

Exchange District Community Investment Strategy

General Backgrounder

The Exchange District Community Investment Strategy (EDCIS) presents a bold vision for the future of the Exchange. Forming the second part of the Winnipeg City Council approved Exchange District Plan 2022, the Investment Strategy provides a model for investment, sustainability, and community growth.

Becoming a true urban neighbourhood

Envisioning a population base of between 20 and 25 thousand people living within the area over the 20-year span of the strategy, the EDCIS is a heavily data-driven, deeply researched document that demonstrates the area's potential for significant growth. The proposed public and private investment scenarios paint a picture of a vibrant urban neighbourhood in the heart of Winnipeg's downtown.

Investments for the City's bottom line with ongoing revenue

Featuring several public, private and community-based projects, the EDCIS leverages the Value Planning methodology to demonstrate a substantial boost to the City's bottom line, projecting over \$100 million in net new revenue, with property tax uplift of \$9.3 million over trend on an annual basis at year 20.

Focus on sustainability with an innovative measurement system

In addition to forming the basis for financial growth, the EDCIS also serves as a Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan (SNAP). The plan is designed to demonstrate the building blocks of environmentally, socially, and culturally sustainable growth, using an innovative Neighbourhood Sustainability Index. The first of its kind, the NSI monitors 16 metrics related to the dimensions of Economic, Social, and Environmental sustainability (triple-bottom-line). Measuring and monitoring elements such as the implementations of green technologies, social access, inclusion and equity through to "complete streets," "authenticity," and locally owned business share, our hope is that these replicable metrics will be adopted by other urban neighbourhoods throughout the city and across the country.

7 Essential Moves

The EDICS is predicated on 7 essential investment directions for success. These are the true investments that will make the strategy work as a successful endeavour, pulling together the public sector, private investment, and community partnerships.

1. **Precinct Based Planning:** Even within the smaller footprint of the study area, it was clear from the data that there were distinctive clusters of character, opportunity and needs. This allows for much clearer direction and focus and the conservation of neighbourhood strengths.
2. **Residential Densification and Intensification Zones (RDIZs):** Investment opportunities that have true, lasting impact work best when developments are planned in clusters. Defining RDIZs will allow the city and



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its partners to create targeted incentive regimes that demonstrate the type of development being sought and provide the confidence and predictability investors seek. These include infrastructure commitments, expedited approvals (within established guidelines), and the judicious use of financial tools.

3. **Enhanced Corridors and Connections:** one of the Exchange District's enduring strengths is its relative walkability and its accessibility across all modes of transportation. By filling the gaps, enhancing formal and informal pedestrian routes and ensuring access to and from the area, future residents and visitors should be able to efficiently enjoy traversing the streets while taking in the art, culture and all that the community has to offer. Enhancements include new pedestrian walkways, cultural corridors, and the selective implementation of shared streets where warranted.
4. **Arts Festival Campus:** Old Market Square has been the home to some of the City's most enduring and beloved summer festivals for decades. As we've seen from events like Winnipeg Fringe Festival, Winnipeg Jazz Festival and Nuit Blanche, that footprint often spills out into the streets (with great difficulty). Drawing on examples from Montreal and Leeds (UK), the opportunity to create a full campus that extends from the China Gardens in the north through to Odeon Park in the south will allow festivals of all shapes and sizes to adopt the appropriate footprint with minimal effort.
5. **High Impact Rapid Transit:** the implementation of the City's Transit Master Plan presents opportunities to create truly impactful Transit Oriented Development and beautiful spaces Winnipeggers can be proud of. Being mindful of where stations are located by factoring impacts on development potential and livability should be an essential part of the implementation process. Additionally, stations should be beautifully designed, architectural signposts for the area they serve— whether the performing arts cluster or the central business district.
6. **Infrastructure Maintenance, Replacement & Beautification:** Poor maintenance of both public and private realm assets create competitive disadvantages for development and contribute to challenges for economic, cultural and environmental health. Good repair standards should be set for each precinct, with an audit and reporting regime as well as an annual maintenance schedule. Specific action plans should be developed in cooperation with private building owners, the public service, and partner organizations such as the BIZs, CentreVenture, Neeginan Centre, and Chinatown Development Corporation.
7. **Transformation of Main and Disraeli:** Many North American Cities are demolishing functional freeways and converting them to grand boulevards with marginal impact on vehicular traffic flow and significant benefits to both community livability and the economic health of the city. The western section of the Disraeli is the vestige of a freeway network that never came to be and should be reconfigured to reconnect and restore the health of neighbourhoods with conditions to support infill development, and a healthy environment for businesses, cultural and recreational venues, and inclusive community.

Precinct Plans

The EDCIS lays the groundwork for precinct-based plans within the study area by modelling a range of development scenarios and infrastructure projects. Each precinct has a focal point or theme as a guiding principle drawn from what is already working well. The names are intended for convenience of reference and a mild nod to the precinct's focus:

- **Rows Precinct:** Go-to streets for commerce and culture
- **Education and Innovation Precinct:** Fueling the local industrial revolution



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- **Chinatown Precinct:** Celebrating Chinese-Canadian Heritage
- **Neeginan Precinct:** Realizing the community's vision
- **Alex Precinct:** Living in the arts
- **Waterfront Living Precinct:** Bridging people, places, rivers
- **Connection + Intensification Precinct:** Launchpad for a complete downtown

Measuring Success

- **Neighbourhood Sustainability Index.** The Exchange District BIZ created the Neighbourhood Sustainability Index to monitor the level of economic, social and sustainable contribution throughout the creation of the strategy. As targets are reached, investments, projects and actions will seek improved metrics.
- **Return On Investment Projections.** As a result of implementing this strategy, the uplift modelling yields an increase of nearly 11,000 residential units above standard growth projections, which would increase the population of the Exchange District by about 15,000. Over the 20-year projection, modelling of the investment strategy produces a property tax uplift of \$103.5 million and a business tax uplift of \$5.7 million. By year 20, the City of Winnipeg will collect a minimum of \$9.3 million annually based on property value uplift alone.

Next steps

1. Establish a priority sequence for foundational projects, factoring in how each multiplies the success of the others, the readiness of specific partners involved, and the degree of impact to be achieved.
2. Identify and/or create specific development plans and infrastructure projects according to the priority sequencing and arising opportunities that includes final costing and refined value-uplift calculations to establish net ROI.
3. Establish a refined series of "Success Metrics" for each foundational project and precinct plan, aggregating them into an overall reporting tool for evaluation over time.

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Foundational Projects Backgrounder

Innovation, exciting places, and community

- **City Hall Innovation Centre.** City Hall to adopt a leadership role, mandating that Winnipeg becomes the leading urban public policy innovator in Canada, piloting new initiatives within the EDCIS Study Area.
- **Arts Festival Campus.** Shared amenities, infrastructure and space spanning from the China Gardens to Odeon Park and the proposed “Walker Square” that can be used for “plug and play” events and festivals.
- **Market Lands Developments.** Centred on a “Creative Hub” that will provide creators with access to shared space, equipment and other resources used to collaborate, innovate, exhibit, and sell creative projects. It also includes a significant housing development.
- **Chinatown Highstreet.** A vibrant, concentrated, and authentic three-block commercial “high street” experience that celebrates the history and culture of Chinese Winnipeggers.
- **Historic Main Frontage Restoration.** Restoration of the historic frontages along Main Street, creating opportunities for local Indigenous entrepreneurs, artists and social enterprises.
- **Circle of Life Thunderbird House.** Restoration of the Circle of Life Thunderbird House (Anishinaabemowin: Whaka Pimadiziiwii Pinaysiiwigamic) to fulfill its role as an Indigenous community centre and ceremony grounds.
- **Integrate Manitoba Centennial Corporation’s Buildings.** Integration of the Manitoba Centennial Corporation’s buildings and cultural campus into the larger precinct by reducing the blank walls and improving the interactivity between building and streets.
- **Alexander Docks Renewal.** Restoration and renewal of the Alexander Docks and surrounding docklands as a focal point to connect to the river and surrounding communities and for honouring those who came before us.

Walkable, Lively Streets that Connect People, Places, and Activity

- **Cultural Corridor Network.** A series of pedestrian-oriented travel paths linking the East and West Exchange, Chinatown and the Sports, Hospitality and Entertainment District that both add new and integrate existing street-level art and design elements.
- **Alexander Shared Street.** Develop Alexander Street between Lily and Waterfront Drive as a shared street, making it a low-vehicular traffic and open for people, events, and business.
- **Pedestrian Suspension Bridge.** A traditional suspension bridge designed for the natural settings of the Alexander Docks site and Whittier Park to complete the St Boniface and Winnipeg downtown loops.
- **Cantilevered Bridge Connector.** A cantilevered pedestrian and cycling sidewalk/platform on the northside of CN Mainline Railway Bridge (connecting North St Boniface to the Exchange District (Darveau to Lombard Avenues).
- **New North – South Connector to the Forks.** A pedestrian-scale grid creation with a new north-south roadway running from William Stevenson Way to Bannatyne Avenue.



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- **Portage East – Notre Dame Greenway.** An East-West Transit & Active Transportation Greenway located on Portage Avenue East with a driveway for hotel/commercial access.
- **Albert as a Shared Street.** A shared-street development of Albert Street, including the creation of a living laneway perpendicular to the street, allowing access for commercial and cultural activities.

Residential Development Intensification Zones (RDIZs)

- **Rows Residential Development Intensification Zone (RDIZ).** An infill development community bounded by Dagmar, William, Adelaide, and Notre Dame with residential/mixed-used development.
- **Education and Innovation RDIZ & Living Lab.** An innovative mixed-use, mixed income housing project called a “Living Lab” focused on affordability in Chinatown and the Northeast Exchange.
- **Neeginan RDIZ.** Mid to high-rise residential development located in the space bordered by Higgins and Henry Avenues, and Austin and Maple Streets focused on affordability and complete community framework.
- **Alex RDIZ.** An affordable residential and mixed-use development that leverages its proximity to one of the largest clusters of arts and cultural institutions in Canada, located on Alexander Avenue.
- **Portage East RDIZ.** The creation of a residential neighbourhood east of Portage and Main priced for a variety of incomes and intended to provide housing for the Exchange District’s workforce.
- **Waterfront RDIZ.** This development includes a residential building bordered by Higgins Avenue, Waterfront Drive, the Waterfront Trail and the laneway west of Curtis Street, the restoration and preservation single family homes on Annabella and Curtis Streets, as well as the construction of a new north-south street accommodating 20 low-rise, two-floor lofts and townhouses.
- **Green Co-Development RDIZ.** A development project that focuses on furthering advancing green building as co-developments with existing buildings — specifically those with architectural and historic value.

Public Transit as investment in community and enhancing spaces

- **Public Transit Corridor Alignment.** A north-south leg of the City’s planned rapid transit system which extends from the transit hub in the Portage and Main Area (Westbrook) and runs north-south on Main Street, with stations at the William/Market Avenue intersection and Higgins Avenue.
- **Westbrook Station/Corridor.** A rapid transit station and mixed transportation corridor development on Westbrook — situated near the intersection of Portage Avenue East.
- **Market & Main Transit Station.** A rapid transit station at Market Avenue that will be situated near the 1919 Streetcar public art installation and the Pantages Theatre, making it a destination spot in addition to a transit stop.