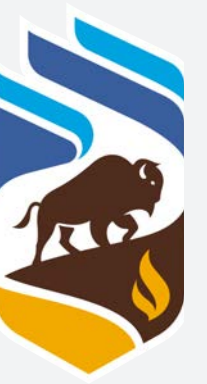


TWO-WAYS TO REVITALIZE DOWNTOWN:

One-way to Two-way Street Conversion and its Potential Implications for Downtown Winnipeg

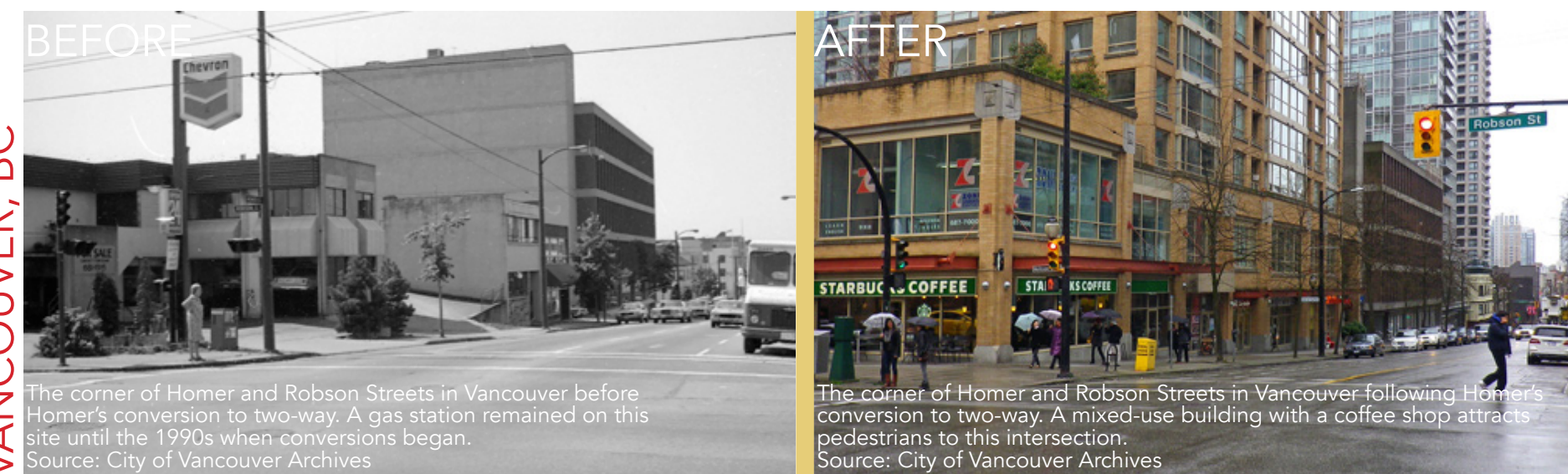
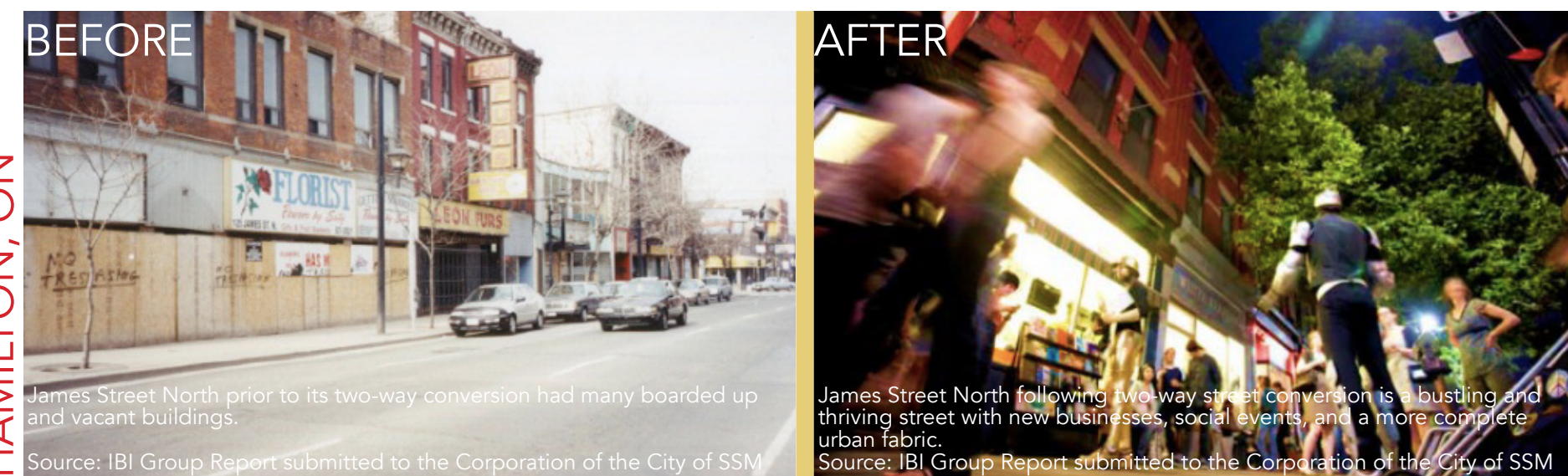


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BACKGROUND

In Winnipeg's downtown South Portage neighbourhood, all streets between Broadway and Portage Avenue and between Memorial Boulevard and Main Street are one-way arterials and constrain the area's ability to support a livable mixed-use community. There is a renewed interest in urban living and a need for efforts to improve different components of downtown. One-way to two-way street conversion is an urban revitalization strategy to improve the condition of downtown for people who want to live in and visit it, to make changes to transportation patterns that constrain pedestrian activity, and to facilitate conditions that are more conducive to economic development.



HAMILTON, ON

VANCOUVER, BC

FINDINGS

By speaking to planners and representatives of Business Improvement Areas to understand what implications street conversion has had in other cities and with urban developers to identify what conditions are conducive to downtown development, twelve findings emerged. What has become most clear is that a number of different factors need to be considered as part of the puzzle for one-way to two-way street conversion to be successful in achieving a pedestrian-friendly environment, improving transportation patterns, and encouraging economic development.

- THE EFFECTS ARE TRANSFORMATIVE**
Areas that have undergone one-way to two-way street conversion have noted higher levels of development, increased residential populations, calmer traffic, more pedestrian activity, and additional amenities.
- IT'S NOT ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL**
Interviewees cautioned that street conversion alone will not achieve all of the objectives associated with having a livable downtown. Strategies such as granting space to multi-modal transportation should also be considered.
- IT'S ABOUT LIVABILITY**
Cities used street conversion as a strategy to calm and remove through-put traffic, and to encourage conditions that were conducive to pedestrian activity and economic development, all contributing towards livability.
- IT STARTS WITH RESIDENTIAL**
Having a residential population in a downtown was identified as being crucial to having the increased pedestrian activity and economic development that street conversion is associated with influencing.
- FIND THE RIGHT MIX**
While a residential base is key to encouraging the revitalization of downtown, having the right mix of retail and service components to support the livability of an area is just as important to secure its longevity.
- DEVELOPERS SEE THE POTENTIAL**
Developers consider the location of a site in relation to vehicular volume and access, and while they do not consider the direction of traffic flow, they are optimistic about the advantages of building better streets.
- INVEST IN THE STREETS**
Public infrastructure upgrades and investments in the downtown core will attract investment from the private sector and will allow for higher density residential development that aligns with the City's objectives.
- DEVELOPERS WANT MOMENTUM**
Developers are more inclined to develop in locations where there are opportunities for future development or for spin-off effects, even if their own projects are creating the momentum in a downtown core.
- COLLABORATE AND COORDINATE**
There is a need for the public and private sectors to coordinate in downtowns to strategically plan for future development projects to improve the public realm and to also reduce costs incurred to developers.
- DEVELOPERS NEED BETTER ACCESS**
Lengthy permit processes and the inability to access downtown land are two large hindrances to development. There is interest in downtown development in Winnipeg, but some developers are deterred by these factors.
- PEOPLE WILL BE FOR IT AND AGAINST IT**
The advantages associated with one-way to two-way street conversion are not always immediate and can therefore be difficult to comprehend. The reality is that there will be people both in support and opposed to it.
- CITIES WOULD DO IT AGAIN**
Interviewees in all cities indicated that based on the relative success of one-way to two-way street conversion, they would make the decision to convert again, and believe residents would share this same sentiment.

METHODS

I conducted semi-structured interviews with city planners and Business Improvement Areas in two case study cities that implemented street conversion in their downtowns to understand the implications for Winnipeg, and with local urban developers to understand their perspective on what conditions are conducive to economic development.

RECOMMENDATIONS



CHANGE THE CLASSIFICATION OF DOWNTOWN STREETS

Designing streets to allow high levels of service tend to be self-fulfilling. Changing downtown's arterial streets to **local** or **collector** streets will support one-way to two-way street conversion in calming traffic and encouraging pedestrian activity.

RETAIN CERTAIN ARTERIALS FOR TRAFFIC FLOW

Each case studied retained **arterial one-way pairs** to prevent traffic congestion in their downtowns. Donald and Smith Streets are important arterials with connections to other parts of the city and should retain their one-way operation.

IDENTIFY RESIDENTIAL AND MIXED-USE CORRIDORS

Residential and mixed-use corridors are **most likely** to exhibit the **advantages** of one-way to two-way street conversion. Planning for these corridors can help to inform where street conversion should be implemented as a strategy.

IMPLEMENT A PILOT PROJECT

A pilot project would be an affordable tool to test different design considerations for street conversion in Winnipeg, and can help residents, motorists, and business owners **experience the implications** of conversion on a lesser scale to increase support.

DEVELOP A PHASING STRATEGY

The **existing urban fabric** on the west side of South Portage is more complete than the east, providing a **better opportunity** for street conversion to help support pedestrian activity and economic development if implementation **starts** there.

DON'T OVER-EMPHASIZE PARKING

Encouraging **active and public modes of transportation** and creating better policies and conditions to support them may **grant better access** to developers who cannot secure downtown land because of the emphasis on parking.

CONCLUSION

The success of street conversion in achieving better livability, calming traffic, and creating conditions to be conducive to economic development in other cities could be realized in Winnipeg with collaboration from the public and private sectors.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What effect has one-way to two-way street conversion had on the pedestrian experience and transportation patterns in Hamilton and Vancouver?
- What economic benefits have been observed following one-way to two-way street conversion?
- Are developers more inclined to select sites on two-way streets in a downtown setting?
- What are the implications of one-way to two-way street conversion for downtown Winnipeg?