakeholders to work towards a sustainable future where cultural heritage is at the core of the evolution of the Exchange.



Figure 5: Old Market Square
source: the Exchange District BIZ

Part I

Understanding the Context of Change

3. Current Status

The Exchange includes a number of designated properties¹ and is regulated by various policies. This section describes the information that is relevant to analysis of the heritage conservation needs and sustainability objectives.

3.1. KEY INVENTORY DATA

The data was analyzed in two different zones, the Exchange District, as well as within the boundaries of the National Historic Site (see figure 6).

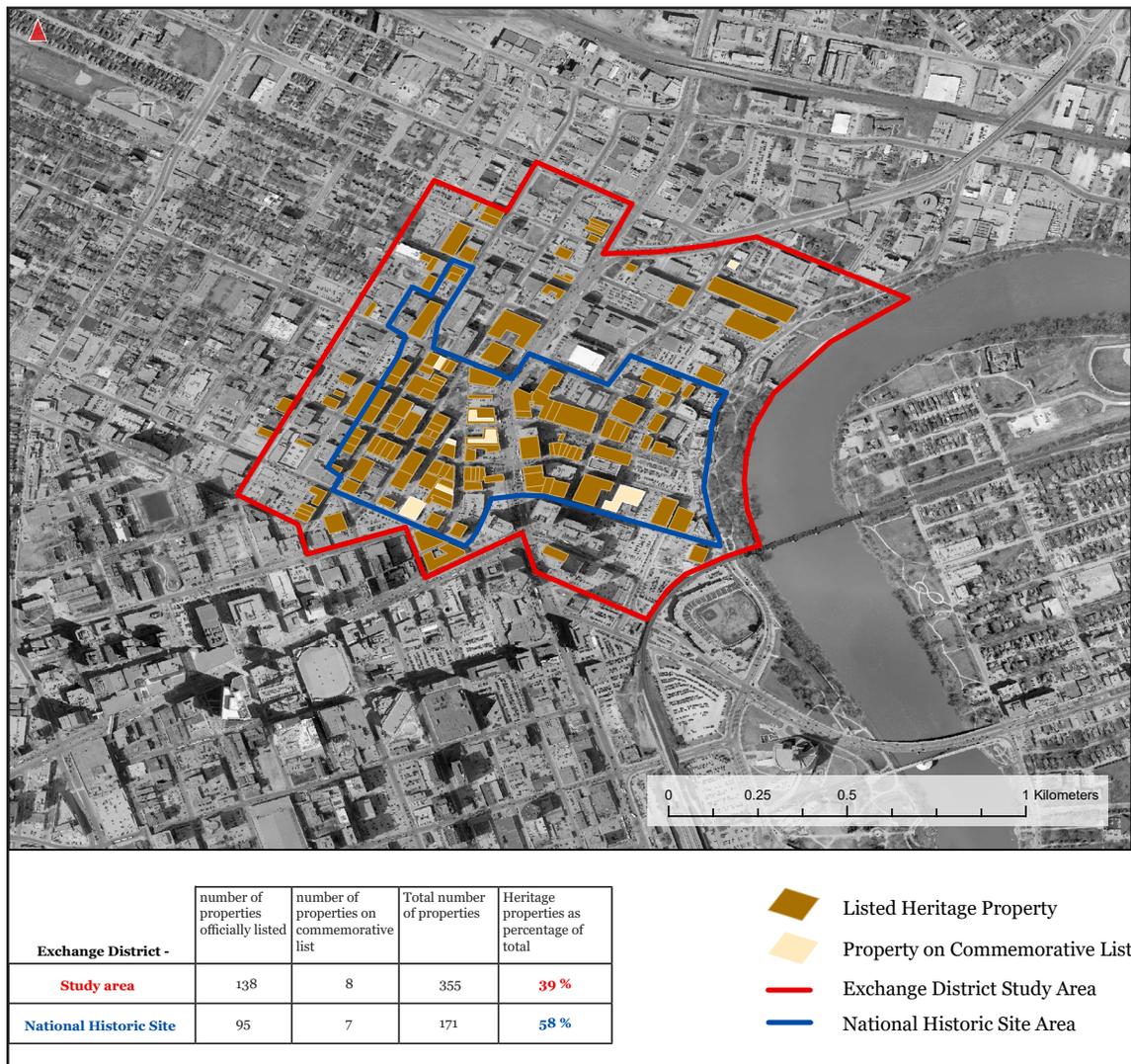


Figure 6: Heritage Properties in the Exchange District

The analysis aims to understand the overall ecosystem of policies guiding decision-making, rather than how individual properties are conserved. Data simply takes into account the number of designations and the jurisdictional authority. While many properties have heritage status, many more need to be evaluated to determine their significance. Many properties in the Exchange are National Historic Sites in their own right; however, this type of recognition is separate from municipal oversight and management of heritage.

¹Analysis reflects property divisions rather than buildings/improvements, as based on the City of Winnipeg GIS data. Consequently, some properties may include more than one building and other properties have no structures or improvements.

3.2. HERITAGE PROFILE

The study area includes a district and buildings designated or listed by the three levels of government. These include the National Historic Site, the Warehouse Character Sector as defined by the city in its downtown zoning by-law, and the individually listed buildings.

An initial survey of the area noted the potential for identifying other types of heritage properties, including landscapes, archaeological sites, and places of memory. Intangible heritage may be associated with the area, at least in the form of stories. Additionally, some areas are acquiring new meanings, such as the Alexander Docks, in planning their future.

These other forms of heritage to be recorded reflect the complex identity of the area which beyond the turn of the century architecture, speak to such character-defining elements as the industrial and waterfront use, the Indigenous connection, the long-standing human presence, and labour movement related events. Lastly, while seen as a closed entity delineated by designation boundaries, the historic and current connections with other parts of the city, including Saint-Boniface on the other side of the river, give meaning to many of these other values that are embedded in the Exchange.

This report focuses primarily on the built environment since the current regulatory and policy context is designed to protect and conserve that form of heritage.

NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

In 1997, the government of Canada designated a portion of the Exchange District as a National Historic Site. This recognition is not accompanied by federal protection, restrictions on alterations, or any federal approvals during planning processes. In fact, the protection is provided in part by a municipal By-law, the Downtown Winnipeg By-law (100/2004) which establishes the National Historic Site boundaries in its zoning mechanism.

The Commemorative Integrity Statement (CIS) for the Exchange District, drafted in 2001, stresses the importance of treating the Exchange as an ensemble and that its significance stems from the collection of buildings more than from individual buildings. The CIS also notes the importance of streetscapes, street elements, archaeological sites, and objects.

PROVINCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage sites of provincial significance are designated under the Heritage Resources Act. The emphasis is on individual buildings and their architectural value. There are three properties designated for their provincial significance.

MUNICIPAL RECOGNITION

Municipal designation is enabled by the Heritage Resources Act and recognizes the significance to the community. There are 118 properties listed as heritage resources within the study area boundary. All recognize an architectural significance.

In the case of the City of Winnipeg, the protection of individual properties is outlined in the Historical Resources By-law (55/2014). In the case of individually listed buildings, the conservation of character-defining elements is prioritised and measures to mitigate impacts to those elements are considered in rehabilitation or redevelopment projects.

The large concentration of designated properties in the Exchange, particularly those protected at the municipal level, are partly the consequence of limited tools for protecting heritage resources at a larger scale. While the National Historic Site is recognized in the Zoning By-law, prior to the 2018 HCD By-Law, individual property designation was the only legal mechanism to directly protect Heritage Resources in areas such as the Exchange.

3.3. HERITAGE PLANNING

Heritage permitting is the primary mechanism in heritage planning to conserve historic properties. High level planning documents, such as Our Winnipeg 2045 and Complete Communities 2.0, outline visions and policy guidelines that include heritage conservation and the Downtown Winnipeg Zoning By-law provides a mechanism for establishing a planning foundation. This section examines how policies address heritage planning in the study area.

HERITAGE PERMITTING

There is no mechanism that ensures a cohesive approach to conserving the heritage resources of federal, provincial, and municipal significance. The common denominator is a permitting process and the use of the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*, prepared with the participation of Manitoba, and adopted at both the provincial and municipal levels. These provide the foundations for intervening on heritage properties, sites and districts.

The municipal permitting process relies on the guidance provided by the Historical Buildings and Resources Committee, which is chaired by a City Councillor and includes appointees from the City, Province of Manitoba, Government of Canada, Manitoba Association of Architects, Manitoba Association of Landscape Architects, Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Manitoba, and citizen members at large. Their mandate covers a range of heritage related matters, including the allocation of funds from incentives.

Provincially designated properties require a heritage permit to be obtained from Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism before undertaking any physical alterations. There are three provincially designated properties in the Exchange, for which Provincial permits processes apply. The Heritage Resources Act is subject to municipal zoning by-laws and provincially adopted Building Codes.

At a municipal level, a heritage permit is required when interventions are considered, such as:

- A new addition to a building that is on the List of Historical Resources;
- Maintenance and restoration of character-defining elements, such as re-painting, mortar re-pointing, building cleaning, re-roofing, and window repair, etc.;
- Alterations to character-defining elements, such as the re-construction of an element that has deteriorated, alterations required by code upgrades, etc.;
- Installation of new signage or lighting, on a building that is on the List of Historical Resources.

There are currently no Exchange specific guidelines to support the analysis of infill proposals or alterations. The Standards and Guidelines are relied on to guide the development of proposals from developers and their analysis by the permitting officers.

Beyond individual listings, areas comprised of multiple properties can be protected as districts via the recently implemented Heritage Conservation Districts (HCD) By-law (87/2018). Heritage planning plays a role through the Heritage Permit process for listed historical resources and properties within an HCD. Armstrong's Point is currently the only HCD. The plan that accompanies the listing provides guidelines for alterations, typical of a mature residential neighbourhood in Winnipeg. The policies and guidelines reflect the character of the neighbourhood, specifically the values and character defining elements of that district. HCD plans are written at the scale of the ensemble and do not replace or take precedence over individual designations.

It is important to note that unlike in other provinces; heritage protections in Manitoba do not replace or take precedence over subsisting zoning or other municipal powers granted by the legislature.² This means that HCDs are an additional layer that allows for detailed guidelines for district character-defining elements to be conserved, however they do not necessarily address height, density or land uses.

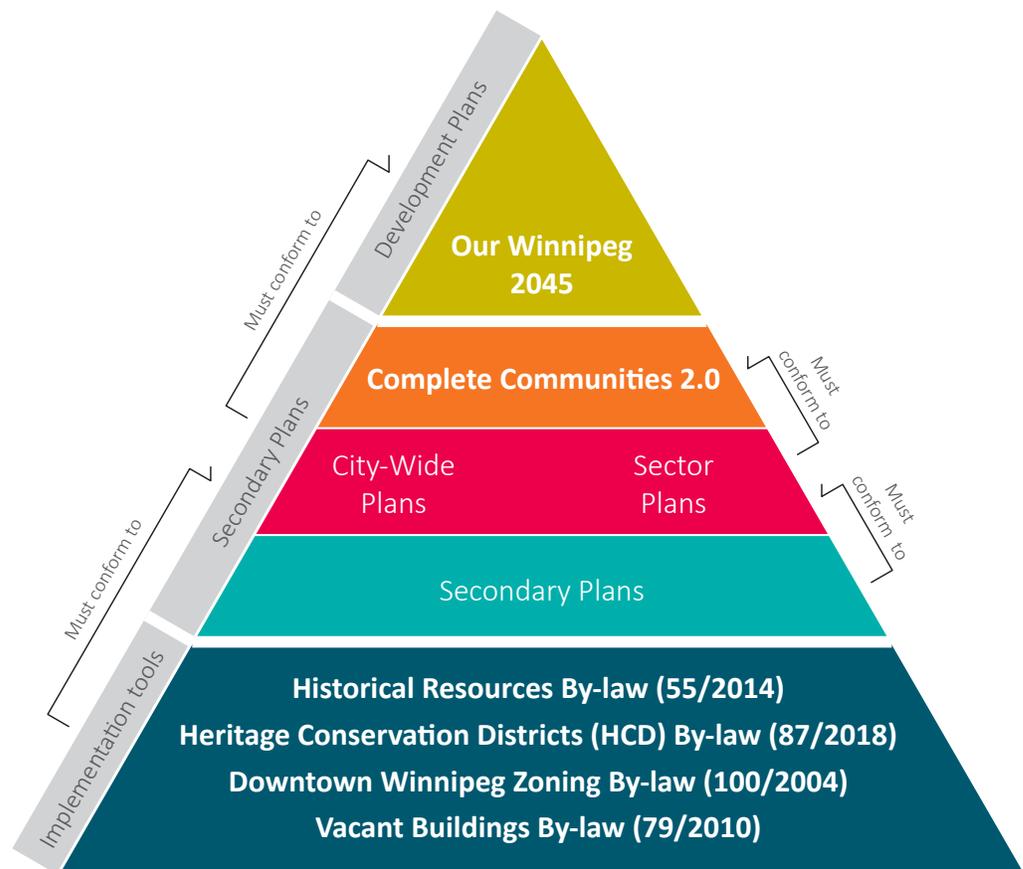
3.4. PLANNING AND HERITAGE

The City of Winnipeg has a number of policies currently in force that affect the evolution of the Exchange, such as Our Winnipeg, Complete Communities, and the zoning plan. None, however, are specific to the neighbourhood and few consider heritage conservation as embedded in planning. These plans are broader in scale, and set direction for planning and development at a scale that goes beyond the Exchange. A more detailed description of the different plans is included in the Exchange Plan prepared by Scatliff + Miller + Murray.

To understand the relationships and authorities associated with each planning tool, the following diagram illustrates the hierarchy of plans and implementation tools that guide planning processes and actions.

This diagram places Our Winnipeg at the top of the pyramid as the overarching guiding document that applies to the entire city. It identifies implementation tools, such as by-laws, district plans, and agreements, at the bottom. Lastly, since each level must conform to the policies above it, it highlights the role of secondary plans and by extension the missing link that connects the implementation tools to the guiding documents. The following short descriptions highlight the place of sustainability and heritage conservation in relevant guiding municipal documents.

Figure 7: Hierarchy of municipal plans guiding the planning of the Exchange



²Article 64 of The Heritage Resources Act (1986) C.C.S.M. c. H39.1

OUR WINNIPEG 2045 POLICIES

Many of the goals, objectives and policies in *Our Winnipeg 2045* are relevant to the future of the Exchange. Many of the high-level policies touch on economic development, transportation, support for the cultural sector and residential development, and climate resiliency in particular. The plan's goals and policies are explicitly linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which provides a transversal approach illustrating how policies can contribute to multiple goals.

Our Winnipeg 2045 includes five policies that address heritage specifically³. These policies connect heritage conservation with the good health and well-being of citizens, city building, economic vitality, leadership, education, stewardship and leadership, truth telling and reconciliation, sense of place and the conservation of heritage resources and districts.

COMPLETE COMMUNITIES 2.0

Complete Communities 2.0 is a direction strategy that is a sister document to *Our Winnipeg 2045*. Policies are more detailed with spatialized information organized thematically as Transformation Areas and Urban Structure Supports.

Much like in *Our Winnipeg 2045*, many of the policies in the *Complete Communities 2.0* policy speak to residential enhancement, transportation and economic vitality. The plan identifies downtown as a Transformative Area that overlaps with a significant portion of the Exchange. Furthermore, the plan's Urban Structure Supports include heritage conservation as well as urban design. Both are relevant to the management of heritage environments such as the Exchange.

The goals and policies relating to heritage conservation touch on a variety of subjects ranging from planning, conservation and waste reduction, greening measures. Collaboration with stakeholders to work on leadership and the role of cultural tourism, development. A Heritage Stewardship Plan and a Conservation Management Plan are mentioned as necessary future steps.

Several policy orientations for the Downtown Transformative Area are strategically important to conserving and valuing heritage in the Exchange. Goals focusing on ensuring coordinated planning, reinforcing the area as the heart of economic activity in Winnipeg, a beautiful urban environment with quality design and a high-quality built form, and more comprehensive and coherent planning will have a positive impact on the Exchange. One of the goals focuses directly on the enhancement of the National Historic Site. The importance to move forward with Heritage Conservation Districts and the objective of integrating heritage conservation into secondary plans is also underscored, which offers a path forward for planning in the Exchange and the broader Downtown.

³ 2.14 Heritage Conservation, 3.7 Heritage Investment, 3.8 Culture and Heritage Value, 5.9 Heritage Conservation, 6.37 Heritage Conservation

ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

As mentioned, much of the Exchange falls within the Warehouse Character Sector, which is covered by the Winnipeg Downtown Zoning By-law (100/2004). The urban design review process, as stated in the by-law, “is intended to reinforce the valued current built forms in the Exchange (identified in the National Historic Site Commemorative Integrity Statement)”. Furthermore, the Downtown Winnipeg Urban Design Guidelines are outlined in a separate supporting document. Guidelines are organized around 11 urban design principles and the intent of fostering high quality design. However, the design principles remain high level.

Another element of the zoning by-law is that building height ranges from 7.62 to 30.48 metres (25 to 100 feet). This blanket height limits the height of new constructions to the one for the majority of historic properties in the area. This aims to respect the objectives of the commemorative integrity statement for the National Historic Site, which includes the “design, setting, scale, massing, height, materials, and workmanship of new developments respect and are sensitive to the cultural resources and historic values of the Exchange”

4. Broader Trends and Pressures

Because this report is an initial high-level assessment, the trends and pressures were surveyed in broad terms. These were identified based on the characteristics of an urban environment and on the specificities of Winnipeg. Since sustainability is the foundational framework, this report identifies critical factors related to the UN's sustainable development goals.

4.1. DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Internationally, the future of human settlements is described according to these three trends:

- Half of humanity lives in cities today and 5 billion people are projected to live in cities by 2030. By 2050, 70 percent of the world population is predicted to live in urban settlements.
- Rapid urbanization is exerting pressure on fresh water supplies, sewage, the living environment, and public health.
- Cities account for between 60 and 80 per cent of energy consumption and generate as much as 70 per cent of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions.

Manitoba's numbers are not very different: by 2040, population will reach an estimated 1.7M people from today's 1.3M. Currently, approximately 55% of the province's population lives in Winnipeg with a trend beyond 60% in 20 years. This marker signals a need to consider a sustainable approach to living that includes the need for housing, a healthy environment, economic drivers, social inclusion, waste management, transportation to make the neighbourhood livable.

As indicated in the Scatliff + Miller + Murray Exchange District Plan 2021, the Exchange's resident population is approaching 1500. The presence of certain industries and institutions offer a picture of users of the area that includes Indigenous youth and emerging professionals (e.g. through the Red River College), office workers, young tech developers, artists and creators, consumers of art performances (e.g. the concert hall, museums, and on street performances), out of city visitors, and restaurant patrons. These populations are critical to the fabric of the neighbourhood and to its future evolution.

As the neighbourhood changes to include more residents, the impact on sustainability matters related to people include access to housing and social inclusion.

4.2. HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT

Winnipeg, like most Canadian cities, has been under pressure to provide housing options as real estate prices continue to rise, its population continues to increase, and there are thousands of people on waiting lists for affordable housing. This pressure means considering where and how to create these options, the city's choices being to push for new build or rehabilitate existing infrastructure.

The Exchange has thousands of square feet of lot spaces available for development and many more for rehabilitating existing infrastructure. Surface parking lots and vacant land accounts for over 97 000 square metres of developable land in the Exchange. The context of potential growth in the neighbourhood is tied to nearby institutions (e.g. the Red River College) and the expanding creative sector and tech industry. While these will define the type of resident, such as students and industry workers, they do not reflect specifically the attractiveness of the neighbourhood.

Offices, small store spaces, restaurants, and bars predominantly define the profile of the neighbourhood with pockets of housing consisting of condominiums and apartments. There are significant gaps for services that cater to residents such as grocery stores and schools, which require sufficient density to appear. Developers working on apartment buildings, which are

densifying the neighbourhood and providing new housing units, drive the real estate response. As that push intensifies, it risks raising issues of access to green spaces (i.e. parks and public spaces are required to achieve well-being in a neighbourhood) and mobility (i.e. as more people live in and interact with the area, a range of mobility options have to be considered).

The impact on other sustainability matters that need to be considered include social inclusion, waste management, access to food options, conservation of cultural heritage.

4.3. ECONOMIC DRIVERS

A changing neighbourhood is also a changing economy. In the case of the Exchange, governments have a significant presence and there are large anchor cultural and educational institutions that define its economic profile, including the Red River College, the Centennial Corporation, and various museums. In parallel, the neighbourhood has traditionally been associated with emerging artists, creators and musicians as affordable spaces (both indoors and outdoors) provide an opportunity to perform, create, and display art. As such, it has benefitted from a concentration of cultural industries that make the Exchange a recognizable cultural destination not only in Winnipeg but also to an extent Canada. Tourism to the area is driven by the presence of these institutions, activities and the marketing of the Exchange as an exceptional heritage environment. In other words, it is the place and its activities through culture that are an essential part of the neighbourhood's DNA.

The Exchange's economy also depends on a significant number of office workers, from professional firms, government departments to tech industries. Their consumption patterns and purchase power drive the presence of services to support them, such as restaurants, bars, and catering services.

Lastly, as additional development opportunities arise, the building activities themselves and the resulting new residents become additional economic drivers that might alter the current pattern. This might be negative, through disruption of activities (e.g., not having outdoor cultural events for lack of space), and positive, by introducing new permanent consumers to the area.

The sustainability factors affected by changing economic drivers include social inclusion, conservation of cultural heritage, work and economic growth, and responsible consumption and production.

*Figure 8: Public Events in the District
source: the Exchange District BIZ*



4.4. NET ZERO CARBON BUILDINGS AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY

According to a 2020 UN report, buildings consume 30% of the world's total energy consumption and emit 28% of all greenhouse gases. Add to it the construction industry's own emissions and numbers jump to 38% of total emissions. In order to reach goals of net zero infrastructure by 2050, emissions have to be cut by 50% by 2030. Addressing carbon emissions in buildings is inevitable and necessary. It is also not a simple solution of replacing existing with Net-Zero buildings.

The Winnipeg Climate Action Plan addresses the importance of low carbon and energy efficient buildings, and establishes a target of 20% reduction in energy consumption by 2030 with a long-term goal of an 80% reduction by 2050. For example, the plan speaks to the broader importance of infill development and adaptive reuse, but stops short of defining the indicators beyond aiming for an 80% diversion rate for commercial/industrial and construction waste. While a target, the plan does not go into specific detail about measuring waste diversion rates for the type of historic structures in the Exchange nor does it acknowledge the link between heritage conservation and waste diversion.

Net-Zero carbon emissions and energy efficiency are two distinct concepts that relate to buildings. The first addresses carbon emissions by accounting for both the embodied (i.e., the carbon in materials that make up the building) and operational. The second focuses on the efficiency of key materials and technologies in using the energy available, the goal being to maintain the same level or improving the outcome while consuming less energy. Focusing on addressing these issues in the Exchange is an opportunity to prepare the valuable historic fabric to impending policy priorities and to demonstrate a leadership with a national impact.

The Winnipeg Climate Action Plan sets goals for low carbon and energy efficient buildings, but does not outline measures or indicators for historic structures. The Manitoba governments' guidance *Make History. Preserve Manitoba's Past - Green Guide to Heritage Conservation* (2010) provides a framework for approaching these questions. It stands currently as the only direction on heritage conservation and energy efficiency in the province and provide high-level guidance that reflects current and emerging policy expectations for low carbon and energy efficiency. It surveys practices that are having a true impact, from small changes to bigger projects in the province of Manitoba.

Retrofits are one of the significant building changes to address energy efficiency that individuals and policy-makers can consider. However, achieving an impactful result for heritage infrastructure is challenging for a range of technical and policy reasons. Current codes and data do not reflect the way older buildings perform. Historic structures are often constructed with stronger and more permanent materials and are designed according to standards that are no longer applied. As such, it is inadequate to consider today's standards as applicable without risking issues with mould, ventilation, excess humidity, rot, and other impacts that might deteriorate the building. Moreover, applying the models for energy efficiency and carbon emissions that are based on today's materials and designs will undoubtedly skew the data against historic buildings and force unnecessarily the destruction of heritage elements. It is essential to apply models that are tailored to the materials and designs of historic buildings to get a true picture of efficiency and emissions and provide real solutions. Too often, to people's surprise, heritage buildings perform better than contemporary ones.

Lastly, energy efficiency is often measured at the level of the material (e.g., the rating of insulation). Trends are pushing towards the rating of buildings and eventually districts. Many jurisdictions in Europe and the US have already implemented buildings-based rating with an eye on improving through incentives their performance. However, it is also important to consider the generation and distribution of energy as a means to increase efficiency, where solutions such as district energy systems provide significant results for a wider area.

In response to these trends, the heritage infrastructure and particular context of the Exchange offers an exceptional opportunity for Winnipeg to lead the way by developing models that are specific to this historic infrastructure and exploring energy efficiency approaches that are adapted to the 21st century.

4.5. CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

Climate change trends in Winnipeg point towards more hot days and a shorter cold season between 2021 and 2050. In particular, the number of days above 30°C will double (from 14.3 to 30.5 days), the mean temperature will also double (from 2.9°C to 5.3°C) and the frost-free season is projected to increase by at least 20 days (from 130 to 150 days). This has an impact on buildings and the wellbeing of the residents and users of the neighbourhood. As temperatures rise, so do the number of freeze-thaw cycles. Consequently, damage to building components increases.

Winnipeg's Climate Action Plan identifies several climate-related changes that affect the city. Among those risks, three directly affect the Exchange: the impacts on City infrastructure from extreme weather events, strain on the electrical caused by increased cooling requirements from hotter temperatures, and risks to human health associated with extremely hot summer days.

The primary measure for adaption is cooling which can be achieved through mechanical ways (e.g., air conditioning, district cooling), modification of surfaces (e.g., screens, roofing material), and vegetation (e.g., increased tree canopy, greening including walls and roofs). Each of these offer opportunities to consider the impact and the improvement of the heritage infrastructure, that range from simple solutions such as greening the surroundings to more complex approaches that consider the entire neighbourhood's needs such as district energy. It would not only achieve the necessary goal of adapting to the temperature changes but also enhance the neighbourhood's attractiveness for residents and users.

Planning for climate change adaptation is the trend that signals important transformation changes for which historic environments have to prepare.

Figure 9: Greenery and the District
source: the Exchange
District BIZ



Part II

Gathering the Building Blocks

5. Analysis

This section analyses the situation in the Exchange through the sustainability lens by considering the current context as well as the trends and pressures affecting it.

It addresses planning policies and their impact on heritage as well as specifically targets transformative elements for the neighbourhood that include development, people and the environment. It also addresses a proposal for creating a heritage conservation district.

5.1. POLICY REVIEW - PAST AND CURRENT INITIATIVES AND INCENTIVES

NON-HERITAGE POLICIES

The high-level policies included in *Our Winnipeg 2045* position heritage as an important part of Winnipeg's future. Plan objectives speak to the conservation of resources and different districts, making connections to adaptive re-use and carbon neutrality. Incentives and the importance of conservation are mentioned, as are the broader role of cultural heritage contributing to the economic vitality of the city, its contribution to a sense of place, as well as its potential for truth telling and reconciliation. The policies are high-level but offer direction on the place of heritage.

The connection of goals, objectives and policies to the UN SDGs allows the plan to be more anchored than many municipal plans across Canada. While there is plenty for ambition, forward looking vision and broad strokes, *Our Winnipeg 2045* discusses heritage in a strategic and meaningful way that focuses on how heritage resources can perform as assets for Winnipeg for identity and sense of place as well as a low-carbon built environment.

Even if *Our Winnipeg 2045* is a very high-level plan, it establishes direction for what other policies must aim to achieve. Consequently, heritage planning, investment in the Exchange's assets and their positioning for identity and environmental resilience can all support Winnipeg's contribution to the SDGs.

HERITAGE RELATED POLICIES

Investing in infrastructure, either new or for its maintenance, is a wise approach to both public and private asset management. This is equally true for infrastructure that has heritage value. Additionally, heritage infrastructure generates measurable additional social, economic, and environmental benefits for communities and cities, each responsive to its specific urban context.

Based on this, investing in heritage conservation is an investment in urban infrastructure, contributing to a neighbourhood's wealth, well-being, and sustainable evolution. When the asset is in public hands, the responsible government agency can measure its investments in ways that directly meeting its mandate of public benefit. When the heritage structure is in private hands, the partnership between the public and private sectors is essential to fully leverage the benefits of conserved heritage and not irreversibly compromise an asset of distinctive value.

Those benefits are both for the private investor, since a healthy distinctive neighbourhood adds to the value of the asset, and for the public. This explains why governments need to invest in the public realm and the private sector needs to invest in individual assets in a coordinated fashion.

There are however a number of factors that act as barriers to private investments, including lower return on investment (ROI), limits on development potential, higher construction costs and the complexity of regulatory compliance. For example, projects may require greater densification in order to be financially viable, which translates into increased height, additions, and interior redevelopment. Each strategy may challenge the standards of heritage conservation and require careful analysis to accompany development in respecting the heritage values and allow it to be financially viable.

Consequently, public investment strategies, both indirectly in the public realm and directly to developers, are critical to accompany private investment and stimulate the redevelopment and restoration of historic properties and districts. The oft-cited American refundable historic preservation tax credit, has demonstrated that each dollar of tax credit leverages five dollars of private investment. There is no such program in Canada, and jurisdictions have to establish other strategies.

Over the past 40 years, several initiatives and programs have been aimed at the renewal of the Exchange. The Core Area Initiatives, the Winnipeg Development Agreement, and the creation of CentreVenture Development Corporation both aimed at revitalization. Different granting programs and measures have also supported the restoration of heritage properties.

The Core Area Initiatives were active from 1981 to 1991, and was well funded by all three levels of government. The initiative blended elements of both entrepreneurial as well as interventionist policy and focused on combining social and economic goals. Economic trends towards investments in the suburbs locally, as well as towards other cities regionally limited the success of the program. The Core Area Initiative's mandate included the Exchange.

The Core Area Initiatives were followed by the Winnipeg Development Agreement in 1996, which no longer targeted specific areas like the Exchange. Funding for the agreement was still shared by all three levels of government, and projects within the Exchange were undertaken.

CentreVenture, created in 1999, introduced a new model that focused on redevelopment of vacant and under-utilised municipal properties in the Core Area. This arms-length para-municipal organization focused on specific targeted developments that were strategic and worked towards the same broader goal of improving Winnipeg's Downtown, including the Exchange. CentreVenture has leveraged different federal, provincial, and municipal programs for projects and has been an important stakeholder for many projects in the Exchange, acting as both a developer and an advocate. Its mandate does not tie it to specific social improvement or conservation goals, as was the case with the Core Area Initiatives.

Figure 10: Banantyne
and Main
source: Exchange Biz



Subsidy programs have supported projects in conservation, adaptive re-use, as well as energy efficiency. The main programs analysed include:

- The *National Cost-Sharing Program for Heritage Places* provides matching grants for non-profit agencies within the National Historic Site (active).
- The *Commercial Heritage Properties Incentive Fund*, a former federal program for adaptive reuse of commercial heritage structures in National Historic Sites offered financial assistance up to a million dollars for privately owned commercial structures, subsidizing 20% up to a total of a million dollars (ended in 2006).
- The *Manitoba Heritage Resources Conservation Grant Program* allows for matching grants of up to \$25,000 for listed properties (active).
- The **City of Winnipeg Gail Parvin Hammerquist Fund City-Wide Heritage Program** is a municipal grant program that can grant up to \$50,000 for restoration (active).
- The *City of Winnipeg Heritage Conservation Grant Program* is a municipal grant program that can grant back 80% or municipal incremental taxes for 12 years for projects that conserve underutilized or vacant heritage buildings (active, but no longer accepting applications).
- The *City of Winnipeg Heritage Tax Credit Program* is a municipal program that can provide 100% credit on municipal taxes for 10 years (or a length approved by council) to fund restoration and adaptive re-use projects. This program does not have a fixed envelope or budget ceilings for individual projects (active, but no longer accepting applications).
- *Efficiency Manitoba's Building Envelope Program* subsidizes energy efficiency retrofits for building envelopes up to a general ceiling of \$100,000. The program covers the replacement of components, but not the restoration (active).
- **CentreVenture's Gail Parvin Hammerquist Fund is a fund administered by the organisation, that has criteria that are aligned with the fund's goals.**

Many restoration and adaptive reuse projects in the last two decades have benefitted from grants and subsidies, which made larger redevelopment projects more viable. The two most significant recent incentives, the federal Commercial Heritage Properties Incentive Fund, and the municipal Heritage Tax Credit Program leveraged millions of dollars in investment from the private sector. Unfortunately, neither of those two larger programs are available, and there are currently no comparable incentives to stimulate the investments needed for rehabilitation projects in the Exchange.

While the smaller grant programs still provide small support for conservation, the capacity to leverage these amounts is marginal. The current incentive landscape for buildings in the Exchange is essentially limited to smaller restoration grants with ceilings of \$25,000 to \$50,000. Given the scale of the heritage properties, and the condition of some properties that have suffered decades of deferred maintenance and neglect, they simply do not make a difference in financial calculations. Furthermore, increasing labour and material costs have further eroded the impact of these amounts in the past decade.

Without the necessary incentives and policies, the ability to fully leverage the values associated with heritage, generate the benefits expected from a historic environment, and nurture a sustainable neighbourhood is severely compromised.

PLANNING GAPS AFFECTING HERITAGE IN THE EXCHANGE DISTRICT

Our Winnipeg 2045 and *Complete Communities 2.0* outline goals and policy direction for Winnipeg. These policy directions have yet to be translated to the zoning and development planning level in the Exchange. Many of the broad goals will have an impact on the enhancement of the heritage resources, more inclusivity in terms of governance and accommodating different histories and perspectives in the valuing of the area. Furthermore, greening, support for the cultural sector, and aims for more residential development in the city centre, include the Exchange.

Policies for the rehabilitation of existing structures, infill development guidelines, and visions or objectives for the enhancement of the Exchange's heritage resources are not outlined in the current zoning for the Warehouse Character Sector sections of the Downtown Winnipeg Zoning By-law. Consequently, without adequate planning tools to manage the areas heritage resources with a holistic vision, a pattern of designating or listing individual properties has become the only sure way to manage properties that contribute to the overall character and quality of the built environment. Guidelines for infill projects are not adequately articulated to facilitate project approvals. Lastly, policies based on detailed analysis and character sub-areas, which would normally be the baseline for assessing projects, are lacking.

Figure 11: Pedestrians crossing at King and McDermot.
Source: Exchange Biz



5.2. LESSONS FROM COMPARABLE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENTS IN CANADIAN CITIES

Four urban historic areas were selected to examine frameworks for comparable environments. These cases were selected as they are all urban areas that include commercial and warehouse type buildings in the historic centres and are similar in scale to the Exchange. In all four cases, the areas benefit from heritage protections and a form of incentive program.



Location: **Old Montreal, Montreal**
Plan/Guidelines: General protection and enhancement plan, 2013



Location: **St. Lawrence Market, Toronto**
Plan/Guidelines: HCD Plan, 2015



Location: **Gastown, Vancouver**
Plan/Guidelines: Design Guidelines, 2002



Location: **Core Historic, Victoria**
Plan/Guidelines: Old Town Design Guidelines, 2019

Figure 12: Comparable Canadian Cities

Image sources: Montreal: Vieux-Montreal | Toronto: Wikipedia | Victoria: City of Victoria | Vancouver: The Canadian Encyclopedia

MONTREAL

Old Montreal is a heritage site, which was designated by the province of Quebec under the Cultural Heritage Act. While the area was designated in 1964, the urban, architectural, historical and archaeological values of the site have since been defined to reflect the current values approach.

The designation applies to everything within the site boundary, including façades and portions of the properties not visible from the public realm. The provincial designation supersedes local zoning by-laws and heritage authorisations are required before municipal permits are issued for alterations to properties within the perimeter.

There are currently no published guidelines or criteria for the heritage site and projects are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The newly revised Cultural Heritage Act (2021) calls for provincial directives and regulations for sites such as Old Montreal.

There is no secondary plan for the area, however the zoning by-law has been adjusted to generally reflect the current heights and densities found within the heritage site. The municipal plan for the protection and enhancement of Old Montreal identifies public investment and planning objectives to protect and enhance the area.

As the heritage protection supersedes municipal zoning, there has been less development pressure than in other areas of downtown Montreal. A long-standing history of public investment to support conservation and restoration through grants as well as high quality public spaces and streetscapes underscore the consensus for the value of conservation of this historic environment and the importance of financial incentives.

TORONTO

The St. Lawrence Market area is a Heritage Conservation District (HCD) that was designated by the City of Toronto based on values of design and physical quality, historic and associative connections, and context. The HCD plan identifies the different character sub-areas within the district and illustrates how development and change can be accommodated through policies and guidelines. Policies are structured as a by-law and are anchored in the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*.

The HCD plan applies to portions of properties visible from the public realm, and the HCD plan is subordinate to zoning and other planning by-laws. There is no secondary plan for the district, and large-scale development projects are routinely approved through the zoning variance process. Consequently, development pressure has led to many façadism projects, which is normally a last-resort mitigation strategy for heritage resources and not considered a conservation measure. This has led to the loss of historic integrity at the scale of the area. In terms of subsidies, tax reductions for commercial properties can be negotiated with the city to cover up to 50% of the cost of restoration work, and subsidies are available for residential properties.

VANCOUVER

Historic Gastown is an Historic Conservation Area (HCA) covered by a by-law. Design Guidelines illustrate and orient how development for alterations, additions and new construction can be integrated into the area. The guidelines are tied directly to objectives addressing scale, massing, streetscape character and so forth. The Guideline document is complimentary to the HCA By-Law. The guidelines are designed to facilitate the permitting process and illustrate appropriate examples of projects.

Policies focusing more on design allow for more flexibility for rehabilitation projects. Subsidies have had a positive, but limited impact within the HCA, as they depend on budget allocations and often exclude important aspects such as building code and seismic upgrades that are unavoidable for redevelopment projects. Heritage revitalisation agreements, which are legally binding agreements between an owner and the City. These agreements are used to negotiate conservation, with increased flexibility regarding development costs, zoning, and permits.

VICTORIA

The Historic Core of the city is covered by several abutting HCAs that reflect the character of different sub-areas downtown. The HCA is an overlay, but like in Ontario, does not address use or density. The Design Guidelines are clear, and focus on different sub areas within the core. Examples and strategies for interventions illustrate how change can occur. Height and density are addressed in other planning documents, but the objective of densifying around the Historic Core rather than within it is expressed.

Victoria uses both grants through a heritage foundation and tax incentives for residential conversions and seismic upgrades in rehabilitation projects.

LESSONS

A vision and public investments are important to communicate. The Montreal model is supported by significant investments from the City and the Province. Municipal actions and public realm improvements that have been prioritised are showcased in the protection and enhancement plan. This signals the importance of investment and the complimentary nature of public projects despite powerful yet flexible heritage site controls that limit development pressure on historic structures.

Height and density cannot necessarily be addressed by an HCD. In contrast to Old Montreal, an HCD Plan is very detailed with many specific policies and guidelines. In the case of Toronto's St. Lawrence Market, mitigation of new development is the focus through the conservation of historic façades and portions of structures, but the area is not tied to a secondary plan, which would control zoning, including height and density.

Guidelines cannot be stand-alone documents. In the case of Gastown, design guidelines can offer some clarity for property owners, but as the document is complementary to the HCD and zoning by-laws, all three must be consulted to understand what is permitted. Flexibility with zoning where conservation is part of a development project has also contributed to rehabilitation projects where financial incentives have been insufficient or underfunded.

The right tools for the job are crucial. The Victoria design guidelines for the Historic Core cross-reference the secondary plan objectives regarding height and density. This more holistic approach marries conservation and development goals in their respective planning documents, provides guidelines to illustrate best practices and solutions for owners and developers, and incentivizes rehabilitation with targeted subsidies and tax incentives.

Comparisons illustrate the importance of integrated approaches. In the context of Winnipeg, the regulatory framework in the Exchange would benefit from a planning document that outlines the broader development goals and clearly defines the heights and densities that cannot be adequately addressed in an HCD plan. As the cases demonstrate in both positive and negative examples, clarity, consistency across plans, some flexibility for different projects and targeted incentives are all critical parts of the equation.

Comparisons are limited by the reality on the ground. Vancouver and Victoria show the importance of flexibility and consistency respectively, but both benefit from robust real estate markets where development does not require stimulation, unlike the Exchange. In the Exchange, the challenge is to invite investments while preserving heritage. In the case of Montreal, the city has been consistent with investments and project approval across time, yet there are no public design or infill guidelines because of strong legislation. The case of Toronto shows that despite having very specific guidelines, development pressures are not adequately addressed and heritage is not consistently protected.

5.3. HERITAGE AND DEVELOPMENT

The engagement of heritage planning municipal officers, heritage advocates and developers through this project offered a diverse perspective on development in the Exchange. The sensitivity of managing change was made evident with process and the way decisions are made being a shared concern. What emerged falls under the categories of *transformation and adaptation*; *densification and intensification*; *cohesion*; and *impact*.

TRANSFORMATION AND ADAPTATION

The transformation of existing infrastructure primarily concerns adapting buildings to changing functions and new standards. A number of buildings have been adapted over the years to introduce new functions. Each of the provincially and municipally listed buildings was subject to a review before a permit was issued.

In order to make economic sense from a development standpoint, the pressure is on to build higher and bigger. The property values and the forecasted rental market prices make it difficult to balance numbers without considering densifying the lots and increasing height and mass.

Based on interviews, a review of key documents, and a review of a sample of decisions, the following was observed:

- The review process focuses on character-defining elements and heritage value. This is aligned with heritage conservation principles. By applying the Standards and Guidelines, the review aims to conserve the character of the Exchange.
- The adaptation of buildings has aimed to provide more commercial uses (stores and offices) and to some extent housing.
- In interviews, developers have indicated an appreciation for heritage as a value to their projects.

In order for transformation and adaptation to be successful, the following should be included:

- A clear set of guidelines based on heritage value that are interpreted consistently. While the Standards and Guidelines are key to delivering on heritage conservation objectives, they are meant to be interpreted by experts.
- A plan for the maintenance and improvement of the public realm that enhances the Exchange and helps translate and showcase its heritage resources.
- Guidance to adapt buildings to meet the code in relation to accessibility and fire suppression in particular.
- Consideration of the range of services for the neighbourhood, including grocery stores, daycares, schools and other essential services which translates in an approach with different strategies to adapt existing infrastructure.

DENSIFICATION AND INTENSIFICATION

Densification and intensification are important strategies to address the significant amount of square footage available in vacant lots and the need to attract more residents to sustain the neighbourhood. With that, the pressure is on to guide appropriate infill and additions to existing buildings.

Our research allowed us to observe the following:

- Development is market driven. Currently, residential development includes mainly apartment projects rather than condominiums. This may be beneficial, as property owners of apartment buildings are stakeholders that desire a long-term investment in an area.
- The guidance for infill development in the Exchange, including the principles in the Urban Design Guidelines for Downtown Winnipeg is not clear or seated in its heritage values; guidelines do not address appropriate materials, massing, form, façade composition or articulations, nor do they reflect the existing character of the Exchange. Consequently, there is a gap in setting the expectation for maintaining the character of the Exchange through contemporary infrastructure.
- The permitting process focuses on the character-defining elements and heritage values of the listed and designated resources. There is no process that considers the breadth of values needed to grow a neighbourhood, nor to analyse the contribution of projects in leveraging the district heritage value.
- Additionally, there is a gap in analysing the relationship between private and public investments.

For densification and intensification to be successful, it needs to:

- Establish a benchmark to guide growth based on resident and user well-being;
- Develop infill guidelines that are specific to the Exchange;
- Undertake an analysis to measure the value of proposed project and their benefits for preserving the Exchange's heritage character as well as leverage a range of economic, social, and environmental benefits.

COHESION

The value of the neighbourhood's heritage character comes from the collection of buildings and its cohesion. This supports a sense of place that makes the Exchange distinctive and attractive to businesses and residents. Strategies that aim to support that cohesion would help achieve both heritage conservation and the goals of a sustainable neighbourhood, including user well-being. Additionally, the Exchange is historically and functionally connected to neighbouring parts of the city, including Saint-Boniface.

Our observations include:

- The need to manage the collection of heritage buildings in the Exchange in a cohesive way may require an overall heritage framework. Since most municipal and provincial listings are managed individually, adding a regulatory district level layer might help with a cohesive approach;
- The connecting elements between buildings include streetscapes and landscapes. While streetscapes are identified in the definition of values associated with the national historic site district, which recognizes the relationship between the built environment at the context. Public realm conditions are variable in the Exchange and include a range of designs, materials and quality, and these components are not addressed in heritage or other policies.
- While many infill or rehabilitation projects were approved in the past decade, inconsistencies in outcomes make it difficult to articulate guidance from these and consider them as precedent setting examples.

For neighbourhood cohesion to be achieved, it is critical to:

- Have a vision that expresses the architectural heritage character to serve as a benchmark to gauge infill and rehabilitation projects and respect established standards for the conservation of heritage Districts.
- Encourage heritage planning approaches that connect with key sectors of the city, including downtown, Saint Boniface, and the Forks.
- Integrate heritage conservation in a broader planning strategy for the Exchange.

IMPACT

Heritage conservation is impactful in transforming neighbourhoods, generating value for businesses and the city, as well as promote social inclusion. Both developers and business owners that we interviewed have clearly indicated that the character of the neighbourhood and its location are prime reasons for them to invest in it. Because of its heritage, the Exchange has value for businesses and potential residents.

The goal of conserving heritage, however, needs to be pursued jointly by the public and private sectors to be effective. CentreVenture's mandate has at times been impactful in adaptive reuse and attracting private sector investments to the Exchange. Additionally, the investments made through the Core Area Initiatives and the Winnipeg Development Agreement have played a critical role in conserving key heritage infrastructure. As noted in the past incentive programs, these were critical in delivering on that original promise. In fact, current incentives cover 50 % of expenses for conservation and restoration, and are capped at a maximum of \$50,000. Considering that projects in the Exchange are valued at multiple millions of dollars, these incentives cover a negligible amount of the total project cost. Additionally, other tools such as tax breaks or caps have been used to incentivize development.

Public institutions, such as the Red River College and the Centennial Concert Hall, establish their distinct master planning tools and pursue investments for their assets in the Exchange. Various areas within the Exchange were targeted for specific redevelopment over the years. These include the waterfront projects along Waterfront Drive, the warehouse sector, and connections with the Forks and the Alexander Docks. All feed into providing cohesion to the Exchange and development proposals can have a lifting impact for the whole.

Our observations included:

- Decision-making regarding investments in the Exchange have been inconsistent in promoting conservation.
- Investments by public institutions have the potential to be leveraged to support the improvement of the Exchange. A lack of concerted planning means that these interventions are inconclusively leveraged and hard to assess for the entire Exchange.
- Past investments that preserved or were compatible with the area's heritage character has lifted the neighbourhood and unlocked its value.
- Projects, such as development proposals or reimagining the Alexander Docks, are assessed based on their individual merit but with the lack of Exchange specific architectural guidance (e.g. infill guidelines) and the absence of a holistic vision, it is difficult to assess the impact.
- Incentives are currently limited in scope and size. As such, while useful, they may not be as impactful as expected for larger commercial properties.
- There is a perception that the permitting process can take a very long time as project requirements are being articulated between developers and officials and that the outcomes of permit requests are unpredictable. This constitutes a risk to projects having the expected impact.

The impact of investments and decisions is greatest if:

- There is a holistic vision for the neighbourhood that includes indicators of success and a measure of the impact of certain types of building rehabilitation projects.
- The permitting process is shorter, framed more precisely by heritage expectations (e.g. infill guidelines), and offers a clear path to approval based, amongst other parameters, on precedent setting decisions.
- Incentives are large enough to target rehabilitation projects based on the quality of the conservation work as well as the impact of those changes on the neighbourhood.
- Investments are made based on long-term impacts, reflected by quality materials and design as well as commitments to maintenance.
- Private and public investments are coordinated and assessed as a whole to leverage their full potential impact.
- Planning is based on the value of certain projects in lifting the neighbourhood and the return to the city.

5.4. HERITAGE AND PEOPLE

People are key to motivate and pursue the conservation of heritage. The connection felt by communities justifies the attention paid to protecting buildings, sites and landscape while offering a path on how to maintain that connection.

In the Exchange, people are defined as both residents and users, each connecting to heritage in different ways. A critical element required for that connection is the ability to recognize oneself in the forms of heritage, as they are commemorated, listed, and preserved.

A look at users provides a glimpse of the diversity of people evolving in the Exchange. Based on the institutions, offices, and services available, there is a growing demographic of young office workers and artists, Indigenous emerging professionals and students, as well as patrons of the arts and of the various food-related services (i.e., restaurants, coffee shops and bars) located in the Exchange. There are tens of thousands of users each day interacting with the businesses in the neighbourhood.

The current emphasis on architectural heritage from the turn of the century allows a connection for some but also excludes a number of cultural groups. The Métis, First Nation, Franco-Manitoban, and cultural communities for example are not equally represented by that heritage. In fact, the tangible evidence of their presence is generally absent from the narrative and the landscape of the Exchange. In order for that connection to be enhanced, attention would have to be paid to a broader range of types of heritage. Certain areas of the neighbourhood may lend themselves more readily to that enhancement.

The interviews carried out during this project highlighted that the Exchange has had a reputation for being unsafe. While the situation has improved, including safety initiatives spearheaded by the Exchange District BIZ, feedback from users and residents continues to stress the need for more life in the neighbourhood and more activities to counter the perceived lack of safety, especially as we emerge from COVID-19 and public health restricts that have limited workplace and commercial activity.

Heritage conservation has a role in achieving this since maintenance of buildings demonstrates care for the neighbourhood and discourages vandalism. The rehabilitation of heritage buildings to accommodate new functions allows the inclusion of a range of services that attract patrons and builds the neighbourhood's reputation as a place where people like to spend time.

This concern further cements the relationship between heritage conservation and economic benefits. During the interviews, business owners stressed that they recognize the heritage value of the neighbourhood and chose to open their businesses there specifically because of its aesthetic qualities and sense of place. Equally, developers have stated that they value the heritage character and are willing to invest in the Exchange. In essence, the businesses and projects entertained for the Exchange build on the heritage character and therefore both conservation and new development that is sympathetic to its heritage character help leverage economic opportunities for the neighbourhood.

5.5. HERITAGE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The environmental dimension of the Exchange is three-fold. One is related to the environmental context, another to the climate change trends and adaptation, and the third to energy and resource management. All three play a role in shaping the evolution of its heritage.

The river and the prairie environment of the city define the context. Since 2007, the Red River has been a designated Canadian Heritage River for its natural, cultural, and recreational values. This highlights its role as a mode of passage and in supporting some of the most productive agricultural soils in the world as a result of its severe periodic flooding. Because of these values, the relationship between the river and the Exchange can be strengthened by bridging the traditional Indigenous presence with the architectural heritage.

Flooding continues to define the landscape in the spring, mainly along the waterfront, and is an inescapable condition to planning transformation of that waterfront. The natural prairie conditions and the humid continental climate define the vegetation as well as temperature and humidity fluctuations that affect heritage.

As noted in a previous section, the environmental trends are for shorter cold seasons and more hot days. That change can affect the materials and structure of the buildings as well as affect the well-being of its users. Adaptation can be mechanical and technological, such as the implementation of cooling and reflective measures on outdoor surfaces. It can also be natural by introducing trees and greening measures in public spaces, such as streets, to shelter pedestrians from excessive heat. In all circumstances, the ability to introduce these measures should consider its impact on the character-defining elements and heritage value.

The last dimension is energy and resource management. The city is committed to lead by example through its management of city-owned buildings. Winnipeg adopted a Green Policy for Existing City-Owned Buildings, which focuses on benchmarking the performance of existing buildings against similar or new buildings; as well as seeking ways to improve it. This approach recognizes however that there are gaps in developing proper assessment tools. While this focuses on government buildings, the concern is equally important for non-city-owned buildings.

Similarly, the current City waste management strategies make no mention of tackling the waste generated by construction activities. Yet, such a policy might include consideration for encouraging the preservation and rehabilitation of existing buildings to reduce construction waste ending up in landfills.

5.6. HERITAGE AND CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

This report considered a municipal request to assess the stakeholder interest in creating a Heritage Conservation District (HCD). The rationale as presented by municipal heritage officers is to seek additional protection by adding an overlay to protect the context of individually designated buildings and their relationships. Another aim is to clarify how infill development for new projects and additions can be sensitively integrated into the Exchange, while addressing the need for cohesion in response to development pressures.

EVOQ Strategies and Scatliff + Miller + Murray engaged with a range of stakeholders from the private and public sectors, associations, developers, institutions, and heritage organizations. The questions asked related to people's appreciation of heritage, knowledge of what a HCD is, the way they function, and whether they would support a tool that helps better protect the Exchange.

Overall, there is broad support and appreciation for the contribution of heritage to the distinctiveness of the Exchange. However, there was a lack of knowledge of what an HCD is (83% of respondents) and once informed the support was limited, with few people understanding clearly what it would do (33%). In particular, comments related to not adding more obstacles to development and finding ways for change to occur in the Exchange while maintaining its attractive heritage character. The positive outcome is that everyone agrees with the importance of protecting heritage and with the need for clear direction for development (83% of respondents), despite the perception that additional tools would impede change (66%).

LIMITS TO AN HCD

The HCD By-law in Winnipeg came into force in September 2018. To date it has been applied in a single location, the residential neighbourhood of Armstrong's Point in 2019. Another one is being prepared for Crescentwood, a residential neighbourhood. The By-law requires that once designated an HCD plan be prepared to cover a range of topics including demolitions, infill, and alterations. While not explicit in the By-law, the HCD Plan for Armstrong's Point includes guidelines for a range of matters, some enforceable others acting as guidance. Floor area, dimensions and density remain the purview of zoning By-laws. Demolitions of buildings within HCDs is permitted in specific circumstances, including when the building does not embody sufficient heritage values, when it is deemed unsafe, and when the refusal of the permit can result in undue prejudice on the owner.

In the case of the Exchange, besides stakeholder apprehensions, there are other reasons to consider that an HCD alone may not be the best next step to achieving the city's objectives. Those reasons include the newness of the regulation and the limited demonstration of effectiveness of the tool in the Winnipeg context. The HCD By-law and its first plan at Armstrong's Point have not been legally challenged which makes it difficult to confirm that it will resist the development pressures effectively to guide an area's evolution. Furthermore, the area covered by the existing HCD is a homogenous series of single-family residential properties with clear natural boundaries. Contrastingly, while the built form of the Exchange is generally consistent, it is a complex mixed-use district, undergoing different pressures from a diversity of stakeholders.

The HCD By-law allows for character-defining elements of a district to be addressed in a clear and nuanced fashion; however, this tool does not have the ability for heritage conservation objectives to establish their role in planning for the neighbourhood's evolution without a comprehensive set of foundational planning and urban evolution tools, policies and programs. Heritage conservation, urban planning, and incentive programs need to share common objectives for additional regulatory frameworks to reach their goals.

*Figure 13: Exchange District of Winnipeg
source: Jonathan Geiger on Flickr*



In considering the lessons from comparable heritage environments to the Exchange, the complementary nature of an HCD to other planning tools addressed in the Planning Act, such as secondary plans, is critical to creating a successful sustainable heritage conservation environment. Other jurisdictions that have traditionally applied HCD approaches have relied on provincial legislation to enforce the conservation of components and of the values of districts. In Ontario for example, the Heritage Act supersedes planning legislation, giving it weight in assessing impacts of proposed changes to the heritage fabric. However, those same HCDs do not speak to zoning including height and density, which can often place heritage conservation at odds with development in a losing battle. This is especially true where different spheres of planning are not done concurrently. This reality observed in other jurisdictions applies equally to Winnipeg and encourages an approach that prioritizes establishing a solid planning foundation adapted to the qualities of the Exchange.

An HCD includes precisely defined boundaries that circumscribe an area established by the concentration of existing heritage properties. In the Exchange, when identifying HCD boundaries, factors such as vacant lots and areas where new construction is predominant could result in excluding portions of the National Historic Site and other areas in and around the historic core. Consequently, it might be challenging to create a HCD that captures all the historic designations within a single boundary, but rather it may result in several HCDs being identified within the Exchange (separate HCDs for the East Exchange, the West Exchange and the Civic Precinct). Unless these separate HCDs are prepared simultaneously, there is a risk of affecting the Exchange's integrity by allowing distinct zones, which may successfully or not achieve designation. Once again, a coherent and distinctive planning foundation is the essential ingredient for the area's evolution.

HCDs are limited in their integration of different forms of heritage and their role in defining the value of a site or area. In a place like the Exchange where Indigenous values are increasingly being integrated into its future, an HCD may struggle to reconcile those values and understandings of place within a definition that is especially focused on elements of the built environment.

When the sustainability lens is applied to the HCD, its usefulness as a stand-alone tool becomes less apparent. While heritage conservation is a goal to achieve the sustainability of a neighbourhood, the lack of consideration for other aspects can limit its effectiveness and may in fact be counterproductive. A sustainable approach requires attention be paid to a range of issues, including social inclusion, climate change adaptation, and economic resilience that should be addressed in tandem with the evolution of a heritage environment.

The premise of an HCD is that it provides a coherent framework to manage heritage. It articulates the contributing properties or at least the character that defines the area. This helps guide the conservation of the whole instead of focusing on the scale of individually designated properties. However, in the instance of the Exchange, a stand-alone HCD added to the current planning structure would result in additional administrative layers to properties not already covered by individual designations. The complexity of the Exchange means that many different public and private interests have influence or exert pressure of the area. Planning tools that can establish a vision and a direction for the Exchange, address the zoning and land-use that are critical to maintaining the area's character, as well as guide the management and improvement of the public realm are essential. Without the complementary planning tools, policies and programs that are required for its success, an Exchange HCD at this stage would be a risky next step, both for its use in the Exchange and as a conservation tool.

PLANNING WITH HERITAGE IN MIND

In light of the rationale presented, the lessons from comparable environments, and the comments received by stakeholders, a cohesive approach to conserving heritage in the Exchange should be the primary goal of city policy.

This first requires a planning environment that articulates the place of heritage in the vision for the neighbourhood and provides an integrated approach to guiding decision-making. Tools such as secondary plans that define a vision, objectives and mechanisms for integrating a range of planning concerns, infill guidelines, and strategies for integrating different forms of heritage and a cohesive plan for public realm improvements. This should provide the necessary foundation of established regulatory policies that achieve successful conservation while defining the parameters of evolution of the Exchange.

In other words, a visionary integrated approach to planning can achieve greater conservation goals than the immediate implementation of an HCD. Despite the lack of adequate planning tools in the Exchange, guidelines for infill development and public realm improvements are urgently needed for the Exchange including areas outside of the National Historic Site. The Urban Design Guidelines that are part of the Downtown Zoning area a potential vehicle for infill guidelines for a broad area of the Exchange as examined in this report.

Once the building blocks have been secured in a secondary plan as well as infill and revised urban design guidelines, one or more HCDs could be more successful if used as a final touch. Infill guidelines and a secondary plan would establish direction for development within the broader Exchange, and subsequent HCDs would articulate the heritage character and detailed guidance that relate to specific precincts within the historic core.

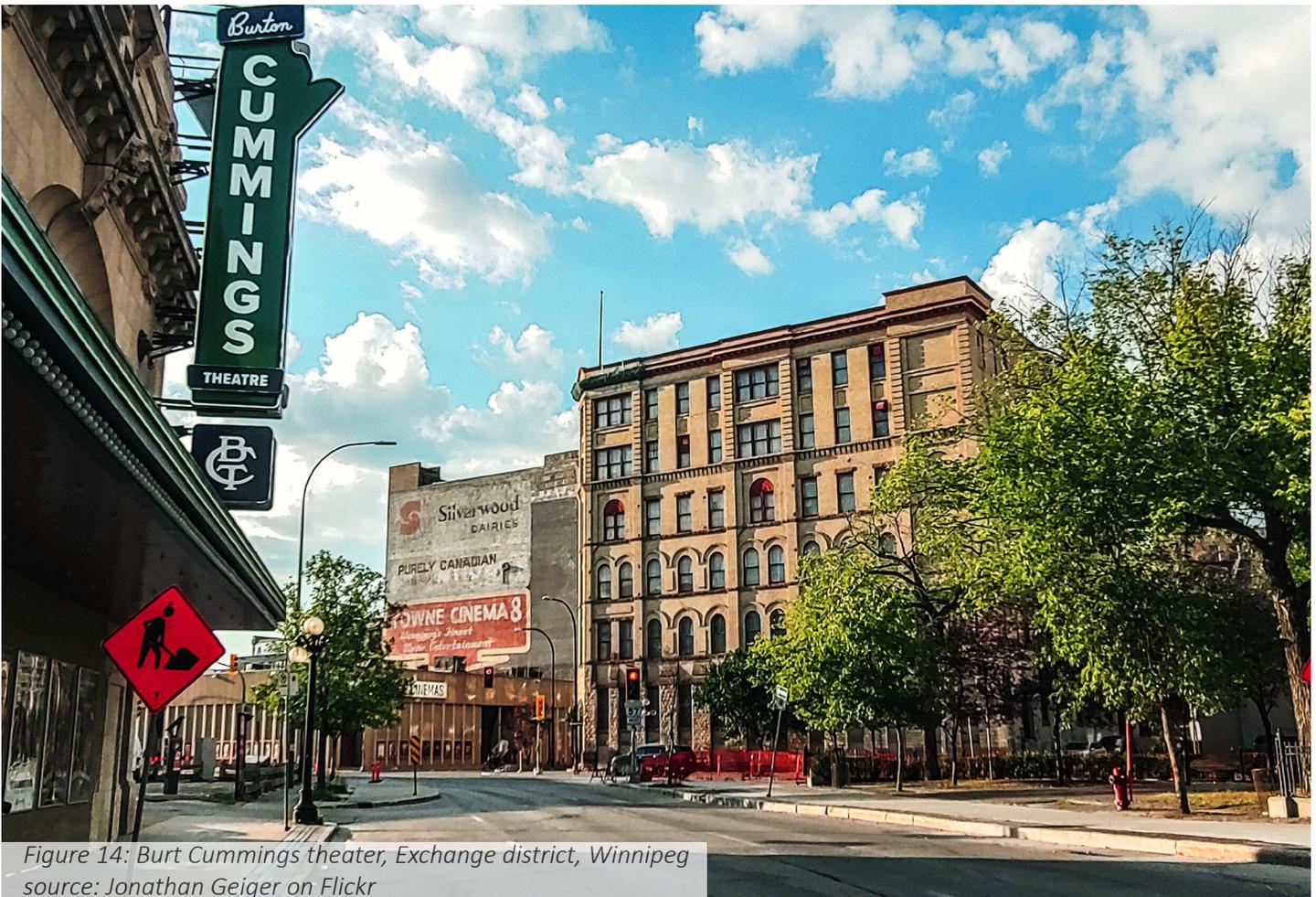


Figure 14: Burt Cummings theater, Exchange district, Winnipeg
source: Jonathan Geiger on Flickr

Part III

Shaping the Future

6. Actions

The analysis of trends, pressures, and of the current policy context point towards the need to rethink some of the building blocks of the Exchange's approach to planning as it affects heritage. The following eight actions are proposed as pillar areas for change, accompanied by a series of recommendations for changes to policies and to programs.

6.1. FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY

The future of our urban environments is based on a sustainable approach to planning, even more so in relation to historic environments as change makes them more vulnerable to disappearing.

Our analysis demonstrates the relationship between heritage conservation and the economic, environmental and social impacts to the communities. It also demonstrates that addressing these impacts holistically, in other words according to a sustainability approach, offers a different set of tools for long term successes in conserving the heritage character of the Exchange and even enrich it.

A sustainability approach meets the expectations of heritage conservation because it emphasizes:

- maintaining a use and function;
- the economic value of a historic environment;
- investing in a healthy environment;
- promoting maintenance;
- recognizing the relationship between people, their heritage and their rights; and
- promoting better uses for materials and waste management.

Additionally, for the Exchange to function as a whole and achieve the conservation of heritage, the range of considerations that affect a neighbourhood need to be taken into account, such as green spaces, economic incentives, and resident services. For these reasons, the planning environment needs to focus on sustainability.

6.2. INFILL AND ADAPTIVE REUSE GUIDANCE

Recent projects and proposals for the Exchange include designs that are not compatible with the historic character of the area, often contrasting with the materials, massing and articulations of the many heritage resources. Current urban design guidelines are vague and functionally non-existent, as they do not define clearly how infill projects, additions, or major rehabilitations should contribute to the evolution of the Exchange. The pressure from development and growth coupled with the desire by businesses to invest in the Exchange makes the need for infill and adaptive reuse guidance a priority.

The designated heritage resources in the Exchange reflect a small period of development. Consequently, architectural styles, building typologies, façade articulations, constructive systems, and materials are consistent. Speaking directly to those components of the built environment, urban and infill design guidelines should clearly express how contemporary projects could sensitively add to the area in a way that is compatible with its heritage values.

This guidance needs to be **specific** to the Exchange and reflect its heritage character, namely the heritage value and character-defining elements as outlined in:

- the national historic site;
- the provincial designations;
- the municipal listings.

The guidance needs to be **clear** about:

- the benchmarks against which success is measured;
- the characteristics and conditions that the outcome aims to preserve;
- the limitations around acceptable changes to the Exchange; and
- the use of the tools to assess projects.

The guidance needs to **address**:

- height;
- massing;
- materials;
- public realm;
- functions;
- new technologies;
- climate change adaptation measures.

Lastly, this guidance needs to be **adapted** to the context and economic realities of heritage environments by:

- Offering stricter direction in heritage sensitive environments (such as the core of the National Historic Site);
- Providing flexibility in a buffer area surrounding the historic environment; and,
- Detailing the ways that the buffer area allows a transition with the rest of downtown.

The Downtown Winnipeg zoning By-law would be an appropriate vehicle to introduce area specific guidelines. It is possible that an Exchange section could be added to these guidelines in the short term, which would contribute greatly to managing the impact of infill, additions, and major rehabilitations to the overall character of the Exchange. The infill guidelines for mature neighbourhoods are a recent example that illustrates the City of Winnipeg's capacity to prepare clear and context sensitive guidelines for areas with heritage character. Ideally, this would be done with the support of professionals with experience in heritage environments.

6.3. POLICIES, PROGRAMS AND INCENTIVES

A summary review of the incentive programs identified some important gaps, inefficiencies, and strengths to build on. It recognized that over the years, a number of incentive programs have been successful but have waned without a vision for their replacement.

The primary justification for incentive programs is two-fold: certain actions can be costly due to the hiring of specialized labour and use of the traditional building materials; and secondly while it is broadly recognized that heritage conservation brings positive outcomes for everyone, the cost is overwhelmingly borne by the owner. As such, not encouraging conservation and maintenance through incentives can lead to neglect, deferred maintenance, vacancy, and higher rental or sale prices that can contribute to gentrification. All of these have been observed in the Exchange.

Since our analysis has demonstrated the need to provide greater cohesion and coordination in decision-making and planning, the same applies to incentives. A priority action would be to consider creating a program designed for the Exchange, one that appeals to the heart of the community, attracts a range of investments to strengthen the potential of the area, and builds on the heritage value.

Dubbed ROOTS for the purpose of this report, the program would include mechanisms to generate revenue through penalties for the benefit of incentive programs that aim to ensure heritage conservation and sustainable approaches. It would be supported by a vision of how to promote the Exchange, encourage the conservation of its character, attract investments and guide the changes that will make the neighbourhood attractive to residents and users alike.

Some of the penalties and incentives captured by the ROOTS program may include:

Community benefits agreements for up-zoning in the Exchange Buffer (area outside the Historic Core)- more density could be negotiated for areas surrounding the Exchange Historic Core would support multiple goals. Allowing for more height and density for new projects where funds would be redirected towards restoration projects in the Exchange Historic Core would create a new funding opportunity for rehabilitation and conservation. Amounts from community benefits agreements could be transferred to a dedicated envelope within the Gail-Parvin-Hammerquist Fund to increase granting capacity within the area.

Revising and re-initiating the Heritage Conservation Grant Program - the Heritage Conservation Grant Program should be revised to specifically target downtown including the Exchange. Businesses and real estate development in Downtown Winnipeg is the largest concentration of wealth creation in Manitoba. Consequently, the conservation and rehabilitation of historic structures have an impact that spreads far beyond its boundaries.

Refundable Heritage Tax Credits (Provincial and Federal)- while provincial and federal tax credits are not within the City's authorities, it would be relevant for Winnipeg to position the Exchange as a pilot project for such a measure in the short term. This could further be linked to initiatives that contribute to net-zero carbon cities.

Revise the Building Envelope Program and other waste management incentive policies - as heritage conservation reduces waste, continues to store the carbon embedded in structures and contributes to a series of Sustainability and Development Goals, these provide an opportunity to work with Efficiency Manitoba to include the restoration of character defining elements within their programs, such as the Building Envelope Program. For example, the restoration of windows is currently not accepted in the program, despite the fact that this type of intervention can meet both energy and conservation goal

Vacancy penalty - discouraging the neglect and vacancy of buildings and lots (including surface parking lots) is an important incentive to shift the momentum in the neighbourhood from passive to active. This needs to be accompanied with a clear path towards regeneration through process, funding, and decisions. Vacancy penalties could be avoided by transitional uses and could apply to parts of buildings. The Within the Vacant Building By-law, the Empty Building Fee could be modulated in tandem with other measures.

Rehabilitation incentive - based on a vision for the neighbourhood and clear guidance, an incentive that discourages demolition and encourages rehabilitation would send a message that meets a range of sustainability objectives. It is critical to consider that incentives and penalties play an essential role in shaping an urban environment. There is no single mechanism that can resolve this problem, but a range of levers can direct change towards the desired outcome.

6.4. PROCESS

The analysis highlighted the need to take action on the decision-making process. As noted, there is a lack of cohesion and coherence in decisions in part due to:

- the gap in vision for the Exchange;
- the multiplicity of public actors involved in shaping the neighbourhood;
- the absence of a coordinated approach;
- a heritage permitting process that relies on an incomplete tool set (e.g., no infill guidelines or permits for non-designated properties within the Exchange);
- a perception of inconsistencies in permitting decisions;
- a perception of inconsistent timelines in decision-making; and,
- a process that seems to isolate decision-making regarding heritage from other policies affecting the area.

For change to be more effective, a streamlined process for the area needs to be considered which can include:

- an integrated decision-making process for permits and planning;
- a coordinated if not single decision-making environment where key actors function together to manage change in the Exchange;
- greater clarity and predictability in the expectations and the timeline of decisions;
- stronger heritage conservation guidance tools;
- a vision that allows proactive strategies to anticipate change; and,
- a mechanism that engages stakeholders.

6.5. INTEGRATION WITH PLANNING POLICIES

The analysis demonstrated that the current planning and decision-making environment contributes to creating uncertainty, limiting development, and affects the conservation of heritage. The absence of vision and of a single decision-making environment coupled with limited engagement of public and private sector has dampened opportunities to leverage the values of the Exchange. Furthermore, the tools available to conserve heritage have limited effects.

A concrete action to address this is to integrate heritage conservation in a broader spectrum of planning policies. This would mean that heritage conservation would be achieved not only through the usual tools but through also using other planning policies. It would also encourage approaching heritage as part of an urban environment, such as to consider the conservation of streetscapes.

6.6. REVIEW HERITAGE DEFINITIONS

The current definitions of heritage based on the federal, provincial, and municipal recognitions emphasize the architectural characteristics. Yet, based on changing demographics, a broader definition of heritage, and the recognition of new meanings in the Exchange, the definitions of what has heritage value needs to be reviewed.

This is a priority action in order to maintain relevance to the community of residents and users, to pursue social inclusion, and contribute to enhancing the connections with other aspects of Winnipeg's history and people.

6.7. PROMOTE OCCUPATION AND USE

Our analysis highlighted a fairly significant vacancy rate when taking into account not just empty floors and buildings but also vacant lots. A basic principle of heritage conservation is to ensure use of buildings through contemporary functions. At an Exchange level, this also means that the gaps between buildings need to be addressed to leverage the area's full potential.

Promoting occupation and use also affects the sense of safety and builds the connections that lead to investments, financial or otherwise. Developing programs and policies that actively promote use are critical to the long-term sustainability of the Exchange and conservation of heritage.

6.8. LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR A HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The city's objective in setting up a HCD is based on the desire for greater cohesion and a coordinated approach to managing the collection of heritage buildings. As our analysis highlighted, at this stage a HCD may not provide the additional regulatory tools required to achieve better conservation and in fact risks compounding the effects already observed. The setting of boundaries that capture all the heritage buildings within a cohesive framework of values is complicated by key areas of vacant lots and new builds. Furthermore, some stakeholders have expressed reservations regarding additional rules and approval processes.

While a HCD in the Exchange may be a viable long-term strategy to preserve the collection of heritage buildings, for it to be successful some key planning tools need to be in place that address heritage holistically and within a sustainability framework. Defining a vision for the Exchange and enabling measures that can better manage change in the short term such as context sensitive infill guidelines, anchored in the heritage character of the Exchange are priorities. With appropriate planning frameworks in place, a potential HCD would be supported by a foundation of bylaws, zoning, and guidelines. HCDs would be a finishing touch to a comprehensive set of tools to preserve heritage and manage change. HCD guidelines could be fine-tuned to reflect the architectural character and landscape features of smaller areas within the broader Exchange, specifically for those properties that are not individually listed or designated.

7. Recommendations

7.1. TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE EXCHANGE

The recommendations stem from the analysis to identify changes to policy and to programs. The intended outcome of these recommendations is to provide a path towards achieving a sustainable neighbourhood and protect heritage.

The following wheel illustrates the relationship between sustainability and heritage. It connects the various aspects of urban planning to the objective of conserving heritage. At the heart of it is the objective of a sustainable Exchange neighbourhood. Surrounding it, are the key SDGs that relate to the character of the Exchange, based on its cultural heritage, its function, and its characteristics. Stemming from these key SDGs, a number of policies and actions radiate that often overlap, demonstrating how policies can have multiple impact if addressed in holistic manner.



Figure 15: Recommendations in relations to sustainability and heritage goals

As stated at the outset of the report, the Sustainable Development Goals are a mechanism to connect different recommendations and policy directions affecting heritage to broader goals, including those in the *Our Winnipeg 2045* and the *Winnipeg Climate Action Plan*. The recommendations presented in this wheel are detailed below.

POLICY

Strong institutions

- Establish a secondary plan that integrates the range of policies, including heritage policies, needed to ensure cohesive and sustainable outcomes.
- Review and strengthen heritage review and permitting processes, including by establishing timelines for review, clear authorities, standard document review guidelines, and expected outcomes.

Responsible consumption, clean energy and climate action

- In order to reach goals outlined in the Winnipeg Climate Action Plan, discourage demolition through policies that emphasize rehabilitation, incentivize the reuse of existing buildings, penalizes waste production, and rewards waste reduction. This includes applying analytical models that weigh sustainability factors to the permitting process, such as life-cycle analysis and triple bottom approach.
- Encourage climate change adaptation measures through policies that promote retrofit, energy efficiency, low carbon emissions, and other adaptation measures. Measures may include pilot projects, case studies, awards, and the integration of conservation best practices within broader energy efficiency programmes, such as those targeting windows. This includes the prior development of benchmarks and measures that are specific to the performance of building typologies found in the Exchange. This is a critical step in properly defining the Waste Performance Indicators identified in the Winnipeg Climate Action Plan¹.

Reducing inequalities and sustainable communities

- Reduce vacancy rates through policies that change minimum property standards to increase requirements, provide penalties for excessive vacancy, and provide incentives for temporary and transitional uses, especially in the cultural, small business and innovation sectors.
- Support the restoration of significant properties through policies that incentivize the preservation, restoration and rehabilitation of heritage assets, provide a consistent approach to conservation, and offer guidance for ongoing maintenance.
- Provide opportunities for members of Indigenous and Metis communities to reclaim areas that are culturally, symbolically, and spiritually significant through policies that encourage the identification, creation, and transformation of spaces.

Economic growth, industry and innovation

- Support responsible development through policies that establish height and density based on a contextual analysis of the National Historic Site and a buffer area to the south and east of it. These include Exchange-specific urban design and infill guidelines based on the heritage value and character defining elements. It would take into account such aspects as the visual and functional connection between the Exchange and each of the downtown, the Forks and Saint Boniface.
- Encourage creative and innovation industries to establish themselves in the Exchange, through policies that incentivize the establishment of offices and rehabilitation of spaces to accommodate those industries.
- Implement a value assessment planning approach to determine the types of projects most adapted to protecting and capitalizing on the heritage value and character-defining elements of the Exchange.
- Implement an innovation policy focused on historic environments, urban sustainability, and cultural industries as engines for economic growth, creativity, and export value.

¹ Additional work would be required to get into the specifics of adapting the WCAP to heritage conservation, within and beyond the Exchange.

PROGRAMS

The following recommendations on programs aim to offer ideas of priorities and incentives that will affect positive change.

Strong institutions

- Create an Exchange communications protocol that brings together different stakeholders, city services, institutional and government representatives, to discuss issues affecting the Exchange as well as projects and policy changes planned for the area. Include representation from Indigenous and Métis organisations.
- For additions or infill projects, ensure that a project manager (planner) from the city is assigned to facilitate and coordinate approval processes, including development permits, minor variances, heritage reviews, and financial incentive programs.

Responsible consumption, clean energy and climate action

- Create a waste surcharge for the demolition of character defining elements of heritage resources that includes demolition from neglect.
- Evaluate the potential for the retrofitting of legacy district energy systems for geothermal heating and cooling for existing and new structures. This may include repurposing of individual system components or the underground tunnel system that could allow new infrastructure to be installed, or connecting both existing properties as well as new development.
- Establish a carbon neutrality program by using life-cycle analysis calculations for different components and systems of historic buildings; calculate carbon emissions of rehabilitation projects compared to their demolition and replacement with new structures. The reduced carbon footprint could be documented and used to contribute to municipal targets and attract companies and industries seeking carbon neutrality.

Reducing inequalities and sustainable communities

- Create a grant program designed to reinvest in the Exchange. Funding may come from penalties for negligence or violations to the Property Standards By-law, vacancy surcharge, and other mechanisms that addresses the Exchange's challenges. Grants would be available for restoration, retrofitting, rehabilitation, sustainable community initiatives, and stabilizing vacant properties in the process of being rehabilitated.
- Create ROOTS in the Exchange program, a wide-ranging program promoting short-term and long-term businesses in the Exchange. The short-term transitional occupancy component would target buildings or portions of buildings that have been vacant for extended periods of time (12 months or more). Transitional uses would include cultural tenants, small businesses, non-profits or targeted economic sectors, but would exclude residential occupation. An organisation such as the Exchange District BIZ could coordinate between the lessors and the lessees.

Economic growth, industry and innovation

- Include provisions in zoning that leverage the National Historic Site (see figure 6) as a landscape amenity by allowing for density bonuses in the buffer area around the site. Establish a mechanism for higher density projects to be built with a value share agreement where contributions are made to the Gail Parvin-Hammerquist Fund and re-invested in the Exchange.
- Create a productive landscape zoning that allows for flexibility in land uses within the same buildings that will offer flexibility to tech and cultural industries establishing themselves in the area, allowing for temporary or transitional uses.
- As part of the ROOTS in the Exchange program to promote investment in the area, connecting interested developers, and businesses with available properties, development opportunities, and transitory vacant spaces.
- Establish a trades program in the Exchange aimed at promoting specialized trades in relation to heritage carpentry, masonry, historic engineering, and any other program that can train in heritage conservation with an aim to develop innovative approaches to sustainable conservation of heritage.

7.2. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

IN CONCLUSION

Unique in Canada, the Exchange is more than a remarkable collection of historic properties. Within that urban environment, the concentration of cultural activities and institutions, creative and tech industries, educational facilities, and quality housing add the layers of activity and energy that make up the Exchange. This cultural capital, seated in one of the best-conserved early 20th century urban environments in North America, also positions the Exchange as an urban landscape amenity, which can help drive investment and wealth-creation within its historic core, as well in the different areas surrounding it.

Through the review of policies and programs related to heritage conservation, stakeholder engagement, and an examination of heritage conservation through a sustainable development lens, this report has outlined strategies and recommendations to enhance heritage conservation and place it at the heart of the Exchange's continued transition towards a complete community.

Sustainable development framed the broader analysis and considerations. Additionally, assessing interest and support for a Heritage Conservation District (HCD) for the Exchange was equally a focus. While an HCD is not the recommended next step in the planning process, HCDs are a long-term tool that could add a layer of finesse over a secondary plan for targeted sub-areas within the area. Furthermore, urban design guidelines that draw from the heritage resources can better clarify and direct how development can contribute to the area's future, without compromising the wealth of its heritage resources and its cultural vitality.

NEXT STEPS

While this report offers an overview of the place of heritage in planning within the Exchange, its preliminary conclusions and recommendations offer a path forward that includes several policy changes, information gathering and planning. In terms of next steps, the following stand-out as critical in the short term:

- Developing heritage-based urban design guidelines for the Exchange within the framework of the Downtown Winnipeg Zoning By-Law.
- Completing a Secondary Plan that places heritage conservation and sustainability at its core.
- Establishing a Property Standards By-law to target vacancy and demolition through neglect.
- Incentivizing use of vacant buildings including transitional uses.
- Exploring the positive impact, such as through value-planning, of investing in heritage for city revenues, property values, economic activity, and tourism.
- Establishing measures for climate change adaptation based on an understanding of an optimal built environment.

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ANNEX - STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- How long have you been working on projects in the Exchange?
- What drew you to the Exchange in the first place?
- What has kept you there (i.e. what are the benefits/what is special)?
- What are the main challenges associated with doing projects in the District?
- Do you plan to continue doing projects in the Exchange for the long-term?
- Do you see any opportunities for improving your operations from/in the District?
- How would you envision and describe a successful Exchange District in the future?
- What would be your number one priority for the District moving forward?
- What are some of the challenges in carrying out development projects? What are some of the opportunities?
- How is your projects benefitting from the District's character?
- What kind of investments/developments are you undertaking in the District?
- Are you familiar with the Heritage Conservation District approach to managing heritage?
Are you supportive of such an approach?
- What role did the heritage buildings, streetscapes and the character play in drawing you to the area?
- How familiar are you with planning tools in the District (zoning, individual building protections, and HCD)?

TIMELINE OF INTERVIEWS

October 02, 2020 Developer
October 06, 2020 Developer
October 08, 2020 Fringe Festival / RMTTC (led by SMM)
October 08, 2020 Developer
October 08, 2020 Martha Street Studio (led by SMM)
October 09, 2020 North Forge Technology Exchange (led by SMM)
October 09, 2020 Building Owner(led by SMM)
October 09, 2020 MB Music (led by SMM)
October 09, 2020 Little Brown Jug (led by SMM)
October 09, 2020 Building Owner (led by SMM)
October 15, 2020 Artspace Inc. (led by SMM)
October 15, 2020 Heritage Winnipeg
October 16, 2020 Winnipeg Folk Festival (led by SMM)
October 23, 2020 CentreVenture
October 29, 2020 Tourism Winnipeg (led by SMM)
October 30, 2020 New Media Manitoba (led by SMM)
November 03, 2020 Developer

November 04, 2020 Performing Arts Consortium (led by SMM)
November 11, 2020 Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation
November 17, 2020 Ubisoft (led by SMM)
November 20, 2020 Developer
November 20, 2020 Chinatown Development Corp (led by SMM)
November 24, 2020 Developer
November 28, 2020 Developer
December 09, 2020 Red River College
February 19, 2021 Building Owner (led by SMM)

Members of the team

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