

## City Planning

The City of Winnipeg's guiding vision for future growth and development, *OurWinnipeg*, emphasizes sustainability, quality of life and planning for future generations. The proposals included here, and in our Environment section, are intended to address these principles, as well as ensuring fairness and equity in the planning process. The CCPA-MB Alternative Budget proposes several strategies, including:

- Ensure that capital improvements reflect planning goals
- Increase planning capacity, accountability and resources for community groups (see Food Security chapter for an example)
- Use taxation tools to encourage infill development (see Revenue section)
- Create transparency in development agreements

These strategies are designed to (1) ensure that financial resources and benefits align with the vision set out in planning documents, (2) increase capacity and fairness in how communities participate in planning processes, and (3) promote equity in the distribution of financial resources.

### Link Capital Budget to Planning Goals

In addition to *OurWinnipeg* and area-specific secondary plans, the city's growth and development is greatly influenced by capital investments in infrastructure such as roads, services, and recreational facilities. From a municipal perspective, the 5-year capital budget and forecast is instrumental in implementing *OurWinnipeg*,<sup>1</sup> as it specifies what types of resources are funded and where. While capital plan proposals include a broad description of how investments fit within *OurWinnipeg* (such as "sustainability" or "key directions for the entire city"), an in-depth analysis of how these plans fit together

would ensure that capital investments support the broad vision for change. Critically, capital plans should also address issues of climate change and evaluate how spending will work to encourage community resilience. The AMB Introduction and Environment chapter have details on sustainable budgeting that would help the capital budget meet the goals set out in *OurWinnipeg*.

A lack of consistency between official plans and capital investment plans undermine the implementation of planning efforts, and both municipal finance and urban planning professions identify alignment between the two plans as a best practice.<sup>2</sup>

While *OurWinnipeg* encourages infill development, this can be hampered by a lack of infrastructure capacity (such as for sewers and water), and too often these improvements are determined by capital spending rather than official or secondary plans. Rather than determining improvements by capital spending, official or secondary plans should inform and prioritize capital spending.

Given the importance of capital plans in determining how resources are distributed, equity should be a factor in decision-making, a strategy used in other cities.<sup>3</sup> Critically, unlike *OurWinnipeg* and secondary plans, capital plans rarely involve extensive consultation in their development, raising concerns about equity and transparency in the allocation of resources.

There are several strategies that could be used to ensure that capital spending aligns with planning goals and incorporates equity in decision-making. One way to achieve greater consistency is to have planning staff involved in the review or ranking of capital projects, including evaluating whether projects achieve goals stated in the official plan.<sup>4</sup> In some cities, such as New Orleans, alignment between capital and general plans is required by law, and evaluated by the City Planning Commission.<sup>5</sup> A key step from an



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equity perspective is to provide a clear analysis of where investments are being made, including a ward-by-ward assessment of types and amounts of capital funding. Similarly, a commitment to climate change should be reflected in infrastructure and capital spending.

*New Expenditures:*

- Staff time/additional full time staff to: evaluate capital budget; and assist Geographical Information System (GIS) department staff with spatial analysis of plans: \$70,000
- Funding for neighbourhood-based consultation on capital budgets: \$50,000

Total: \$120,000

### Provide Resources for Communities to Engage in Planning Activities

One of the pillars for planning practice is engagement and consultation with communities. Unfortunately, participating in these processes often assumes and requires a certain level of expertise, familiarity with city practices, and time and financial support. While some communities are able to effectively engage with planning processes, this varies significantly across the city, with differences in available resources and expertise limiting participation. In some instances, neighbourhood groups may be actively involved in planning consultations but do not represent the diversity of their community (including renters, new residents, those with barriers to participation or reflecting divergent views). Critically,

while the City has committed to reconciliation through the adoption of the Indigenous Accord, it is still unclear as to how this will be incorporated into planning practices, especially as it is voluntary. While equity and social justice should be a key principle of engagement practices, uneven resources and power dynamics make it difficult for all to participate equally.<sup>6</sup>

There are several ways to encourage more diverse and representative engagement in planning, including by providing resources to community groups that demonstrate inclusive representation, creation of freely available independent expertise for communities and neighbourhoods, and having a specific staff focus on reconciliation and planning.

#### **a. Create a Community Planning University Partnership**

There are several models for providing independent planning expertise to communities without existing capacity. In England, Planning Aid provides free, independent advice through volunteer professionals, including outreach, capacity building, and neighbourhood planning.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the American Planning Association pairs volunteer Community Planning Assistance Teams with communities that lack resources to deal with specific concerns.<sup>8</sup> Community-university partnerships have also been used to provide resources for disadvantaged communities and advance social equity goals, though these require municipal support and flexibility.<sup>9</sup>

Currently, there is capacity to support community planning through community-based studios and on-going research at local universities that could be co-ordinated along with volunteer professionals. To ensure effective and responsible practices, there must be city staff support and funding for basic resources, such as meeting space, childcare, transportation reimbursement, and supplies. We recommend funding for a staff person to co-ordinate existing capacity from local universities and professional planners, and

establish a focus on implementing principles of reconciliation in community planning practices. We estimate this at \$30,000.

#### **b. Provide Resources for Representative Neighbourhood Associations**

While resident groups can often be very influential in local planning decisions, they may not reflect community interests. Groups often form as a reaction to planning initiatives but may not continue to engage with processes or work to ensure they are advocating on behalf of all residents. One way of ensuring that resident associations are diverse, inclusive and representative of their community is to provide benefits and resources to groups that can demonstrate this. One model is the community league, which can act as an advocate as well as provide community outreach, coordination and services. Edmonton's community leagues were created on principles of inclusivity and are governed by a code of ethics and by-laws. These neighbourhood associations facilitate communication between the City and local residents, and are eligible for a variety of municipal operating and capital grants.<sup>10</sup>

It is critical to provide resources and staff support to build local capacity and to assist groups in ensuring they are inclusive.<sup>11</sup> This should include funds to facilitate outreach, communication and policy development; dedicated community development staff support to assist neighbourhood groups; and the continuation of the Planning Ed workshops previously offered to provide information on the planning process. We recommend that financial resources be dedicated to neighbourhood associations that can demonstrate that they are representative of the communities they serve and have a commitment to civic engagement. While these would have to be developed more thoroughly, some ways to assess the inclusiveness of community groups could be a demonstration of detailed stakeholder analysis and an outreach plan for engaging with under-represented groups.<sup>12</sup>



*New Expenditures:*

- Funding for 1 part time staff support (position shared with part time University-Community position) for Community Planning Studio: \$30,000
- Grants for neighbourhood groups that demonstrate inclusive processes. Funding for 1 pilot project: \$20,000
- Funding for 1, full-time community development staff person: \$60,000
- Dedicated funds for community-based Planning Education workshops: \$30,000

Total Funding for Representational Associations: **\$140,000**

### 3. Transparency in Development Agreements

Development agreements are used to extract benefits from proposals that don't conform to the existing zoning codes. For example, in exchange for building at a higher density or a taller structure, developers may be required to contribute to a fund for affordable housing or public art. As a slow growth city, Winnipeg has used tax relief as a tool to stimulate private sector benefits without acknowledging the benefits that accrue to private developers. The public benefits of these agreements are not clear, especially as it is difficult to determine if developments would proceed without the tax relief. We recommend that the City develop a clear set of criteria of true public benefits that can be negotiated with developers, such as affordable housing, daycare spaces, and active transportation facilities, in exchange for density, height or tax deferral bonuses.

*New Expenditures:*

- Staff person (part time) with strong real estate background to develop criteria and negotiate agreements. This position would be full time and would include administering the duties of the new

position created in section 4 below (a full time \$70,000 position would be shared between the two initiatives):

Transparency officer: \$35,000

*New Revenues:*

- Development Impact Fee Increase: see Revenue section

### 4. Ensure Planning and Taxation Strategies are Aligned

Planning policies can encourage the types of sustainable development envisioned in *OurWinnipeg* but a range of other policies also informs decisions about development. Tax policy specifically can have a strong influence on land use.<sup>13</sup> There are several areas where taxation policy could be used to encourage sustainable growth, if it was aligned with planning goals. One area is taxation policies for surface parking and other auto-oriented uses. Surface parking lots create a hostile environment for pedestrians, can contribute to safety concerns, and detract from neighbourhood vitality.<sup>14</sup> While they could be used for more productive purposes, a large percentage of downtown is devoted to surface parking. While *OurWinnipeg* encourages infill development downtown, the revenue from surface parking, combined with low tax rates, discourages their sale and conversion. Rather than freezing taxes on new development, bringing surface parking lots' tax rate in line with their future potential would provide additional revenue for the City, as well as create incentives for owners to either develop their properties or sell them to those willing to develop. Similarly, drive-through restaurants — which have negatively impact the built environment and are contrary to active transportation policies — could be taxed at higher rates to discourage their development.

Another area for alignment is residential taxation policies. The benefits to the city from

higher density developments are not reflected in property taxes, with condominiums and apartments taxed at the same rate as single-family homes, despite the lower infrastructure costs associated with higher density development in established communities. We recommend that property tax strategies be aligned more closely with planning goals to encourage the types of communities envisioned by *OurWinnipeg*.

*New Revenues:*

- Increased property tax from vacant sites/surface parking: see Revenue section

*New Expenditures:*

- Staff time to assess areas of conflict and develop report on changes: this position would be combined with the Transparency Office above:
- Conflict officer: \$35,000

***Total Expenditures:***

- Linking Planning to Capital Budget: \$120,000
- Funding for Representational Associations: \$140,000
- Transparency Officer: \$35,000
- Conflict Officer: \$35,000

**Total: \$.33M**

<sup>1</sup> <http://winnipeg.ca/interhom/CityHall/OurWinnipeg/>

<sup>2</sup> Shishir Mathur, “Linking Planning with Budgeting: Examining Linkages between General Plans and Capital Improvement Plans,” *Journal of Planning Education and Research* (Ahead of Print) (2017).

<sup>3</sup> Susan Hoffmann, Norman Krumholz, and Kevin O’Brien, “How Capital Budgeting Helped a Sick City: Thirty Years of Capital Improvement Planning in Cleveland,” *Public Budgeting & Finance* 20, no. 1 (2000).

<sup>4</sup> Mathur, “Linking Planning with Budgeting: Examining Linkages between General Plans and Capital Improvement Plans.”

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nola.gov/city-planning/capital-improvement-plan/>

<sup>6</sup> John M. Bryson et al., “Designing Public Participation Processes,” *Public Administration Review* 73, no. 1 (2013).

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid/what-we-do/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.planning.org/communityassistance/teams/>

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth M. Reardon, “An Experiential Approach to Creating an Effective Community-University Partnership: The East St. Louis Action Research Project,” *Cityscape* 5, no. 1 (2000).

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.edmonton.ca/programs\\_services/funding-grants.aspx](https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/funding-grants.aspx)

<sup>11</sup> Sirianni, Carmen. “Neighborhood Planning as Collaborative Democratic Design.” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 73, no. 4 (2007): 373–387.

<sup>12</sup> These criteria were used in determining which community groups received funding for community-based planning processes in Seattle. The city allocated \$4.7 million to support neighbourhood-based planning, including staff support and money for consultants (see Sirianni, C., 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Bengston, David N., Jennifer O. Fletcher, and Kristen C. Nelson. “Public Policies for Managing Urban Growth and Protecting Open Space: Policy Instruments and Lessons Learned in the United States.” *Landscape and Urban Planning* 69, no. 2: 271–86.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Manville and Donald Shoup, “Parking, People and Cities,” *Journal of Urban Planning and Development* 131, no. 4 (2005).