

Winnipeg 2000: Exploring Strategic Development Options

Occasional Paper No. 7

**by Deborah Lyon & Lynda H. Newman
1984**

The Institute of Urban Studies





THE UNIVERSITY OF
WINNIPEG

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The Institute of Urban Studies is an independent research arm of the University of Winnipeg. Since 1969, the IUS has been both an academic and an applied research centre, committed to examining urban development issues in a broad, non-partisan manner. The Institute examines inner city, environmental, Aboriginal and community development issues. In addition to its ongoing involvement in research, IUS brings in visiting scholars, hosts workshops, seminars and conferences, and acts in partnership with other organizations in the community to effect positive change.

WINNIPEG 2000:
EXPLORING STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

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Summary of a Public Lecture and
Conference held in Winnipeg, September 24-25, 1984

by

Deborah Lyon

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Institute of Urban Studies

1984



PREFACE

Most Winnipeggers are by now conscious of the efforts of both government and the private sector to revitalize the city's core. The Winnipeg Core Area Initiative, begun in 1981, is well-known to most citizens even though its complex and varied programs are not always appreciated as they could or should be. More recently, the Downtown Winnipeg Association inaugurated an ambitious "Destination Downtown" project designed to convince Winnipeggers that the core area contains excellent shopping, cultural facilities, and restaurants. Using the catchy slogan - "Its Better in the Centre" - downtown merchants are joining forces to promote their neighbourhood. On Main Street, the Main Street Revitalization Group continues to make progress and a recent infusion of funds will help shape dramatic visual changes to the area's buildings and streets. And, of course, the North Portage Development Corporation has begun the task of actually redeveloping a crucial portion of the core area after long years of talk and frustration.

In spite of all this activity, there is little sense that strategic planning is occurring in Winnipeg. Despite the attention directed at the core, suburban malls and subdivisions continue to grow. Is there, in fact, a strategic plan in place, or even in the minds of key decision-makers? In an attempt to answer this question, the Institute of Urban Studies - in co-operation with the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) - organized a one-day conference in the hope that attention could be focussed on the need for strategic planning.

By most indicators, the conference was very successful. In terms of registrations, the conference was a "sell-out." We were also pleased with the mix of registrants, which included individuals from both the public and private sectors. Our only regret was that more businessmen did not attend. In terms of speakers, the audience was treated to a comprehensive

and engaging view of the future. Indeed, as the following summary indicates, there was general agreement on virtually all issues.

It is my hope that similar conferences will be held in the next few years. As public service institutes, both Greg Mason (Director, ISER) and I hope that this conference did contribute to the informed debate that is so essential in a democratic society.

Alan F.J. Artibise
Director
October 1984.

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The Winnipeg 2000 Conference, organized by the Institute of Urban Studies and Institute for Social and Economic Research, was designed to:

- analyze prospects for economic and demographic change in Winnipeg to the year 2000, and
- assess strategic options for development within the city's economic, political and social context.

The event began on September 24 at the University of Winnipeg with a public lecture on the process of downtown redevelopment by keynote speaker, Stephen F. Dragos, recently appointed Executive Vice-President of the Phoenix Community Alliance and formerly Executive Vice-President of the Milwaukee Redevelopment Corporation.

A day-long conference followed at the Hotel Fort Garry on September 25. Approximately 100 planners, housing officials, educators, civil servants, business persons, politicians, community organizers, students and interested individuals participated. The schedule of speakers is presented in Table 1.

Socioeconomic and Demographic Prospects

Winnipeg's overall economic growth is expected to remain moderate at best and subject to the dynamics of technological change from now until the year 2000. To obtain even modest growth it will require efficient, well-timed and carefully focussed public sector investments, and more effective government planning and co-ordination (Mason).

- Services will continue to develop as the basis of the city's economy, employing perhaps 80 per cent of the work force by the year 2000 (including transportation and communications). These services will have to be export oriented due to insufficient population growth to support this base. Significant increases in wealth cannot be expected from mega projects or a major expansion of manufacturing.

TABLE 1

PROGRAM FOR WINNIPEG 2000:
EXPLORING STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

Monday, September 24, 1984

*Public Address on the Process of
Downtown Redevelopment*

Stephen F. Dragos
Executive Vice-President,
Phoenix Community Alliance

D. Jane Snidal*
Associate Professor and
Chairman, Department of
Economics, University
of Winnipeg

Gerry R. Kendall
Vice-President, Winnipeg
Chamber of Commerce

Tuesday, September 25

Opening Remarks

Alan F.J. Artibise
Director, Institute of Urban Studies,
University of Winnipeg, and
Member, Committee of Review,
City of Winnipeg Act

Luncheon Address

Chair: Robin H. Farquhar
President, University of
Winnipeg

Speaker: Mayor William Norrie, Q.C.
City of Winnipeg

*Session 1 - Prospects for Economic
and Demographic Change Through
to 2000*

Chair: Paul G. Thomas
Chairman, Master's Program
in Public Affairs,
Universities of Manitoba
and Winnipeg, and Member,
Committee of Review, City
of Winnipeg Act

Session 3 - The Options in Context

Chair: Lawrence A. Cherniack
Chairman, Committee of Review,
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Speakers: Greg C. Mason
Director, Institute for
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Speakers: David Henderson
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Peter Diamant
Deputy Minister, Department
of Urban Affairs,
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Arnold Naimark
Chairman, North Portage
Development Corporation,
and President, University
of Manitoba

Session 2 - Options for Development

Chair: James A. Ernst
Deputy Mayor, City of
Winnipeg

Banquet Addresses

Chair: Alan F.J. Artibise

Speakers: Michael A. Goldberg
Professor and Associate
Dean of Commerce,
University of British
Columbia

Speakers: Stephen F. Dragos

Mary Beth Dolin
Minister for Urban Affairs,
Province of Manitoba

William F. Neville
Councillor, City of
Winnipeg, and Associate
Professor, Political
Studies, University
of Manitoba

* Reading a paper prepared by Robert W.
Fenton, Associate Professor,
Department of Economics, University
of Winnipeg

- Population and economic activity may shift to Winnipeg from other parts of the province given recognition of the city as the provincial growth pole; lack of funds to sustain suboptimal development elsewhere in Manitoba; and continued rationalization of the agricultural sector.
- There may be significant shifts of dependent persons, especially the elderly, should fiscal restraint force centralization of social and health services in Winnipeg (Mason). Alternatively, it was argued that Manitoba has taken a lead in helping the rural elderly remain in their communities and it may be expected to continue these efforts (Sale).

One topic which engaged speakers and general participants in discussion revolved around the questions: (a) Will the service-based economy be sufficient to redistribute income? or (b) Will new government measures be required to ensure that divisions between the lower two and upper three income quintiles are not sharpened further? It was suggested the starting point for income redistribution is increased employment, based on a co-ordinated economic development strategy (Diamant).

In terms of sociodemographic prospects, it was argued that, to reverse net losses of population from inner city census tracts, physical growth should be limited to the city's demographic growth, investment concentrated in the core area, and a vision articulated and marketed for the heart of Winnipeg (Sale).

- By 2000, Winnipeg's population may be 658,000 to 680,000, or about 65 per cent of the provincial total. The rate of growth will be based on natural increase and immigration rather than interprovincial migration.
- The elderly will be the fastest growing segment, constituting perhaps 15 per cent of the population by 2000. The school population should stabilize in four years and for the next cohort.
- The dependency ratio is expected to slowly improve to 2000, then recede to its current level. The ratio masks several socioeconomic factors:

- Children and families increasingly are at risk - risks associated with unemployment, poverty, family breakdown and other social pathologies.
 - The "under 15s" and "over 65s" have distinctive income/expenditure impacts, especially in terms of the distribution of costs between the public and private sectors.
 - Experience indicates there will not be dollar-for-dollar transfers from education to health care in response to population changes.
- Female labour force participation rates may have peaked after rising rapidly between 1976 and 1982. Prior to 1981, this factor, not existing mechanisms of income redistribution, made a significant contribution to reduced poverty rates. Since then, the numbers of social assistance recipients and families below the poverty line have increased markedly in Manitoba.

Political Prospects

One of the basic themes to emerge from comments by speakers and general participants was that political will and leadership, especially at the municipal level of government, are key to the development and promotion of strategic goals, plans and programs for Winnipeg. However, participants' and speakers' perspectives were mixed on the strength of these factors *vis-a-vis* the challenges facing the city. Among the observations discussed during the conference:

- Strategic planning should occur through the political process despite the controversy, fragmentation and incrementalism this may entail (Norrie). Examples of "good planning" are the new Air Canada building and Trizec's Portage and Main development, both of which mean increased net city revenues from the affected properties, and the succession of tri-level and city-provincial housing and community improvement programs valued at \$56.7 million between 1974 and 1984 (the Neighbourhood Improvement Program, Community Services Contribution Program, Core Area Initiative, Community Improvement Projects).

- Alternatively, the absence of appropriate technical, administrative and political reforms - including introduction of municipal parties in civic politics - means little or no premium is placed on coherence, consistency and accountability in planning, policy- and decision-making (Neville). Essential corollaries to such reforms are:
 - . Changes in public attitudes toward the nature of and participation in municipal politics, and
 - . Formation of distinctive municipal parties, rather than branches of provincial/federal parties.
- Dissolution of social consensus has contributed to controversy, government uncertainty and apparent confusion over strategic direction during the interregnum in which a new consensus is being formed. Persuasion and negotiation, not power, are required to function in a context of imperfect and contradictory signals. The outputs may appear fragmented and unrelated, but these mask the consensus on strategic direction which has occurred among those involved in development and redevelopment in Winnipeg.
- Tension will persist in the future between the two perspectives at city hall. One encompasses the traditional municipal role in providing hard services and taking a *laissez-faire* approach to the marketplace. This view is reinforced by financial, jurisdictional and other institutional/legal limitations on city government. The second view is based on the proposition that increased social problems in the urban environment oblige municipal government to go beyond basic policies and services. Civic participation in the Core Area Initiative (CAI) reflects acceptance of this latter view, but the test is whether this commitment can be sustained.
- Will provincial power increase relative to that of the city, given the province's superior taxation powers and mandate to plan and locate human services? Or has Winnipeg increased its power in the past 20 years? If so, will it continue to do so?
- Resolution of municipal/provincial fiscal responsibilities is difficult and contentious, especially as municipalities go beyond traditional service roles. Presently, responsibilities are so intertwined that fiscal accountability and decision-making are blurred.
- The tripartite CAI offers an alternative structure for shared decision-making and responsibility, as well as for focussing financial and human resources on a set of problems.

- Is there a need to develop other models; e.g., development authorities or a fourth level of government? Community development corporations now functioning in Winnipeg provide one option (Kiernan). These micro-level development groups operating in concert with a macro or regional-level development authority could be a second model (Naimark). A third proposal suggested that planning should be retained as a city function, but for implementation, especially downtown, apply the North Portage Development Corporation model to the total downtown and to the social needs of immediately adjacent communities (Henderson).
- The political context may contain certain imperatives which can lead to some impatience with the pace at which development corporations or similar entities proceed in the process of downtown revitalization (Dolin).
- There is a need to get the private sector more actively involved in setting strategic directions for Winnipeg, especially in downtown revitalization (Norrie, Dragos). Alternatively, conscious non-participation in the process by key sectors of the community may contribute to failure of vision and an undesirable physical legacy.

Context for Strategic Options

The two external speakers (Dragos, Goldberg) expressed optimism about the opportunities for planning, development and redevelopment in Winnipeg, and urged participants to look to the options for the future rather than dwelling on the past. Both stressed the importance of addressing the questions: (a) What are Winnipeg's goals? and (b) What are the objectives to attain those goals? They argued it is important to establish clear goals based on a locally-defined vision and agenda.

Among the key contextual issues presented to the conference:

- Winnipeg's physical configuration may be appropriate for conditions which existed 15 years ago, but not for the period to 2000 which will be marked by social disintegration, unemployment, declining disposable incomes, and an aging population (Diamant).

- Plan Winnipeg provides the vision and framework for future development/redevelopment but still has not been formally implemented or translated into specific, action-oriented programs, except through the CAI. Until government commitment is firm, there will be no private sector commitment to the plan's policies, especially for the downtown (Henderson, Sale).
- In setting goals and plans, consider carefully both product (the physical legacy; the collective impact of development/redevelopment on the fabric of the community) and process (e.g., Who designs downtowns? Who should? What will be the relationships between the public and private sectors? between planners, decision-makers and citizens? What is the time frame? Do the rules of the game facilitate or hinder objectives achievement?) (Dragos).
- Recognize but do not be paralyzed by the fact that planning occurs in an environment of uncertainty, competition and risk-taking. Once plans are set and judgments made about the quality and viability of a project, then proceed as quickly as possible to avoid stalemates arising from the actions of a competitor or changing social/economic conditions (Dragos).
- The CAI has demonstrated that action which produces tangible results, and has stakes attached to it, is the most efficacious form of participation in development/redevelopment (Kiernan).
- Reform of the property assessment system, and complete reassessment, are prerequisites to successful long-term planning in Winnipeg (Norrie).

Strategic Options

Two general observations emerged from conference discussions about Winnipeg's strategic options to the year 2000:

- (1) The focus of discussion was on options for the inner city, especially the downtown. By implication, it was perceived that revitalization of the inner city would make for an improved city by 2000.
- (2) While the focus on the inner city was consistent, the strategic

options within that focus varied and were not necessarily compatible with one another.

Among the observations and proposals:

- There will be no single, perfect strategy for Winnipeg's development to the year 2000 but, rather, incremental changes, at least in the physical environment. Social, demographic and economic shifts may be more dramatic, especially in relation to aspirations (Diamant). Strategic planning should aim to raise the level of social consensus, and must be participatory and non-coercive. Programming will be repetitive and incremental (Norrie).
- In the downtown, build on existing centres of strength through infill development around current anchors and do not use public funds to artificially attract investment to underdeveloped areas (Kendall). Portage and Main, Broadway, South Broadway, the Eaton's-Hudson's Bay Co. axis, and South Portage all have potential for new development/redevelopment. North Portage should undergo private residential redevelopment; any attempts to produce speculative office/retail space would tend to fragment the central business district. The CN East Yards could contain a business or research park in the future as well as a public transportation interchange; high density residential development; public open/recreational space; and perhaps a domed stadium. Incentives should be introduced to encourage service-oriented businesses to locate in the Notre Dame-to-CPR core. Outside the downtown, Plan Winnipeg's implementation should recognize traditional freedom of locational choice.
- Additional industrial park sites should be provided in the northwest quadrant of the city; there is no demand for industrial redevelopment of the CPR yards.
- Begin to restrain development of the suburban periphery and take measures to encourage centralization of people and income in the inner city (Goldberg). Co-ordination of land use and transportation is critical since one advantage of the core is access. If this is eroded, inner city problems will persist. Suburbanization is well within local control; one tool is non-provision of periphery infrastructure. This strategy could redistribute the costs of suburbanization from the inner city to suburbanites. (Participants held contrasting views on suburban development - its costs; distribution of costs; freedom of locational choice; whether there is serious commitment to making the inner city, especially the downtown, a real

residential alternative). Measures to assist the inner city/downtown include:

- . Relaxed density and land use controls;
- . Amenity development, especially along Winnipeg's rivers;
- . Greater creativity and diversity in the provision of housing;
- . Establishment of a building inventory to determine buildings which are successful, unique or of historical value; those which are marginal and may require assistance; and those which no longer are functional and should be written off;
- . Maximization of the threshold effects of investment by careful selection of targets to achieve critical masses of activity;
- . A focus on the functions an area or a development is to perform because if functions are inappropriate or unchanged, redevelopment may be no more than cosmetic.

Whatever the strategy that is adopted, the bottom-line measure will be whether the private sector senses a sound environment for investment, enabling the development to be self-sustaining and relieving the public sector of any direct investment role.

- Focus on inner city stabilization through reclamation of obsolete commercial/industrial areas in and adjacent to the downtown. The land would be redeveloped as modern residential subdivisions or banked until a suitable alternative use could be found (Snidal/Fenton). Goals of the strategy include: to make the downtown functionally and geographically more compact; to enable it to sustain its own vitality; to fill the resulting vacuum with forms of physical redevelopment competitive with the suburban residential neighbourhood; and to combat the debilitating effects of vacant land and structural decay which now afflict the downtown and have been difficult to alleviate through spot renewal and infill. The strategy would require defining the boundaries of the more compact downtown. It could be implemented through a land reclamation company which would acquire properties and have the land cleared, down-zoned, replatted and otherwise prepared for sale or an interim use (i.e., banked). Sales would be conditional upon the desired type of development; they could include a land swap with owners of undeveloped suburban periphery sites. The strategy is long-

term, in nature, reflecting the lead time necessary to overcome problems which have developed over the past century. Reclamation could complement key site developments of the CAI and North Portage Development Corporation. Implementation could be accomplished jointly by the private and public sectors.

Winnipeg's Downtown

Conference participants were told that the downtown has not been planned but, instead, is an agglomeration of individual expressions, some of which work well, but collectively do not provide a memorable core of the community (Dragos). Recently much attention has been given to alternative visions for the redevelopment of the North Portage precinct and the potential for this redevelopment to reflect the "heart and soul" of the city; to be a key part of a variety of programs to ensure Winnipeg's centre will not die but retain a vital core; and to help link together the other nodal points of the downtown (Dolin).

Among other comments presented to the conference:

- Speakers' perspectives differed on the efficacy of the geographic extent of the downtown. Several argued that Winnipeg's downtown is too large for its functional core and should be concentrated to stem locational drift and make investments more effective and economically efficient. However, the practicality of trying to shrink the geographic extent of the downtown was questioned, with one alternative being the grand infill strategy represented by the proposals of the North Portage Development Corporation (NPDC) (Naimark).
- Do not dismiss any function for the downtown too early, especially retail and residential functions (Dragos). It is difficult to predetermine what will/will not work in a revitalization strategy since the synergistic effects of development are unpredictable. Consideration also should be given to public expectation of what constitutes a downtown, and the importance of shopping in social interaction.
- One model for downtown redevelopment is the Milwaukee

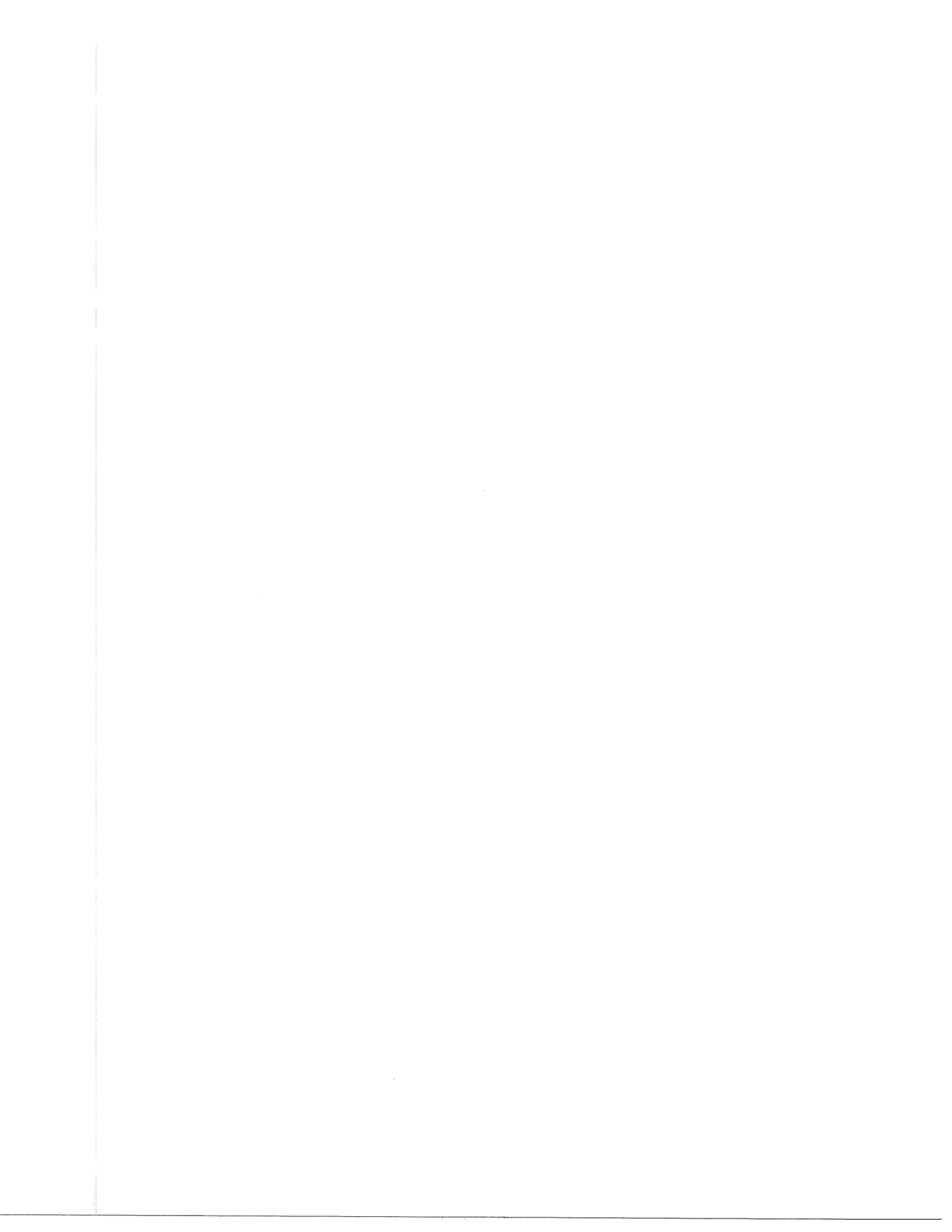
experience where key elements included: establishment of a professionally-staffed development corporation that was a full-time spokesman for downtown redevelopment and often a broker between the public and private sectors; clear statements of the corporation's objectives and plans; acceptance of risk by the corporation, including the risk of basic economic studies and preliminary planning/design of residential redevelopment; and involvement of both the private and public sectors, but with the major emphasis on private sector initiative.

- The NDPC plan is a more complex entity than originally portrayed and progress is bound to be slower and more complicated than expected. However, the NDPC will not confuse activity and achievement; rather, it will take a longer-term perspective reflecting the context in which it is operating and the complexity of what it is trying to do (Naimark). Private sector investment is an integral part of the North Portage scheme; the questions at this point are the rate at which such investment will occur and whether the level will be great enough to ensure success.
- One advantage of the NDPC project is that considerable sums of money are on the table prior to detailed planning (Dragos), but there also are key questions:
 - . Will the NDPC have the ability to do its job without unnecessary pulling and prodding by people who have provided the money and in light of its mandate that is vague and tied with strings?
 - . What is the time frame for the process/project?
 - . Who must be consulted? How will the public be involved?
 - . Will the rules of the game hinder or encourage development?
 - . Will the two existing major department stores facilitate the project by their co-operation and sanction?
 - . Will the ultimate plan fit Winnipeg's circumstances?
- Will North Portage redevelopment build on the CAI - its blend of physical and socioeconomic development, and its efforts to address the needs of both the 'haves' and 'have nots'? (Henderson),

Concluding Observations

Winnipeg in the year 2000 is projected to be both similar to, and significantly different from, the Winnipeg of 1984. The general socio-economic, demographic, political and physical context probably will be similar. However, beneath these general trends significant changes are expected to stem from the social and economic impacts of technological development and from the shifts in demographic structure. The strategic focus in urban planning is expected to be on Winnipeg's inner city, especially the downtown and plans for the North Portage precinct.

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