

# **Main Street Workshop: Searching for Solutions**

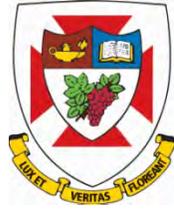
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**1990**

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**The Institute of Urban Studies**





THE UNIVERSITY OF  
WINNIPEG

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**MAIN STREET WORKSHOP: SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS**

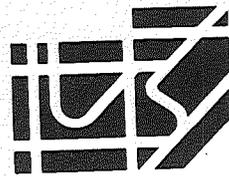
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The Institute of Urban Studies is an independent research arm of the University of Winnipeg. Since 1969, the IUS has been both an academic and an applied research centre, committed to examining urban development issues in a broad, non-partisan manner. 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.

MAIN STREET WORKSHOP

SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS



**INSTITUTE  
OF URBAN  
STUDIES**

UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to provide background information related to the issues in the Main Street community, raise some questions and to stimulate discussion. It is not intended to be an extensive investigation and analysis of the issues, nor will it provide solutions for the dilemmas with which the community is faced.

### 2. Scope of the Report

The report is based upon interviews with community representatives, both resident and non-resident, service providers, both public and private, census information and literature. The study area, upon which the report focusses has two definitions: (1) the primary study area as defined as the strip of Main Street from City Hall to the CPR underpass; and (2) the secondary study area defined as the neighborhoods surrounding the strip.

### 3. Structure of the Report

The report is presented in two parts. Part 1 is an executive summary which highlights the contents of the report, with respect to evolution and change in the Main Street area, community characteristics and the issues before the community at this time. Part 2 is a draft copy of the background paper from which the highlights presented in the executive summary have been drawn.

PART 1  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**2. Employment and Income**

\* Unemployment in the Main Street area continued to exceed the City average over the 1981-1986 period and increased at a greater rate than for Winnipeg as a whole.

\* Since 1981, households in the Main Street area have not experienced significant improvements in household income. In some areas, household income in 1986 represented a smaller percentage of the average income in Winnipeg than in 1981, indicating a polarization of income groups. Poverty continues to underline the economic and social malaise in the area.

\* A greater proportion of families and individuals in the study area continued, over the 1981-1986 period, to live in low-income situations, compared to the Winnipeg as a whole.

**3. Education**

\* While levels of education have improved in the study area, they continue to lag way behind City levels. Most concerning is the education of children and youth, especially native, who have difficulty adjusting to the conventional school system.

**4. Housing**

\* The declining rate of homeownership in the study area has implications for community stability and the thrust of revitalization efforts.

\* The Main Street area exhibits some of the highest rates of resident movement in Winnipeg, the concerns of which relate to educational performance of children and quality of the housing stock.

\* The homeless in the Main Street area are increasing in number and decreasing in age, corresponding with the increasing numbers of street youth.

**5. Commercial Activities**

\* The area is experiencing a loss of higher order commercial activities (banking institutions, for example) that served the resident population. The gap has been filled by lower order commercial activities, such as pawn shops, which serve the needs of the non-residents who frequent the area now.

- \* Business in the Main Street community is adversely affected by the lack of stability and wealth in its adjacent neighborhoods. An impoverished population base, lacking the means to improve the situation, cannot support a strong commercial district.
- \* While the hotels in the area provide a form of housing for some residents, the community questions whether they serve the area in any other constructive way.
- \* There is a strong feeling in the community that the CPR should have a role in financing the revitalization strategy, either by providing the land and buildings or financial investment.
- \* Small business in the Main Street community feels alienated by government that gave support to major initiatives such as the Trizac Development, the North Portage Development and the Forks Development, but failed to recognize and address the economic decline on North Main.

**6. Image**

- \* The negative image of the Main Street area is the result of years of physical deterioration, the perceived lack of safety, the display of social ills, the lack of customer opportunities and a lack of recognition of the area as a component of Winnipeg's commercial sector.
- \* The criminal element on Main Street, contributes to the area's lack of safety and is particularly concerning to the elderly population.
- \* The concentration of high needs groups in the Main Street community has meant that the area has become concentrated with services to address their needs. Thus, the area lacks a balance between social service agencies and other neighborhood amenities vital to a healthy functioning community.
- \* The physical deterioration of the study area is linked to the lack of wealth in the community and the lack of commitment in the political arena to do something about it.

PART 2

BACKGROUND PAPER

# MAIN STREET: SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS

Discussion Paper for Main Street Workshop

Draft for Discussion Purposes Only

March 1990

This discussion paper was prepared with  
financial assistance from  
Manitoba Department of Urban Affairs.  
The views expressed are those of the  
authors and do not necessarily represent  
the views of Urban Affairs.

## A. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this discussion paper is to provide background information related to the issues in the Main Street community, raise some questions and to stimulate discussion. By no means is it intended to be an extensive investigation and analysis of the issues, nor will it solve the dilemmas with which we are faced. This paper is the product of interviews with service providers and community representatives, both resident and business, a review of existing literature and census material. To a large extent the paper draws on the experiences and opinions of people living and providing services in the Main Street area.

The topic of the Main Street workshop is timely for a variety of reasons: an ad hoc committee on Main Street was struck by the City in October, 1989; an urban native strategy for Winnipeg was established by the Province in July, 1989; an urban native centre has been proposed by the Native community for re-use of the CPR Station; the future of the Winnipeg Core Area Initiative is under discussion; and public support for improving the area is strong.

Winnipeg's Main Street area has seen many changes over the years. One of Winnipeg's first flourishing districts, the Point Douglas area was originally home to the elite while Main Street itself was considered to be the preferred commercial district. As the population grew, and the city expanded its boundaries, the influx of immigrants began to reshape the Main Street community. The area became the natural landing point for immigrants into the city, a tradition which continues today. However, changes in the fabric of the area have meant that, the area no longer serves community residents to the extent that it once did. The years of neglect and absence of sensitive and committed initiatives for revitalization are readily apparent in the social, economic and physical malaise in the area.

Nevertheless, there is a strength inherent in the Main Street community. There are pockets of long-time residents and committed merchants who can attest to the area's one time health, vitality and diversity of activities. It is these who admire the character of the area, who appreciate its history and who most know the decline it has suffered.

## B. DEFINITION OF STUDY AREA

Winnipeg's Main Street community can be characterized by two distinct areas: (1) the three quarter mile long strip along Main Street from City Hall to the CPR underpass, and (2) the neighborhoods adjacent to the strip. While the strip is considered by some to be a unique area in Winnipeg, what Main Street symbolizes is not so unique. Main Street symbolizes the process of urbanization, whereby inner city cores deteriorate and become home to the poor as the more affluent people move to the more expensive suburbs. Most cities have an area where social and economic deprivation not only exist but are more apparent. Winnipeg may be unique in the sense that this area happens to be one of our main thoroughfares.

However, as Bourne (1978) stated, "there is no single definition of the inner city; nor should there be. The term is strictly relative." (p. 5). While the inner city is in fact some defined geographic area, it has also come to be associated with a package of social problems, which perhaps have more validity when delineating the area of study or interest. For example, Bourne (1978) goes on to describe the traditional problems equated with the inner city as physical deterioration, poverty, a declining economic and population base, crime, social pathologies and fiscal difficulties, all of which appear to have worsened under the forces of inflation, unemployment, racial tension, economic uncertainty and sluggish population growth.

There are limitations in setting geographical boundaries when addressing issues which stretch beyond the physical characteristics. Social and economic issues know no rigid boundaries. However, it is useful to define a particular area in order to establish a common point of reference, to aid in data collection and analysis, and to provide a focus for intervention. Therefore, recognizing the boundaries as being somewhat arbitrary, the Main Street area is defined as follows.

**1.0 Primary Study Area - Main Street Strip**

The primary study area is defined as that portion of Main Street which begins at Rupert Avenue to the south and extends north to the CPR underpass, near Higgins Avenue. This area is commonly known as "The Main Street Strip", "The Strip", "The Street", or "North Main".

**2.0 Secondary Study Area - Adjacent Neighborhoods**

The secondary study area encompasses the neighborhoods adjacent to the primary study area, the boundaries of which are: Notre Dame Avenue to the south; Burrows and Redwood Avenues to the north; Salter and Isabel Streets to the west; and the Red River to the east. Census tracts 24, 25, 34, 35 and 36 fall exactly within these boundaries (see Figure 1).

The census tracts roughly correspond to the areas listed below:

<b>Census Tract</b>	<b>Neighborhood</b>
24	South Point Douglas
25	Chinatown
34	Lord Selkirk Park
35	North end of North Point Douglas
36	South end of North Point Douglas

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## **C. EVOLUTION AND CHANGE IN THE MAIN STREET AREA**

Significant social, economic and physical change has occurred in the Main Street community since the area was first established as Winnipeg's central business district (CBD) in the 1880's. This section traces the historical evolution of the area, documenting those events which have shaped the course of its development.

The second part of this section provides a brief overview of intervention strategies in the Main Street area and their overall effect.

The final part of this section characterizes the community from four perspectives: physical, social, economic and political.

### **1.0 HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE MAIN STREET AREA**

#### **1.1 Thriving Years (1881-1913)**

During Winnipeg's formative years, Main Street was the preferred business district. The two transcontinental rail mainlines quickly established the area as a "command post" for settlement and economic development. Despite the fact that the CPR mainline dissected the Point Douglas neighborhood, residential districts flourished in Main Street's hinterland to the point of capacity with the constant arrival of new immigrants. The demand for housing on Main Street grew with the presence of a highly transient seasonal, semi- and unskilled labor force seeking employment. Consequently boarding houses and "roomer" hotels proliferated. Main Street was known as "hotel row" with in excess of 60 hotels between the CNR and CPR terminals.

#### **1.2 Years of Decline (1914-Present)**

Since 1914 several noteworthy occurrences have contributed to the current state of the Main Street area. Some people believe that the current situation is the result of a loss of legitimate activities which has allowed the darker side of Main Street to surface. Main Street has an historical score of illegitimate activities but they had been somewhat "masked" by the presence of more legitimate activities. The loss of the positive forces (legitimate activities) has made more apparent

the negative forces (illegitimate activities). Whether the negative forces have grown in absolute magnitude is questionable, however, there is no doubt that the relative magnitude of the negative forces is today more pronounced.

### **1.3 Decentralization of Warehousing and Employment Loss**

The decentralization of warehousing and shipping functions out of Winnipeg to competing urban centres across the prairies was facilitated by a rise in the number of trucking firms, which compete with the railroad companies. As a result, the number of wholesaling businesses in Winnipeg declined proportionately, reducing employment in the Main Street area significantly.

### **1.4 Shift in Commercial Focus To Portage Avenue**

The decision in 1905 by the T. Eaton Company to locate its new department store on the then residential Portage Avenue, rather than on the commercially oriented Main Street served to shift the focus for future development of Winnipeg's Central Business District. Anxious to establish Portage as a more refined shopping area, City Council reneged on its own policy which restricted building height, bulk and setbacks on the prestigious residential Portage Avenue to accommodate the new store.

### **1.5 Suburban Exodus**

In the post war era, new industries were located in factories built in industrial parks on the periphery of the city. New residential suburbs were also developed. The Main Street area began to lose both residents and industries to the newer, more open suburbs which provided better services, more amenities and, for the residents, a more desirable lifestyle. The trend toward industrial parks and commercial strips in the more peripheral areas of the city have lured new business and industry and thus effectively stymied the economic strength and health of the area. The most recent loss of banking institutions has reduced the ability of the area to provide a variety of services to its residents and customers.

### **1.6 Loss of CPR Passenger Service**

The slow and ultimately complete withdrawal, by 1978, of rail passenger service from the C.P. terminal on Higgins Avenue further reduced Main Street's function in the City and narrowed the diversity of activities that once animated the street. The familiar site of travellers coming and going along the street was never again to be seen or enjoyed. Demolition of the Royal Alexandra Hotel in 1967 was interpreted by many as a symbol of complete demise and death of Main Street.

### **1.7 Construction of the Disraeli Freeway**

Construction of the Disraeli Freeway in 1961 brought widespread demolition in South Point Douglas and the subsequent loss of a residential population base. Unsuccessful attempts to establish South Point Douglas as an industrial area have left the area with little purposeful function. The Disraeli Freeway today channels more traffic in and out of the downtown contributing to the perception that Main Street has become less of a community shopping strip and more of a commuting conduit. Should plans to revitalize the Main Street area included rebuilding the population based in South Point Douglas? Some people suggest that a new bus depot or arena would be appropriately located there. South Point Douglas certainly presents an opportunity for the Main Street community.

### **1.8 CBD Extended South To Broadway**

In 1969, Metropolitan Winnipeg's Downtown Development Plan set out to revitalize the declining residential area south of Portage Avenue to Broadway. The intent of the revitalization initiative was to modernize and extend the downtown business district. Although unintentional, the effect on Main Street was further deleterious in that it sent out the message that south of Portage Avenue would be the focus for future office development.

### **1.9 In-Migration of Native Population**

Since the 1960's, the quiet, yet growing immigration of thousands of Native peoples from their isolated rural communities to Winnipeg has been increasingly felt on Main Street. Untrained, unskilled and often uneducated, many native people find their way to the Main Street area searching for a place to live, people to be with and more significantly a place where poverty is not so conspicuous. The unfortunate predicament of this segment of our society has manifested itself in the Main Street area in growing proportions. The plight of the Native people is considered by many to have emerged as the number one social issue in Winnipeg in recent years.

### **1.10 Landing Point for Poor Immigrants**

Today the Main Street area has less in the way of opportunity to offer its immigrants. As a result it attracts the poorest of the poor, further contributing to the decline of the area and its ability to sustain only an impoverished population.

## **2.0 PUBLIC INTERVENTION IN THE MAIN STREET AREA**

This section will highlight inner city intervention initiatives which have had an impact on the Main Street. The intent is to raise some discussion regarding the kind of intervention the Main Street community would consider today.

### **2.1 Initiatives of the Urban Renewal Era**

#### **2.1.1 Lord Selkirk Public Housing Project**

#### **2.1.2 Civic & Centennial Centres**

### **2.2 Neighborhood Improvement Program**

### **2.3 Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program**

### **2.4 Winnipeg Core Area Initiative**

#### **2.4.1 Main Street Initiatives**

#### **2.4.2 North Portage Development Project**

#### **2.4.3 Forks Development**

## 2.1 Initiatives of the Urban Renewal Era

### 2.1.1 *Lord Selkirk Park Public Housing Project*

Identified as one of the worst pockets of urban blight in Winnipeg in the late 1950's, the Lord Selkirk Park area, west of Main Street, today is the product of major urban renewal efforts in the early 1960's. At that time the area was "characterized by most of the physical attributes of an area in decline such as indiscriminate mixture of incompatible land uses, poor housing, overcrowding, industries stagnant for lack of expansion room, antiquated municipal services and, of course, all the ensuing social and economic ills (City of Winnipeg, 1971). The Lord Selkirk Park renewal project involved widespread expropriation, demolition and new construction. Today, the Lord Selkirk Park area presents us with concerns related to poor housing and socio-economic ills: low income, unemployment, poor education, high migrancy and crime. Is the Lord Selkirk Park project an example we would want to consider for future community revitalization initiatives?

### 2.1.2 *Centennial Centre Complex (consisting of City Hall, Planetarium, Concert Hall, and Museum of Man and Nature)*

The centennial centre complex is another example of extensive demolition and new construction activity which unsuccessfully attempted to attract private investment into the area. How did this major undertaking strengthen the Main Street community?

Where intervention in the Main Street area, has been physical in nature, seeking to improve the environment, it has not been able to relieve the underlying problem of social and economic decline. While some people believe an urban renewal approach is the only way to reverse the downside of the area, others assert that this approach will again be unsuccessful. This is a major point of contention for the Main Street community and one which requires careful and thorough consideration.

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## **2.2 Neighborhood Improvement Program 1975 - 1979**

The product of a re-oriented policy, the Neighborhood Improvement Program was a conservation and rehabilitation program designed to improve the housing and living conditions in seriously deteriorated neighborhoods of moderate and low income households. In the Main Street area, the neighborhoods of North Point Douglas (census tracts 35 and 36) and Centennial (roughly corresponding to census tract 25) benefitted from the locally administered federal program. To this day it is felt by many people that North Point Douglas is one of the stronger inner city neighborhoods as a result of the Neighborhood Improvement Program. Could a similar approach be successful in other Main Street areas, where the incidence of home ownership is much lower? How do we revitalize communities characterized by residents who frequently move, who have very low incomes and who tend to live in rented housing?

## **2.3 Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP)**

Originating in 1974, the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program, used in conjunction with the Neighborhood Improvement Program, improved several homes in the study area, notably the North Point Douglas, William Whyte, Centennial, Lord Selkirk Park and West Alexander neighborhoods. Prior to 1986, the homeowner RRAP was both a neighborhood stabilization program and an economic support program for low-income households, concentrating repair in targeted neighborhoods. In the post-1986 era, the homeowner RRAP, now coined a "social housing program", relates specifically to low income groups, and is not confined to designated areas. However, with the majority of the poor population renting, how readily do the benefits of the RRAP reach those living in poverty? How can we help people who cannot afford to own? Perhaps of greater concern in an area with 70% of its households renting is the discontinuance of the Rental RRAP. In December of 1989 the federal government, halted all funding for the rental portion of the Program. With an increasing rental rate in the area, the Main Street neighborhoods are now more vulnerable to the process of decline.

## 2.4 Winnipeg Core Area Initiative (CAI)

During the 1970's it had become obvious to government that a special effort had to be made to respond to the conditions and relieve disparities in the Winnipeg Core Area. The Winnipeg Core Area Initiative was established in 1981 with the overall purpose of improving job opportunities and the standard of living in the inner city (Winnipeg Core Area Initiative Policy Committee, 1981). The strategy for revitalization addressed economic development, employment, physical renewal, and social service needs.

Recently, the CAI has been criticized for failing to relieve the disparities in the Main Street area. Statistics show that income levels, unemployment rates, migrancy rates and the supply of low priced housing did not improve over the 1981-1986 period (Statistics Canada 1983, 1988; Social Planning Council, 1989). The merchants feel that the area has been neglected in terms of physical improvements and economic development. As CAI II comes to a close in 1991, the time is right to decide how it has been successful and how it has failed in improving living conditions for people in the inner city. What has been the benefit of physical projects, such as the Forks Development and the North Portage Development which were able to attract tri-level funding while the Main Street area further decline?

### 2.4.1 *Main Street Initiatives*

The Neighborhood Mainstreets and Small Business Support Services Program was established to strengthen the commercial viability and encourage new investment in designated older key commercial areas in Winnipeg, including, Chinatown, Ellice Avenue, *Main Street*, Norwood, Provencher Boulevard, Osborne Street, Sargent Avenue, Selkirk Avenue, West Broadway, and Corydon Avenue. What have been the benefits of this program on Main Street? Can investing dollars into the commercial heart of a district be fruitful without improving the socio-economic conditions of the supporting population base?

#### 2.4.2 *Development of North Portage*

While only a fraction of the dollars which have been invested into the North Portage Development came from the CAI, this project received strong support by the three levels of government as a viable way to revitalize the downtown. The development has had deleterious effects in other downtown areas - south of Portage Avenue is most obvious, with its failing businesses. However, Main Street too, has suffered from the lack of government commitment and spending. Will the Main Street community have to propose a similar revitalization scheme to attract public investment? Would this be a model of redevelopment the Main Street community would want to adopt?

#### 2.4.3 *Development of Forks/CN East Yards*

At least \$20 million<sup>1</sup> have been spent for the redevelopment of the CN East Yards, the commercial component of which may further threaten the viability of existing downtown commercial areas, including the Main Street area. While it can be argued that The Forks development is not in direct competition with the Main Street business community, it most certainly was in direct competition for revitalization dollars.

In the above examples of tri-level government spending one must question what criteria

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<sup>1</sup> This figure is understated when one considers the other CAI programming dollars which have gone into The Forks development:

\$ 687,425	- has been spent through CAI First Agreement
\$ 10,000	- from Strategic Capital Program 5 on a feasibility study for locating the Children's museum in The Forks.
\$5,000,000	- from the Strategic Capital Program 5 to renovate two historic stable buildings for use as a year-round public market at the Forks site.
\$ 4,786	- from Employment and Training Program 9 to train two archaeological interpretative guides for the public excavation at The Forks site.
\$ 11,680	- from Employment and Training Program 9 to train two unemployed core area residents for employment as maintenance personnel at The Forks Market.
\$ 10,000	- from Public Information and Programming (Program 12) for Christmas at The Forks (1988).
\$5,723,891	Total additional CAI dollars spent on The Forks development over and above the \$20 million budgeted to the Forks Renewal Corporation.

were used in allocating public dollars? What was the overall guiding scheme for development which endorsed spending money on The Forks before assisting the Main Street community? Why was not Main Street considered?

## **2.5 Lack of a Downtown Plan**

The sporadic development and spending occurring in our inner city is largely the result of no overall downtown plan by which planning decisions are guided. Winnipeg's downtown is without vision. What do we want our downtown to be in ten, twenty, fifty years? We must mobilize ourselves out of our here and now mode and think about the future. A vision should look beyond the existing fragmentation toward cohesiveness and be translated into a strategic plan for our downtown. How would the Main Street area fit into a downtown development plan?

## **3.0 COMMUNITY CHARACTERIZATION**

### **3.1 PHYSICAL**

#### **3.1.1 Land Use**

Land use in the area ranges from heavy industrial flanking the CPR mainline to residential in the northern half of the study area (Figure 2). The area south of the CPR tracks is characterized by a mix of light industrial and commercial with a pocket of residential in the southwest quadrant. Land use along Main Street is predominantly commercial.

The area today known as South Point Douglas is the only part of the study area which has undergone any significant change in land use since the turn of the century. Prior to 1914, South Point Douglas was predominantly residential but with subsequent development decisions land use shifted to industrial and other non-residential uses. However, new industry has not been locating in the area, in fact the area has lost some of its industrial occupants, preferring instead to locate in the industrial parks on the periphery of the city, following in the footsteps of the suburban residents. The result has been a virtual under-utilization of this central city land. A few small pockets of residential use still exist as non-conforming uses, despite the fact

that building improvements are not permitted and deterioration continues.

### 3.1.2 Building Condition

Buildings in the area are generally in poor condition due to age, lack of maintenance and scarce revitalization or new development. Main Street is home to many of Winnipeg's oldest commercial and residential buildings, many of which have considerable historic value, in addition to integral beauty, the CPR station, for example. However, many buildings sit vacant and thus fall prey to the natural process of decline due to abandonment. Boarded-up windows, "for sale" signs and vacant lots are a familiar site down the street.

The area also contains a disproportionate amount of Winnipeg's oldest housing stock. Forty-five percent of the housing stock was constructed prior to 1946, compared to 22% for the City as a whole (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
**Occupied Private Dwellings by Period of Construction**  
**for Winnipeg and Selected Areas, 1986**

CT	O.P.D.	1946	%	46-60	%	61-70	%	71-80	%	81-86	%
24	130	115	88%	15	12%	0	0%	10	8%	0	0%
25	1185	400	34%	130	11%	90	8%	315	27%	250	21%
34	1095	425	39%	135	12%	300	27%	215	20%	25	2%
35	680	450	66%	120	18%	45	7%	35	5%	40	6%
36	405	195	48%	70	17%	25	6%	105	26%	5	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3495</b>	<b>1585</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>WPG</b>			<b>22%</b>		<b>23%</b>		<b>19%</b>		<b>27%</b>		<b>8%</b>

Source: Statistics Canada

### 3.2 Population Characteristics

#### 3.2.1 Change in Population: 1961 to 1986

Since 1961 the Main Street area has lost 68% of its population. Where in 1961 the area was home to 32,215 residents by 1986 that figure had dropped to 10,186. Over the period 1981 to 1986, the population increased very slightly (3.2%) from 9,869 to 10,186 while the City as a whole grew at a rate of 5.6% (Table 2). North Main's adjacent neighborhoods are vulnerable. They are losing population and thus stability.

Of significance in the Main Street area is the rapid rate at which the urban native population is growing and settling in the inner city.

Table 2

### Population Change 1961 to 1986

#### Winnipeg and Selected Areas, 1961, 1966, 1971, 1976, 1981, 1986

CT	1961	1966	1971	1976	1981	1986	81-86 Chnge
24	4,215	3,712	805	683	541	570	+ 5.4%
25	13,147	12,327	4,215	3,443	3,134	3,525	+12.4%
34	4,613	4,228	4,055	3,447	3,022	2,808	- 7.1%
35	8,664	8,012	3,145	2,508	2,332	2,327	--
36	1,576	1,316	1,115	1,021	840	956	+13.8%
Total	32,215	29,388	13,335	11,102	9,869	10,186	+ 3.2%
WPG		508,759	540,260	578,217	592,061(a)	625,304	+ 5.6%

(a) Adjusted for boundary changes.

Source: Statistics Canada

### **3.2.2 Population Sub-Groups**

#### **Residents On The Main Street Strip**

Service providers in the Main Street community believe that the number of residents living on the Main Street strip comprise a small proportion of the total area population. The residents on Main Street have been described as veterans, pensioners, chronically unemployed, transients, ex-convicts and mentally ill. For the most part, they are elderly men on fixed incomes who live in hotels, hostels or at best in apartment buildings. In recent years, women have become an increasing part of the Main Street population. The residents live in the area for varying lengths of time. The transients, for example stay for relatively short, interrupted periods of time, whereas many of the war veterans have been there, uninterrupted, for over 20 years. Because few have any family contacts, isolation is an issue which raises concerns related to both mental and physical health. Health care is crisis oriented, with little emphasis on prevention. This sub-group exhibits a sense of complacency and fears change. Forced change would no doubt have deleterious effects on many.

#### **ii. Residents In the Adjacent Neighborhoods**

The residents in the adjacent neighborhoods are more diverse, and to some extent more stable than the main street residents. More of the population in the adjacent neighborhoods live in private dwellings - either single detached or multiple, although a growing number are residing in rooming houses. This sub-group too has its long time residents and its more frequent movers. However, the movers, who tend to be renters, change residence but stay in the area.

#### **iii. Non-Residents on the Main Street Strip**

Information on this group is limited and generally based upon observation and informal interviews with service providers and group members. This group can be further separated into the following: prostitutes, pimps, johns, sniffers, drug addicts, drug traffickers, street youth, deinstitutionalized psychiatric patients, bar patrons, and transients. The groups are not mutually exclusive. However, to a great extent, they co-exist with minimal interaction. Long time service

providers in the area state that the non-resident component of The Street has become significantly younger over the past twenty years. The numbers of street youth in the inner city, and especially on Main Street, present a major challenge in improving living conditions in the area.

### 3.2.3 Change in Households

The number of households increased at a slower rate than the population over the 1981-1986 period. While population increased 3.2% (Table 2), the number of households increased only 0.1% (Table 3), with three out of the five census tracts experiencing a decline in the number of households, suggesting that households are becoming larger, possibly due to "doubling up".

**Table 3**  
**Change in the Number of Households**  
**Winnipeg and Selected Areas, 1981-1986**

CT	1981	1986	%change
24	135	130	- 3.7%
25	1085	1185	+ 9.2%
34	1185	1095	- 7.6%
35	710	680	- 4.2%
36	375	405	+ 8.0%
Total	3490	3495	+ 0.1%
Winnipeg	217,210	236,275	+ 8.7%

Source: Statistics Canada

### *3.2.4 Single Parent Households*

The Social Planning Council (1989) reports that in the inner city, the proportion of single parents among native people is three times greater than among non-natives, showing a tremendous increase in the last five years. Single parent households are also overrepresented in households with low income and poor housing. Single parents, particularly mothers, require day care services and employment training. How will a revitalization plan for the Main Street community address their needs?

### **3.2.5 Income**

Individuals and households in the Main Street area have incomes which are significantly below the city average. More concerning however is the fact that the situation for many is getting worse. Since 1981, households in the Main Street area have not experienced significant improvements in household income, in fact in some census tracts, household income in 1986 represented a smaller proportion of the city average than in 1981. For example, Table 4 shows that in census tract 25, average household income in 1981 was 49% of the City average but by 1986 had shrunk to 42%; similar reductions occurred in census tracts 35 and 36.

Table 4

Private Household Income as a Percent of Winnipeg Average  
Winnipeg and Selected Areas, 1981 - 1986

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CT	1981	%	1986	%
24	\$11,665	50%	\$18,612	56%
25	11,360	49%	14,143	42%
34	9,734	42%	14,340	43%
35	15,734	68%	19,696	59%
36	11,476	49%	15,464	46%
WPG	\$23,208	100%	\$33,477	100%

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Source: Statistics Canada

**3.2.6 Incidence of Low Income Economic Families & Unattached Individuals**

The incidence of low income families and unattached individuals was significantly higher in the Main Street neighborhoods relative to the City as a whole in 1981 and 1986. In 1986, for Winnipeg as a whole, 15% of all families are categorized as low income, while in the Main Street area the figures ranged from 21% to 66% (Table 5). Similarly, for unattached individuals the incidence for the City as a whole was 42%, and in the Main Street area ranged from 55% to 83%.

Over the five year period from 1981 to 1986 the incidence of low income families and individuals generally increased in the Main Street area to a greater extent than for the City as a whole. Overall, a greater proportion of families and especially individuals in the Main Street area live in low income situations compared to the city as a whole.

Table 5

Incidence of Low Income Families & Unattached Individuals  
For Winnipeg and Selected Areas 1981, 1986

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CT	1981		1986	
	Family	Individual	Family	Individual
24	34%	67%	21%	83%
25	52%	76%	66%	77%
34	61%	72%	55%	83%
35	37%	54%	44%	55%
36	35%	72%	47%	79%
WPG	14%	40%	15%	42%

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Source: Statistics Canada

### 3.2.7 Housing

Resident satisfaction with housing plays a critical role in overall community satisfaction and thus, it is vital that housing cost, quality and choice adequately meet the diverse needs of the community. This section will discuss current housing trends and their implications for community revitalization.

### *Tenure*

Homeownership is declining in the Main Street area. This can be attributed to several factors: (1) the conversion of formerly single family dwellings into rooming houses and the subsequent increase incidence in absentee landlords; (2) decreased affordability which coincides with shrinking incomes; and an increasing proportion of rental units on the market. Increasingly, long-time seniors are selling their homes to take up more suitable accomodation in the area, usually multi-unit dwellings. The area has difficulty attracting buyers from other areas of the city, resident renters cannot afford to purchase these homes which, consequently are bought up by absentee landlords from as far away as British Columbia.

The Main Street area is characterized by an increasingly disproportionate concentration of renter households. Over the five year period 1981 to 1986 the percentage of renter households in this area increased from 70.6% to 72.5% while the City average decreased from 41.2% to 39.2% (Statistics Canada, 1983a, 1988a). Conversely, while the rate of homeownership increased for the City as a whole, it declined in the Main Street area. The lack of a substantial portion of population with owned tenure, coupled with the predominance of low income in the area raises implications in neighborhood stability.

### *Type*

The Main Street area has a lower percentage of single detached dwellings and a higher percentage of low rise apartment buildings, duplexes and row housing compared to the city as a whole. In 1986, 34% of the households lived in single-detached dwellings as opposed to 60% for the City as a whole. The percentage of single detached dwellings is greatest (59.6%) in census tract 35, which is the northern tip of North Point Douglas and lowest in census tract 25, the area south of the CPR tracks and west of Main Street (Chinatown). In the Main Street area, 43% of the households live in low rise apartment blocks, row housing or duplexes compared to 27% in the the City as a whole (Statistics Canada, 1988a). The difference in housing types raises questions about housing the thrust of housing revitalization programs.

### *Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Hotels*

The hotels on Main Street provide a type of housing to a part of the Main Street population. Most of the renters are elderly pensioners, welfare recipients or transients. In addition to their need for social interaction, the fixed- and low-income situation of the SRO renters perpetuates their need to seek housing in low-priced accommodation in the hotels. While it is likely that this population chooses the SRO to avoid isolation, too often they suffer from the effects of isolation, for fear of being the likely victims of the more aggressive social groups on the street. Isolation and the related perceived lack of control over one's life, carries with it serious concerns for mental and physical health.

#### **3.2.9 Migrancy and Resident Movement**

Not surprisingly, the Main Street community exhibits some of the highest migrancy rates in the City. In 1986 56% of the population in the Main Street area had moved in the preceding five years compared with 46% for the City as a whole. There is no doubt that this is related to the high proportion of renters in the area, who typically move more frequently than home owners, are less satisfied with their housing and pay greater proportions of their income for shelter. The majority of movers are non-migrant, meaning that their movement was within the same census tract.

The situation in North Point Douglas (census tracts 35 & 36), is more stable than other North Main census tracts. It has a lower percentage of movers (comparable to the City) and considerably lower percentage of migrants. With a significant proportion of residents over the age of 65 years, movers in the North Point Douglas area tend to stay within the neighborhood, supporting the aging in place phenomenon which sees seniors preferring to remain in their neighborhood, with familiar people, places and services (Brink, 1984. p.10).

Reinforcing the contention that the area is negatively perceived by people outside of it, the North Main area has, by and large, been unable to attract residents from other areas of the City. However, to this day, the area remains an entrance point for immigrants, particularly

those of eastern European and Native ancestry. In 1986, only 1% of its mobile population came from some other part of the City (as opposed to 6% for the City as a whole) while 44% percent arrived from outside of Canada (as opposed to 20% for the City). Clearly, the North Main area is a starting point for landed immigrants, who today, may or may not stay in the area as they improve their socio-economic status.

Why do residents move so often? What are the push factors? What attracts residents to the area? What are the pull factors?

#### 4.0 Economic Climate

Business in the Main Street is adversely affected by the lack of stability and wealth in its adjacent neighborhoods. The poor economic situation of the people living in its hinterland, provide a weak market for local enterprise.

Main Street's poor image negatively affects its ability to attract customers to the area. Winnipeg 2000 asserts the need to strengthen the City's image, especially in the crucial area radiating ten blocks out from Portage and Main.

While Main Street's poor image is the product of many factors, the two most often cited are: (1) the physical deterioration and general unattractiveness of the area, and (2) perceived lack of safety. Related to these factors are the high rate of crime, the display of social ills on the street, the relative concentration of social service agencies and high needs groups, the functional isolation of the area by the high volume transportation routes (Main Street, Disraeli Freeway), deficient range of customer opportunities, and the lack of recognition of the area as a component of Winnipeg's economic community.

At present the North-Main Development Corporation is working to organize the local merchants and establish an economic strategy for the area, through which commerce would be diversified and employment opportunities created. A strategy for Main Street should define Main Street's functional purpose within the City of Winnipeg and be in concert with economic

strategies for Winnipeg as a whole.

#### **D. CURRENT ISSUES IN THE MAIN STREET COMMUNITY**

##### **1.0 Poverty**

*"The greatest of evils and the worst of crimes is poverty."  
George Bernard Shaw*

Underlining the plight of the Main Street area is the issue of poverty. The area functions as a magnet for those stricken with poverty - cheap housing, free meals, greater tolerance, little structure, an accepting social environment, friendship, companionship, and a relatively simple way of life. Unfortunately, all too often, many migrating to Main Street fall prey to pimps, drug traffickers and unscrupulous merchants. Most of the population is there because of the perceived lack of alternative; they see no way out, and fear that change could be worse. They feel helpless and victimized, and as such are distrustful of formal social service structures, such as the police, child and family welfare agencies and even health professionals. Ironically, for many, the social welfare system has the damaging effect of further oppressing the poor, stripping them of self-pride, and the courage and the skill to take charge of their lives.

One of the most sensitive issues that Winnipeg as a whole and specifically the Main Street area, will have to address is that of a growing native population subjected to a life of urban poverty. To treat the plight of the native people as a transient phenomenon and something which will take care of itself is irresponsible. The growing presence of poverty among the natives demands immediate attention. Poverty afflicts the native community in the urban setting after decades of vitural alienation. "We have no grounds for taking a high moral tone on South Africa when we treat our Native people so badly" (Macdonald, 1990). The situation requires leadership, understanding and tolerance by all levels of government and non-government sectors in society, including the native community.

## 2.0 Unemployment

Unemployment in the Main Street area continues to be nearly three times the City average (Table 6). In 1986 Winnipeg's unemployment rate was 7.8%, while it ranged from 9.3% in census tract 36, the northern part of North Point Douglas, to 27.1% in census tract 24, South Point Douglas (Statistics Canada, 1988b). This situation has not improved over the 1981-1986 period, and in fact in some areas it has worsened. Winnipeg's unemployment rate increased about 2.4% from (5.4%) 1981 to 7.8% in 1986, while unemployment in the Main Street area increased from 5.3% to 10.7% (except census tract 36 which experienced a 1.5% decrease).

**Table 6**  
**Rate of Unemployment**  
**For Winnipeg and Selected Areas, 1981, 1986**

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Census Tract	1981	1986	% change
24	20.5%	27.1%	+ 6.6%
25	13.8%	19.1%	+ 5.3%
34	10.8%	18.1%	+ 7.3%
35	8.0%	18.7%	+ 10.7%
36	10.8%	9.3%	- 1.5%
WPG	5.2%	7.8%	+ 2.6%

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Source: Statistics Canada

Of concern in the Main Street area is the growing number of people who are uneducated and unskilled. Strategies to reduce unemployment in the inner city involve education and job training as well as job creation. How effective have these strategies been in putting people to work? What is the link between job training and job availability? While the figures do not look encouraging, perhaps it is too soon to see the benefits. What would be a realistic amount of time?

### **3.0 Education**

Educational attainment in the inner city has been, and continues to be of particular concern for civic and provincial education policy-makers. Two obvious factors contribute to the general low level of educational attainment in the inner city: (1) the high incidence of attendance problems; and (2) total transfer by neighborhood/migrancy (Social Planning Council, 1980).

Education levels have improved slightly city wide since 1981, including the Main Street area. However, significant educational disparities continue to exist. In the Main Street area 75% of the population has less than a grade nine education compared to nearly 40% for the city as a whole (Statistics Canada, 1988b). The challenge to reduce the educational gap is hindered by the large proportion of elderly residents in the Main Street area, many of whom have very low levels of education and most of whom are not likely to make improvements. However, the real concern for education lies with children and youth. The high rate of migrancy and increasing numbers of street youth in the area is reflected in school attendance and enrollment figures. We need to question the ability of our education system to accommodate children and youth who, for various reasons, are not achieving and maximizing their potential in the school system. Community agencies such as Beat The Street and Rossbrook House and special government programs, are working to help youth and young adults catch up and obtain an education in a way that is compatible with their needs.

#### **4.0 Crime & Safety**

Winnipeg residents feel that the Main Street and Higgins Avenue areas require immediate attention for revitalization because the areas are so physically run down and perceived to be the centre of crime in the core area (Results Group, 1989). Core area residents and non-core area residents alike, rated the reduction of crime in the inner city as number one, second only to fixing up Main Street. In the minds of Winnipeggers these two issues are surely inextricably related. Is crime a Main Street problem or a problem of the city acted out on Main Street?

The criminal element on Main Street is a market driven economy. The area provides a lucrative market for sex and drugs. Prostitutes have no difficulty finding customers, the johns literally drive through looking to purchase their services. Its an easy buck, but the costs are great. The lack of a regular income and the addiction to a substance breeds robbery and assault. The drug trade on Main Street services not only the local addicts but also motorists and pedestrians who pass through for that single reason.

Elderly residents in the Main Street community are most vulnerable to violent crimes in the area. They reluctantly walk the streets in fear of assault and robbery. While the seniors realize that safety is a city-wide issue for people of all ages, they feel especially vulnerable due to the high concentration of problems in the community and to the fact that this non-resident population has moved in and claimed it as "their territory".

#### **5.0 Homelessness**

The homeless are increasing in number and decreasing in age. The people who deal directly with the homeless see a change in the kind of people seeking temporary shelter. Since the early eighties, the average age of patrons at the Main Street Project (a temporary shelter) has dropped from 45-55 years to 18-34 years. An increasing number of children and young people, chronically unemployed, single mothers, psychiatric outpatients, and abused women are counted among the homeless. Some experts estimate 30 to 40 per cent of the homeless have some psychological disorder. For these people, finding a place to sleep is an immediate need, but not their only need. While

homelessness is defined by some to be an affordability issue, others suggest that it is one of availability of supportive housing - housing for the hard-to-house.

#### **6.0 Family Dysfunction and Multi-Problem Families**

At the root of many of the social and economic ills acted out in the Main Street area, is the dysfunctional family unit. Producing children who are maladjusted and unable to fit into the brighter side of society, dysfunctional families become multi-problem families who are subjected to a fragmented service delivery system. The fragmentation of services and thus of family members, breaks down the efficiency of the system. In our fragmented and overloaded social service delivery system, case workers change, threatening continuity of care. Can a "one-stop social shop" concept more effectively deal with multi-problem families?

#### **8.0 Relative Concentration of Social Services**

The Main Street community has not been successful in achieving a balance between social services and other neighborhood amenities, vital to a healthy functioning community. While the Main Street community has not been vocal in expressing concern about this imbalance, other areas of the City have not assumed their responsibility in accepting a share of social service outlets, homes for the deinstitutionalized, for example. Some residents and merchants in the Main Street area believe that City problems, including suburban problems, end up on Main Street. "Main Street has become a human junkyard." Is this the function of the Main Street area?

#### **9.0 Substance Abuse and Drug Trafficking**

The issue of substance abuse is definitely not specific to the Main Street area. It can be found in all areas of the City. However, what makes substance abuse a cause for greater alarm is the incredible extent to which it is acted out, mostly along the Main Street strip and secondly the fact that so many young people are caught up in it. Drug traffickers prey on street youth and prostitutes, and attract a drive-up and walk-up drug trade in the Main Street area. The closing of the shooting galleries has served to move trafficking activities to the hotel restrooms and beverage rooms. How do we reach these kids before they get caught up in substance abuse?

What can be done to control trafficking?

#### **10.0 Function of the Hotels**

While the hotels in the Main Street area are needed by a group of people for housing, one might question whether they serve the area in any other constructive way. Nevertheless, the hotels are among the few commercial ventures which have maintained their presence in the community. It is perceived that they have prospered within their walls while the community around them has sunk into destitution and poverty. Does business have a moral responsibility to the community from whom they earn profit - a responsibility as fundamental as promoting health, safety and positive social interaction?

#### **11.0 Role of Canadian Pacific Railway Company (CPR)**

Canadian Pacific Railway was granted land in the Main Street area to situate its mainline and buildings. CPR continues to hold title to significant expanses of land, much of it now idle, the CPR Station for example, currently displaying a "for sale" sign. What role should Canadian Pacific Railway be playing in the revitalization of Main Street? Does CPR have a moral responsibility to the Main Street community and the City as a whole?

#### **12.0 Alienation of Local Business**

Small business in the Main Street area feels that it has not been given a fair chance at attracting government investment. They are concerned about the imbalance of social agencies in the area and the effect it has on economic viability. The three levels of government have been supportive of major initiatives, such as the Trizac Development, the North Portage Development and The Forks Development. The failure of the community to attract diverse commercial ventures through new investment, both private and public, has resulted in a business climate that is marginal, empty of promise, and void of hope.

#### **13.0 Physical Deterioration**

Physical deterioration of the area is inextricably linked to the lack of wealth in the community. The building stock and infrastructure have deteriorated for several reasons: absentee

property owners who provide little supervision and maintenance to the buildings; buildings, occupied only during the day, fall prey to vandals during the night; lack of financial commitment to the area due to a poor return on the dollar. The lack of color and vitality generates a negative image of the area by residents and non-residents. Major transportation arteries dissect the area into traffic islands, devoid of functional purpose. Main Street is an eight lane freeway, a physical and psychological barrier and a major source of trepidation for those venturing to cross it. The physical deterioration of the area is a deterrance to people who, by their very presence, would inhibit the illigitimate activities going on.

#### **14.0 Problems of Commitment and Leadership**

The lack of political commitment to the area is facilitated by the absence of an empowered community. The community is comprised of distinct sub-populations, with diverse characteristics who co-exist with minimal interaction. The fragmentation and lack of a strong community voice impedes the community's ability to improve the standard of living.

### **E. WORKING TOWARDS SOLUTIONS**

#### **1.0 SOCIO/ECONOMIC TRENDS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

##### *1.1 Growth of the Native Population*

Native migration into Winnipeg from rural Manitoba is expected to accelerate in the 1990's. This coupled with the rate at which the urban native population is increasing presents both a challenge and an opportunity for the native and non-native communities. The native population is presently over-represented in the low socio-economic groups and in many of the issues presented in this paper. What role will the native community play in the revitalization of the Main Street area? Is the native and non-native communities prepared to work together in the revitalization of the Main Street community? How might the adjustment from life on a reserve to life in the city be easier for native migrants?

## *1.2 Ageing of Society*

Population trends indicate that the Canadian population is ageing. In 1971, 26% of the population was under 15 and 9% was over the age of 65 years; by 1986, only 20% was under the age of 15 years and 12% was over 65. It is expected that this trend will continue (Social Planning Council, 1987). Currently, the population on Main Street is polarized with greater numbers of youth and elderly, especially men, although the number of elderly women is increasing. With the aging of the population, what are the implications for Main Street?

## *1.3 Increased Polarization in Society*

Increasingly we are witnessing the povertization of entire sectors of society, in the face of a shrinking middle class and an expanding lower class. These trends are observable by ethnicity, by gender, and by housing tenure.

In terms of ethnicity, Native and recent migrants are over represented amongst households with low incomes. With respect to gender, women and particularly single parent women, are substantially overrepresented amongst low income and poorly housed households. And we continue to see an increasing concentration of moderate and upper income groups in homeownership paralleled with an increasing proportion of low income households in rental housing.

## *1.4 Urban Development Policies*

What effect will continuing suburban growth have on the downtown? How can a population base be attracted back to the Main Street area? Would South Point Douglas be a potential site for residential development? Is Plan Winnipeg an effective tool for containing urban sprawl? Will the Main Street community receive the attention it requires under its containment clause?

#### **4.0 CONFLICT RESOLUTION: WHO ARE THE PLAYERS?**

The Main Street situation is complicated by a large number of stakeholders who have a concern in the current situation and a greater concern for the direction in which revitalization initiatives move. Any vision and plan for Main Street should give consideration to and receive input from the following groups:

1. The residents
2. The merchants
3. Land and property owners
4. Native Organizations
5. Other Ethnic Groups
6. The Seniors
7. Third sector service providers
8. The Public At Large; Taxpayers
9. Government Politicians, Bureaucrats and Service Providers

Note: These groups are not mutually exclusive. It will be the task of these players to determine what structure the implementing vehicle will take.

#### **5.0 WHERE DO WE BEGIN? OPTIONS FOR THE MAIN STREET COMMUNITY**

Upon recognition of the gamut of issues and the acceptance of the fact that any solution will be long terms and incremental we must proceed by defining a vision for the area, negotiating the support necessary and establishing a decision-making process.

##### **5.1 Defining a Vision for Main Street**

Before we start we need to know where we are going, how long we plan to take to get there and some sense of what the end product might look like. Whose vision will it be? What are the various objectives of all parties involved? Where are we heading and what exactly do we want to end up with? How will the process and final product affect the lives of community members? How much will the final product cost?

##### **5.2 Negotiating Support**

The challenge is to design a plan which satisfies the individual and collective objectives of all parties involved. We will need a unified approach, not a uniform approach. Achieving

consensus on the overall feasibility of the vision for Main Street will mark the point at which we can begin to refine the process. How do we work with the people and get to where they are in their thinking? How do we resolve the conflicts between all groups? We need ordinary people to get involved with the process; community leaders who are trusted in the community and who live there. These people are key actors and need to be identified and involved.

### **5.3 Defining the Decision-Making Process**

From where will the initiative to address Main Street come? Who will take ownership? The government? The residents? Social service agencies? Ethnic groups? A combination? Who will make decisions and how will decisions be made? From where will the funds come? Who will have responsibility for approval and allocation of resources? How do we ensure that the decision-making process has credibility and accountability? How will uncertainty be handled? Do we want another arm's length public corporation?

The complex nature of the Main Street situation, and inner city decline in general, means that decision-making, which involves the community, becomes far more complex than if it did not; we must be prepared to accept this.

## **F. CONCLUSIONS**

It is true that the Main Street area has been studied to death. Each study attempts to capture the dynamics of the community, the issues at work and the underlying causes for it all. It is a complex situation and while the issues are fairly straightforward, understanding how they all relate and play off one another is overwhelming and surely part, if not all, of the reason the area has been left to fall apart. This discussion paper has only scratched the surface of the dynamics of the issues in the Main Street community. It has however, presented some background information and some of the issues as they became apparent during discussions with residents, non-residents, merchants, and service providers.

The purpose of the workshop is to start where the paper stops.