
Dennis Lewycky of the Social Planning Council opened and facilitated the event.

This event was the result of many discussions about how the city allocates land. There have been a number of cases where land allocations have become controversial - the proposed Water Park at the Forks, the fire station land swaps, the land parallel to the CN Fort Rouge rail line - are just a few.

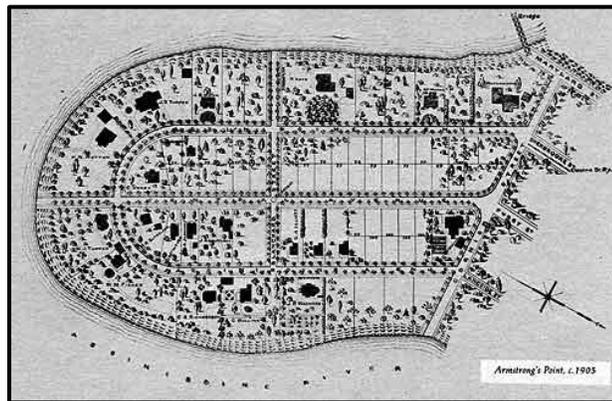
This event was organized by For the Love of Winnipeg, The Planners' Network Manitoba, The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg (SPCW) and Outdoor Urban Recreational Spaces-Winnipeg (OURS-Winnipeg), to give the community an opportunity to learn about how municipal government allocates land, and then discuss how these decisions affect our community.

Dennis noted that it is important for setting the tone for the event, that we know the public is concerned about how City Hall is dealing with land, and for this meeting our concern is not about specific parcels of land and specific decisions our elected officials are making. It is important to monitor and comment on this aspect of city government because they are dealing with a fundamental part of our community - with the private use of public land, the reduction in the commons that is our collective heritage and future. "How a city uses its land determines how it physically and social grows. City government is the custodian of the commons and therefore has an ethical and legal obligation to protect the commons for all of us and for future generations. But we as citizens also have a responsibility to measure and monitor the government procedures and actions for assuring the best use of public land."

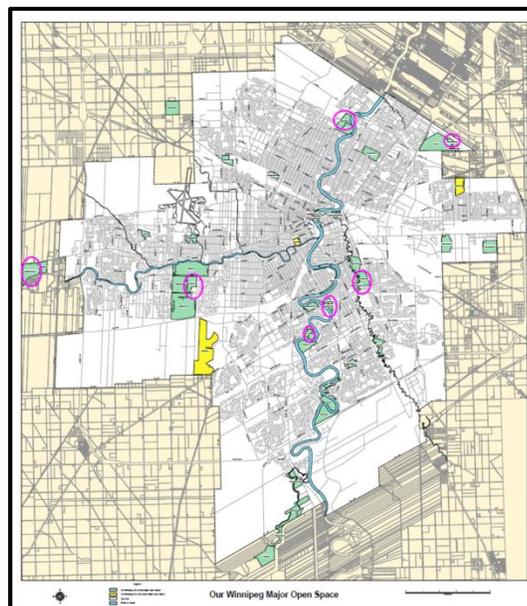


The evening began with four cases that deal with the allocation of public land and community groups who have had experience dealing with the City.

1. Thomas McLeod of Armstrong's Point Association (APA) briefly introduced their dealings with the City around the expansion of the private school in their neighbourhood. The APA is taking the City to court, citing that the City is contravening its own Zoning By-laws and the City of Winnipeg Charter. They are currently waiting for the written decision by the court, which was not in their favour, to decide what their next step will be.



2. Ron Mazur of OURS-Winnipeg presented on their efforts to protect the City-owned golf courses from privatization. Though public golf courses took years and six different Mayors to be established, Mayor Katz attempted to sell seven in one decision at Council. OURS-Winnipeg held public forums and organized a petition campaign to preserve the golf courses as public land. The City is now implementing a modified management competition for the golf courses.



3. Kerniel Aasland, Corydon community resident spoke about the secondary plan process in Corydon. The process started with an advisory committee, which included the Corydon Residents' Association, and seemed from a residents' perspective to be representative and inclusive. Research for the plan started back in 2009. The process was stopped after some business people in the community complained to the City, and Councillor Wyatt from Transcona put forward a motion to halt the secondary plan. An RFP went out to hire a consultant to restart the process, but for now the community is still waiting.



4. Sandra Gessler, The Friends of Victoria Park presented on their attempt to establish a heritage park recognizing the 1919 Strike on Waterfront Drive. The strike is a major event that drastically affected labour relations in North America and there is nothing in the City commemorating this important history. The Friends of Victoria Park identified an ideal location, zoned as parkland and along the river. After much investigation, it was learned that the land was sold by the City and deemed to be suitable for a boutique hotel, though this information was not available in any public documents.



Whose Winnipeg: Public Process and City Decisions Forum March 14, 2013

4

The panel speakers who discussed the case studies and gave their perceptions and insights throughout the discussion have studied Government decision making, city planning, community engagement and have worked within government.



- Sheri Blake is a former professor in the Department of City Planning at the University of Manitoba and has worked with community groups since the 1990's to develop their capacity to plan and work with the City planning process.
- Brian Kelsey is a former policy advisor to Mayor Katz and now a guest lecturer in Politics at University of Winnipeg.
- Richard Milgrom is head of the City Planning Department at the University of Manitoba as well as an active member of the Planners' Network.

The speakers briefly discussed the case studies, then participated in discussion with the 130 people attending the event. The following is only a brief overview of the comments and points of discussion that were shared. For a full list of comments, see appendix 1.

Integrity, Transparency and Accountability of Civic Government and Bureaucracy

There was great frustration in the audience that there seems to be a culture of deal-making, secret meetings, and general disregard for public process within the City. Citizen groups have difficulties getting information and following how the decision-making process follows investigations, reports, consultation, policy and plans. There have been cuts to the planning department, reducing their ability to plan for the future. It is unclear whether or not increasing this capacity would make a real difference given the culture of City Hall. This is a challenge in and of itself, but it's compounded by a lack of tools to hold representatives and decision makers accountable.

Public Input

The consultation process in the City feels like a charade. Those who participate have no sense that the information they provide will be heard or utilized in any meaningful way. A number of people spoke about not being heard or even respected when they speak at formal political processes, for example, community committees or Council meetings.

Winnipeg's Municipal Governance

Some of the concerns regarding accountability were linked to the way Winnipeg's municipal government is set up. The Courts, the Province (through the Municipal Board and the City of Winnipeg Charter), and our civic representatives all have a role to play. Citizens, through speaking to Councillors and the Mayor, attending meetings, and participating in elections, also have responsibilities.

Key Issues

There were a number of current critical issues discussed, all of which are being resolved in unsatisfactory ways by The City. The process of developing rapid transit was of great concern, from the studies to the recommendations to the consultations to the decisions. Downtown development, and in particular the lack of consideration for residents and their needs, was also discussed. Finally, there was discussion of the short-sighted development of the City which tends to ignore youth, seniors, and those things that are the heart of Winnipeg - arts and culture, neighbourhoods, and history. In summation, one participant noted that Winnipeg is being "undersold and sold off."

Conclusion

What we heard tonight was just a start. Obviously there is a lot of concern and it was important to get some of the views and frustrations out in the open. We need to learn more and to move this discussion forward.

The next steps offered by the group discussion include:

- Learning more: information about the complex rules and learning the language of those in power is important for determining the best way to change things.
- Engaging others: though many people are concerned, there is still apathy to the issues. New people must always be brought into the discussion
- Working together: coalition building can support us in learning from each other, working with fewer resources, and sharing across specific issues or neighbourhoods.

Another meeting will be organized in a month but important for everyone to bring at least two new people to the discussion.

Whose Winnipeg: Public Process and City Decisions Forum

March 14, 2013

Appendix 1: Full list of Discussion Points

i

The following is a list of the summarized comments that were shared by the 130 people at the event:

- people at top of the city political hierarchy have their integrity in doubt
- polite people speaking to politicians are not listened to
- the Municipal Board has responsibilities and jurisdiction that is not being challenged or employed to deal with the problems at City Hall
- currently a great deal of the decision making and meetings are happening behind closed doors
- seems the City has given up on Downtown and the people who live there
- transit system - it seems the rapid transit plan is just designed to get buses off Pembina - not meet the needs of riders. Would it make more sense to put rapid transit down the centre of Pembina Highway? This would create vibrant streets
- the City has chosen a path for rapid transit that failed in Minneapolis
- changes in Policy regarding transit are rarely made by those who use Transit
- solution is developed for the wrong problem: rapid transit focuses on speed, but frequency may be the problem
- on the transit studies, it seems the consultant preferences are not the same as the what the recommendations ended up to be
- there should be an Online petition for who supports/is against the Parker Wetlands Conservation proposal for the rapid transit extension
- there is no progressive action being taken by the city to keep young people
- everyone should remember that a city election is coming up quickly
- Winnipeg needs Policy changes and regulatory changes that will stand the test of time regardless of who is in power
- there should be a formal mandated procedure for public participation in city planning and decisions making
- there really is a 'culture of deal-making' at the city now where there are no provisions around conflict of interest, accountability and transparency, and that major land allocations are being made according to who has what clout
- there is a very serious lack of planning capacity at the City: the role of staff now is to respond to zoning and development demands, not to proactively plan for the City
- seems important to reform EPC - the tendency to have meetings in private is not usually allowed
- we need a mayoral candidate with a comprehensive proposal to reform EPC and decision making generally

Appendix 1: Full list of Discussion Points

- we need RADICAL transparency: city should expose how land sold, who does the appraisal, what are the costs involved in land transactions
- We the public, as citizens need to directly engage with our Councillor when things happen. Contacting them to justify or change their decisions.
- Everyone can and should call their councillor regularly
- there has also been an erosion in support for community challenges of City Hall, there is less understanding and empathy can be expected from the Courts. In the past, the Courts would look at the substance of the laws and bylaws. There is no back up if we cannot get a hearing in court
- Provincial government can rewrite City of Winnipeg Charter so there is a document that will ensure rules are kept
- City is undersold and is being sold off - there isn't a respect of what Winnipeg is and has to offer
- rapid transit as it's being built is based on a failed model of meeting city needs
- cultural experience, for residents and visitors, is the future of the modern city: culture and entertainment district as separate areas is offensive as it implies there are these different groupings in the city
- the Our Winnipeg plan disregards place
- we should be investing in our children as artists in Winnipeg as an asset
- there is a bait (densification, proper use of land) and switch (suburbs are still being built rapidly) phenomenon led by government that is confusing for business, developers and citizens
- what is needed is a Coalition of residents' organizations - a unifying body so that neighbourhoods collaborate and heighten their voice with the city. There is a reliance on the fragmentation of community organizations that exists - it benefits the City to have division
- Winnipeg Transit Riders' Forum is March 23 10:30-2:30 at the library
- it is very difficult to get information from City officials on these issues
- we need to organize coalitions
- we need young people involved
- there is a huge accountability, transparency deficit: "why isn't land publically tenured? Why is there no bidding?" It is hard to get notice of hearings to prevent political action.
- There is a long list of issues on land that the City has not deal well with over time: old arena at Polo Park site, Summerset School, Home Depots, Royalwood Development, Waverly West, Sherbrooke Pool, Ballpark and the parking lot.

Appendix 1: Full list of Discussion Points

- the demise of the City amenities in the downtown - grocery store at Zellers closing, but 18,000 - many of whom have a physical disability in Portage Place area being disregarded. The necessities of life not seen as a city responsibility
- can we rally various groups in our communities to have secondary plans developed
- the issues have a lot of people who care about them, but we need to get people involved. There are many people who are apathetic or do not know the issues; we must engage many people on our issues
- City ignores its own studies, declines to bring attention to studies that have been done, make up information
- fundamental problem at City Hall that will not be solved by hiring more planners
- the court is understanding “reasonableness” as the standard rather than “correctness”
- changes to our laws are made to the benefit of some: this is a local but also a national trend (note Bills 38 and 45 recently in Ottawa).
- we can organize with other Cities who are facing same corruption
- there is a relationship between our health and urban design. Our cities are making us sick - poor planning not only causes infrastructure deficits but also health problems
- Cities that are good for older adults are good for everyone. We need Activist Aging - it’s up to us to make the government do things, not up to the government to do it
- we need to get informed - there are layers of complex rules around how cities are formed
- we need to learn to speak the language to engage, we can arm ourselves with that knowledge
- Winnipeg is a City of deep communities with deep roots and committed people
- it is not unreasonable to expect to be heard
- City Council is making its decision on Rapid Transit route. Councillor Orlikow has proposed two options be kept open. Talk to your Councillor this week