



downtown
WINNIPEG BIZ

2015
ANNUAL REPORT



Our Members

We represent over 1,300 downtown businesses in who contribute financially for programs and services through a special BIZ Levy.

Over 100 sponsors, stakeholders, supporters, volunteers and donors contribute to over \$2 million cash annually in and over \$500,000 of in-kind support to elevate our downtown initiatives from good to great.



Our Partners

The customers, clients and employees of our BIZ Members, residents, office workers, students, tourists, and people who visit our downtown, in the hundreds of thousands add to the walkability, vibrancy, and dynamics of our city centre.



Our Community

Comprised of 16 dedicated board members, the organization is committed to great fiscal management with over a decade of balanced budgets, guiding an organization with very strong fiscal health and governance policies. The Board oversees the BIZ's strategic plan, and provides input and guidance to management on all downtown issues of the day.



Our Board

MANAGEMENT BOARD:

SACHIT MEHRA,
East India Company Pub & Eatery, Chair

DEBBIE O'BRAY,
Investors Group, Vice Chair

DARREN DOWNEY,
FNP Parking, Secretary

CINDY BALE,
Treasurer, Weppler Chartered Accountants

DAVID STONE,
Portage Place Shopping Centre, Member at Large

ARI DRIVER,
Perfume Paradise, Member at Large

JENNY GERBASI,
City of Winnipeg Councillor

ROBERT THORSTEN,
True North Sports & Entertainment

DIANA WIESENTHAL,
Corporate People Responsibility Inc.

MELANIE BERNADSKY,
Freshcut Downtown

TREVOR BUHNAI,
Canad Inns

KWOK NGAN,
RBC Royal Bank of Canada

RICHARD WALLS,
ADI DesignWorks Ltd.

BRIGITTE BURGOWNE,
Think Shift Agency & Consultancy

DANIELA CURCIO,
Hudson's Bay

WES SCHOLLENBERG,
Avison Young Commercial Real Estate

MANAGEMENT STAFF:

STEFANO GRANDE,
Executive Director

JASON SYVIXAY,
Managing Director

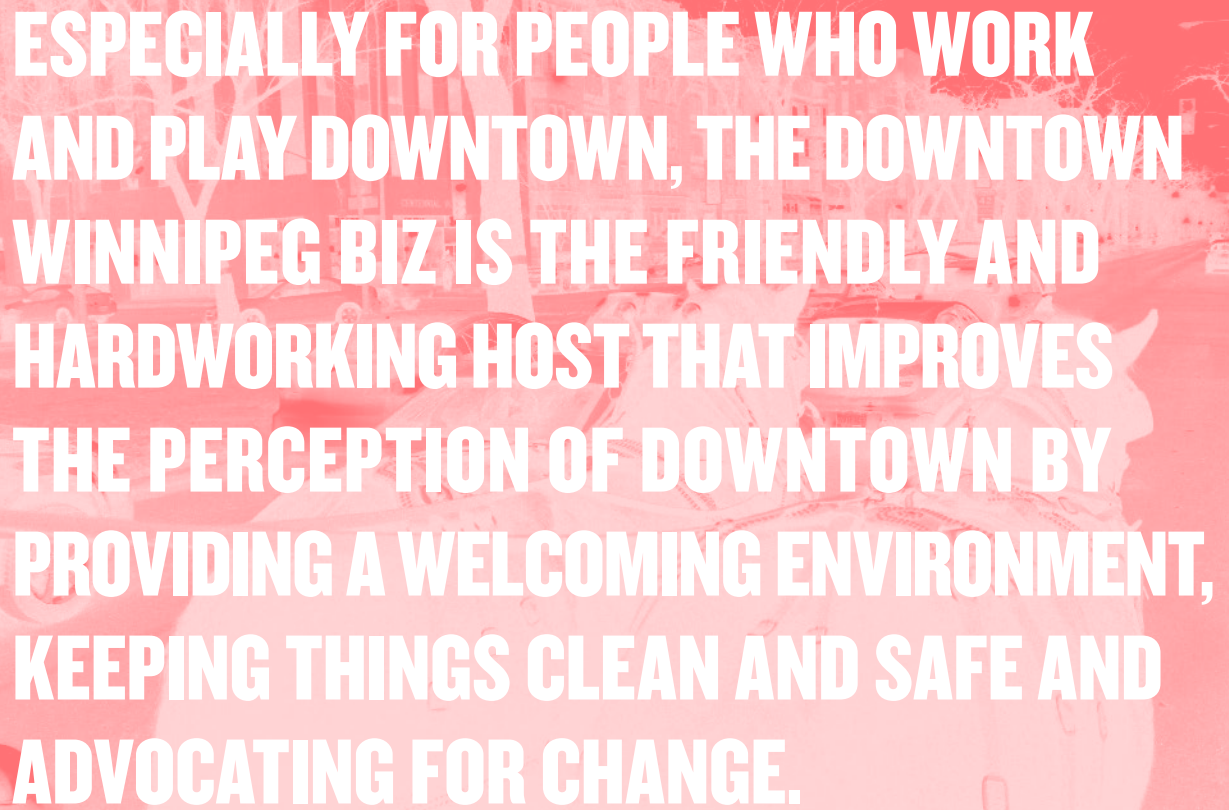
RON ENNS,
Finance Director

DEBRA TOMISKI,
Manager, Human Resources

RICK JOYAL,
Manager, Safety & Development

STEPHANIE VOYCE,
Manager, Placemaking, Cleanliness & Transportation

[FULL STAFF LISTING ONLINE](#)



**ESPECIALLY FOR PEOPLE WHO WORK
AND PLAY DOWNTOWN, THE DOWNTOWN
WINNIPEG BIZ IS THE FRIENDLY AND
HARDWORKING HOST THAT IMPROVES
THE PERCEPTION OF DOWNTOWN BY
PROVIDING A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT,
KEEPING THINGS CLEAN AND SAFE AND
ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE.**

Established in 1989 by the City of Winnipeg, the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ is the oldest of Winnipeg's 16 Business Improvement Zones (BIZ). Directed by a management board of 15 business members and a City Hall representative, the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ markets the city centre on behalf of 1,300 businesses and runs programs that target downtown placemaking, cleanliness, safety, transportation and parking. The BIZ operates as a thought leader, bringing downtown opportunities and issues to greater light and engaging our community in conversations. We also host and support events and promote downtown as a great place to work, shop, live and experience.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & CHAIR

Winnipeggers are great storytellers. We care about our great city, we promote it and we wear our pride with us wherever we may go. We are sensitive and protective of the people and neighborhoods we are lucky to call friends and home. This is especially true for the tens of thousands who have grown to love our downtown. Our staff, board, volunteers, members and the community truly care about the heart of our city. Word of mouth is powerful in changing attitude and we are seeing it – we really can find it all downtown.

For us at the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ, our story involves a personal commitment to create a better downtown, and the passion and emotional intelligence to get us there. We've seen people come around; people who are viewing the downtown as a positive place to work, live, and experience. With more than 50 festivals downtown that attract 950,000 visits and 8 million additional visits to arts, cultural, and entertainment venues, there is no shortage of things for people to see and do. Just this past fall, our annual festival, ManyFest, drew in nearly 70,000 people, shutting down Broadway for a car-free atmosphere and celebration of food trucks, local vendors and artisans, musicians, and more. With a vision to see increased pedestrian activity at all hours of the day, it is events like ManyFest that help tell the true story of downtown, and also work towards changing perceptions. In a study recently facilitated through Probe

Research, ManyFest was said to have changed the minds of 50 percent of Winnipeggers on downtown for the better.

These events, and many more, help strengthen the downtown as vibrant, safe, and great place to spend time. Events instill pride. They expose people to parts of our downtown which may have gone unnoticed or unfrequented; they create positive perceptions and reinforce our view of the city and downtown as the cultural hub for Winnipeggers. And more importantly, they are opportunities for Winnipeggers to gather, share, connect, and celebrate the incredible diversity in our city centre.

These spinoffs are present in all of the programs our members afford us the opportunity to work on. In 2014 and 2015, we made very good progress implementing our strategy and delivering on our financial and programming targets. Guided by our long-term vision to become the voice for downtown businesses, we continue to demonstrate leadership in our core areas of safety, cleanliness, placemaking, events, marketing, and more. As thought leaders, we continue to have conversations around important issues, bringing stakeholders around the table to think beyond today and better position our downtown for tomorrow.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & CHAIR

Keeping pace with downtown's incredible momentum, your BIZ has begun to move ahead by collaborating with partners, sponsors, stakeholders, and all levels of government. This has translated to more farmers' markets, new concerts, increased movie screenings at night, and greater evening and weekend cleaning and safety initiatives.

As we move forward into the third and final year of our 2014 – 2016 strategic plan, we want to extend a special thanks to the committed management board, staff and volunteers who help to move our bold plans and action strategies forward. The long nights spent at the office or at Memorial Park setting up a 40 foot screen for

outdoor movies does not go unnoticed. We are clearly an organization that can work with little but do a lot for our members, and have opened up our doors to thinking more about how to support and enhance our community.

Our vision both for the BIZ, and for our downtown remains clear, and we continue to steward the downtown in new and exciting ways. We are thrilled to continue working with our members to forge a strong path for renewal, community, and economic development. As Henry Ford said, "If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself."

Let's find it downtown, together.

SINCERELY,



Stefano Grande,
Executive Director



Sachit Mehra,
Chair of the Board

CLEANLINESS

Our goal for 2015 and continuing in 2016 is to continue growing public perception that the downtown is getting cleaner. In 2013, **86%** of people polled felt downtown was clean – that's up from **82%** in 2007 and **63%** in 2004.

The **Metro Enviro-Team** is dedicated to keeping downtown clean and accessible to all – from litter picking, to sidewalk sweeping, removing snow and ice build-up from pay stations and graffiti removal. In the last year we've increased our cleanliness resources:

- **2** new dedicated cleaning staff in the **SHED** area in the late evening, in addition to **25** full-time and part-time employees now working seven days a week during the summer and early evening
- **Dedicated Chinatown position** for the summer
- Partnerships with the City of Winnipeg and various stakeholders continue to facilitate a cleaner downtown
- Metro News continues to brand the Metro Enviro-Team providing significant contribution to the BIZ and the downtown business community

In March, Mayor Brian Bowman endorsed the Metro Enviro-Team for their efforts and proclaimed a continued partnership with the City of Winnipeg to enhance cleanliness services.

Additionally, we've partnered with Take Pride Winnipeg to increase the number of **cigarette butt receptacles** on the streets, installing **20** in 2015.

In partnership with Winnipeg Transit, the Metro Enviro-Team cleans and pressure washes **145 bus shelters**, including signage and furniture, weekly.

The **2015 summer Streetscape Team** made up of four students worked to refurbish poster boards, bike racks and street furniture throughout downtown, as well as planting, weeding and watering the thousands of plants that brighten up our streets.

Not only do people believe downtown is cleaner now than ever before, they are taking part in making it that way. Ten school groups of **20 students** came out to clean up downtown this spring, on top of over **500** downtown employees and community members who helped collect **2,750 pounds of litter** during our annual Earth Day Clean-up. In September, **26** newcomers to downtown from Stantec took to Portage Ave. to tidy up their new neighbourhood.



HOMELESSNESS

The BIZ continues to raise awareness with the corporate community to end homelessness through supportive housing and by raising funds to employ our city's least advantaged to beautify downtown.

In September, at the city's windiest intersection, Portage and Main, over 130 of the city's movers and shakers camped out in the cold for the **5th annual CEO Sleepout**, to raise \$182,000 and to get people talking about homelessness. Earlier in the year, \$205,000 was granted to Graffiti Art Programming Inc., Red Road Lodge, Siloam Mission, Artbeat Studio Inc., Macdonald Youth Services, and Union Gospel Mission in order to connect those experiencing homelessness or those at risk of becoming homeless with adequate housing and employment; providing these individuals with valuable work experience, life skills and training, while building self-confidence and self-sufficiency.

This funding has helped to leverage nearly \$1 million in programming and employment of 50 homeless individuals to work 19,524 hours in 2015, contributing to downtown in a positive and meaningful manner.

Since 2011, over \$780,000 has been raised by the private sector, helping to employ 137 people experiencing homelessness for more than 51,000 hours of employment — with many of these individuals returning to school or finding permanent full-time work.



TRANSPORTATION, PARKING & TRANSIT

The BIZ continues to strive to make downtown easily accessible for those who commute to and from, visit, and live downtown through advocating for parking, transportation and transit initiatives and policies and programs.

Over the last year, we held five parking coffee sessions with BIZ members, as well as over **50** one-on-one meetings to discuss priority with regards to the Winnipeg Parking Authority proposal to increase on-street parking to 8:30 p.m. in the SHED area, culminating in our decision to endorse the Winnipeg Parking Authority High Demand Zone Policy, with several recommendations.

We've also made strides on the active transportation front by supporting Bike Week, installing over **70** new bike racks in the downtown, supporting and participating in Commuter Challenge (11 BIZ staff commuted a combined **885km** using active transportation during the June challenge) and we distributed 50 free 5-day bus passes to downtown workers), increasing the Ciclovía protected bike route to **19km** from Assiniboine Park all the way to Kildonan Park, engaging Bike Valet services for events like Table for 1201, Moveable Feast tours, Chinatown Street Festival and ManyFest, and enticing **12** additional businesses to support active transportation by becoming official Bike Friendly Businesses in an effort to encourage folks to come downtown by bike. Our board is supportive of downtown bike lanes, and presses for outreach and collaboration with our members regarding changes.

In addition, we've added a getting around downtown map to our portfolio of print materials to replace our parking guide. The map highlights often-visited downtown locations and highlights how to get there, and get around using all modes of transportation.

You may have noticed a few beautiful city cruiser bikes outside of the Alt Hotel and Delta Hotel. This is part of the soft launch of the **Pedal in the Peg** program, providing folks with bikes to ride as tourists or to get to and from a mid-day meeting for a small fee. Look for an expanded fleet, more locations and official launch in 2016.



SAFETY

At the BIZ we are always working towards improving safety and public perceptions in the downtown, with the ultimate goal of ensuring people are comfortable in the neighbourhood.

We are working closely with the Winnipeg Police Service and other community partners on a crime management strategy.

The safety plan involves:

- Strategic deployment of police officers on Main St. and Portage Ave., with a total of 18 police foot patrols now working in our downtown
- **10** Cadets dedicated to downtown, funded in part by the BIZ
- **25** full-time Watch Ambassadors
- **60%** dedicated to evening patrol
 - **2** dedicated Watch Ambassadors on Main Street
 - **5** dedicated Watch Ambassadors in the SHED in the evening
 - **3** dedicated Watch and Customer Service Ambassadors (Kiosks) to Portage and Donald area at peak times

This year we've also gathered the community around the table to form the Harms Related to Alcohol and Substance Abuse Committee to identify a community-based strategy and recommendations to help address the harms related to alcohol and substance abuse.

The 2014 Winnipeg Police Service crime stats show a reduction in Criminal Code offences in the downtown, and we are proud of our contribution to these changing numbers:

- Violent crimes down **7%**
- Property crimes down **6%**
- Total offences down **5%** compared to the city total, which was up **1%**

In the last year we've been working to promote the **Downtown Security Network (DSN)** by hosting tours and seminars for members on topics such as Manitoba gangs, the Downtown BIZ vision for safety, and the Winnipeg Police Service Crime Prevention Through Social Development initiative.

Through the **Crime Awareness and Prevention Program (CAPP)** we implemented the ParkSafe and ShopSafe initiatives to help retailers and shoppers enjoy a crime-free experience, and reduce retail theft.

The **Community Homelessness Assistance Team (CHAT)** continues to enable downtown's most vulnerable and chronically homeless to access the services they need to become housed. Since January 2014, over **62** individuals have been housed, and **87** connected to comprehensive support services.

Our customer service team is **40** strong and assists hundreds of people daily – from distributing posters and information to our members and the public, to answering questions, to promoting downtown events at kiosks, to executing Downtown Flashback walking tours and assisting with Moveable Feast tours throughout the summers, these folks are the friendly faces of the downtown.

In addition to over **40** customer service volunteers, the Downtown Watch program worked with over **275** volunteers this year to provide over **20,000** volunteer hours and community presence – the equivalent of almost **14** full-time employees.

PLACEMAKING

We're striving to make the visual quality and pedestrian experience in downtown Winnipeg the best it can be through physical improvements, proper lighting of streets and buildings, and beautifying the streets for those who work, shop, live or visit downtown.

In the last year, our placemaking department along with board member and City Councillor Jenny Gerbasi worked hard to ensure the City would continue to fund the flowers that brighten up our downtown in the summertime, and we installed **102** hanging flower baskets along Portage Ave. just in time for Winnipeg to welcome thousands of visitors for the FIFA Women's World Cup 2015.

You'll notice new plants in the flower beds in Air Canada Park, in front of APTN – it's the Downtown Winnipeg Indigenous Garden. Together with APTN, RBC and the City of Winnipeg, this initiative is aimed at uniting communities, promoting conversations about Indigenous culture and tradition and improving the visual landscape of the city block with traditional plants including artemesia, wild ginger, sweet grass and prairie sage.



FLOWER INSTALLATIONS ALONG SIDEWALKS

Other Flowers:

- New black flower pots on **Vaughan St.** in partnership with City of Winnipeg
- Planters & window boxes installed along **north Main St.**
- Additional baskets on **Hargrave and Donald St.** in partnership with CentreVenture
- Fall and winter seasonal planting beds along **Portage Ave.** and in front of **MEC**

In a partnership with Winnipeg Arts Council, the first Lights on Broadway light-based sculpture was selected by jury in spring 2015 and will be mounted at Broadway and Edmonton St. in summer 2016.

Banners add liveliness to the street and designate districts. This year local artist Kal Barteski created three banner designs for the Year of the Sheep, which can be found throughout Chinatown, in addition to new bike racks and luminaries, which are in the works for 2016.

Before the end of 2015, we will be putting out a call for submissions for a 2016 back lane enhancement activation. The project will see the back lane at the north side of Portage Ave. between Donald St. and Smith St. come to life with art, lighting, vegetation, furniture and events to add to the quality of the neighbourhood, improve perceptions related to safety and cleanliness and give those who frequent the downtown an enticing experience.

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Through prominent marketing campaigns and bold activations our initiatives brought people into the core, exploring places they would never have thought to visit. With our programs, everyone is invited to enjoy working, living, and playing in the unique environment of downtown every day.

A new partnership between Downtown Winnipeg BIZ and Tourism Winnipeg aimed to drive more visits to downtown restaurants and retail. As part of the BIZ's **#finditdowntown** marketing campaign, all convention-goers coming to the city receive exclusive access to discounts and unique experiences offered by our downtown BIZ members with a special lanyard in 2015.

3,000 Winnipeggers also received **custom keychains** granting them year-round access to these promotions. With **#finditdowntown**, the BIZ guides visitors' experiences through this emerging, vibrant area where the city's most unique and compelling experiences happen.

Since the launch of the campaign one year ago, we've seen nearly **5,000 photos posted on Instagram** using the hashtag **#finditdowntown**.

Soccer in the city was ever-present in the downtown, with hotels booked solid with visitors from across the globe, all eager to take in the soccer matches at the plethora of delicious restaurants. On game days, soccer lovers were treated to a free trolley that would circulate people to restaurants nearby. Many downtown restaurants got into the FIFA spirit with a Downtown Peggy promotion where folks could simply visit the restaurant for a chance to win tickets to anywhere in North America, Mexico, or the Caribbean, courtesy of Air Canada.

Let's not forget our home teams, the Winnipeg Jets and Manitoba Moose. We have distributed brochures, posters and giveaways to

fans, encouraging them to dine and drink at restaurants before, during, and after the game!

This year we commercialized our tours, and in a big way. Tailored to grab suburbanites by the hand to show off our downtown, our tours helped promote more than **40 restaurants, bike routes, patios, and unexplored spaces**. Tours help to showcase the downtown in an authentic way, leaving folks with a long-lasting, positive impression and encouraging future visits. Over 800 guests, including out-of-town visitors from rural Manitoba, several other provinces and many states were impressed with our downtown culinary scene. Tours with front-line staff throughout the city and members of the media helped to highlight key trends and downtown market research, and promote the programs and services offered.

The Chow Down in Chinatown restaurant passport promotion has been developed to encourage visitors to try restaurants in Chinatown, with a chance to win a \$1,000 dining gift card.

We held a design competition for a kiosk to promote upcoming events and great places to dine. The winning design will be fabricated and tested with the public in 2016.

The day after he was elected, Mayor Brian Bowman agreed to his first post-election interview for **Downtown Winnipeg Magazine**, and appeared on the cover of the Fall/Winter 2014 issue. In 2015 we updated the Downtown Winnipeg Magazine media kit offering our members and stakeholders more creative advertising opportunities than ever before.

We continue to work with strategic partners and event organizers to ensure downtown is up front and centre in the minds of Winnipeggers. Our collective efforts have been promoted online through our plethora of social media sites, Downtown Winnipeg Magazine, and pitched to media, seeing close to 500 positive news stories in 2015 alone.

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

The Downtown Winnipeg BIZ is a tool for change and progress, both locally and nationally.

As thought leaders, we continue to build a better downtown by being your voice for positive, continuous change. We have conversations about important issues, bringing stakeholders around the table to think beyond today, to identify opportunities and better position our downtown for tomorrow. We facilitate discussions involving ideas like Tax Increment Financing (**TIF**), the importance of mixed-use buildings and density, creating new districts like the **SHED**, façade improvement programs, youth entrepreneurship and more.

This year, we worked to engage and inform the public and our members about the importance of the national economic prosperity of downtowns across the country. In September at Portage Place, **federal candidates** discussed their platforms on key downtown issues including long-term funding for downtown infrastructure, making downtown the economic centre of the city, transit investment, and ending homelessness. Our executive director's work in mobilizing Canadian business improvement associations to form a national coalition - **Downtowns Canada** - resulted in forums hosted from coast-to-coast, urging the federal government to prioritize the continued revitalization and health of our downtown. As Chair of Downtowns Canada, and Vice Chair of the **International Downtown Association**, our executive director continues to put the efforts of downtown Winnipeg and its stakeholders on the map internationally, while being connected globally with downtown revitalization best practices.

Early in the year we hosted a forum with **Joe Minicozzi**, expert analyst of economic potentials of downtowns versus

sprawling subdivisions, to facilitate discussion with the community, politicians, and civil servants, and percolate ideas for action.

On the heels of a pilot program launched in 2014, three young entrepreneurs set up shop in a vacant storefront at Portage Place. Dubbed the **Launch It! Retail Incubator**, these entrepreneurs were given an opportunity to operate a pop-up store for three months, gaining first-hand experience of running a mini-retail outlet and testing their products and services in the market. A call for proposals for the third and fourth edition of this program will be solicited late in 2015.

We continue to meet with city councillors, chambers of commerce, and members to get a sense of what programs they desire to support businesses and the surrounding community. This year, we hosted a tour of downtown with newly elected city councillors and members of the Chinese community. We also continue to work with BIZ members on Main St. to support and sustain the betterment of that area, and this year produced a **12 month action plan** which will inject more cleaning, safety and placemaking programs, while increasing advocacy for government to create a district community economic development plan for this important downtown neighbourhood.



426 PORTAGE AVENUE
WINNIPEG, MB R3C 0C9

PHONE:
204.958.4640

WATCH PHONE:
204.958.SAFE (7233)

FAX:
204.958.4630

info@downtownwinnipegbiz.com
www.downtownwinnipegbiz.com

