



WINNIPEG BIZ

— 2023 —

ANNUAL REPORT



Our downtown is on Treaty No. 1 territory and
the traditional Homeland of the Red River Métis.



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We're at the start of a transformation.



Nigel Mohammed
Chair

In 2023, we saw downtown Winnipeg come back to life with events, new businesses opening, students and workers returning and streets alive with the vibrancy that defines our community.

We also experienced challenges that will require a consolidated effort to have meaningful impact. This effort will have an impact on those facing addictions, mental health, or homelessness. It will create a more attractive and welcoming city centre, while supporting small business owners in navigating the current interest rate and inflationary climate, while adapting to hybrid work models.

We understand downtown needs sustained focus and investments to succeed, and that's exactly what we do at the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ. Over the first year of our 2023-2025 strategic plan, a lot was accomplished, providing hope and optimism for our downtown and for our members.

Every thriving city in the world needs a strong downtown, and Winnipeg is no different. It has been quite some time since the stars have aligned as they are at this

“

We understand downtown needs support to succeed, and that's exactly what we do.

”

very moment, with municipal, provincial and federal governments, the community and businesses all understanding the critical

role a collective approach plays in the success and sustainability of our downtown, city and province.

In the past, when people thought about downtown they imagined a central business district. But we're changing that view. We know downtown is more than just office buildings; it's a vibrant community where the diverse voices and stories of our city come together. We need only to look around to see this transformation already beginning to blossom as we reimagine what we want our downtown to be going forward.

As the city with Canada's highest urban Indigenous population, we are in a unique position to show the country what reconciliation looks like. Over the years, the BIZ has



made efforts to celebrate Indigenous people and culture and as part of our commitment to reconciliation, we are taking the next step forward. This year, we worked with a consultant to take a closer look at our organization and to guide the development of an Indigenous Relations Strategy that will inform and evolve how and with whom we engage in advancing this important work. The Downtown BIZ team, under guidance of our Board of Directors and community partners, will begin implementing the strategy in 2024.

As I wrap up my final year on the board, I want to extend a big thank you to our hardworking staff for their dedication to this neighbourhood whether on downtown sidewalks, back alleys, board rooms, City Hall or in Ottawa. Your tireless efforts make our downtown better. I also want to express my heartfelt gratitude to our volunteer Board of Directors for their invaluable insight, guidance and time. Their intelligence and competence are matched only by their passion for an inclusive downtown and their compassion for the “invisible” and “voiceless” in our society.

Downtown Winnipeg is evolving and Downtown BIZ is committed to our community’s growth and prosperity, and we ask you to commit too. I encourage all members of our community to get involved, share your ideas and be an active part of shaping the future of your downtown. With your support, I’m confident we’ll continue to build a downtown all Winnipeggers can be proud of.



Nigel Mohammed
Chair

Mission

We promote, care and advocate for a vibrant and inclusive downtown where business thrives and people are drawn to work, live, shop and explore.

Values

- Respect
- Collaboration
- Innovation and excellence
- Inclusion

Board of Directors

Nigel Mohammed (Chair)
Assiniboine Credit Union

Ben Gillies (Vice Chair)
*Winnipeg Trolley Company
and Fools & Horses*

Shane Solomon (Treasurer)
Republic Architecture Inc.

Amelia Laidlaw (Secretary)
Tandem Collaborative

Louise Blanchard
Birch Wellness Center

Teri-Lynn Friesen
Fête Ice Cream & Coffee

Erika Giannini
The Magic Room Spa

Pamela Hilderman
MLT Aikins LLP

Julie Kiernan
IntouchCX

Dorian Morphy
*True North Sports
+ Entertainment*

Andrew Parkes
Eph Apparel Inc.

Sherri Rollins
City Councillor

Charla Smeall
Sk8 Skates

Dane Surtees
Alt Hotel

Shameel Thakrar
IG Wealth Management

Steffen Zinn
Red Ember

Senior Management Team

Kate Fenske
Chief Executive Officer

Ken Berg
Director of Operations

Ron Enns
Director of Finance

Ri Forrest
Director of Human Resources

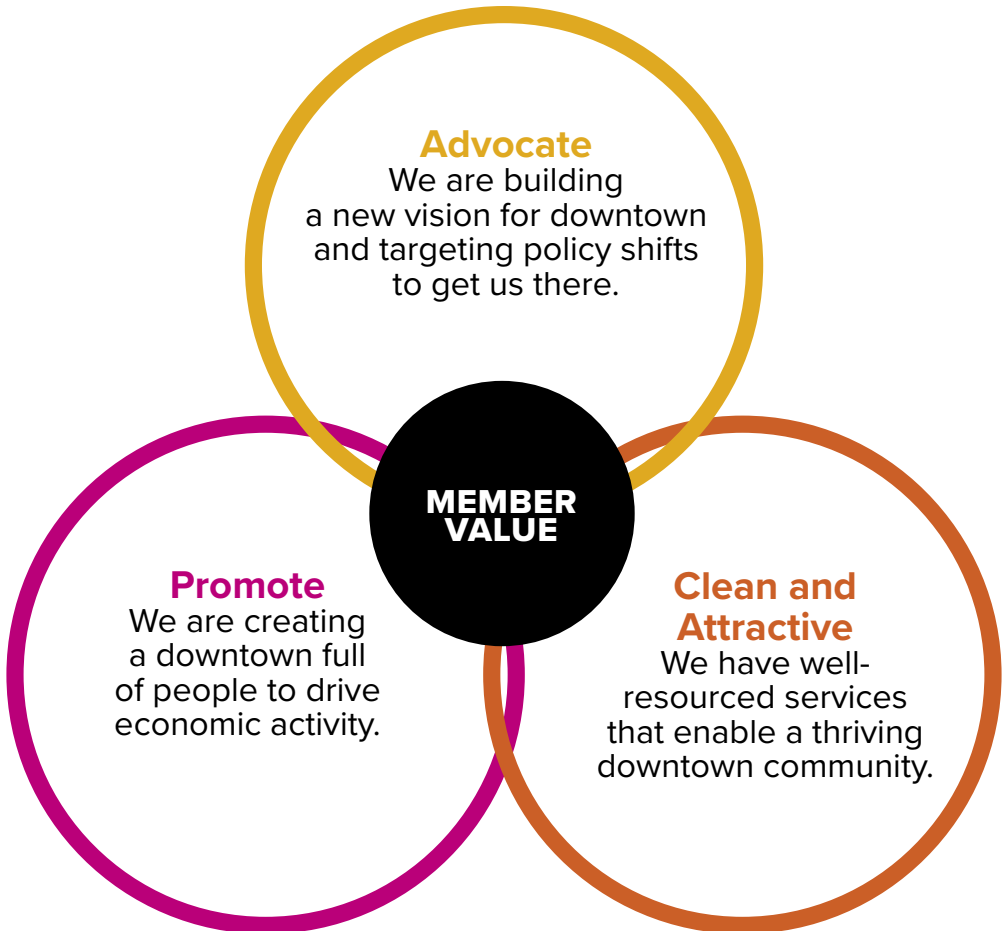
Pamela Hardman
*Director of Marketing,
Engagement and Communications*

Rhiannon Hayes
*Director of Policy and
Economic Development*



2023 - 2025 Strategic Plan

As you dive into this report, we invite you to follow along as we summarize key highlights from 2023 as aligned with our strategic plan.



We must have a sustainable, effective, and inclusive organization to deliver on our strategic plan goals.

Our Finances | Our People | Our Reconciliation Journey



Red River Métis singer/songwriter Brandi Vezina in Downtown Sounds Concert Series.



Red River Métis singer/songwriter Andrina Turenne performs at Cityplace.



Indigenous Gardens Planting and Celebration at Air Canada Park.

Foundation

Our reconciliation journey

Over the years, we have celebrated and included Indigenous culture in what we do as an organization, but we've never had a formal guide to help us take meaningful and intentional steps forward on our reconciliation journey. Until now.

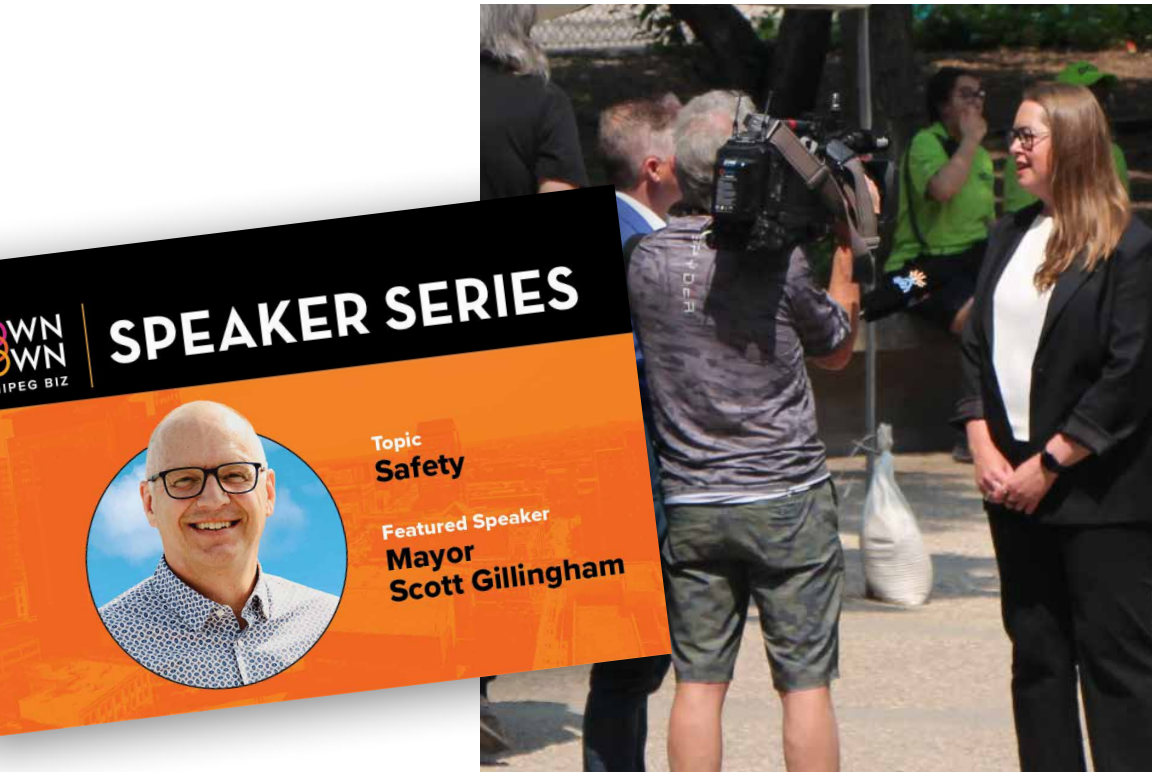
Under direction of the board and created by an Indigenous consultant, the Downtown BIZ has developed an Indigenous Relations Strategy to help guide our work. The strategy will inform our day-to-day work across every department, from our internal policies and procedures to how we show up for the downtown community. The strategy acts as a foundation as we continue on this important journey and implement the recommendations.

In 2023, we celebrated Indigenous culture in meaningful ways:

- Indigenous Gardens & Community Celebration held for the ninth year at Air Canada Park.
- Supported Spirit Horse Therapy to organize three drumming circles for the community at Air Canada Park.
- Partnered with APTN to present weekly Downtown Sounds Concert Series, which included Indigenous performers.
- Featured Indigenous makers and artists offering unique products at the Downtown Winnipeg Farmers' Market.
- Worked with community members from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation and the City of Winnipeg to redevelop the Broadway Fountain to pay tribute to the First Nation where Winnipeg's drinking water comes from. The project was unveiled in June with a community celebration and ceremony.
- Participated in Wa-Say Healing Centre's Survivors Walk on Sept. 30 to honour National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The BIZ office was closed to give as many staff as possible the opportunity to recognize, reflect and participate in ways that were meaningful to them.

Shoal Lake 40 First Nation monument on Broadway.





Mayor, Councillors, City staff, BIZ board directors and staff take a tour on the "Poli Trolley".

Advocate

Advocacy efforts positioned downtown as a priority

Downtown BIZ has always been a voice for the downtown business community and we've advocated for what members want and need to succeed. We know the results of our advocacy efforts take time, and so much of our work happens behind the scenes. A new vision for downtown is needed, and we are working with decision-makers to shift policies and remove barriers to help with this transformation.

What we did:

- Invited the Mayor, Council and key city staff aboard the “Poli Trolley” for a tour of the neighbourhood to show the wins and opportunities for downtown.
- Held the first Speaker Series event to connect members with experts and decision-makers.
- Conducted two member surveys to better understand member priorities and where to focus our advocacy efforts.
- Our CEO spoke in delegation at City Hall three times to address key issues that affect our members.
- Many phone calls, in-person meetings and presentations with municipal and provincial elected officials and public servants.
- First-ever IDA Canada advocacy day on Parliament Hill to ask for federal support for downtowns across Canada.

Key results of our advocacy efforts:

- Downtown listed as one of the five key themes in the City’s Strategic Priorities Action Plan, a roadmap to shape the future of Winnipeg.
- In October, three levels of government came together to mark renewed efforts to work collaboratively, identifying downtown Winnipeg as a priority.
- Sustainable funding secured for Downtown Community Safety Partnership (DCSP).



Influencer Carter Chen guides the Chinatown Dim Sum tour.



Downtown Family Movie Night at Bonnycastle Park.

Promote

We attracted people to the heart of the action

People make a neighbourhood vibrant. They also drive economic activity. Whether it's the people who work downtown daily or a few times a week, visitors who are here to attend a unique event, or those who live in our city's core – attracting people here and giving them a good experience are key.

Events:

- Together, the Downtown Farmers' Market and lunchtime Concert Series attracted **50,000 people**.
- Held for the first time since 2019, **1,000 people** attended Downtown Family Movie Night over two dates.
- Winter Wanderland's fat bike tours and events attracted **over 2,000 people** with many more visiting the ice sculptures before they melted.
- One of three tours offered this year, the Chinatown Dim Sum tour **sold out** every month. **Over 100 people** toured Chinatown and had a dim sum experience led by local influencer Carter Chen.
- Provided **funding for 25 events** through our Host It Downtown grant, attracting over 175,000 people downtown.

Marketing & Communications:

- Generated over **65 positive news stories** about Downtown Winnipeg BIZ's programs and initiatives.
- Social media accounts reached **nearly 62,700 followers combined**.
- Mingle e-newsletter promoted arts, culture, and sporting events to nearly **5,000 subscribers weekly**.
- **24 bi-weekly MEMO e-newsletters** kept members up to date with critical information affecting their business.
- **\$26K** sold in Downtown Winnipeg Gift Cards, encouraging people to spend downtown.

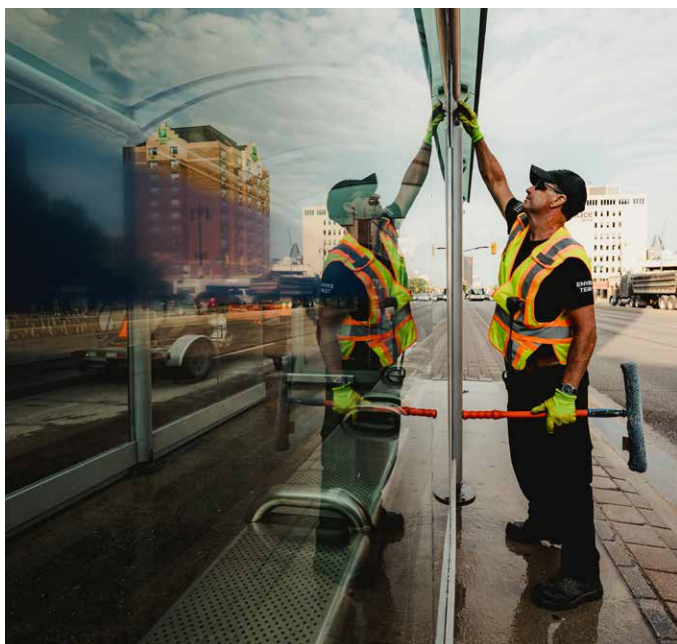
Supporting visitors and residents:

Wearing their iconic orange outfits, our ambassadors are a visible presence and offer on-the-street support and assistance to the public and downtown businesses.

- **257 courtesy walks** provided.
- Greeted and supported attendees at **245 events**.
- **2,625 member business check-ins**.
- Supported communications efforts by visiting and calling members to give them **key news and info** affecting their business.



Artist Ten Yetmen with mural, *Discover Tigers on Another Planet with Rainbow Laser Fun Clouds*.



Clean & Attractive

We took care of our neighbourhood

The Downtown Winnipeg BIZ team sets ambitious goals. Every year, we strive to make downtown the cleanest neighbourhood in our city. While this can be tough to measure, we do know a clean and attractive neighbourhood is one where people want to spend time.

Our teams work 365 days a year to clean and enhance downtown streets, sidewalks, storefronts and public spaces. This year, our team found efficiencies while boosting service levels to meet the growing demand.

Cleaning downtown:

This year, the Enviro Team began removing bulk waste and large items like discarded furniture from back lanes and around dumpsters where these items were accumulating. This work not only helps enhance the image of the neighbourhood but also reduces serious fire hazards.

- **12,904 graffiti tags** removed.
- **5,673 bus shacks** cleaned.
- **5,949 needles** removed.
- **941,300 litres of litter** picked up.
- **2,989 sidewalk blocks** plowed.
- **32,850 biohazards** removed.
- **507 posters** removed.
- **6,910 kilograms of bulk waste** removed.
- **315 downtown community members participated** in Earth Day Cleanup Downtown resulting in 225 bags of litter picked and 24 bags of recyclables collected after the spring melt.*

Enhancing the neighbourhood:

- **90 hanging baskets** installed.
- **134 ground-level flowerpots** planted.
- Approximately **4,640 flowers planted** in over 30 locations.
- **Two new murals** installed in partnership with Synonym Art Consultation.
- **30 print art work installations** covering broken windows and doors.
- **36 new banners** installed in Chinatown.
- **19 bike racks** installed.



Member Value

DCSP made downtown safer

Downtown Winnipeg BIZ is a founding and funding partner of the **Downtown Community Safety Partnership**. Together, we are committed to a welcoming downtown where everyone feels and is safe.

DCSP is on the front lines 24/7, responding to non-emergency situations where people need help and taking a person-centred approach focused on long-term solutions. They are here for everyone in the downtown community – workers, businesses, residents, students, visitors and tourists. Every day DCSP actively engages with people downtown to open lines of communication, build connections and improve awareness.

In 2023, DCSP received sustainable funding agreements from both the Province and the City to help continue its work making downtown Winnipeg safer.

This year, DCSP:

- Performed **123 medical emergency interventions**.
- Provided **2,359 transports** to safe spaces.
- Gave **466 safe walks**.
- Provided support that allowed **29 participants to become permanently housed**.*

*Reporting period: Jan. 1 to Oct. 31, 2023

The DCSP can be reached by phone at **204-947-DCSP (3277)** or download the app.



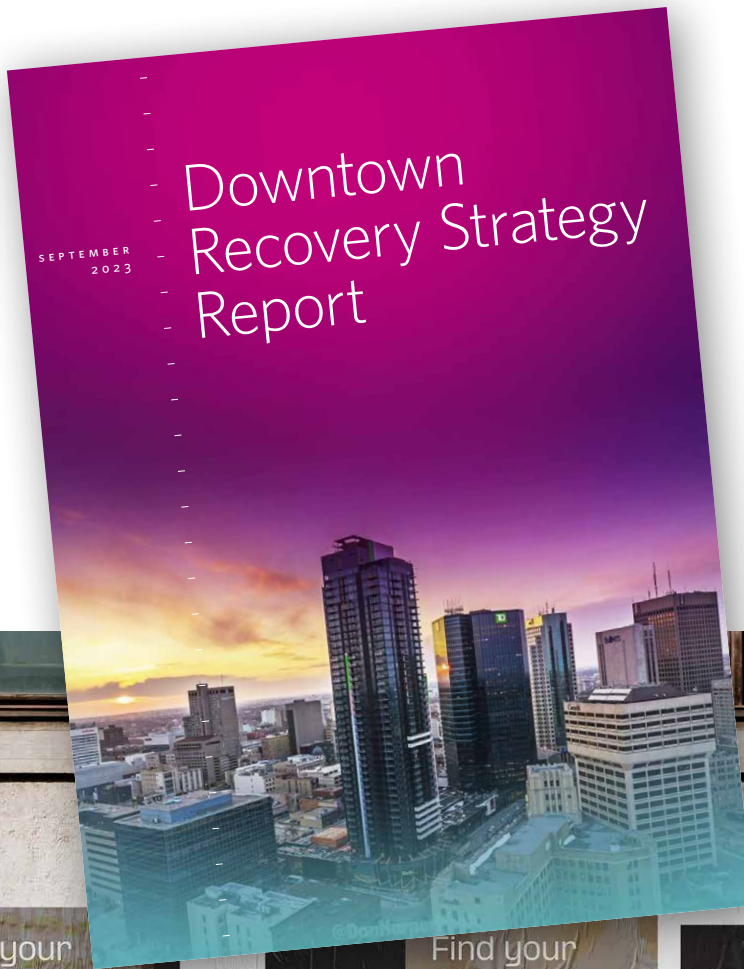
Apple



Android



DCSP
Downtown Community
Safety Partnership



Find your way to live shows.



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DT**

Find your way **Back** Downtown.

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Find your way to unique gifts.



**B
DT**

Find your way **Back** Downtown.

B
DT Back Downtown [#backdowntownwpg](#)

Find your way to winter activities.



**B
DT**

Find your way **Back** Downtown.

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DT Back Downtown [#backdowntownwpg](#)

Clean & Attractive, Promote, Advocate

Downtown Recovery Strategy

The Downtown Recovery Strategy (DRS) is an innovative and intensive three-year action and investment plan that kick-started downtown's recovery post-pandemic.

Highlights from 2023:

- The #BackDowntown advertising campaign invited Winnipeggers to return to downtown and experience their neighbourhood favourites once again.
- The Building Business program granted \$924K to new and existing businesses in the Downtown Winnipeg Business Improvement Zone, supporting 44 businesses including 13 newly opened. This grant helps with exterior and interior improvements, marketing, IT support, legal support, accounting support and rent relief.
- Downtown Spirit Week gave office workers a reason to be downtown with themed days, special offers from restaurants and event pop-ups. More than 65 organizations participated and engaged their staff.
- The DRS team made significant progress on plans for the revitalization of Air Canada Park, a new public plaza on Smith Street and landscaping the community space between Thunderbird House and Amoowigamig (the public washroom at Main Street and Henry Avenue). These exciting public space projects will be completed in 2024.

Thank you to our DRS partners:



For more information on the Downtown Recovery Strategy, visit downtownrecovery.ca



Finance and Governance

The Downtown Winnipeg Business Improvement Zone (BIZ) is governed and administered by a board of individuals who are either a proprietor, director or employee of a member business, plus one member appointed by Council.

The Downtown Winnipeg BIZ is primarily funded by zone levies collected by the City of Winnipeg based on an Annual Rental Value (ARV) of a business operating within the designated zone.

In 2023, the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ worked with an annual operating budget of **over \$6.37 million**. **Over \$3.18 million** of this is funded through the levy and more than **\$2.79 million** is funded through non-levy contributions including sponsorships, grants, and partnerships. Funds are focused on initiatives aimed at providing a downtown that is clean, safe, and well-connected, where businesses can thrive, and everyone feels welcome.

2023 Programs:

\$825,861

Safety & Outreach

\$1,743,563

Clean & Attractive
Public Spaces

\$1,889,137

Policy & Economic
Development

\$714,598

Promotion & Engagement



Winter Wonderland sculpture, *Creatures* by Niels Brouwers.

Message from our CEO



Kate Fenske
CEO

As we look back on the year and imagine the future, one thing we can all agree on is that a healthy, thriving downtown is important. It should matter to everyone – not just those who live, work, and spend time here, but to our entire city and province. It's up to all of us as Winnipeggers and Manitobans to keep pushing for the downtown we want to see. Because when we do that, good things happen.

Knowing we're on the cusp of some huge changes, with the Métis National Heritage Centre, Portage Place and Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgoohn still a few years away, 2024 will be a year of transition for downtown. In anticipation of these key redevelopments, Downtown Winnipeg BIZ will focus on vibrancy in public spaces, supporting businesses, and residential growth.

To help grow the residential population, we'll advocate

for policy changes that increase incentives and remove barriers to encourage more housing downtown. We'll support residential development projects and organize events that engage residents who are already

“ *It's up to all of us as Winnipeggers and Manitobans to keep pushing for the downtown we want to see. Because when we do that, good things happen.* ”

here. We'll also work with our partners to improve safety and create vibrant public spaces. Exciting projects like Railside and Market Lands will break ground in 2024, and once completed will contribute to a lively downtown beyond just office hours.

Over the next year, we will see the completion of projects from the Downtown Recovery Strategy transform some key pockets of our downtown. Thanks to the City of Winnipeg's investment, a revitalized Air Canada Park will open in the spring, a new outdoor community space linking Thunderbird House and Amoogiwamig on Main Street will take shape and the expanded public plaza on Smith Street will provide a new space for community groups to offer programming and bring more people downtown.

We will continue to work hard to provide value to our BIZ members. We are here to support every business downtown, from the neighbourhood coffee shop to the office towers. We are proud to work with members from every sector and size.

Looking ahead, one of the things I'm most excited about is implementing recommendations from our new Indigenous Relations Strategy. We are committed to doing our part as an ally and a leader, turning reconciliation into action.

In 2023, I hit the five-year mark with Downtown Winnipeg BIZ. It's been a wild ride but I couldn't have done it without the support of our incredible team, both our staff and Board of Directors. Thank you for your dedication to this neighbourhood and for approaching your work with passion and joy.

To our BIZ members, thank you! Despite challenges, your commitment to downtown is unwavering. Let's continue to work together and take steps to show pride in our neighborhood. Share local events with your networks, tidy up your area, or arrange a community clean-up. Reach out if you need ideas on how you can help.

Right now, it's clear we're beginning a transformation. Our relationships with key decision-makers at the federal, provincial and municipal level are strong and genuine and I'm excited for the opportunities for collaboration ahead of us. BIZ members, partners and stakeholders, social agencies and governments – let's make bold moves together to realize a new vision for downtown.



Kate Fenske
Chief Executive Officer



Mashkiki Gitigaan (Medicine Garden) by Kristin Flattery at 164 Fort St..



The Downtown Winnipeg BIZ is grateful to our sponsors, supporters, volunteers, and stakeholders who support the vision that downtown matters for the future of all Winnipeggers.

The success of our programs in 2023 would not have been possible this year without the generous support of our sponsors including APTN, Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries, Manitoba Public Insurance, RBC Convention Centre, Recycle Everywhere, and the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba. We also thank the City of Winnipeg, the Manitoba government and the Government of Canada for their support of downtown. A special thank you to our invaluable partners at the City who help us do what we do, including the Mayor's office; Active Transportation;

Graffiti Control; Planning, Property and Development; Public Works; Special Events; Winnipeg Parking Authority and Winnipeg Transit.

Finally, we recognize and appreciate the hard work and dedication of the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ team and Board of Directors. Your support and enthusiasm for the greater good is key to building a downtown all Winnipeggers can be proud of.

Thank you for your support and collaboration. We look forward to continuing this important work together.



This publication is available in alternate formats upon request. For more information, contact:
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