

# 1. Planning

Adhering to the principles outlined in *Our Winnipeg* — a 25 year municipal plan that outlines broad goals for future development, supported by three main areas of focus and directional strategies such as complete communities, sustainable transportation, and sustainable water and waste — and the preferences expressed by the public, the CCPA Alternative Budget proposes specific directions in city planning and development. These include:

- Holistic city planning using secondary plans
- The implementation of development charges to reflect the true cost of suburban sprawl
- The promotion of denser, mixed-use sustainable development
- A plan to look at insourcing snow removal
- Reversing vacancy management

In line with *Our Winnipeg's* three areas of focus, these directions are intended to: first, create a more sustainable city in which city planning and development is consistent with social, economic, and environmental sustainability goals; second, contribute to a city that works by making effective, efficient use of city resources, including existing municipal infrastructure and services; third, establish more complete and inclusive communities that will enhance quality of life by affording more opportunities for mobility, access to resources and opportunities, and for the cultivation of diverse, vibrant neighbourhoods.

The measures presented in this budget are also based on principles of responsibility and public accountability in government. This involves planning that is conducted in a manner that is transparent, consistent, and in the best interests of the public rather than planning that conforms to private interests.

## Secondary Plans

To achieve the vision set out in *Our Winnipeg* requires a holistic approach to city planning. There is also a Capital Plan, which offers a 5 year outline of projected spending on specific capital projects such as downtown enhancements and public art.

However, there is a lack of middle-ground plans that address how the city can achieve its 25 year vision and implement broad development goals through specific actions along the way.

To engage in effective city planning more secondary plans are required. A secondary plan is a land use plan for a particular neighbourhood, providing more detailed land-use policies than those found in the larger municipal plan. In the last several years few plans have been completed, especially for existing and mature neighbourhoods, where we recommend denser, mixed development take priority. Having these plans in place promotes fiscally responsible, timely, and sustainable development that seeks to coordinate municipal infrastructure with proposed developments according to established criteria.

As such, we recommend that the city develop more secondary plans, at a faster pace (from 2011–13 only 2 plans per year were completed, mainly for emerging suburban neighbourhoods). At the same time, we suggest that secondary plans be developed in an inclusive, publicly transparent manner, drawing on input from residents as well as existing resources like Winnipeg's public universities, as well as community organizations, as discussed in the 2010 Alternative Municipal Budget (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives MB, 2010).

There is also a need to ensure that secondary plans are adhered to, along with a better process to amend them. Currently developers in areas where secondary plans exist can amend the plan quite easily and for a small fee. Amendments are subject to a "public consultation" process which often does not include real consultation. The various levels at which the public is allowed to

voice its opinion amount to little more than ad hoc exercises where citizens speak but are not listened to.

We propose hiring back more planners, which will enhance the city's planning capacity and create a strong planning department. Further, we propose to channel funds into the planning process, with the target of completing at least 3 secondary plans per year.

*New Expenditures:*

- Hiring New Staff: \$500,000 (5 new full-time equivalent positions)
- Establishing Secondary Plans: \$1 million

### Development Charges: Addressing Suburban Sprawl

Without clear, intermediary plans, new development in the city has unfolded in a way that is inconsistent with aims of environmental, social, and economic sustainability as outlined in *Our Winnipeg*. Since 1970, Winnipeg has expanded its area by 80 per cent, while its population only grew by 33 per cent (Bellamy, 2014). To accommodate this expansion, Winnipeg has extended municipal infrastructure across a vast region. Yet the city has decreased in density meaning each taxpayer's share of the infrastructure burden has grown (Bellamy, 2014).

Too often the location of new development tends to be based on developer's preferences rather than public interest (Leo, 2013) This is particularly manifest in the pursuit of new greenfield suburban developments such as Waverly West and the recently approved Ridgewood South, while tracts of land closer to existing neighbourhoods and infrastructure such as in Transcona West remain underdeveloped or vacant (Leo, 2013).

Suburban sprawl in Winnipeg (and cities across Canada) has many costs, some of which are accounted for, while others remain hidden (Bellamy, 2014). The mayor of Calgary, Naheed Nenshi, has termed these hidden costs 'sprawl

subsidy' (Thompson, 2013). Suburban development requires building new infrastructure (roads, sewer and water lines, etc.), which calls for ongoing maintenance (snow removal, repairs, etc.). Yet Winnipeg already faces an infrastructure deficit and significant challenges in maintaining existing, and especially older infrastructure. At the same time, new suburbs necessitate new parks and fire stations, libraries and recreational services, regional roads, policing, and active and public transit, all of which involve significant financial investment by the city (Santin, 2013).

While development fees cover some of the expense of building infrastructure (mainly roads, sewer and water lines, sidewalks, etc.) and new developments grow property taxes, these revenue streams do not adequately address the ongoing, long-term economic cost of sprawl (Thompson, 2013). The increased costs are met by eliminating funds from other areas of the municipal budget or by raising taxes. In any case, we all pay for suburban sprawl.

In addition to economic costs, there are less direct, yet significant social and environmental costs associated with sprawl. Suburban life is heavily reliant on the car, and suburbanites drive about three times more than urbanites contributing to environmental pollution, as well as road congestion and delays which cost employers. More driving contributes to inactivity and health problems (such as obesity and chronic illnesses), as well as an increased number of collisions and road accidents (Thompson, 2013). Moreover, suburban sprawl expands the gap between wealthier suburban neighbourhoods and low income inner city neighbourhoods, fostering inequalities in quality of life and opportunities afforded to those living in these disparate locations (Savage, Warde and Ward, 2003).

To address suburban sprawl and mitigate some of its costs, we propose to adopt a new growth development charge (GDC). Many major cities across Canada implement some kind of GDC to fund growth. The idea behind the GDC is that

growth should be able to pay for the new infrastructure and services it necessitates (City of Winnipeg, 2013). Although the city has floated the idea of a per-lot tax on new homes, we prefer a model in which charges are adjusted by location. The closer the proposed development is to the city centre, where it can take advantage of existing infrastructure and services, the less the charge. In the City of Kitchener, for instance, suburban residential charges are 74 per cent higher than urban residential charges, and even more for non-residential buildings (Thompson, 2013).

We propose that the GDC be phased in, starting with new suburb development. The AMB recommends a \$15,000 fee, which would amount to about 4 per cent of a new \$350,000 house, be applied to housing starts in new suburban residential developments in Winnipeg. It will not apply to the replacement or renovation of existing homes. It will also not apply to new units on vacant lots in existing developments or designated areas close to Winnipeg's urban centre that have not yet been developed. Between 2000 and 2013, an average of 1,370 new single-family dwellings were built each year (City of Winnipeg Statistics). Not all of these were built in new developments, so if 1,000 homes of the 1,370 were built on new developments the tax would raise \$15 million.

In addition, we propose to implement planning policy promoting denser growth in suburban areas. For example, the city of Calgary has adopted a model whereby new land use is reduced by 25 per cent. This model is projected to save the city \$11 billion just in capital costs alone (Thompson, 2013; Bellamy 2014). In addition to being denser, however, any new suburban development should also ascribe to the complete communities goal set out in *Our Winnipeg* by incorporating a diversity of housing type and tenure, as well as mix of residential, commercial, and office or industrial use.

Finally, similar to the 2010 Alternative Municipal Budget, we propose to develop a new

Planning and Infrastructure Economic Analysis Unit within the planning department, dedicated to cost-benefit analysis of all new developments with an eye to the public good. Such analysis will take into consideration all of the costs of new development, including immediate and long term infrastructure and service costs. This unit will be composed of newly-hired city planners.

We recognize that slowing suburban sprawl will require cooperation from the provincial government, since the Province would have to amend legislation to allow for a GDC.

*New Expenditures:*

- Planning and Infrastructure Economic Analysis Unit: \$1 million

*New Revenues:*

- Growth Development Charge: Implement a fee of \$15,000 per new lot for suburban residential development: \$15M

**Promoting denser, mixed development**

According to population projections outlined in *Our Winnipeg*, over the next 17 years (by 2031) Winnipeg is expected to add another 180,000 people to its population. In order to accommodate this growth, the city will require a variety of new residential and commercial development. Yet to ensure that such development occurs in a sustainable manner, and creates the kind of walkable, livable, complete communities desired by the citizens of Winnipeg, development needs to take a different direction.

Specifically, more emphasis needs to be placed on densification through infill development, the retrofitting of existing suburbs, and downtown development.

**Promoting infill development**

*Our Winnipeg* offers direction for city building that supports compact urban growth. This means prioritizing infill along with new growth in areas

that are adjacent to existing neighbourhoods and that minimize sprawl. There are many parcels of land within the city that could be developed according to this directive. We propose to place particular emphasis on developments that makes use of underused land, including brownfield sites (abandoned industrial areas) such as the old rail yards, and surface-parking lots (Bellamy, 2014).

Infill projects that are sustainable need to prioritize transit-oriented development (TOD). To encourage infill around transit hubs, however, requires that the city invest more investment in modern, rapid transit and the expansion of routes, as discussed in the Transportation section (also see Bellamy, 2014). So far, Phase I of the South West Rapid Transit Corridor has already spurred infill such as the Fort Rouge Yards, which will accommodate 1800 residents in the Lord Roberts neighbourhood. The economic spin-offs of this re-densification are numerous: increased property values, better use of existing infrastructure and resources (such as schools that are currently below capacity), and a boost for local commerce (Bellamy, 2014).

### **Retrofit existing suburbs**

Winnipeg's many existing suburbs offer an exceptional opportunity for infill development that will not only reduce new green-field sprawl but also create more complete communities. As outlined in *Our Winnipeg*, complete communities offer a range of housing and options for accessing amenities and resources to accommodate a diversity of incomes and lifestyles. Retrofitting existing suburbs through the redevelopment of underused strip malls and surface-parking lots, as well as residential and mixed-use infill can help achieve this goal.

This means targeting residential infill to expand the array of housing available, with particular emphasis on creating more affordable, multi-family, and low-income housing since there is a shortage in these types. Retrofitting also requires the development of mixed-use ar-

reas in order to increase options for accessing local services such as grocery stores, restaurants, and recreational facilities. Further, existing suburban neighbourhoods need to be better integrated with public and active transit options in order to meet the transit needs of a variety of people and lifestyles.

### **Downtown development**

As *Our Winnipeg* states, 'Downtown offers one of the best opportunities to create complete, mixed-use, higher-density communities in a way that promotes sustainable practices' (City of Winnipeg, 2011, p. 34). Infill that prioritizes downtown development is most efficient. It is closer to the core and heart of the city, where a significant proportion of Winnipeg and its neighbouring municipalities' labour force work, in one of the city's most concentrated office developments. Downtown is also considered the city's entertainment, cultural, and arts centre. Winnipeg's concert hall, art galleries, museums, and other performances attract over 3 million people annually (MNP LLP, 2013). Further, Winnipeg's downtown is where major public and active transit routes intersect at a number of transit hubs. Downtown also provides ready access to a wide variety of recreational and other municipal services such as the Millennium Library.

Residential development in the city centre would create more complete communities by enabling more people to live downtown, where they can walk or use public transport options to get to work. The densification of downtown would enhance *Our Winnipeg's* quality of life goals, since more people downtown means safer streets, access to opportunities, and the cultivation of a more vibrant core.

There is much opportunity for infill downtown. For instance, Winnipeg has no shortage of inner-city surface-parking lots that can be repurposed (Kives, 2014). Further, there is an existing stock of older and heritage buildings that could be renovated for residential and mixed-uses in

line with *Our Winnipeg's* emphasis on heritage conservation and sustainability objectives.

In order to promote these directions for development, we propose to channel funding toward incentives that promote infill development in existing neighbourhoods and downtown. These include tax reductions for the redevelopment of brownfield and TOD priority sites. Further, the proposed GDC will be significantly lower for new development in existing and mature neighbourhoods as compared to suburban areas.

In addition, in the future we propose to increase taxes on empty and underused lots (such as surface-parking lots) by introducing property class tax reform, with significantly higher rates for surface-parking lots and vacant land classes than other property classes such as multi-residential buildings (Thompson, 2013). This will provide incentive to owners of underused lots to redevelop them and put them to higher-value use.

Of course, the proposed financial incentives need to be met by necessary zoning adjustments that allow for denser, diverse development, such as changes to parking requirements (Bellamy, 2014) and the establishment of inclusionary zoning regulations. Some progress has already been made on this front with the allowance of secondary, rental suites in existing homes in 2012. Yet there is more work to be done. As such, we propose the creation of a specific working group in the Planning Department that would identify and address obstacles to infill development. This would be facilitated by one of the new hires in the department.

The creation of secondary plans for these areas would be prioritized. Further, we suggest that any Downtown development initiatives such as the planned Sports, Hospitality, Entertainment District (SHED) be conducted in an inclusive, publicly transparent manner, with the involvement of city planners and in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders (i.e. residents, arts and community organizations, local businesses, and the broader public). This will ensure that

the heart and core of Winnipeg is revitalized in a manner that is transparent, consistent, and in the best interests of the public.

#### *New Expenditures:*

- Working group to identify and address obstacles to infill development: cost of new hire (already included).
- Incentives for development on priority sites: \$700,000

#### In-sourcing

The logic of outsourcing of public services, long questioned by the AMB, is now facing widespread doubt originating with evidence of how costs have sky rocketed after services were removed from public purview (Greenwood, 2014). Municipalities across the US are re-thinking outsourcing and considering the benefits of bringing services back under their control (In the Public Interest, 2014). Locally, concerns around the quality of snow removal services raise serious questions about the long-term effects of contracting this core service out. CUPE 500 finds that Winnipeg spends more on snow removal than other Canadian cities and it would like the opportunity to see if it could save our city money by bringing the work back in house. In order to study the possibility, it needs access to information the City has been unwilling to provide.

#### *New Expenditure:*

- Snow removal insourcing study: \$20,000

#### Vacancy management reversal

Demands on core public services will only increase as our population grows and climate change presents new challenges. The City has been undermining the civil service for years and shortsighted 'savings' such as the \$14M in vacancy management (a term that often means hiring freezes or position consolidation) make it increasingly difficult



for public workers to meet Winnipeggers' needs. This situation frustrates citizens, businesses and workers alike. The AMB begins to reverse this trend by reducing vacancy management by \$2M.

*New Expenditures:*

- Vacancy management reversal: \$2M

### Complete community planning

As with regular budgeting, Gender Based Analysis (GBA) in planning and development recognizes that universalist approaches can lead to inequitable outcomes in cities. For instance, women are much more likely to rely on public transit than men, and their access to work, recreation, and other public activities is therefore disproportionately impacted by suburban sprawl. Bookman and Morgan (1998) argued the interconnection between home, work, and community needs more attention from planners given working-class women's responsibilities in all spheres.

In Winnipeg, the definition of a "complete community" depends on the perspective of the populations within that community. GBA in planning entails a consideration of the housing, transportation, commercial and amenity options

required for the varied family structures, cultures and incomes of those living in Winnipeg.

The AMB dedicates staff time to study and recommend how to incorporate complete community planning into departmental considerations.

*Total Expenditures*

- Hiring New Staff: \$500,000 (5 new full-time equivalent positions)
- Establishing Secondary Plans: \$1M
- Planning and Infrastructure Economic Analysis Unit: \$1M
- Working group to identify and address obstacles to infill development: Cost of new staff included in new hiring
- Development incentives on priority sites: \$700,000
- Insourcing study: \$20,000
- Vacancy management reversal: \$2M
- Complete community planning: Cost of new staff included in new hiring
- Total spending: \$5.22M

*Total Revenue:*

- Growth Development Charge: \$15M