



CASE IN POINT 2009

Partnership for Learning

South Point Douglas Secondary Plan

CONTRIBUTORS

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Kurtis Kowalke

ABSTRACT

In 2008, a process began to redefine the South Point Douglas neighbourhood through the use of a secondary plan. An innovative partnership emerged between the City of Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba Department of City Planning through the development of a teaching studio. Students, under the direction of faculty members, undertook comprehensive background research and consultation with the neighbourhood.

For students, it was an opportunity to become involved in a meaningful education in an unique neighbourhood. For the City, the partnership allowed best use of its resources while ensuring that the community was educated about its own formal process. In all, 13 engagement sessions were held with stakeholder groups. These sessions gathered key information from hundreds of participants that was collated and provided to the secondary plan steering committee for its use. Following the initial engagement processes, students continued to build community capacity through activities such as the publication of the South Point View newspaper.

BACKGROUND



The South Point Douglas neighbourhood is one of Winnipeg's inner city neighbourhoods in transition. After a nearly a century at the heart of the city's railroad and industrial base, the area has fallen into a steady decline in recent decades. Situated on the north side of Winnipeg's downtown, South Point Douglas is ready to be re-examined for its future as a vibrant part of the urban fabric.

In 2008, a process began to redefine the South Point Douglas neighbourhood through the use of a secondary plan. Such plans have been used in other Winnipeg neighbourhoods to address land use and other planning concerns. Following initial studies, the City of Winnipeg began a formal process to prepare the secondary plan.

An innovative partnership emerged between the City of Winnipeg Planning, Property and Development and the University of Manitoba Department of City Planning in the development of a teaching studio for a secondary plan. Department of City Planning Master students under the direction of faculty members undertook a comprehensive background research and consultation process with the neighbourhood. Over the course of four months, a studio class of 14 students used a variety of tools to engage six distinct communities in South Point Douglas.



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FACTS OF THE CASE



The Aboriginal Centre at Higgins Avenue and Main Street played host to the largest workshops of the stakeholder engagement process. Over the course of a full day engagement, approximately 110 people participated in six distinctive workshops. Participants ranged from Aboriginal Centre students and staff to general building users. The Aboriginal Centre is home to a wide range of groups, organizations and services. Many of the users of the centre are from outside the South Point Douglas area and had a unique point of view to offer. The size and diversity of the engagement yielded a vast quantity of information.



Three sessions were held with stakeholders from the arts and cultural community. The first saw 29 students from Argyle Alternative High School participate in an “Earth Island” exercise. Argyle draws students from around Winnipeg to a curriculum with a focus on environmental and sustainability issues. The second attracted members of the arts and cultural community. Five workshop stations were used. The third workshop was run in conjunction with the Graffiti Gallery. This session included map visioning and brainstorming exercises.



The South Point Douglas business community is a mix of long standing merchants, industry and new entrepreneurs. The project team organized one primary workshop session for area business owners in cooperation with the Downtown BIZ. 14 participants representing businesses, business organizations and other associated stakeholders participated in an open ended brainstorming and visioning session. Three discussion themes were used for the sessions. These included a focus on the current business climate, visioning for Main Street and residential / industrial conflict.

FACTS OF THE CASE



The Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) is a major landowner in South Point Douglas. MMF began its process of engagement with the secondary plan through their own desire to meet growing organizational needs. The sessions reflected a desire both to vision new possibilities for their own building and site as well as the larger neighbourhood context. Three workshops were facilitated by the project team with stakeholders from the MMF Home Office. Each session built upon the work of the first in an effort to create a larger vision for the building site and grounds.



The project team used a door-to-door canvassing campaign to inform residents in the area about the upcoming secondary plan and encourage participation in a workshop session. The residential areas in this neighbourhood are concentrated near the east end of the Point. A residents workshop was held at MAWA gallery where the project team facilitated a variety of information gathering sessions. Three separate workshop engagement tools were used including SWOT Analysis, Photo Analysis and Planning for Real.



Residents and management of the three major shelters in the South Point Douglas area were a distinctive part of the consultation process. The Salvation Army (Booth Centre), Main Street Project and Siloam Mission were each engaged independently in an effort to obtain their input into the secondary planning process. Outcomes were mixed. Consultation began with government officials followed by shelter management and finally residents themselves when possible. A session with Salvation Army residents included a variety of engagement tools.



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FACTS OF THE CASE

10 SOUTH POINT VIEW

Slow Down Disraeli - You're Missi

The Disraeli Freeway was built in 1959, during an era of urban freeway construction across North America. In many cases freeways were planned to run directly through functioning communities without public consultation, dividing neighbourhoods and isolating communities in the process.

South Point Douglas was a victim of this same approach to freeway construction. Prior to the arrival of the Disraeli, neighbourhood streets flowed largely uninterrupted. While there was opposition to the freeway in North and South Point Douglas, the City nonetheless continued with construction.

Currently, a secondary planning process is underway in South Point Douglas. Re-evaluating and re-imagining the Disraeli Freeway has been one of many hot topics. During the workshops held in South Point Douglas, participants shared their views on the freeway, describing how it divides their neighbourhood, separates it from the downtown and restricts pedestrian and bicycle traffic. However, the Disraeli Freeway is a key commuter route to the downtown, handling 49,000 vehicles on a typical weekday.

With these issues in mind, planning students looked at ways in which connections could be re-established within South Point Douglas and with the rest of the city without obstructing commuter traffic. In a design charette, an alternative was explored to reshape the heavy traffic route.



spanning the Red River. students proposed the neighbourhood's original a key commuter corridor onto Higgins and Suther. For an outline of an alter consult the map below an page 8 and 9.

While this proposal is of the traffic patterns in that has been adopted in contexts. For example,

The "South Point View" was created to disseminate information to the neighbourhood. This community newspaper was a tool to report information from workshops and background research. Containing stories, features and photographs obtained during the project, team members produced the tabloid style newspaper for free distribution in the neighbourhood and future planning workshops.

Studio work and other community issues were highlighted. The future of the Disraeli and Louise bridges, neighbourhood safety and image along with many other issues were covered. Photography, maps and graphics bring additional visual interest to the paper.

The work of studio members was complemented by other contributors from the South Point Douglas neighbourhood. Contributions ranged from community opinions to news stories. The newspaper was distributed in January 2009 to businesses and residents throughout the neighbourhood. The South Point View received positive reviews from many community stakeholders.

**South Point View Newspaper
December 2008**



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CONCLUSIONS & OUTCOMES

Best Practice - In Action

The South Point Douglas secondary planning process, while still underway, has demonstrated three areas of best practice in the Winnipeg.

Municipality / University Partnership

The partnership effort between the City of Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba has allowed both parties to benefit by working together. For students, it was an opportunity to become involved in a unique and meaningful education opportunity in an emerging neighbourhood. For the City, the partnership allowed best use of its resources while ensuring that the community was educated about its own formal process. Students provided a level of energy that is unique to the learning process. This enthusiasm spilled into the community throughout the engagement process.

Members of City of Winnipeg staff from a variety of departments assisted students in the learning process. As guest speakers, several City staff provided input into the planning process. Their insight into the practical realities of planning in a neighbourhood setting assisted students to learn from the experience of others.

Comprehensive Community Engagement

The partnership allowed for a comprehensive consultation process with South Point Douglas to promote dialogue, disseminate information and stimulate interest in the secondary plan. In all, 13 engagement sessions were held with stakeholder groups over the course of the studio work. These sessions gathered key information from hundreds of participants which was collated and provided to the secondary plan steering committee for its use. The process also helped to identify community members to join the secondary plan steering committee in guiding the City's formal planning process.

Keeping in Touch - Community Outreach

Following the initial engagement processes, students continued to build community capacity through activities such as the publication of the South Point View newspaper. This tabloid publication was distributed around South Point Douglas and included contributions from students and other community members. Due to the success in building relationships between City, students and community continued work in the neighbourhood is ongoing. This includes thesis work to document the secondary planning process and assist community members in the development in their own strategies for neighbourhood change.





The South Point Douglas studio provided an excellent opportunity for learning and engagement. The skills developed through the various workshops and activities provided valuable experience to students. For the City, the work of students provided an opportunity to engage many diverse groups in the community.

Both the University of Manitoba City Planning Department and the City of Winnipeg gained from the relationship.

For the University, an opportunity to engage with a neighbourhood could help develop future relationships. Since the conclusion of the studio project, a graduate student from the program has continued to work with City of Winnipeg staff to document the secondary planning process as part of a thesis project. Contact with the planning community assists students in acquiring internship opportunities during their program. Students value professional mentorship opportunities. If such relationships continue, a link between students and planners could continue to enrich the learning experience.

For the City of Winnipeg, relationships with the university allow the improved use of public resources. Student work can be of high quality. Students and faculty are exposed to a variety of professional practices through research activities. Many staff are busy with existing activities and may not always be able to keep up with current literature. Through research activity, a university partnership can inject new ideas into a planning process. Student labour is also inexpensive and can assist City staff in accomplishing a variety of tasks. Planners in the field should also value the opportunity to work with students as a means to further their own professional development. As mentors, planners can help nurture the next generation of professionals.





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