

OurWinnipeg™

It's Our City, It's Our Plan, It's Our Time.

SpeakUpWinnipeg.com

Cover Sheet Information

Topic:
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Case Study Title:
Our**Winnipeg**: It's Our City, It's
Our Plan, It's Our Time

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City of Winnipeg

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SYNOPSIS

Our Starting Point – the Case for Change . . .

Imagine a city . . . a city in the heart of the continent, one with a rich history of industrial success, arts and cultural diversity; and great planning ‘bones’ – a city that 650,000+ people already consider to be a great place to live.

Imagine the same city now competing on the global stage for the next talented and creative workforce, while like many other cities – facing daunting infrastructure challenges, revenue constraints and a diminishing land supply. What’s more, a city with limited planning resources, a trust deficit among planners and politicians and citizens and the development industry; *and*, a planning relationship with its parent, the Provincial government, that is unique in Canada.

Imagine a city with tremendous untapped potential, poised for significant growth, and desperately in need of a new approach to planning and a new development plan.

That’s the challenge we faced, and where our one-year ‘coming of age’ story began.

Our **Winnipeg**: It’s Our City, It’s Our Plan, It’s Our Time.

Our Approach . . .

How do you create a new vision, plan and process in an environment where none exists? We decided to take a leadership role in re-writing our City’s approach to planning and invite the community into a frank and open conversation about what that might look like.

This required securing the necessary resources to plan effectively, do background research that had been lacking before, and engage an energized, creative and diverse planning team. It meant being bold enough to diverge from long-standing processes, use the initiative we’d been granted, and invent a new role for planning and planners in Winnipeg – to *lead* rather than follow; to *be* the best practice, rather than pursue it.

Our leaders entrusted us to be leaders ourselves – to manage and execute a ‘home-grown’ planning process and development plan under the mentorship and guidance of respected experts in their fields. Our mission was to restore trust and create a sense of ownership in the plan amongst our citizens, politicians, developers and stakeholder agencies through significant and meaningful engagement *from the outset*.

To that end, our direction was to deliver a process for Winnipeggers to express a vision for their city and an opportunity to put their fingerprints on the plan. The plan needed to provide

- ➔ A sustainable framework (social, environmental and economic)
- ➔ A call to action
- ➔ A policy foundation for decision-making
- ➔ A dynamic process for delivery

Enter . . . *SpeakUpWinnipeg*: our 'made in Winnipeg' public engagement process. A major component of the process was *SpeakUpWinnipeg.com*, a blog-based website serving as the interactive hub for information sharing and conversation with and among citizens. This innovative new consultation tool featured a host of blog topics, video stories, questions of the day, and reference materials, all designed to generate informed opinions from a wide cross-section of Winnipeggers directly via the site, and through the most popular social media applications.

In addition to the project website, we sought input through roundtables, focused neighbourhood conversations, stakeholder workshops, speaking engagements, community interaction and major public events. The planning exercise also benefited from the mobilization of over 120 members of the City of Winnipeg Public Service. The tentacles of the plan truly reach all operational areas of the organization at the most senior levels and will profoundly influence the way service is delivered for years to come.

Our Achievement . . .

Approximately one year after the launch of the *SpeakUpWinnipeg* process, we delivered a comprehensive 25-year development plan for the city of Winnipeg. It was the result of the largest and most innovative planning exercise in our history. We were successful in connecting directly with over 42,000 Winnipeggers about their vision for the city. Our website itself has had over 8.5 million 'hits', over 26,000 unique visitors, and over 1,650 posted blog comments. We have engaged citizens from all manners of our community, from newcomers to poverty groups to transportation stakeholders, to economic development agencies.

At a cost of approximately \$3.2 million, our new 'package' of planning documents is grounded in contemporary research from leading experts that in some cases had not been updated in 20 to 30 years. At the time of writing, the Plan has already received formal approval from City Council – with minimal opposition from the public – and is now awaiting Provincial approval.

Our Plan commits us to ACTION. So much so, that six months prior to the plan's release, we had already published the Call to Action for Our **Winnipeg**, containing 76 action items stemming from the first six months of *SpeakUpWinnipeg* consultations, and deliverable within a 2 year timeframe with little or no additional resources. The Call to Action will evolve into an accountability 'report card' and be supplemented with new priorities as the Plan lifecycle unfolds. Our leaders and citizens told us very clearly that they don't want to see another plan that simply 'sits on a shelf'.

Our Plan balances the complex issues of growth, sustainability and choice. Through an Urban Structure approach to land use and development planning, emphasis on Complete Communities, and careful attention to social, environmental and economic interdependencies we believe we have positioned our city to successfully compete on the global stage in a time of accelerated change and growing uncertainty.

Municipal governments are not typically known for their risk taking – this initiative marked an important departure. We boldly took on risks in a concerted effort to create something our community would not just own, but truly embrace. But, we also set in place conditions – from

our Council, to Chief Administrative Officer, to senior management to our project staff – to succeed.

Perhaps most importantly, we have demonstrated over the past year that through collaboration and a shared vision, we can create capacity to deliver. We proved collectively as an organization that we can be innovative, creative and responsive to our citizen's needs and inspire current and future Winnipeggers that our city is and will be a great place to live, work, play, learn, visit and invest.

Our Lessons Learned (so far) . . .

- ➔ Social media can be a very effective tool for public engagement that takes community interaction well beyond 'the usual suspects'. Being cutting edge is OK – even in government – just make sure you are accountable and transparent – always!
- ➔ Take the community and its stakeholders with you on the journey. They expect to be informed and will feel infinitely more ownership if directly involved in the process. The government doesn't have to do everything alone or in isolation. There is lots of help out there if the vision is shared – and collaboration is a winning formula!
- ➔ When you ask for meaningful input from your community, you get it. When you reflect that input in your plan, you get respect and support. When you get respect and support, you get more empowerment and autonomy. And when you get more empowerment and autonomy you raise expectations for delivering results that matter to citizens – and now, that's exactly what we intend to do!

Our Session Proposal . . .

Through a series of brief presentations by our project leaders, we will invite conference participants to interactively discuss and advance the following learning objectives:

- ➔ *How can planners make the most of their leadership role as facilitators and enablers in a rapidly changing world where attracting talented citizens to a creative, competitive and sustainable city is the order of the day?*
- ➔ *If this was your city and your city's plan, how would YOU go about balancing the diverse perspectives of planners, politicians, developers / stakeholders, and current / future citizens to ensure effective plan implementation?*

We're proposing a presentation of the main themes / concepts in our comprehensive development plan. Stemming from each would be breakout or roundtable opportunities where participants are asked to assume one of the roles identified above (i.e. planner, politician, developer, citizen, newcomer, etc.) and discuss from that perspective how to collaboratively make those themes happen on the ground.

The success we've had in this planning initiative has been unprecedented for our city and hopes and expectations for 'follow-through' are exceedingly high.

We recognize that our development plan is nothing if it can't be executed. Plans that die on shelves are not an option here and we passionately believe that creative and collaborative tools are the key to successful implementation. Public servants don't develop – developers do; Public servants don't make the key long-term decisions in a government organization – politicians do; and, Public servants decide on lifestyle choices – citizens do.

Clearly then, public servants (planners and others) must recognize their role in bridging these interdependencies. Doing so will effectively facilitate the evolution from a plan on paper . . . to development as planned . . . to creating a city of choice for generations to come.

The collective knowledge of participants gathered at your conference provides a tremendous opportunity to explore, appreciate and balance the diverse perspectives that influence the realization of a Plan. Together we can use this experience to shape a vital new role for planners in making desired development a reality in a world where sustainability and competitiveness are the key drivers of a city's success.

We look forward to our discussion with you about the merits of our session proposal!

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

1. Innovation / Creativity

➔ *How did the project improve the organization?*

More than any other planning exercise undertaken, this one not only broadly communicated the intentions of the plan, but engaged a broad cross-section of the organization directly in the plan's creation. As a result, we believe the organization has substantially increased its capacity to collaborate and evolve / adapt the plan during its implementation phase through alignment of objectives and resource optimization.

➔ *Were new technologies used? (if YES, what methods and/or applications did you implement?)*

Never before has our organization 'broken tradition' and as a government explored the use of social media / blogging to have an open conversation with its citizens about their city. Not only did we exploit existing social media tools to encourage input, but also introduced the use of video features and questions of the day to promote variety and interest in the interactive website.

A Content Management System (CMS) was used to manage the SpeakUpWinnipeg.com site. The site featured blogs, videos, an event calendar, downloadable resources and the cross posting of content to social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. The CMS allowed members of the public service to contribute content to the site with minimal training.

Accessibility was a key consideration in the development of SpeakUpWinnipeg.com. The site featured the ability to change font sizes on screen and a separate print style to ensure that pages would print cleanly. Documents were offered in multiple formats and in both official languages of French and English where feasible, and were also available online as HTML documents.

Feedback received throughout the entire SpeakUpWinnipeg process was captured and indexed in a custom-built Microsoft Access database. This allowed for feedback to be filtered, used and communicated in a timely manner. It also allowed us to directly link feedback received to the action or policy that came as the result of it.

➔ *Was a private consultant used (if YES, describe their involvement). Identify the consultant and/or firm, including contact information.*

Yes, however, the OurWinnipeg initiative has been undertaken on the strength of the Winnipeg public service with assistance from private consultants for mentorship and required background research. At the centre of the OurWinnipeg initiative is a dynamic core team that includes: creative communications experts; videographers, marketing experts; policy makers; planners and students. While the core team plays a critical role in the management and delivery of the project, the plan and its component initiatives have been delivered with contributions from hundreds of City of Winnipeg public service employees. There has been extensive involvement by: Public Works;

Community Services; Transit; Water and Waste; Office of Sustainability; Winnipeg Police Service; Planning, Property and Development; and the Winnipeg Parking Authority; as well as the City's senior leadership team.

2. Outcomes Achieved

➔ *What customer/community needs and expectations were identified and fulfilled?*

City Council owns the OurWinnipeg plan and as such directed that the plan needed to provide:

- ➔ A sustainable framework (social, environmental and economic)
- ➔ A call to action
- ➔ A policy foundation for decision-making
- ➔ A dynamic process for delivery

We believe the plan has delivered on all counts as identified briefly in the Synopsis above. Specifically, in addition to the website participation our community outreach effort consisted of:

- Mayor's Symposium on Sustainability (267 participants)
- City Building Charrette (500 participants)
- 40+ Roundtables (over 800 participants)
- Public Open Houses (275 participants)
- Focused neighbourhood discussions (350 participants)
- A Speak Up Squad (13,500 people directly contacted through public venues and events held throughout the entire city)

A diverse cross-section of community groups included Aboriginal Winnipeggers, older Winnipeggers, Newcomers, francophone community, people with disabilities, students, poverty groups, food groups, housing groups, economic development agencies, transportation stakeholders, sustainability groups, and the development industry. Each individual input contribution is 'logged' in a project database and was considered in putting together the draft plan and identifying overriding plan themes.

➔ *Has service delivery been enhanced?*

The implementation plan envisioned to date will involve participation from the entire organization and as such will endeavour to align resources and efforts around plan priorities, thus enhancing service delivery as planned.

➔ *Did the initiative improve access to your government? (if YES, how?)*

Yes, never before has the public had such diverse forms of access to its government. Our commitment is to 'Continue the Conversation' by extending access to the SpeakUpWinnipeg website throughout the life of the plan as an ongoing communication, accountability and public input tool. This tool has also set expectations for greater transparency, earlier and more consistent communication, and a partnership approach going forward.

→ *Has the health of the community improved as a result? (if YES, how?)*

Our sincere belief is that successful execution of the plan as drafted will provide sustainable and complete communities that support the social, environmental and economic needs of a growing population for not only the current generation, but generations to come.

3. **Applicable Results and Real World Practicality**

→ *What practical applications could you share if selected?*

→ *How applicable is the project to other local governments?*

→ *What results / outcomes will you be able to share?*

The detailed approach to our plan product and process is readily transferable to other cities. We believe that the practices we engaged throughout were highly successful and would be of extreme interest to any urban centre undertaking a comprehensive long-range planning exercise that reflects diverse community and stakeholder views. The framework of engagement and resources used in the SpeakUpWinnipeg process could be a valuable source of information to conference participants. Our plan documents are available in draft form and as such could also be potentially shared during or in advance of the conference event.

→ *Please include any performance measures if applicable.*

Our implementation plan as envisioned commits us to a robust set of indicators and performance indicators (including assembly of critical baseline data) in order to regularly monitor and report on plan progress comprehensively from a social, environmental and economic perspective.