

## Preliminary Revitalization Concepts

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# Overview

In the spring of 2013 The Forks Renewal Corporation, with support from the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba, embarked on an integrated planning initiative for two key properties at The Forks, directly across from the new Canadian Museum for Human Rights. The revitalization of the Rail Side and Parcel Four lands will complete the brownfield reclamation of the former CNR East yards which began in the 1980s. It provides the opportunity to dramatically transform and enhance these under-utilized sites at The Forks.

This document represents preliminary planning and urban design concepts for the revitalization of the Rail Side and Parcel Four lands. It provides further background information and proposals for citizen and stakeholder input, and begins a more detailed dialogue on this important initiative. It should be interpreted as a guiding document to define values and objectives, but with built-in flexibility to achieve the best urban design outcome.

Following further public consultation, these concepts, and more detailed design and development guidelines, will be refined and finalized for approval and adoption by both The Forks Renewal Corporation and The City of Winnipeg.



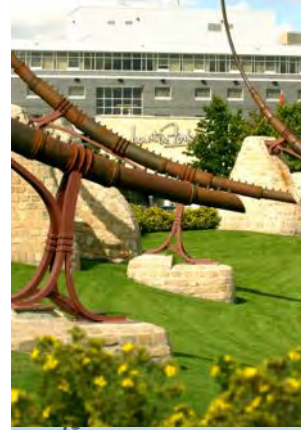
# Mission

The Rail Side and Parcel Four revitalization plan will follow the adopted mission of The Forks to be "developed as a Meeting Place, a special and distinct, all-season gathering and recreational place at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, through a mixed-use approach including recreational, historical and cultural, residential, and institutional and supportive commercial uses."

Its public realm - new parks, plazas, promenades - will provide the foundation, or the backbone, of the plan. Buildings and transportation facilities will support and enhance these new public spaces, creating a rich and multi-faceted environment which is attractive and inclusive.

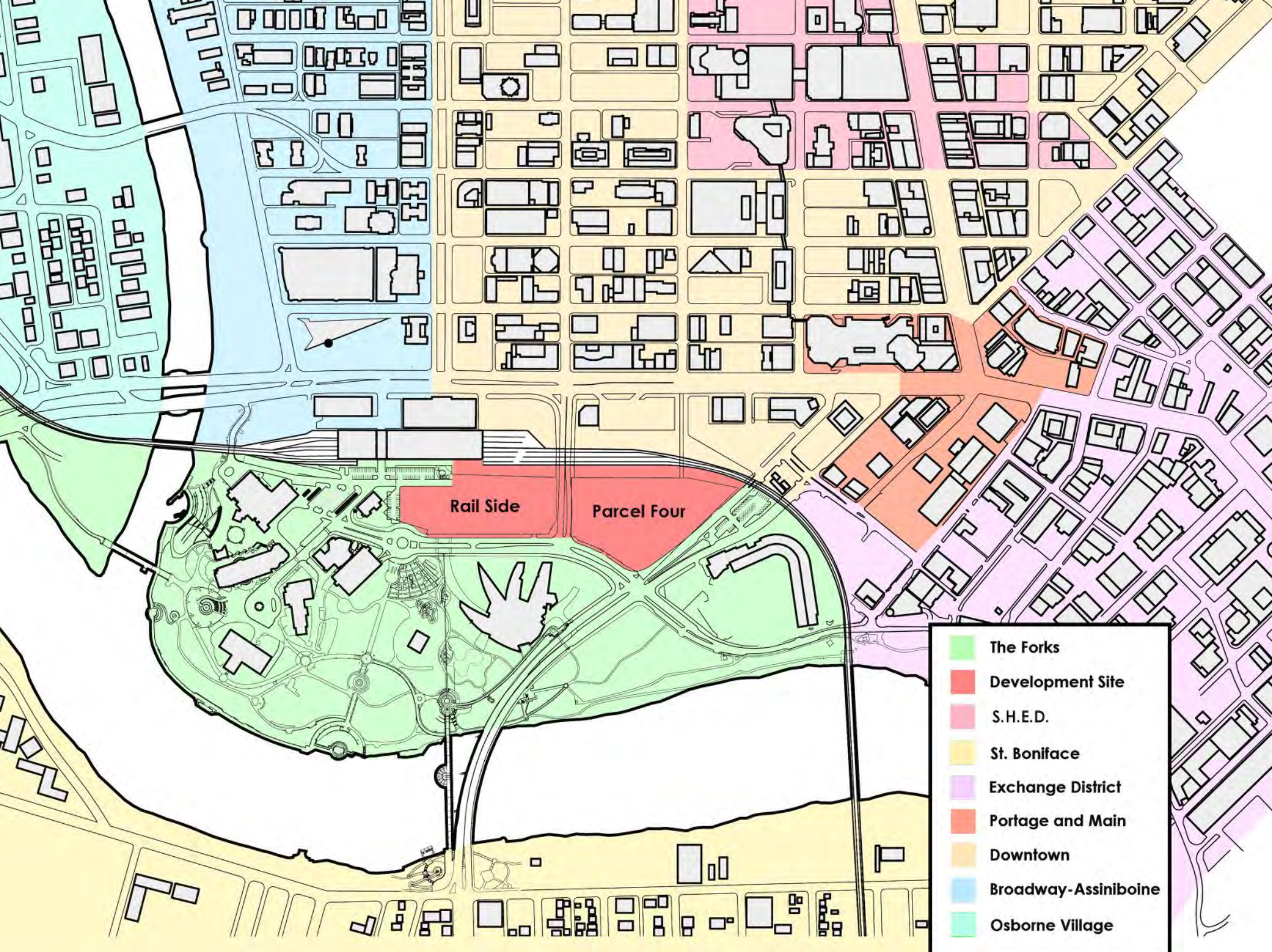
The plan will fill a void and a disconnect on The Forks site which is created by the current expanse of surface parking on the Rail Side and Parcel Four lands. It will implement urban design strategies to strengthen the physical and psychological connection between The Forks site and the rest of downtown. It is built on the belief that The Forks is an important asset in the downtown, the strength of which contributes to and supports its surrounding neighbourhoods and districts.

The Rail Side and Parcel Four lands will strive for design and environmental excellence. Their revitalization will be built on a solid track record of stewardship that began with the adaptive re-use of the site's original rail yard buildings, the introduction of impressive architectural features like the Oodena Celebration Circle and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, and the cutting edge commitment to protecting our planet through The Forks Target Zero Initiative.



The Forks shall be developed as a Meeting Place, a special and distinct, all-season gathering and recreational place at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, through a mixed-use approach including recreational, historical and cultural, residential, and institutional and supportive commercial uses.





# Existing Context

## The Site

The Rail Side and Parcel Four lands are comprised of approximately 11.6 acres, 5.9 acres owned by The Forks Renewal Corporation and 5.7 acres owned by The City of Winnipeg. They are the largest surface parking lots in downtown Winnipeg and have remained unimproved since the initial brownfield reclamation of the Canadian National Railway (CNR) East Yards in the 1980's.

The site is bound by the CNR high line on the west, Waterfront Drive on the east, William Stephenson Way on the north, and the City TV Building on the south. It is divided into three sections, bisected by The Broadway Promenade and York Avenue.

The Broadway Promenade is an east/west pedestrian connection between the Esplanade Riel pedestrian bridge, through the VIA Rail Union Station, to Broadway Avenue. It represents a historic connection, when prior to the building of the CNR east yards, Broadway Avenue extended through the current Forks site across the Red River into St. Boniface. This historical axis has been invested in over the years, with hard and soft landscaping, and is desirable to maintain or incorporate and enhance as part of the development.

York Avenue dips below grade to clear the CNR high line, rising back to grade level at its intersection with Waterfront Drive. The avenue experiences average traffic volumes of 10,900 vehicles per day. During evening rush hour it serves as an outlet for traffic from the central business district to neighbourhoods in east Winnipeg.

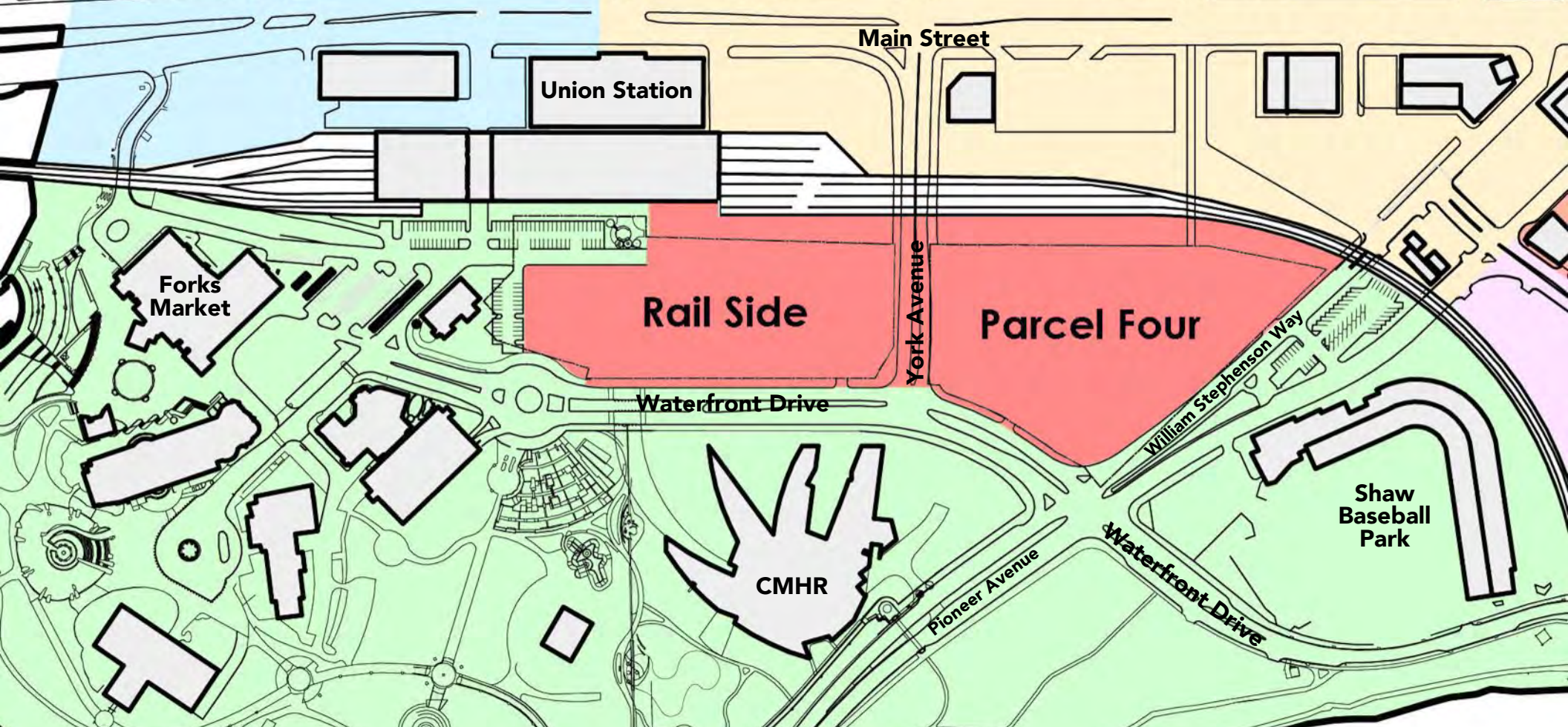
William Stephenson Way is a one-way, east bound connection from Main Street over the Provencher Bridge. On average 13,100 vehicles per day utilize this street. Cars heading west bound over the Provencher Bridge veer right on the one-way Pioneer Avenue, with average daily traffic volumes of 13,200 vehicles. In total, an average of 26,300 vehicles pass by Parcel Four each day.

Waterfront Drive, the eastern boundary of the site, provides one lane and one parking lane in each direction divided by a boulevard median. At its intersection with William Stephenson and Pioneer the intersection widens with turning lanes on all four corners, with seven lanes of east/west bound traffic. This intersection, along with the expanse of the

baseball park and Canadian Museum for Human Rights sites, interrupt the more dense adjacent urban fabric of the downtown neighbourhood to the north - The Exchange District.

The CNR high line creates a physical and, to some degree, psychological barrier to The Forks on its western edge. It is a principal main line for the Canadian National Railway, with 30 to 40 freight trains per day passing by Union Station. Building orientation and design will seek to mitigate sound and vibration issues associated with this rail corridor.

The Rail Side lands and Parcel Four are part of the broader Forks site, which is the most visited tourist destination in Manitoba and a beloved community asset for the residents of Winnipeg.



# Phase One Public Consultations

From March to September 2013 the Rail Side Lands and Parcel Four Planning Initiative undertook an initial public consultation process which included three components: stakeholders interviews, online participation, and citizen public space workshops. When combined, these three methods provide rich and meaningful direction for the preliminary revitalization concepts. The key observations and recommendations emerging from the process included the following:

**Imperative** - Few participants said that the lands should be left alone. Most said that the two surface parking lots, particularly parcel four, have a negative impact on the overall Forks experience and are undesirable land uses. The development of The Canadian Museum for Human Rights has further increased the imperative for revitalizing the rail side and parcel four lands in the minds of many.

**Mixed-Use** - The majority of participants in the phase one public consultations support the lands being developed as mixed-use environments, with public and community spaces and commercial uses. While some participants advocated for the entire lands

being developed as a park space, this is a minority held position of those consulted.

**Connections** - Participants advocated that the two parcels should be developed in partnership to ensure that they both enhance and strengthen the physical connection between The Forks and the rest of the downtown. For example, this could be accomplished by designing the main public space in such a way as to provide a north-south linear connection (e.g., pedestrian promenade or green corridor) from northern end of The Fork to its heart (i.e. The Port and Forks Market).

**Character** - The rail side and parcel four lands should strive to replicate/enhance the pedestrian-level activity and bustle that currently characterizes The Forks site. While some suggested that the lands should “mirror” or be an “extension” of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights’ “contemplative” experience, this is not a widely held position. Most participants characterized their vision for the lands as one with multiple activities and experiences, more celebratory in nature, similar to what currently happens at The Forks.





**Natural Elements** - The public space component of the plan should establish green and natural elements as the central organizing feature. While an “urban experience” was preferred and advocated by most participants (e.g. plazas, public art, cafes), many do not want green or natural elements to be sacrificed in order to achieve an urban experience. Ideally, the plan should strive to achieve both urban and natural elements in harmony.

**Street Level Retail and Restaurants** - Nearly all participants in the phase-one consultations supported retail and restaurant development on the lands at street level. Many said that if incorporated, they should be unique or have a “destination” quality to provide more reasons to visit The Forks.

**Multi-Unit Housing** - Multi-unit housing should be considered as a potential land use for the two parcels. Many participants said that a residential population would improve safety and the viability of The Forks. However, there is a high expectation that housing at The Forks should strive to be innovative or a “showcase” in some way. Ideas included unique architectural design, unique mix of tenure and incomes, or unique building technologies (e.g. green).

**Culture and Community** - There was a strong desire expressed by participants that The Forks continue to grow as a place that interprets history, showcases contemporary culture, and provides a focal point for the broader community. Many said that the rail side and parcel four lands should house a new cultural or community project of some nature, although no consistent suggestion emerged, and it will take time to narrow and implement the best ideas. Therefore it is recommended that a portion of the lands be “banked” for such a future project.

**Design Guidelines** - Specific design guidelines for the rail side lands and parcel four initiative should be created and strictly adhered to. Most participants acknowledged that The Forks is trustworthy and has accomplished a high design standard for public spaces, however concerns exist that commercial development on the site may not live up to those standards without a clear framework.

*“We are seeing the beginning of a pedestrian network in our downtown. We need pedestrian connectivity between our busy downtown anchors like The MTS Centre and The Forks. How do we get people to walk through this site to rest of the downtown - that is the question.” Community Stakeholder*

Find the full consultation report at: [www.theforks.com/railside/reports](http://www.theforks.com/railside/reports)

# History of The Forks

The Forks, so named because of its position where the Assiniboine River flows into the Red, has a rich history of early Aboriginal settlement, the fur trade, the advent of the railway, waves of immigration and the Industrial Age. The following timeline details the successful rebirth of the site as one of Winnipeg's most important landmarks and illustrates the changes at The Forks over the years.

## **The Forks 6,000 years ago**

Extensive archaeological investigations prove that Aboriginal groups were active at The Forks site thousands of years ago. Between 1989 and 1994, a series of archaeological digs were carried out at The Forks that proved camps of Aboriginal bison hunters flourished here. Unearthed was a 6,000 year old hearth, yielding catfish bones and stone tool flakes, as well as numerous later campsites. These recovered materials provided a rich record of Aboriginal occupations up to the time of the fur trade when Nakoda (Assiniboins), Cree and Anishinaabe (Ojibwa) and Dakota visited the site.

## **The Forks during the fur trade 1738-1880**

The first Europeans came via canoe in 1738, when La Vérendrye erected Fort Rouge, the first of many forts and trading posts erected in the area. Known as the

Red River Colony, the forts were within striking distance of The Forks because of its significance as an Aboriginal meeting place. The region provided rich food resources along an important transportation route including fish, waterfowl, game and, most importantly, bison, along an important transportation route. The Forks was the hub of the fur trade until the 1880s, when grain production became western Canada's principal industry.

## **The Forks and the Railway 1886-1923**

Beginning in 1886, The Forks emerged as one of the key sites of early railroad development on the Prairies. The rail yards of the Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway Company, the Canadian Northern, the Grand Trunk Pacific Railroad and the Canadian National Railway dominated the site. Many of the buildings now seen at The Forks date from this time. The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway stable and the Great Northern Railway stable were joined together to fashion The Forks Market and the National Cartage Building is now home to the Johnston Terminal. Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway Company's Buildings and Bridges Buildings (B & B) now houses The Manitoba Children's Museum, while Union Station (built by Warren and Wetmore, the same architects who designed New York City's Grand Central Station) is still in operation.

## **The Forks and Immigration 1870-1920**

In the late 1800s, the Canadian government began actively promoting immigration, settlement and railway development across the Prairies. Winnipeg became known as the "Gateway to the Canadian West" because the Canadian government erected two immigration sheds at The Forks, each accommodating up to 500 people. Legions of immigrants came through the site ultimately changing the physical and cultural landscape of the city and all of western Canada.

## **The Forks Today**

Today, The Forks is a vibrant downtown Winnipeg public space where people gather for celebrations, recreation and, much like the early Aboriginals, to meet one another. It encompasses an interpretive park, revitalized historic and new buildings, skateboard park, historic port and offers a host of year-round outdoor and indoor attractions. With over four million visitors each year, The Forks is the city's number one tourist attraction.

# Planning Principles

Development on The Rail Side and Parcel Four lands will be required to adhere to the following existing Planning Principles at The Forks and new design and development guidelines written specifically for the Rail Side and Parcel Four lands.

**Highlight Heritage (Connect to the Past)** - The heritage of The Forks should be highlighted wherever possible. This is not to suggest that projects should replicate the past, or past styles, rather that the development at The Forks highlight the past through interpretive means that are both creative and contemporary. Opportunities should be taken to allow a sense of history to permeate the site, while building an environment that contributes to our evolving history.

**Promote Innovation and Excellence (Connect to the Future)** - The Forks offers a unique opportunity within the downtown to promote innovation and excellence in design. In order to assure a rich heritage for the future, the highest calibre of design will be expected of all projects at The Forks.

## **Ensure Ease of Access (Connect to the City)** -

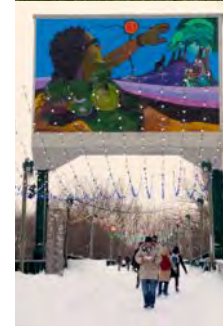
Long-term success depends upon integrating The Forks with its surrounding neighbours. Greater ease of movement and continuity of development with the surrounding area is necessary for The Forks to become an integral part of our city.

## **Create a Rich Pedestrian Environment (Connect to the Site)** -

One of the main reasons for the success of The Forks is its attractiveness for pedestrians. Successful pedestrian environments provide a range of place, event, scale, and discovery that can easily go unnoticed by motorists, and that contributes to increased usage and enjoyment of the site.

## **Ensure Diversity of Uses (Connect to the Community)** -

Ensuring a diversity of uses contributes to the richness of the pedestrian environment while encouraging all members of the community to participate in the enjoyment of the site. In addition, project variety contributes to the economic viability of The Forks.



# Components and Concepts

## Public Spaces - Parks, Plazas, and Promenades

The creation of exceptional public spaces will be the central objective in the Rail Side and Parcel Four revitalization plan. Public parks, plazas, and promenades will guide the organization of the two sites and forge better connections from The Forks to its surrounding downtown neighbourhoods. The design of these spaces will be people focussed, following the four key ingredients of successful public spaces identified by the New York based research non-profit *Project for Public Spaces*:

*Access & Linkages* - A successful public space will have both visual and physical connections to its adjacent buildings and surrounding areas. It is easy for all people to get to and move through, with circulation and paths that lead people to where they want to be.

*Comfort & Image* - A successful public space must feel safe and clean. It is walkable, but also provides places for people to sit in comfort in the sun and in the shade. It has a charming quality that expresses a unique sense of identity, culture, or history.

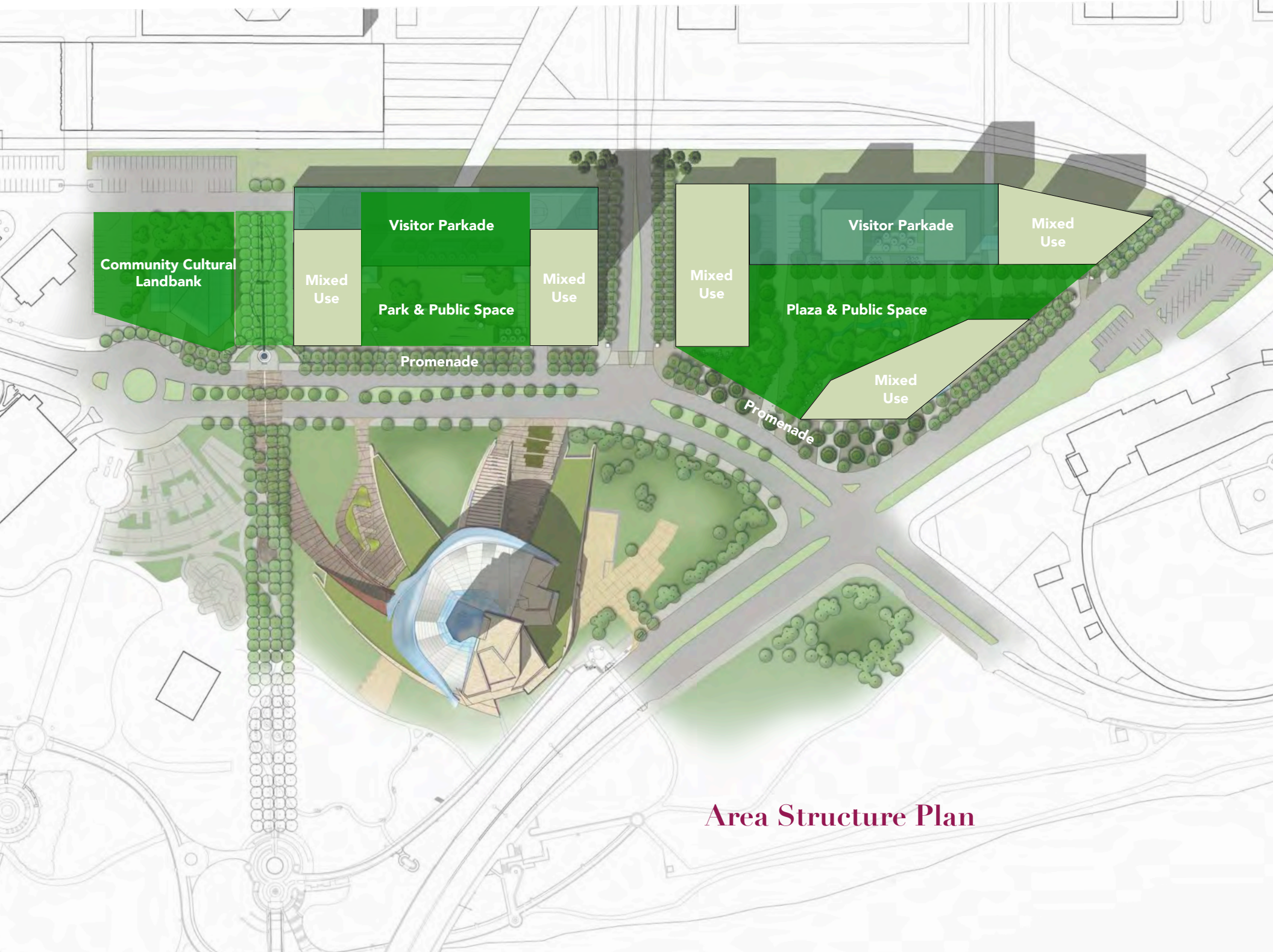
*Uses & Activities* - A successful public space gives people multiple reasons to come: to play, to think, to watch, to be with others, to celebrate, and more. People of different ages are attracted to the activities in the space, throughout the day and through the seasons.

*Sociability* - A successful place is where people meet and greet their friends, but also feel comfortable interacting with strangers. It becomes a place of pride, a place you want to bring visitors to, and where diverse people develop a sense of stewardship for the space.

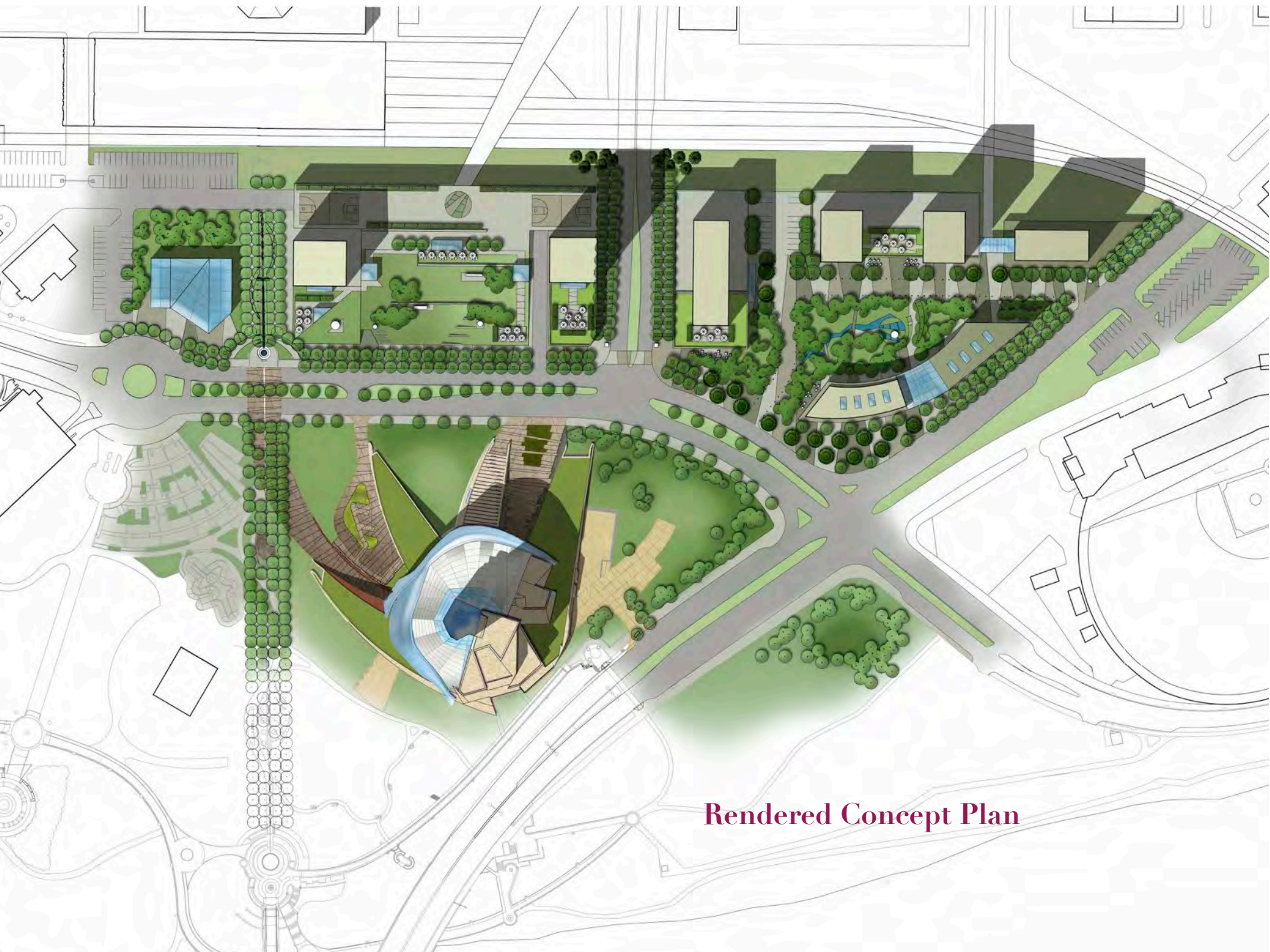
The Rail Side parcel and Parcel Four will both have expansive public spaces. The central plaza on Parcel Four will forge a stronger pedestrian link to Portage and Main and will create a place to gather sheltered from the busy intersection of Waterfront Drive and Pioneer Avenue. The central sloped park on the Rail Side parcel will open up to the arms of Canadian Museum for Human Rights and will create a new vantage point to enjoy this awe inspiring building and its surroundings.

A wide pedestrian promenade will extend the full length of Waterfront Drive. This tree-lined environment will create a new visually enticing walk from The Forks to Winnipeg's Exchange District. Along the way, shops and public spaces will provide opportunities to linger and enjoy the experience.





**Area Structure Plan**



Rendered Concept Plan



Rail Side and Parcel Four - Before and After



Artist's Concept - character and design to be developed through further public consultation.



Rail Side Parcel - Park and Public Space Concept



Artist's Concept - character and design to be developed through further public consultation.



Parcel Four - Plaza and Public Space Concept



Artist's Concept - character and design to be developed through further public consultation.

## Mixed-Use Development Parcels

The Rail Side and Parcel Four lands will aim to create a rich and visually interesting environment, through a balance and interplay of unique public spaces and architecturally engaging mixed-use buildings.

The preliminary plan proposes that five mixed-use development parcels be established, comprising not more than forty percent of the total ground area. Development on these sites will help to define the edges of the outdoor environment. They will shape opportunities to create both intimate and expansive public spaces, where people can gather for a variety of social and recreational activities.

The buildings will enhance the quality of the pedestrian environment with animated ground-floor uses and destinations. On the floors above, multi-unit housing and accommodation will bring a new 24-hour population, improving the safety and financial viability of the entire Forks site. Where applicable, small scale office and support uses, such daycares or athletic facilities, will complement the mix.

The mixed-use development parcels, will range in size from half an acre to up to one full acre depending on the location. They will be made available to private or non-profit development consortiums through a competitive, fair, and

transparent proposal call process, based on prescribed design and development guidelines. High quality construction and architecture will be a paramount requirement.

Multiple, distinct parcels will allow for both large and smaller scale development consortiums to compete for the opportunities to construct on them. This will also allow for the entire plan to be phased and built-out in a controlled and orderly manner, responding to optimum market conditions.

It is estimated that mixed-use development on up to forty percent of the Rail Side and Parcel Four lands will result in over \$200 million in private capital investment, and increase the assessed value of the two sites by more than 20 times their 2013 value.

Land revenue and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) revenue from the mixed-use development parcels will be reinvested to offset the costs of the public amenities and infrastructure contemplated in the plan, including significant parks, plazas, promenades, and visitor parking structures and access. On this basis, the revitalization of the Rail Side and Parcel Four lands will be self-sustaining, providing long-term community and economic benefits.

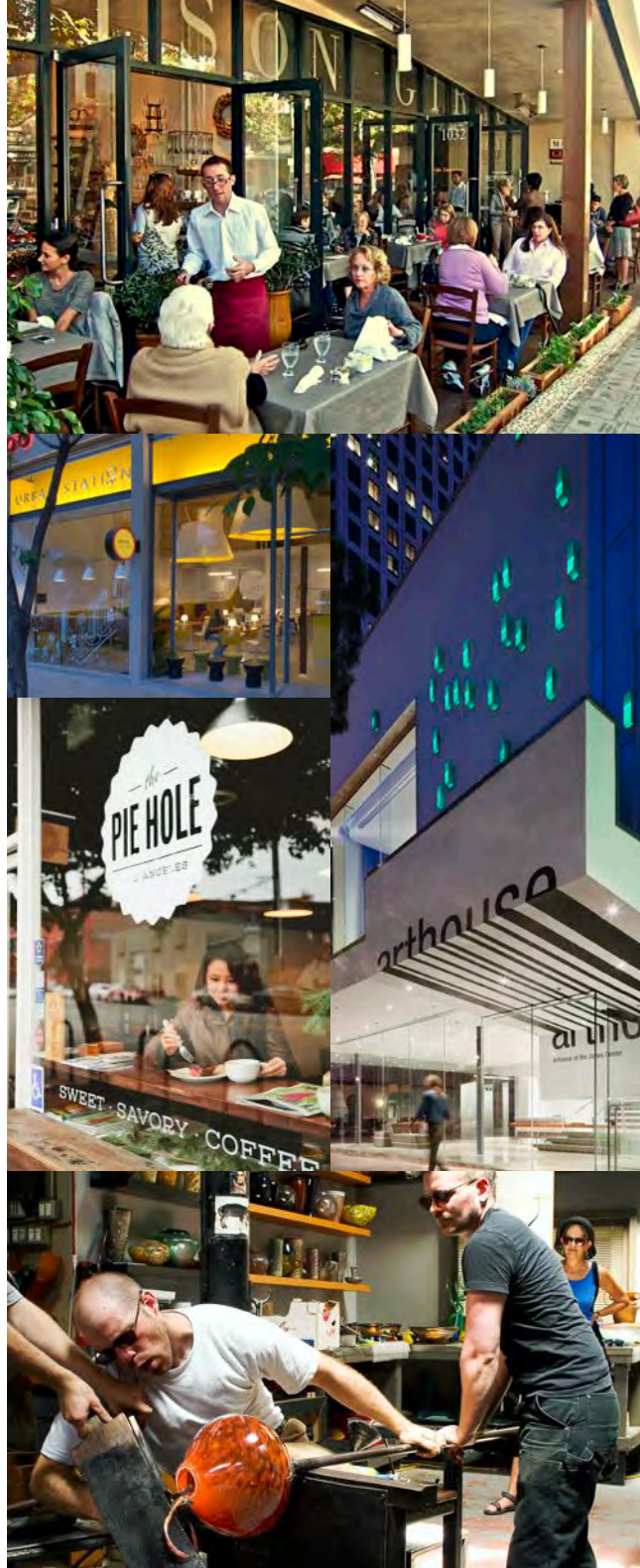


## Ground Floor Animation

In addition to the expansive outdoor public spaces, The Rail Side and Parcel Four plan will provide the opportunity for significant ground floor indoor space on the mixed-use commercial development parcels. Ground floor tenancies will be required to meet targets for interactive and/or visually engaging uses in order to create an animated public realm, both inside and out.

This could include food and beverage establishments, retail shops and services, galleries, artisan manufacturing, cultural spaces, educational spaces, unique product showrooms, or other venues that provide a destination for people and create regular pedestrian activity going in and out of the buildings. This requirement becomes more critical for frontage facing Waterfront Drive and major public spaces, and less critical for buildings against the high line or along secondary access lane ways.

Design guidelines will also articulate in more detail the physical requirements of the ground floor spaces. For example, those spaces will also be required to maximize public interface through the use of expansive glazing, spill over patios, inviting entrances, and/or pedestrian colonnades.



## Community-Cultural Land Bank

The Forks has become a destination for some of the most important community and cultural facilities in Winnipeg, including the Manitoba Theatre for Young People, the Manitoba Children's Museum, and the soon to be opened Canadian Museum for Human Rights. There is room for more.

The Rail Side and Parcel Four revitalization plan will establish a land bank, roughly half an acre in size, to be dedicated for a future community or cultural project.

Development on this land bank will require that, at a minimum, the ground floor be a non-profit use that promotes community or cultural engagement. However a stand-alone building, totally dedicated to this purpose, will be highly encouraged. A tailored process will be established to solicit ideas and approaches for this parcel. Submissions will be judged based on their creativity, contribution to city-building, and level of community support.

As is often the case with community and cultural projects, it may take time to establish a community-cultural project to the point of feasibility and implementation on the land bank.

### District Eco-Targets

The Rail Side and Parcel Four lands will strive to be a showcase for district-scale green building and environmental practices, in keeping with The Forks Target Zero Initiative. Developed in consultation with government agencies, NGO's, and green businesses the final design and development guidelines will establish targets and best practices to achieve the following environmental objectives across the entire development:

- reduce the overall impact of building construction and operation on the environment
- improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- reduce waste streams
- use energy, water and other resources more efficiently
- minimize the strain on local infrastructure
- reduce automobile use and increase alternative transportation
- improve health and well-being



### Public Art Policy

Public art provides an opportunity to make a place exceptional, to celebrate local identity, to honour heritage, and to activate civic dialogue and engagement. It will be an integral feature of the Rail Side and Parcel Four lands.

Public art on the Rail Side and Parcel Four lands may take different forms. For example, "Independent" public art is a sculpture or discrete element created and situated independently from the site and context of its location. "Integrated" public art is directly situated, designed and built specifically for a site. It is incorporated within the physical architecture of a structure or a site, often through the involvement of a

professional artist on a design team. "Site-Specific" public art can be stand-alone, but reflects or references the context or history of its particular location. "Transitory" public art is situated on a temporary basis, or is a project that remains open to collaboration, amendments and additions over time.

It is proposed that one percent of the total capital program be dedicated to commissioned public art works by professional artists.

## Transportation Facilities

Maintaining and enhancing accessibility to The Forks will be an important objective in the Rail Side and Parcel Four plan. Annual surveys find that visitors to the site arrive using multiple modes of transportation: 2% by boat, 9% by bike, 13% by bus, 19% by foot, and 57% by car. Over the last decade more people have opted to come to The Forks using active transportation or transit. Those arriving by car have decreased from 67% in 2003, levelling off to 57% more recently.

As city-wide **active transportation** connections are improved, it is expected that even more people will arrive by bicycle. The Rail Side and Parcel plan will ensure that cyclists are welcomed to the site with ample, dispersed, and well designed bike storage.

The Rail Side and Parcel Four lands are served by multiple transit routes along their edges. Waterfront Drive is served by the #38 Salter route and the three Downtown Spirit routes which operate free of charge

during daytime hours. Parcel Four, along its northern edge, is served by a further five routes. The Rail Side parcel, which connects indoors through Union Station, accesses over twenty routes that go along Main Street. Winnipeg's long-term rapid transit plan also contemplates a dedicated elevated line going right through the Union Station.

The plan will seek to improve the comfort and convenience of **transit users**, including appropriate siting of bus stops and the potential of integrated indoor bus shelters in the mixed-use commercial development parcels.


Parking vacancy counts have been conducted over the entire Forks site for the last four years. Based on this analysis it has been determined that up to 700 **visitor parking stalls** will be required on the Rail Side and Parcel Four lands to meet the current and future peak requirements of visitors to The Forks and the new Canadian Museum for Human Rights.


Parking structures against the high-line on both sites will be built to accommodate this need, with the majority of stalls on the Rail Side parcel, closest to the main attractions of The Forks. Visitor stalls will be operated within The Forks shared pool of parking, revenues from which will continue to be dedicated to cover the costs of free programming and events, The Forks Target Zero initiative, and maintenance of parks and public spaces.


Additional parking requirements for housing units on the mixed-use development parcels will be privately financed and constructed either independently on those parcels or integrated as part of a common-use parkade strategy with visitor parking. Development consortiums will be encouraged and awarded extra points to reduce automobile dependency through the implementation of car-share programs, provision of bike storage facilities, and other techniques.



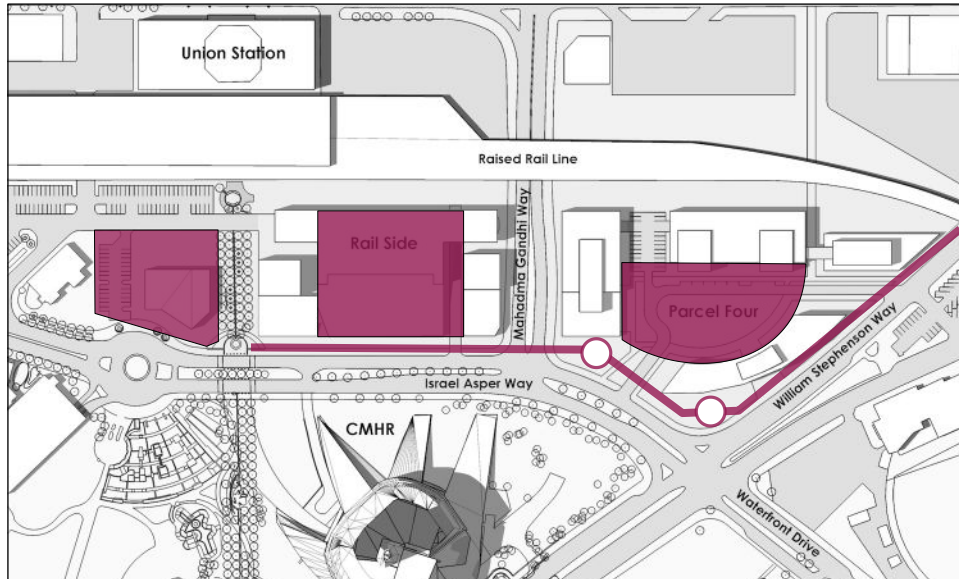


 Transit Stop

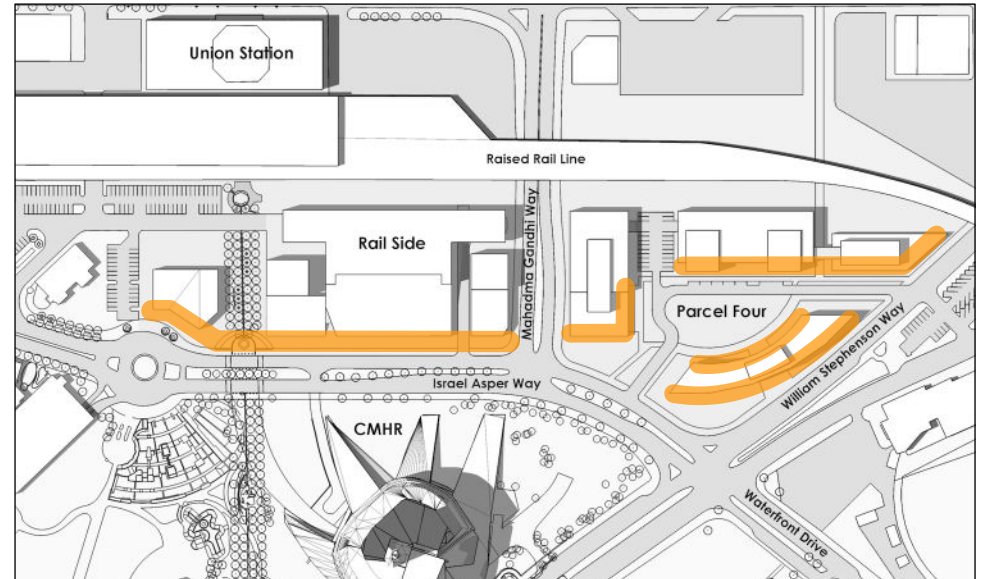
 Pedestrian

 Vehicular

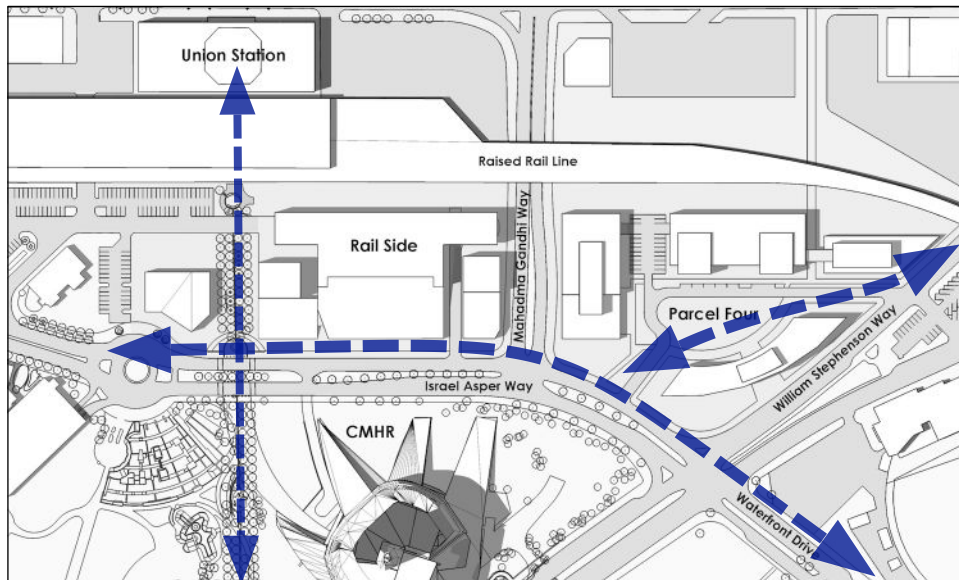
# Urban Design Considerations



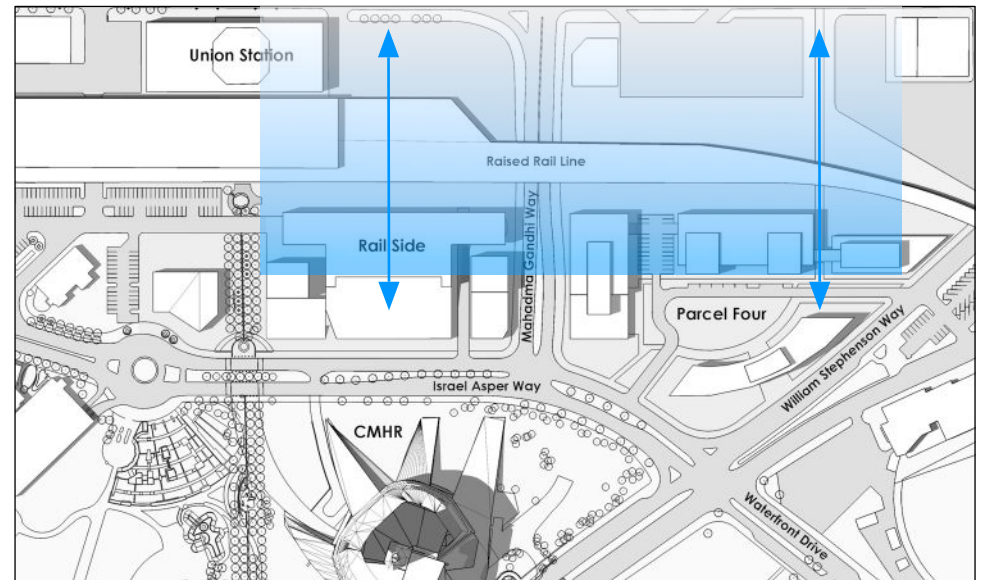
Primary Public Spaces and Opportunities for Heritage and Cultural Interpretation



Animated Ground Floor Uses along Main Pedestrian Routes



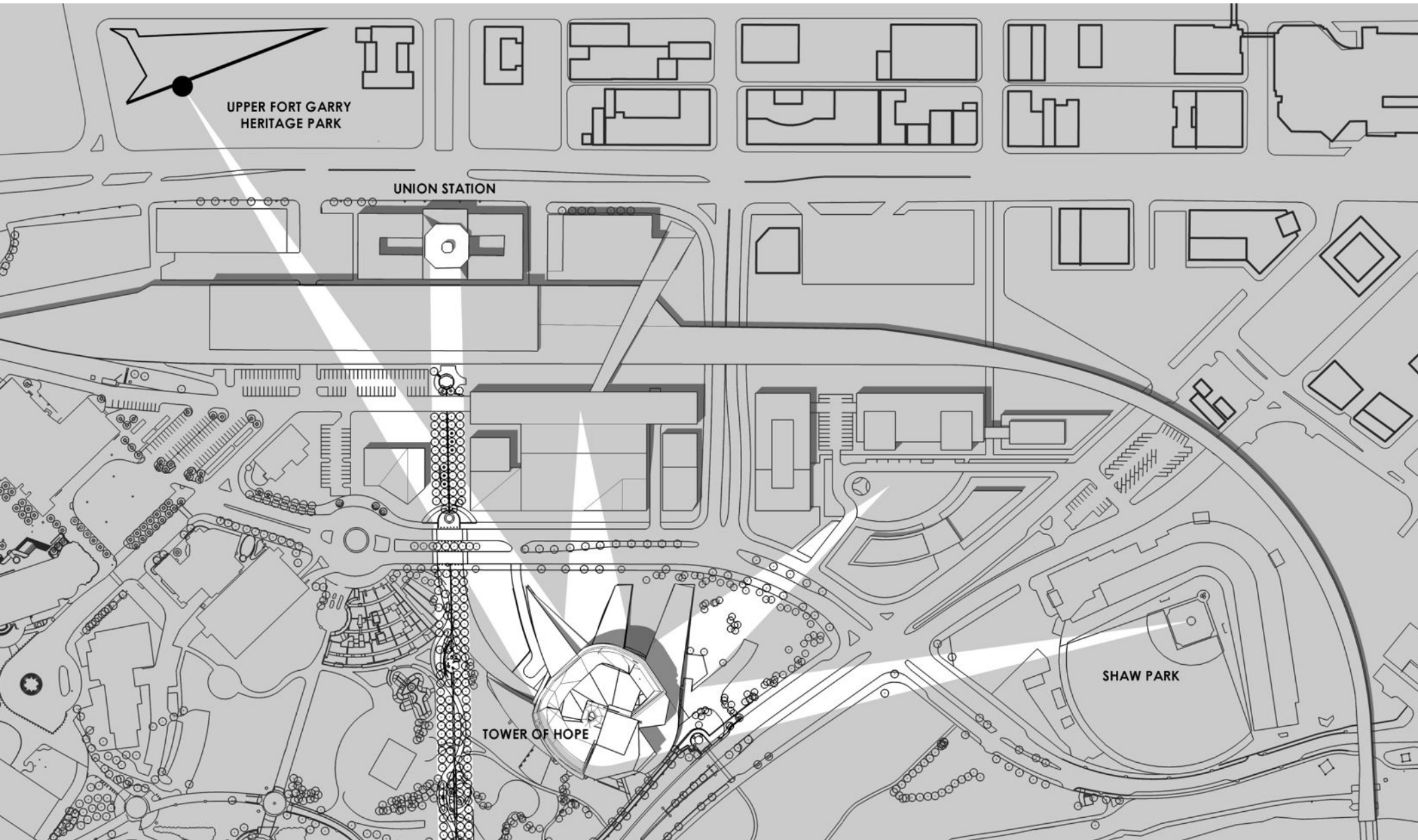
Strengthened Connections to Portage & Main, Exchange District, St. Boniface, Broadway



New Visual and Future Potential Connections to break down the barrier of the High Line

# Urban Design Considerations

View Corridors



# Implementation

## Public Space Development

Due to the importance of the public spaces in the plan, it is proposed that further public consultation be undertaken to define the themes and character of these spaces. Subsequently, a competition format will be used to select the best design concept/team for the public spaces, followed by further detailed design, and construction tendering. Construction of the public spaces will be timed in coordination with construction on the mixed-use development parcels.

## Design and Development Guidelines

Prior to any procurement of the mixed-use development parcels, a clear set of design and development guidelines will be established. These will include specifications pertaining to exterior treatment, heights, set-backs, access, signage, lighting, green building targets, public art requirements, accessibility, and other matters deemed important for enhancing and supporting the public realm. These guidelines will be site-wide and, in some instances, may be particular to a development parcel. They will be the minimum criteria for the award and permitting of any development and construction on the site.

## Archeological and Environmental Assessment

In advance of construction on the site a comprehensive archeological and environmental assessment will be completed, including consultation, surveying, and sampling. Information gathered through that process will inform and guide appropriate mitigation and interpretation strategies.

## Mixed-Use Development Procurement

The mixed-use development parcels will be made available to private or non-profit development consortiums through a competitive, fair, and transparent process, with the goal of making the opportunities accessible to as many qualified firms as possible. In most cases this will involve a pre-qualification process to develop a short list of suitable providers that will subsequently be invited to participate in a Request for Proposal process. Winning bids will be judged based on their economic contribution, but also their contribution to the social and environmental vision of the Rail Side and Parcel Four lands.

## Phasing

Currently, the parking stalls on the Rail Side parcel are fully utilized by Forks visitors during the peak periods. The currently under-utilized Parcel Four parking lot will be required for Forks visitor parking while construction occurs on the Rail Side parcel. If Parcel Four were to be constructed on first, there would be no convenient interim parking option to later facilitate construction on the Rail Side parcel. Therefore, to ensure that public enjoyment of The Forks site is not disrupted during any period of construction, the Rail Side parcel should be developed on first (Phase One), followed by Parcel Four (Phase Two).

## Communication and Monitoring

Following the formal adoption of the revitalization plan, a project website will be established to provide regular updates. This site will offer information on procurement opportunities, bid awards, design refinement, construction progress, and other updates to ensure that citizens and stakeholders are well-informed and have an opportunity to continue to provide feedback on the Rail Side lands and Parcel Four revitalization initiative.

