Connections

From the Vault:
Bridging the Past

Long-time Brandon residents may be feeling a sense of déjà vu with the discussions occurring around the improvements to Brandon bridges. In May of 1966, City Council of the day discussed plans by the provincial government to upgrade the 1st Street Bridge. The presence of a retaining ramp linking Assiniboine Avenue to the 1st Street Bridge was a controversial subject. Apparently such a ramp had existed prior to 1966 but was being removed, in part, because a lot of collisions occurred between automobiles on 1st Street and vehicles coming off of the ramp.

Several businesses and residents of the North End submitted a petition requesting that the ramp be added to the upgraded bridge, as eliminating the ramp would have the effect of cutting the North End off from the rest of the City. Some councillors expressed skepticism about how representative the petition really was of North End residents. Other councillors held out hope that an improved 8th Street Bridge would eliminate the need for a ramp. A lengthy discussion ensued, in which the merits of the 8th Street Bridge and the 1st Street Bridge were discussed, as well as the financial implications of whichever bridge scenario council supported. The petition suggested that building a ramp on the 1st Street Bridge would allow for the removal of the 8th Street Bridge. Ultimately, a decision was made to remove the ramp from the 1st Street Bridge and upgrade the 8th Street Bridge. In doing so, markings on the bridge pillars along Assiniboine Avenue needed to be repainted. This begs the question: were drivers already having run-ins with bridges way back in the 1960s?

Back to the River for Brandon Riverbank Inc.

Brandon Riverbank Inc. is in the process of finalizing its 25-year Master Plan for the entire Assiniboine River Corridor through the City of Brandon. Following two epic floods in three years, it was apparent that there needs to be different thinking in how we develop and interact with the river-bottom greenspace that Brandon has come to know, love and enjoy in every season. Brandon Riverbank Inc., the non-profit, charitable organization responsible for protecting and enhancing this community jewel, partnered with the City of Brandon in 2015 on this initiative. HTFC Planning + Design out of Winnipeg was hired to work with our community to develop a plan that worked with Mother Nature, as well as for the residents of Brandon. Following two days of field work, and significant research and interviews with partners and experts, the public consultation work began. Workshops were held in August and again in November, putting ideas and suggestions in front of people and encouraging their input and opinions on how they want their Riverbank to be developed and protected over the next 20 years. Hundreds of people participated in the public consultation process, resulting in a positive and realistic preliminary plan that has been very well received throughout the community.

The final plan is currently being developed and will be presented to Brandon City Council in February of 2016. The plan calls for an investment of 25 million dollars over the next 20 years to develop spaces where Brandon’s residents and visitors can celebrate, recreate and be educated about the importance of the River and its riparian habitat. To learn more about the parks, gardens, natural habitat and celebration spaces that are included in the Assiniboine River Corridor Master Plan, please visit www.riverbank.mb.ca and follow the links to the project website. The Master Plan will be launched to the community and projects will begin in Spring of 2016. Stay tuned!
The City of Brandon’s Community Development Department worked with the community through the latter half of 2015 on Phase 1 and Phase 2 of a new Cultural Plan for our city. This plan will help establish a vision and foundation to guide cultural planning and development in Brandon for the years ahead. December’s public outreach process included a series of focus groups, one-on-one interviews, workshops, a community cultural forum, a targeted cultural asset survey and an online culture plan survey. Through this process, more than 150 people from various ages, cultural backgrounds and vocations were passionately engaged in public consultation. People were asked what their vision of a culturally rich Brandon looks like, what Brandon’s key opportunities to help realize that vision are and what are the top three priorities Brandon should be focused on. The expected outcomes of this project will be a shared vision with guiding principles that will help coordinate the rich arts, culture and heritage activities in Brandon to better support these efforts in Brandon. Results of this engagement will be available in the new year. Thanks to everyone who has participated so far!

**A Journey of Truth and Reconciliation on Human Rights Day**

This year, the City of Brandon’s Community Development Department hosted two days of programming to mark Human Rights Day, choosing to focus the discussion on the topic of Truth and Reconciliation. During the afternoon of December 9th, members from the community were able to participate in an education panel discussion with presentations from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, as well as presentations about the history of the Brandon Residential School by Katherine Nicols, the Project of Heart initiative undertaken by George Fitton School, and local Elder Frank Tacan shared his residential school survival story.

On December 10th (which is internationally recognized as Human Rights Day), Youth Revolution students from Earl Oxford school and students from George Fitton school participated in an educational workshop about the legacy of the Residential School System in Canada. They also participated in learnings about aboriginal culture and did an art learning project with Elders Clarence and Barbara Nepinak. Human Rights Day then wound up that evening with an engaging public open house, where members from Canada’s Royal Winnipeg Ballet presented highlights from “Going Home Star – Truth and Reconciliation” production. Winnipeg-based artist KC Adams also presented on her participation on the set design of the RWB’s production, as well as her own “Perception” series.
A unique public engagement program launched in early 2015 by the City of Brandon’s Planning & Building Safety Department has been extremely well-received and has department officials already planning for bigger and better programming in 2016.

The Planning & Building Safety Department launched its “Brandon Design Studio” public engagement program in January of 2015 as a way for the community to learn more about how they can be part of the land use development process affecting their neighbourhood, but more importantly, how they can be part of the City’s larger, long-term efforts to build a sustainable Brandon. Regular workshops and public information sessions were hosted within the Brandon Design Studio Space of the Cultural Resource Centre at the A.R. McDiarmid Civic Complex, and staff also took the program “on the road” to the Brandon Home & Leisure Show in the spring.

Department staff organized and hosted nearly a dozen workshops through 2015, on topics ranging from the Zoning By-law amendment process, how to mitigate household radon gas, to an informational session on the new 2013 Manitoba Energy Code. The program’s final event in November, entitled, “Building a Sustainable City – Starting with Your Own Home”, featured a guest speaker from Built Green Canada and even resulted in a few interested homeowners and developers wanting to be part of the Built Green certification effort.

It’s estimated in the range of 450 individuals attended ‘Brandon Design Studio’ programming over the course of 2015.

The Department’s goals for the ‘Brandon Design Studio’ program are multi-faceted, in that it is about showing the public about all the other things it does besides processing development and permit applications as a land use regulatory department. The program has also provided an opportunity for Department staff to collaborate with citizens in building a sustainable City and to educate the public on land use development and building safety issues; but most importantly, it has provided a very unique forum to interact and connect with the wider community.

The program owes much of its success to the public’s support, including that of the Brandon Chamber of Commerce. Chamber officials have referenced the program as a great way to engage Brandon residents in the decisions that will shape the way the community builds its future. Given that development in any community can be hard to understand, the Brandon Chamber of Commerce encourages everyone to take part in future Brandon Design Studio events to gain a better understanding of how our community is being built, and how they can be a part of its success in a sustainable way.

For more information about the Brandon Design Studio public engagement program, visit the City of Brandon’s website at http://www.brandon.ca/brandon-design-studio.
Brandon residents can now keep track of snow clearing progress on City streets through the winter season directly from their computer or mobile device, thanks to the recent launch of an interactive online snow clearing map on Brandon.ca. The interactive site, which you can find here, allows residents to stay up-to-date on snow-clearing efforts being undertaken by the City of Brandon Streets & Roads Department after a snowfall.

This past December (the page’s first full month in operation), the interactive map page saw in the range of 3,300 hits from residents looking to find out the status of snow-clearing operations! It’s simple to use—just search for your address and the map will tell you if and when snow clearing is scheduled.

Using the tandem approach of a colour-coded GIS map display as well as a text display, the site will show the clearing status of the City of Brandon’s main snow routes (which are the first to be cleaned after a snowfall) and also the clearing status of streets in residential areas if a City-wide snow clearing effort is underway. To help differentiate the types of snow-clearing events for the public, priority snow routes are numbered “1” through “6”, while residential zones are indicated by the letters “A” through “G”.

Brandon residents are also reminded that the provision for overnight parking restrictions on all signed seasonal snow clearing routes came into effect November 15th. As per the City of Brandon Traffic By-law, overnight parking along permanently-signed routes (12 a.m. to 8 a.m.) is prohibited if a snow plowing/removal notice has been issued by the City of Brandon.

Did You Know …?

Beginning Saturday, January 16th, a second daily flight to and from Calgary will be offered by WestJet at the Brandon Municipal Airport! In addition to the 12:50 p.m. arrival and 1:20 p.m. departure that has been offered since the fall of 2013, a new, early morning flight will leave Brandon at 6 a.m., arriving in Calgary at approximately 7:30 a.m. local time. An additional return flight to Brandon in the evening will also now be available, departing Calgary at 7:50 p.m. local time and arriving in Brandon just prior to 11 p.m. You can find more information at westjet.com.

You can also click here to read more details about the Brandon Municipal Airport Expansion/Redevelopment Project.