

## Executive Summary

The following is not so much a summary of the report's findings and recommendations -- it is difficult to do that for a 80+-page document in such a short space -- but rather, an extraction of some of the larger themes and fresher ideas, for the purposes of provoking thought and generating excitement for the phases that lie ahead.

### Exchange District

#### **Vision**

By day, the Downtown office workers near Portage & Main discover compelling lunchtime alternatives that cannot be found elsewhere, and then they stay after work for food and drink at the "**casual-chic**" restaurants/bars.

With its artsy reputation, historic architecture and distinctive atmosphere, Winnipeg's "Warehouse District" offers some of the "**cool factor**" to which today's young professionals typically gravitate, for dining/nightlife as well as for shopping.

#### **Tools**

- Property owners "buying in" to this vision
- Incentive packages in select cases (e.g. "tenant improvement" assistance, below-market rents offered by quasi-public landlords/sub-leasees, etc.)
- Retail recruiter role for the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ

#### **Non-Retail Strategies**

- "Clean and safe"
- Appropriate branding and marketing
- "Place-making" strategies

- In deciding to eat lunch in the Exchange District, not only would Portage & Main office workers have to bypass alternatives like Winnipeg Square, but also, they would have to leave the Walkway system and brave the elements. They might, however, be lured to the Exchange if it offered especially compelling lunchtime alternatives that could not be found elsewhere.

For example, the last half-decade has seen the rapid rise of so-called "**fast-casual**" food purveyors that, while utilizing a quick-service format, offer

healthier and higher-quality ingredients, often in a more stylish setting, at a slightly more expensive price-point. Possible candidates include fast-expanding brands based in Canada and the U.S.



**Lettuce Eatery** (left), recently re-branded as **Freshii**, is a fast-growing, fast-casual concept born on the streets of Toronto but expanding across North America. And its founder and CEO, Matthew Corrin, is a Winnipeg native...

- Given its proximity to Portage & Main, the Exchange District is also an appropriate location for more casual yet still stylish eating and drinking establishments geared towards the after-work/"Happy Hour" crowd. At present, the options are limited, with many driving to Earls further south on Main Street. More such alternatives within walking distance of the office could prove compelling.

Speaking more generally, the Exchange District should at this point be much further along in its evolution as a dining and entertainment destination. With its artsy reputation, historic architecture and distinctive atmosphere, it offers some of that "cool factor" to which today's young urban professionals typically gravitate. And yet, the Exchange is far from achieving "critical mass" in this respect, and can still be quite sleepy in the evenings.

- There are a number of reasons why "**casual-chic**" concepts like Earls have been so successful, but two in particular bear mentioning here. One, they embrace a stylish, relentlessly contemporary aesthetic that appeals to a generation raised on the mainstreaming of high design. And two, in their décor, vibe and cuisine, they tap the aspiration of their customers, especially the ones in smaller metros like Winnipeg, to feel young, hip and modern.



**Cactus Club Café** (left) is a casual-chic restaurant/bar concept from British Columbia that has yet to establish a presence in the Winnipeg market.

With noted exceptions, few of the offerings in Winnipeg's other nightlife districts (e.g. Corydon, Osborne) do that: they cater for the most part to what Winnipeggers already know. On the other hand, places like Earls and Moxie's are appealing to what they *aspire to be*, and while one can justifiably criticize these concepts on various grounds, they deserve credit for having spotted and so successfully mined a real but under-served sensibility in the marketplace.

Even if the larger "casual-chic" brands were not interested in the opportunity, they have provided a clearly successful and relatively straight-forward model that local/independent operators can emulate and adapt. Indeed, Winnipeg has no shortage of possible candidates, restaurateurs and nightlife impresarios who have already succeeded with very similar concepts elsewhere in the city. And such smaller, homegrown entrepreneurs are, for a variety of reasons, more likely to be flexible in their site locations and willing to consider an opportunity that does not meet a large chain's exacting requirements.



An example of a local entrepreneur who understands the casual-chic market is **Lyle Portz**, owner of Confusion Corner Bar & Grill (left), who might be approached about opening a similar concept in the Exchange District.

- Of course, this is a long way from the Exchange District as the artistic frontier, and many of the earlier pioneers and its creative types are likely to abhor this vision of the Exchange as a "yuppie" playground.

To better understand these tensions and what they mean for retail, it is necessary to introduce the field of "**psycho-graphics**". Consumers today are defined not only by quantitative, demographic data -- income levels, for example -- but also, by qualitative, "psycho-graphic" characteristics, by lifestyle, aspiration, sensibility, etc. And the latter plays just as important of a role in determining where they shop, eat, drink, etc.

For example, those who head to Earls for "Happy Hour" and those who imbibe at The King's Head might very well come from the same socio-economic strata -- they might even both be employed in "creative-class" occupations -- but their contrasting sensibilities drive them to fundamentally different environments. Indeed, many at The King's Head have such disdain for Earls that they would "not be caught dead" there.

- The King's Head is one of a number of businesses in the Exchange District that cater to the creative types and alternative thinkers (or "**hipsters**") who initially re-discovered and re-pioneered the neighborhood when it was still neglected and cheap. Others include Cinematheque, Royal Albert Arms, Artists Emporium, Antiques & Funk, Ragpickers Anti-Fashion Emporium and Books, Red River Books, Into The Music, Mondragon Bookstore and Coffeehouse, The Underground Café and The Fyxx Espresso Bar.

(For a more detailed description of what a hipster is, please see p. 36).

- Of course, the Exchange District is perceived to be transitioning. Rent increases are reportedly driving some artists to cheaper space on North Main and in North Point Douglas, and there is reason to believe that, in the longer term, the hipster sub-market might start to gravitate not so much north -- where development pressures will be increasingly felt -- but west, towards the University of Winnipeg and into the West End.

- This transition is also heralded by the emergence of a cluster of up-market boutiques that cater largely to young, relatively well-paid professionals with artsy, funky tastes, which signals the rise of another psycho-graphic, the "**yup-ster**", related to but subtly different from the hipster.

The yup-ster, representing a hybrid of "yuppie" and "hipster", can be defined as a mainstream young professional who earns a decent salary and prefers to live in a relatively established, comfortable and affluent part of town, but who has integrated creative and alternative sensibilities into her lifestyle and consumer preferences.

(For a more detailed description of what a yup-ster is, please see p. 43).

For any student of modern urban development, the arrival of yup-sters in the Exchange District comes as no surprise. In cities across North America, those belonging to this psycho-graphic have gravitated to neighborhoods that were initially re-discovered and revitalized by artists, drawn inexorably to the creative vibe there, partly because such areas reflect their own aspirations, how they want to see themselves and be seen by others.

- Many typical yup-ster concepts might not currently exist in the Winnipeg market, and some might feel that they are meant only for more hip, cosmopolitan cities like Toronto or Calgary. However, like any large city, Winnipeg has its yup-sters, along with many more who will only realize that they share such tastes and proclivities if when they are given the choice.



**Purr Clothing** (left) is a yup-ster chain-let that started in Calgary, with stores on 17th Avenue and in Kensington, and has recently established a presence in Vancouver, with a new location in South Granville. With its willingness to expand beyond its home market, Purr might be worth approaching for the Exchange.

- Going forward, the Exchange District's emerging status as a yup-ster shopping *destination*, capable of drawing from beyond just the immediate vicinity, will probably fuel higher rents and greater selectiveness on the part of landlords, ultimately displacing edgier hipster-oriented businesses and reinforcing perceptions (and fears) of an area in transition.

And there is a danger to this. The most stable urban shopping precincts are likely to be the ones with a diverse mix of drivers and customers, especially in a suburban-oriented city like Winnipeg. Furthermore, hipster-oriented concepts help such a district's brand identity, inasmuch as yup-sters tend to look more favorably on neighborhoods with some still-remaining artistic and creative grit.

For this reason, it might make sense to consider some sort of financial assistance for existing and prospective hipster-oriented operators and anchors (e.g. Plug-In Institute), say, a ground-floor lease, entered into by a quasi-public or non-profit entity, where the space is reserved for them. Of course, designing appropriate

selection criteria would be a complex endeavour, but it would also provide Winnipeg with an opportunity to assert itself as a "cutting-edge" leader in an area with direct relevance to many neighborhoods across Canada and beyond.

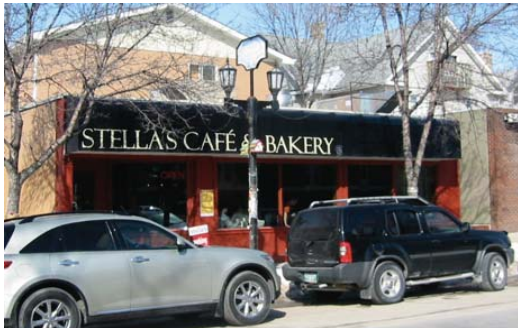


"Hipster" entrepreneurs tend to stay local, meaning that the prime targets are likely to be ones already established elsewhere in Winnipeg, like Andee Penner (left), owner of the **Sew Dandee** boutique in Osborne Village.

- Finally, the decision by Birks, the storied Canadian jeweller, to move its one Winnipeg-area location from Polo Park to Main Street, together with the presence of U.N. Luggage as well as Hy's Steakhouse, Tre Visi and Bailey's, suggests the possibility of growing a small cluster of more **traditional high-end retailers** in the Exchange District. However, for a variety of reasons, it makes sense to tread cautiously.

## The Waterfront

- In addition to the Exchange District proper, the new mixed-use developments on Waterfront Drive will ultimately contain some 35,500 sq.ft. of commercial space. It will, however, prove very difficult to fill these bays with shops, at least in the short term. Rather than trying to force something that would not happen on its own, why not expend precious subsidy dollars further west, where a business district is already gathering momentum?
- If Waterfront Drive makes sense for anything, it would probably be sit-down eateries -- one or maybe two -- focused on breakfast, brunch and lunch. Other possibilities include concepts that have relocated from elsewhere and already have an established customer base (e.g. beauty salon, like lashlove), that derive a large share of their revenue from non-retail sources (e.g. wholesale business, like Zcafe Espresso Boutique), or that can trade on the park-land/waterfront setting (e.g. day spa). Otherwise, such spaces probably make the most sense for professional office uses (e.g. psychotherapists).



**Stella's Café & Bakery** is the sort of breakfast/brunch/lunch-focused concept that would be appropriate for the Waterfront, and has a track record of taking pioneering locations, like this one on Sherbrook Street (left).

## Portage Avenue

### **Vision**

Portage Avenue features "**crossover**" retail brands, that is, ones that draw across socio-economic and cultural lines, that are accepted and patronized by the comfortable classes yet at the same time offer merchandise that is appealing, prices that are accessible and an ambiance that is welcoming to lower-income households.

This includes not just popular value-oriented concepts, but also, so-called "**cheap-chic**" fashion purveyors specializing in inexpensively-priced "of-the-moment" looks, geared towards the trade area's high percentages of twenty-somethings.

Meanwhile, Portage Avenue caters to its evening traffic (e.g. MTS Centre) with well-known food and drink brands that target a middle-market clientele, with broadly popular concepts, unpretentious interiors and moderate price points.

Portage Avenue also welcomes Winnipeg's first integrated "**urban entertainment centre**", a high-octane mix of entertainment, dining and retail catering to the crowds at the MTS Centre, the out-of-towners at the Winnipeg Convention Centre, and locals looking for a "one-stop shop" for their evening fun.

### **Tools**

- Property owners "buying in" to this vision
- Incentive packages in select cases (e.g. tenant improvement assistance, "walk clauses" tied to sales performance, etc.)
- Landlord-developer agreement for "urban entertainment centre" site, including development guidelines (e.g. pedestrian orientation, on-site parking, etc.)
- Retail recruiter role for the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ

### **Non-Retail Strategies**

- "Clean and safe"
- Improving demographics and increasing densities within the larger residential trade area

- Like the Exchange District, Portage Avenue has a destination appeal, capable of luring Winnipeggers from beyond the immediate neighborhood. However, as two of its chief draws are a branded department store and a traditional chain-

filled enclosed mall, it is meant to focus not on a specialty niche (like hipsters/yup-sters), but rather, on what one might call "**commodity**" retail.

A commodity is defined for the purposes of this discussion as a brand that one can find in virtually every major retail sub-market in a given metropolitan area. Take, for instance, the Peoples Jewellers chain: in the Winnipeg market, it operates stores at Polo Park, St. Vital Centre, Kildonan Place and Garden City. Or Winners, with locations in the shopping districts near those same four centres.

With a commodity, because one store within the chain is no different from another, consumers will typically shop the location that is most convenient to them. They will not drive across town -- or, more importantly, for our purposes, to Downtown -- for, say, a Peoples Jewellers or a Winners -- if they can find the same merchandise, at the same price, at/near their local mall.

The "trade area" for such brands, then, can be defined as that area within which Downtown would be the *most* convenient option. In order to delineate its boundaries, one must first map and assess the primary commodity-focused competitors, and then determine at what point it would be more convenient for residents to head inward to Downtown, rather than outward to one of them.

- The trade area for Portage Avenue numbers roughly 97,845 people: as a rule-of-thumb, the traditional, department store-anchored, comparison goods-focused enclosed mall requires a trade area of 200,000 to 250,000 persons: Downtown Winnipeg's has less than half of that.

Furthermore, the median household income can be estimated to fall somewhere in the mid-to-high \$20,000's. This falls far below the medians for the five-kilometre rings surrounding each of Winnipeg's five other major shopping districts, and for the city as a whole (\$43,383).

This helps to explain why Portage Avenue attracts interest from the kinds of retailers that it does: commodity brands have a very clear understanding of what they require in a trade area, and in this case, most of them see one that does not even come close to reaching their necessary population and income thresholds.

Furthermore, given its trade area's unfavourable comparison with the city's other major shopping districts and distance from the city's high-growth areas, Portage Avenue is not the obvious choice for commodity brands looking to open their first or only Winnipeg-area store.

- Of course, the Portage Avenue sub-district boasts certain traffic generators that its suburban competitors lack, but none of these -- the moderately-paid office workers, the budget-conscious University of Winnipeg students, the library-goers and the conventioners -- radically changes its retail prospects.

- Given this demographic profile, its proximity to Polo Park and its existing configuration one struggles to understand how, in the near term, Portage Place's draw and mix could be *fundamentally* and *dramatically* transformed from what it is today.

- Deep-discount brands are even less surprising on Portage Avenue itself because, in addition to the market realities, leasing efforts are challenged by odd configurations in heritage buildings, direct exposure to the street traffic and isolation from the all-important walkway system, resulting in cheap rents in the low- to mid-teens. And prospects are still fewer as one moves further east, away from the mall, and outdoor footfall drops further.

- However, as Winnipeg's highest-profile street, Portage Avenue is the city's "face" to the world and Downtown's face to the city, and as such, it plays a critical role in shaping perceptions of the city among visitors and of Downtown among Winnipeggers. And while brands like The Bargain! Shop and The Cash Store might be appropriate for the market, they do not paint an especially flattering portrait.

- In order to improve such prospects, it is first necessary to look at the problem from a higher altitude. If the commodity-focused shopping district draws residents for whom it is the *most* convenient option, part of the solution is to redouble efforts to improve the demographics of and increase the densities in the close-in neighborhoods surrounding Downtown.

Of course, the three levels of government have played a catalytic role in the creation of a new residential quarter on Waterfront Drive, but it is important to keep in mind that, with only 180 units, this represents just a tiny fraction of what commodity brands require. Indeed, a fully built-out South Point Douglas would have a much greater impact in this regard.

Another model is to be found in the existing close-in neighborhoods, where, largely as a result of the public and non-profit sector's reinvestment in the housing stock, better-off households started to move to the West Broadway area in the late '90's. They have continued to do so in the first half of the '00's, and evidence also suggests that a similar trend might be emerging in other nearby,

low-income precincts, like Spence and Lord Selkirk Park. From the admittedly narrow perspective of commodity retail, such in-migration should be strongly encouraged.

- Also, it is worth noting that prominent downtown streets do not necessarily lack a deep-discount component, but the difference on say, Downtown Toronto's Yonge Street, is that while there is (and has been, historically) no shortage of such businesses, they are now *diluted* by a still larger number of mid-market concepts as well as certain head-turning, buzz-generating brands and developments, and therefore no longer dominate the experience or shape perceptions to the same degree.

- So, how can this dilution be achieved? One possibility is suggested by the mainstream embrace of value retail, a cultural trend that has not slowed since the big boxes and power centres first started to multiply across Canada in the 1990's. Everyone shops discount, and no one is ashamed to have done so; if anything, consumers are more likely to brag about the bargains that they unearthed there.

Of course, while everyone shops discount, only those with low incomes are thought to shop *deep* discount, and the presence of such stores therefore tends to have a stigmatizing effect, suggesting an impoverished and potentially dangerous part of town that is best avoided. And when they fill a prominent downtown street, out-of-towners will often extend that characterization to an entire city.

The focus for recruitment, then, should be on discount brands with "**crossover**" **appeal**, ones that cut across socio-economic and cultural lines, that are accepted and patronized by the comfortable classes yet at the same time offer merchandise that is appealing, prices that are accessible and an ambiance that is welcoming to lower-income households.

Such brands might not be especially glamorous or offer much sizzle, nor are they capable of drawing suburbanites past more conveniently-located shopping districts closer to their homes, but they will be responding to market realities in a way that supports, or at least does not detract from, the image of Portage Avenue, Downtown and the city more generally.

- Other possibilities for crossover retail include the so-called "**cheap chic**" purveyors that specialize in "fast" or "disposable" fashions, that is, of-the-moment looks and runway knock-offs that are priced inexpensively, thus allowing

the shopper to indulge in guilt-free buying and return to the store for more once current trends fade and new ones take their place.



**Forever XXI** is a fast-growing, U.S.-based purveyor of cheap-chic fashions that has started a push into Canada, including a hugely successful location at the high-visibility intersection of Yonge and Dundas (left).

- Many of these discount and cheap-chic concepts -- and most of the ones that could act as anchors -- require larger floor-plates, and these are not easy to find on Portage Avenue. Possibilities include the A&B Sound Building (although it is challenged by its two-level layout and lack of on-site parking), and the United Army Surplus property.

- Assuming that suitably-sized spaces can be identified and secured, these brands are likely to require incentive packages -- including, for example, high levels of build-out assistance, "walk clauses" tied to sales performance, etc. -- in order to mitigate the risk that they would associate with the Portage Avenue opportunity.

This responsibility necessarily falls to the public sector. Developers of large suburban shopping centres routinely "buy" their anchors because they know that such "loss leaders" will drive higher rents in the remaining space. But in downtown settings, where landlords typically do not control multiple buildings, there is no such incentive (nor necessarily the financial wherewithal).

Of course, there is always the possibility that the effort will not bear fruit, that the recipient will take the subsidy, open for a few years, struggle to reach sales projections and ultimately leave. This would no doubt be disappointing, but the alternative is the sorts of commodity brands that exist on Portage Avenue now: that is likely where the market will remain until it is catalyzed.

- With its current and possible future traffic drivers, Portage Avenue's evening potential lies in well-known food and drink brands that target a middle-market clientele, with broadly popular concepts, unpretentious interiors and moderate

price points. These differ from the casual-chic concepts recommended for the Exchange District in that their vibe is not as self-consciously trendy or upscale, nor are they trying to appeal on an aspirational level. To the typical Winnipegger, they might feel less overtly "yuppie" and more "down-to-earth".



**Jack Astor's Bar and Grill**, owned by SIR Corp, the Burlington, ON-based restaurant group, is a "down-to-earth" food/drink concept with a concentration of locations in Ontario as well as ones in Quebec, Nova Scotia and Alberta. It has yet to enter Manitoba, although it might be intrigued by an opportunity in proximity to the MTS Centre, given its success at Front and University (left), near Toronto's Air Canada Centre.

- Mid-market restaurant/bar hybrids could also be combined with quick-service food offerings, theme-appropriate (and perhaps even casual-chic) retailers and a multiplex anchor in a development format known as the "**urban entertainment centre**" (or UEC), which can be found in the downtowns of a number of U.S. cities but has yet to spread across Canada.



One of the larger-format entertainment concepts that might anchor a UEC, **Dave & Buster's** (left) markets itself as an "adult playground", a combination video arcade, bar and casual eatery directed primarily towards the 21-to-44 age range. Most of its 54 locations are in the U.S., but it has operated one in the GTA since 2000, and is in the process of opening two more in Ontario, in Niagara Falls. Furthermore, it has recently unveiled a smaller, roughly 17,000 sq.ft. prototype designed for smaller markets.



**Pro Hockey Life** (left), a hockey mega-store concept showcasing all of the latest equipment as well as fan-wear and memorabilia, is precisely the sort of entertainment-oriented retailer that one would find in a UEC. The Montreal-based chain currently operates 15 stores in Eastern Canada but it is in the process of a nationwide rollout, having recently announced, for example, an expansion to Western Canada, with four new units in Alberta. With the presence of the MTS Centre, it might be willing to consider Downtown for its Winnipeg-area location.

## Graham Avenue

### **Vision**

The stretch of Graham from Vaughn to Hargrave showcases Winnipeg's **distinctive cultural milieu**, with an assemblage of attractive and welcoming immigrant- and minority-oriented businesses that help to put a more positive spin on the city's ethnic diversity and offer an accessible means for visitors (in town, for example, for the Canadian Museum of Human Rights) to explore and experience it.

### **Tools**

- Property owners "buying in" to this vision
- Technical and financial assistance in select cases
- Retail recruiter role for the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ

### **Non-Retail Strategies**

- "Clean and safe"
- Appropriate branding and marketing
- "Place-making" strategies

- Independent operators focused on **immigrant/minority sub-markets** might represent an appropriate future direction for Graham Avenue. Such businesses could play an important image-building role by helping to put a more positive spin on Winnipeg's ethnic diversity, which is so often associated with the crime of the Central Park and the West End, the pan-handling on Portage Avenue, etc.

Indeed, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights can be expected to attract a visitor who is more likely to be interested in such diversity, and in opportunities to explore and experience it. With the right businesses, then, Graham Avenue, could also figure in a broader tourist strategy, as a safe and central location where one can immerse him/herself in the city's various ethnic sub-cultures.

Of course, this approach has a potential downside: if they look and feel a certain way, such businesses can stigmatize Downtown still further. For this reason, there will need to be a focus on aesthetics and cosmetics (e.g. compelling signage, attractive down-lighting, eye-catching window displays, etc.) that makes their concepts (and more broadly, their cultures) seem safe and accessible to larger audiences. This will require both technical and financial assistance, either from landlords, or more likely, from some sort of low-interest loan pool, funded by the public sector, perhaps with a new "tax increment financing" (TIF) zone.

### Next Steps

- Again, the above represents merely a **general positioning strategy**: it is meant to be followed by additional phases focused on recruitment and implementation. The next phase starts with the creation of the sort of "infrastructure" needed to recruit specific retailers, following which, a consultant takes the first steps in the actual recruitment and then trains an in-house retail specialist to be able to continue with such efforts.

If approved, MJB Consulting's scope-of-work for this next phase would involve the following tasks:

1. BIZ-coordinated meetings with landlords/brokers of vacant and "soft" sites/storefronts, to present this general positioning strategy and get their "buy-in", and to gather specific information on their spaces (e.g. square footage/dimensions, asking rents/terms, etc.)
2. Development of an "available-spaces" database, complete with relevant information on vacant and soft sites/storefronts
3. Canvassing for and research on regional "chain-lets" (i.e. from nearby cities) and reference to MJB Consulting's proprietary database of Canadian and U.S. retailers willing to consider Downtown settings similar to Winnipeg's
4. Creation of "detail sheets" on prospective tenants -- regional, national and U.S.-based -- that would be new to the market, complete with information on concept, creditworthiness, site location criteria, comparable locations, etc.
5. Development of content for a leasing brochure (in collaboration with local retail brokers), both for Downtown as a whole and for its individual districts, with pockets for inserts on specific properties
6. Recommendations for and advocacy of new incentive programs (if politically realistic)
7. An initial round of "exploratory" calls to prospective tenants, using our network of contacts in the retail industry (and our earlier and on-going work in nearby markets like Toronto, Saskatoon, Minneapolis, etc.)
8. Presentation of interested tenants to landlords/brokers

9. Additional canvassing for a second round of prospective tenants, to be included as part of the training of an in-house retail specialist (see below)

10. Development of a job description and interviewing of candidates for the role of an in-house retail specialist

11. Training of an in-house retail specialist (e.g. on how to canvass for prospective tenants, how to pitch Downtown, how to "speak" the language of retail, etc.)

12. Creation of a power-point presentation for selling the positioning strategy to landlords/brokers in the future

- This sort of effort is felt to be necessary because coordination and strategic thinking appears to have been largely missing up to this point. Without it, opportunities for maximizing synergy and spin-off -- so critical in such a large Downtown and with such limited resources -- will continue to be lost, and cannibalization will remain a distinct possibility.

Keep in mind that the larger brand is accustomed to working with shopping-centre owners and developers whom it trusts to coordinate and strategize in just this sort of way; a chain's concerns about more traditional downtown settings are partly rooted in its anxieties about how unpredictable and uncontrollable they can be, for example, in terms of adjacent tenancies.

The BIZ is the logical entity to play this role in Downtown Winnipeg, given: 1) its focus on business improvement; and 2) the leadership that it has taken on this specific issue already. The City, on the other hand, potentially exposes itself to criticism from taxpayers, if one of the tenants that it helps to attract ultimately fails.

- An independent consultant, one that does not represent any landlords or properties, is recommended, as it has no stake, no vested interest (i.e. no "skin in the game"), and therefore, can be completely objective on where recruitment energies and prospective tenants are most appropriately directed (and, of course, provide political cover for ideas lacking unanimous support).

Furthermore, a "flat-fee" arrangement is the most appropriate, as an agent paid by commission understandably gravitates to the "lowest-hanging" fruit (i.e. suburban development) and would not be incentivized to devote the time and energy often needed to sell the Downtown opportunity to the retailers that would be most catalytic in its revitalization.

Also, an "out-of-town" perspective, from someone who works across all of North America, is essential, so as to bring to bear retail concepts and development formats that have succeeded elsewhere, a network of contacts within the larger retail industry, as well as familiarity with smaller "chain-lets" in other markets, perhaps flying below the radar, that would be ideal for and interested in Winnipeg.

- Finally, keep in mind that such a consultant would be meant to play a *supporting* role to Winnipeg's local brokers, as someone who could offer *additional* resources (e.g. time, contacts, expertise) -- effectively, for free -- to supplement what they are already doing.

Specifically, the consultant would never take any commission on a deal that it sets in motion, or compete *in any way* with the leasing community. On the contrary, it would work in concert with brokers, its leads sent in their direction so that they, hopefully, can earn commissions on the ensuing deals.