



DOWNTOWN SNAPSHOT is an annual report by the **Downtown Winnipeg Business Improvement Zone** designed to give a high-level overview of key data and information about the neighbourhood. The report highlights downtown developments over the year, and aims to build understanding of the current economic landscape in the zone.



Our downtown matters

It's the heart of our city, and in 2023 Winnipeggers, visitors, business owners, governments and investors showed they recognize **downtown Winnipeg is important**. The unique experiences, the renewed interest and confidence, and the exciting announcements for downtown are signs of change and promising indications of good things to come.

We're seeing **social and economic reconciliation** in action. We're seeing **success stories**. We're seeing **more people setting foot, planting seeds and growing roots downtown**. Still, we know we can't take our foot off the gas – we need to keep this momentum going, and to see promises kept and commitments honoured. As we begin a new year of our own commitment to making downtown vibrant, inclusive and a great place to work, live, shop and explore – and making sure people know it – we look back at what 2023 brought to our downtown.



NEW BUSINESSES

27 new businesses opened in the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ in 2023

A key focus for the Downtown BIZ is to encourage business owners to see the value in being downtown. While the dramatic rate of business closures we saw during the peak of the pandemic has slowed, in 2023, more businesses downtown closed their doors than popped up.

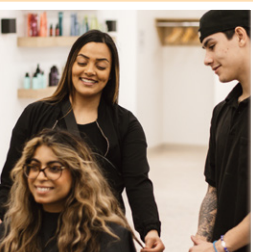
In 2023, 10 more businesses closed than opened – but that’s more promising than in 2022 (26 more closed than opened) and 2021 (28 more closed). We are also encouraged to see that in Q4, 2023 we had an equal amount of businesses open and close – the first neutral quarter for business open/closes since before the pandemic.

Of the 27 new businesses downtown welcomed this year:

3/4 were retail or drinking/dining establishments (such as coffee shops and restaurants)

2/5 were street-facing, ground-level businesses. Of course, we welcome all businesses in downtown Winnipeg, but attracting more streetfront businesses in prime locations is a goal, as our ground floor vacancy rate sits at just over 30%.

Success Stories



Hair Today

Aveda Institute and Academy Salon opened its doors, bringing over 2000 staff, students and customers downtown every month.



A Brew for You

Indulge Café and Bakery, Lavanda Café and Empty Cup Collective all settled in to welcome downtown residents, workers and visitors to grab their favourite brew or a treat.

Who's who?

Most downtown businesses operating at the end of 2023 fell into five general sector categories, each representing their share of space.



19%

Accommodation & Food Services

Hotels, restaurants, coffee shops, bars



13%

Retail trade

Clothing, convenience, grocery, electronics, furniture, books, sporting goods, and other general merchandise retailers



16%

Other services

Parking lots, vehicle and appliance repair shops, beauty services (such as hair and nail salons), etc.

(Does not include public administration)



16%

Professional, scientific, and technical services

Law offices, accountants, architecture and engineering firms, advertising and public relations firms, IT companies, management consultants, etc.



9%

Finance & Insurance

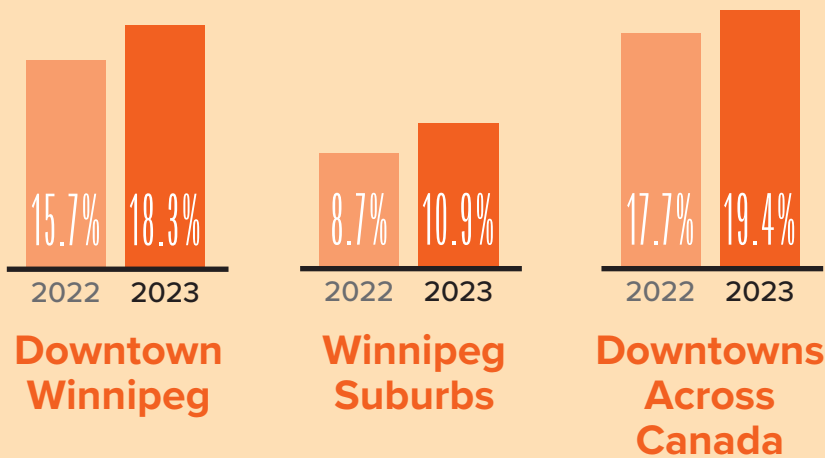
Banks, currency exchange offices, loan offices, insurance providers, insurance brokerages, etc.

OFFICE SPACE

Downtown followed the national trend of slowly rising office vacancies

Full buildings and offices help make downtown vibrant and economically successful. While Winnipeg's downtown office space vacancy rate is experiencing a slow climb, our downtown vacancy was below the national average throughout 2023.

— Office Space Vacancy Rates —



Source: CBRE

Addressing downtown vacancy

We're encouraged by a number of creative adaptive reuse projects that will curb office vacancy downtown, while also addressing a critical need for housing:

35 RESIDENTIAL UNITS are being developed in former office spaces at 175 Carlton St., occupying floors 2-6 and keeping the ground floor businesses open.

Investment: \$4.5 million

148 APARTMENTS are expected to be built in the former commercial Keewayden Block at 138 Portage Ave. East.

Investment: \$36 million

Property tax rebates from the City of Winnipeg: \$1.4 million (over 10 years)

140 HOTEL ROOMS are being added with the conversion of the former Canada Revenue Agency building at 325 Broadway into Western Canada's first Hyatt Centric boutique hotel – creating 70 hotel jobs and 200+ construction jobs.

Investment: \$38.6 million

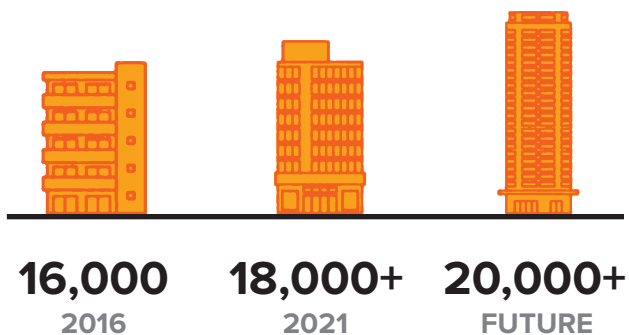


RESIDENTIAL

More people are moving downtown, with more places to live

More than 18,000 people live downtown with hundreds more moving here every year. More people means a safer, more vibrant neighbourhood, plus an enhanced customer base for downtown businesses. The estimated number of Winnipeggers living downtown is anticipated to increase by more than 2,000 in the next two years as more residential units are built.

DOWNTOWN DWELLERS



Source: Stats Canada



twitter.com/300MainWinnipeg/status/1552323716738351104

In 2023, the 400 new apartment units at 300 Main – Winnipeg’s tallest building at 40 storeys – started welcoming its first tenants with more residents to call it home in 2024. We’re encouraged by the continued growth in residential development downtown with hundreds more units expected to be added this year.

Who lives downtown?

The diversity of Winnipeg’s downtown is undoubtedly one of its strengths. When it comes to downtown dwellers:

- **30% are between the ages of 20-24**
- **35 nationalities are represented**, with nearly 120 different ethnic/cultural origins
- **16% are Indigenous**
- **36% are immigrants/newcomers to Canada**

Source: Stats Canada



VISITATION

Events and new attractions draw more visitors downtown

Downtown Winnipeg isn't just a great place to live and work, it's also a neighbourhood with a lot to offer visitors – whether they're Winnipeggers popping in for a few hours to attend a game, concert or arts event or enjoy a meal or beverage, or choosing downtown as a home base for a vacation (or staycation!) from elsewhere in Manitoba, Canada or beyond.

In 2023 vs. 2022:

- **General visitation increased 9.4%**
- **Paid on-street parking hours increased by 25%**
- **Hotel bookings more than doubled, increased by 106%** (with approximately 59,400 nights booked)

Statistics courtesy of Envionics Analytics (visitation), Winnipeg Parking Authority (paid parking hours), Tourism Winnipeg (events and hotel bookings), RBC Convention Centre and The Forks.

Around downtown:

- **41 large events were hosted** (either with direct or indirect involvement from Tourism Winnipeg), **with an estimated economic impact of \$60 million**
- **The RBC Convention Centre had approximately 404,600 guests** (a 7% increase from 2022) **across 550 events** (a 33% increase)
- **The Forks welcomed 3.8 million visitors, a 16% increase** from 2022



Success Story

New team scores thousands of downtown visitors

Winnipeg's newest professional sports team swished into downtown Winnipeg in late May 2023, drawing record-breaking crowds. Joining the Canadian Elite Basketball League (CEBL) for their inaugural season, **the Winnipeg Sea Bears:**

- set multiple attendance records, **attracting 65,609 people downtown** over 10 home games and one playoff game at the Canada Life Centre.
- hosted a series of free youth summer camp sessions in partnership with Manitoba Blue Cross.
- were named CEBL Franchise of the Year.

The Winnipeg Sea Bears return to the Canada Life Centre this May 2024, with ten home games downtown this summer.



VISITATION

Downtown draws

Looking for something to do downtown?



There are so many reasons to visit and there's something for everyone. Winnipeg's downtown is home to world-class performing arts centres including the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Prairie Theatre Exchange and Manitoba Theatre for Young People. Downtown is where you'll find exciting festivals and events that bring people together to dance, celebrate and party such as Nuit Blanche, Pride Winnipeg Festival and Indigenous Day Live. While arts and culture are a big draw

downtown, the entertainment doesn't stop there. Downtown is home to professional sporting events like the Winnipeg Jets, Manitoba Moose, Winnipeg Sea Bears and Goldeyes baseball. You'll also find museums and galleries including the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, WAG-Qaumajuq and the Manitoba Children's Museum. These attractions and events, along with concerts, shows and conferences attracted thousands of people – especially in the evenings and on weekends – to venues throughout downtown in 2023.

Host It Downtown

Street parties, cookoffs, concerts, festivals – we want it all downtown! Downtown Winnipeg BIZ relaunched our popular grant program in the spring of 2023 to attract events and activity to the city's core, offering \$150,000 in funding to non-profits, businesses and individual event organizers choosing to host a public event downtown.

- 25 event organizers took advantage of Host It Downtown in 2023, with grants of up to \$16,000 to help host their event
- The grant program is back for 2024 with three intake windows, for spring, summer or fall/winter events
- Non-profits and businesses (for small, medium or large events) and individuals (for small events) can apply



A YEAR OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

\$200+ million in funding announcements in 2023 show that downtown truly matters

As downtown Winnipeg continues to bounce back from the pandemic, investors and all levels of government showed they believe in our downtown through millions of dollars in funding announcements for downtown development.

Highlights include:

\$122*_M

FROM: the federal **Housing Accelerator Fund**

FOR: the City of Winnipeg will use to fund initiatives including a city concierge for affordable housing, and incentive programs promoting multi-family housing downtown

**not all \$122 million will be allocated to downtown*

\$15.6_M

FROM: the **Government of Canada** and **Province of Manitoba**

FOR: helping to build a seven-storey apartment at 380 Young Street, to be owned and operated by Opaskwayak Cree Nation (OCN)

\$10_M

FROM: the **Province of Manitoba**

FOR: addressing safety in downtown **Winnipeg**, which will cover costs of the improved collaboration between Winnipeg Police Service and Downtown Community Safety Partnership, the hiring of 24 police officers, a centralized downtown community safety office, an expanded CCTV network, and enhanced lighting networks

\$6.11_M

FROM: the **Government of Canada**, **Province of Manitoba**, and **City of Winnipeg** through the **Rapid Housing Initiative**

FOR: creating 11 units of transitional housing for women and children fleeing gender-based violence

\$1_M

FROM: the **Province of Manitoba**

FOR: helping support Winnipeg's bid to host the 2025 Canadian Elite Basketball League championship in 2025, including making space improvements in Canada Life Centre

\$5.4_M

FROM: the **Government of Canada** through the **Natural Infrastructure Fund** and the **City of Winnipeg**

FOR: revitalizing the Broadway Corridor, highlighted by a tree planting campaign

\$5.2_M

FROM: the **Province of Manitoba** through the **Manitoba Capital Works Incentive Program**

FOR: assisting with the conversion of the former Canada Revenue Agency at 325 Broadway to the Hyatt Centric Hotel



A YEAR OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

Historic partnerships breathe new life into old buildings

A NEW COLLABORATION

2023 brought the historic announcement of the collaboration between the Southern Chiefs Organization and True North Real Estate Development to work together on the redevelopment of the former Hudson's Bay Building and Portage Place Shopping Centre. The joint projects, with a combined investment of \$850 million, are seen as a significant step towards economic and social reconciliation with the city's Indigenous community and will also provide long-term employment opportunities during the construction phase and beyond.

The revitalization of the Hudson's Bay Building – titled Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgoohn ("It is visible") – is anticipated to add nearly 300 housing units for families, students and First Nation Elders. The building will combine heritage preservation and environmental sustainability, and will feature a main-floor public space with restaurants, a health and healing centre embracing both western and traditional practices, a rooftop garden and a childcare centre.

The Portage Place redevelopment is estimated to include approximately 257,000 square feet of multi-family, affordable, and student housing, along with a health campus, neighbourhood and green spaces, neighbourhood services and services to relieve food insecurity in downtown.

INDIGENOUS-FOCUSED INITIATIVES

Several other Indigenous-focused initiatives were completed or began in 2023, including:

- the Pitikwé skate park in Portage Place
- the construction of the apartment owned and operated by Opaskwayak Cree Nation at 380 Young St.
- multiple projects in partnership with the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ, including the anticipated construction of the Main and Henry Community Park, the redevelopment of Air Canada Park, the tribute to Shoal Lake 40 First Nation, and the annual planting of the Indigenous Gardens.

COMMITTED TO DOWNTOWN

2023 also saw the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) further entrench itself as a critical downtown property owner, developer and stakeholder. In addition to its commitment to turning the former Bank of Montreal building into the Métis National Heritage Centre, the MMF acquired 200 Main St. and



the adjacent 165 Fort St. property to house its operational departments and affiliates, as well as a culturally focused childcare centre. Nearly three quarters of the combined \$122.5 million in confirmed and planned MMF investments announced since 2019 are dedicated specifically for downtown Winnipeg.

Acquiring these properties not only positions MMF to continue playing a critical role in the future of downtown Winnipeg, but also puts land back in the hands of Indigenous nations, representing an integral step towards economic and social reconciliation.



LOOKING AHEAD

2024 brings progress and promise

There's still work to be done, but there's a lot to look forward to downtown! Construction is underway or starting soon on many of the projects mentioned here. Several major initiatives are also expected to ramp up or wrap up in 2024, including:

MARKET LANDS

New buildings at the former Public Safety Building site at Princess St. and William Ave., to include about 100 units of mixed income housing and 20,000 square feet of creative space for four local arts organizations, plus public spaces and plazas.

WAWANESA HEADQUARTERS

A 21-storey tower on the corner of Carlton Street and Graham Avenue, built to house the North American headquarters of Wawanesa including 1,300 of the insurance company's staff who moved in early this year; the downtown SkyWalk has also been extended.

RAILSIDE AT THE FORKS

Work has been completed in preparation for breaking ground on Phase 1 of construction in 2024, including installation of underground and City services, an RFP process for public art, and the creation of a centralized info hub at railsideattheforks.com. Railside will be more of The Forks – a mixed-use neighbourhood including high-quality public spaces, alleyways, and courtyards along with commercial, retail, and services on the ground level and about 1,200 rental and condo units for people and families to be able to call The Forks – and downtown – home.

CENTREPLAN 2050

The City of Winnipeg's 30-year vision for a revitalized downtown, which includes expanding bike routes along several downtown streets and redeveloping Graham Avenue, building more housing (250 new units per year until 2030 and then 500 per year until 2050) and adding parks and green spaces.

“Downtown Winnipeg is the heart and economic engine of the city. We're investing in the future of our downtown - it's a key theme in our Strategic Priorities Action Plan and the focus of Centre Plan 2050. We're excited to see investments in major downtown development projects such as Wehwehneh Bahgahkinagohn, Portage Place redevelopment, Railside At The Forks, and Market Lands. These initiatives will transform our city's core into a more vibrant neighbourhood where it's easier to build, live, and visit downtown Winnipeg.”

– Winnipeg Mayor
Scott Gillingham



“Winnipeg's downtown is Manitoba's downtown – that means we're all invested in a growing, prosperous downtown core that offers economic opportunities, vibrant arts and culture, delicious restaurants and exciting sports and entertainment. Our government believes every Manitoban should be proud to show off downtown, whether it be to out-of-town friends or an important investor. We're ready to partner with the business community to make that happen.”

– Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew



Our downtown is important.

It has a lot to offer – and a lot of promise. People who live, work, visit, invest and open businesses in downtown Winnipeg have shown their confidence in our city's core and its potential.

Downtown saw many exciting enhancements and announcements in 2023. While we're encouraged by the renewed confidence in downtown, we're ready to see bold moves and decisive action to help our downtown rebound faster. We're committed to working with all levels of government and our partners to make downtown Winnipeg a strong economic driver and neighbourhood that all Manitobans can be proud of. To everyone reading this, we hope you'll join us in helping keep the momentum going.



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#FindItDowntown

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

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