

October 30th, 2023

Notice of Objection to Change of Land Use to Allow for 24 -hr drop in Centre at 817 Rosser Ave.

Process Objection

As an adjacent landowner who owns two properties on Rosser Ave., I first received notice about the proposed change of land Use via mail from City of Brandon on Thursday October 26, 2023 3 days after the deadline for submission of written objections to the City of Brandon Planning Building Department. Upon receipt I contacted S.Tempbo about this and was told that if I submitted something it would get distributed to the people involved. With all due respect this is insufficient as I have no assurance it will be received in time to be reviewed by board members. Even if that is the case, I still have been denied the opportunity to speak to other land owners effected by the application and submit a joint report on behalf of several of the others effected by this application. Or attend in person (given the short notice) I note the Property Tax Bills, Water Bills all arrive in a timely manner so I am at a loss to understand why this couldn't be sent out in a more timely manner. THIS IS A DENIAL OF THE LAWS OF NATURAL JUSTICE.

Objection to Change of use Variance Application V-14 to allow for 24-hr Drop in Centre.

As an adjacent Land Owner I object to the proposed change of Land Use, a 24- hour adult drop in Centre is the last thing that should be allowed on Rosser Ave. Between 11th St and 6th St), especially not at this particular location. Eight years ago there was a bench in front of 827 Rosser Ave. it became a hang out for vagrants that sexually harassed two women business owners (who both happened to have to walk past this bench on the way to the CIBC Bank branch where their businesses dealt (one of them still operates her business) . A complaint was lodged with the then Renaissance Brandon Director Ms. Elizabeth Saftiuk and the bench was removed. Having already lost the main branch of two other financial institutions (Westoba Credit Union and T-D Bank) the "Downtown Hub" cannot afford to lose another main branch of a financial

institution and expect to continue as a viable commercial district. Yet this would undoubtedly be a factor in the bank's decision as to whether or not to keep this branch open. It should be noted there was a steep decline in customer traffic and thus related businesses volumes when each of the other branches closed.

The public benches which were an eyesore that attracted vagrants and drunks and drug users were finally removed at the request of the merchants over the objection of Councilor Kris Dejarlis. It took approximately 8-10 years to accomplish this goal despite it being blatantly obvious to most of the building owners. I note that this drop in center would be less than a block from the Samaritan House Ministries. It is not that the Samaritan House doesn't do good work, it is that their clientele should not be encouraged to stay in the same small geographic place 24 hours a day, and especially not in the middle of a commercial business district. There is more than ample vacant storefront commercial space located elsewhere in the Hub (for example 222 Rosser Ave which is less than a block away from the 440 Rosser Ave which is the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation's office).

Five and Half years ago then Renaissance Brandon held a public forum to gather input into the revitalization hosted by the City Engineer Ryan Nickel, his position was that he would revitalize downtown by:

- 1) opening up Pacific Ave with increase access of off new first street bridge and thus encourage commercial business on Pacific Ave.;
- 2) address the parking issue by increasing use of parking lot on Pacific Ave between 12th & 13th Streets, when the writer pointed out to him that the lot in question had at the time been used less than 1% of the time for the last 31 years "his response was "just give me 5 more years" well he has had them and nothing changed (and he had more than two years to address the issue before the onset of the pandemic).
- 3) Mr. Nickel stated that the Downtown Hub would be supported by Second Story residential apartments. While it looked like that was true then. This one pillar of the Downtown Hub has been placed in Jeopardy by the lack of policing and proper law enforcement in the area (See the attached letter to the Editor Brandon Sun published October 28, which I incorporate into this presentation by reference). It has been harder to rent second story apartments because of this and despite a shortage of apartment rental within the city landlords in the downtown area cannot re-rent suites at the previous obtainable rents and face a cost-price squeeze as taxes, insurance utilities increase and rents decrease. It is worth noting that the Sneath's have both

their prime properties the Bass Building on 10th Street and Prairie Lofts on Rosser Ave. (located within 100 feet of the subject property) up for sale. At the same time Cam Wirch who redeveloped several properties on Rosser Ave (7th and Rosser among others) announced several months ago that he would not do any more redevelopment on Rosser Ave. in part due to the lack of proper policing in the Hub.

It is worth noting that the applicant is the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation, here is a thought, how about they actually take actions to accomplish their goal as set out by the cooperate name and try to renew the downtown area instead of contributing to the continued decline of the downtown core. If this change of use is granted it will only be a matter of time before CIBC closes their branch and and vagrancy and crime problems both downtown and in the Town Centre increase. The granting of this application will be another nail in the coffin towards increasing the decline and demise of the Downtown HUB

J.M.S Investments Ltd.

Per:

Steve Baker B.A., LL.B

(Owner of 912 Rosser Ave & 904/906 Rosser Ave.)

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Complacency brings higher residential property taxes

Last year (according to the city) the Downtown Hub represented 12 per cent of the city's property tax base. But this is in the process of undergoing a dramatic reduction. It is likely that this will be reduced to six per cent or less within the coming years.

The missing tax revenue will have to be distributed onto the residential tax assessments of homeowners. The year 2022 saw reduction in assessments of the former TD Bank property from \$1.312 million to the \$600,000 range. The property at 501 Rosser Ave. saw its assessment reduced from above \$1.3 million to the current \$739,000. The Town Centre, which is currently assessed at \$6,944,400, just sold for \$3.9 million, and undoubtedly the owners will successfully appeal and obtain a reduced assessment, thus leading to reduced property tax revenue.

Other property owners will undoubtedly follow this trend.

It didn't have to be this way. Ten years ago, there was a renaissance in downtown Brandon. In fact, the BDDC was at one time known as Renaissance Brandon, and a variety of businesses opened up in the downtown core. The downtown area was written up as being the fifth-best downtown area for small cities on Expedia Canada Travel Blog. The city had previously recognized that there was something going on, and also realized that access and parking were issues that needed to be dealt with.

An ill-fated attempt at closing Rosser Avenue was abandoned after seven or so days and a study on parking was commissioned from one of North America's leading experts. Rather than implement



Steve Baker writes that unless action is taken, downtown property values will continue to plummet — which will lead to “property taxes that will have to be made up by transferring the deficit created onto the residential tax base.” (File)

the modest recommendations, successive administrations ignored the problem and the recommendations. Had they been implemented, increased access and parking would have allowed the businesses to take advantage of increased customer traffic, and the strongest of those businesses might have survived the pandemic-induced downturn.

The BDDC is still studying the

concept of increased parking some 11 years later. It is worth noting that the stronger businesses located in the downtown core are all in areas without restricted/limited parking in front of them — Benny's, A & L Cycle, the dance academies and brew pubs.

Now we face another problem — low-level crime and vagrancy that is not being addressed and contributing to the decline mak-

ing things much worse. This aside from low-level drug use, which may or may not be difficult to control. The former police chief, Wayne Balcaen, didn't believe in attempting to control it, as he has frequently been quoted as saying “You can't arrest your way out of the problem.”

This is not the way to correct anything. While low-level drug use may be hard to keep in check,

surely the dealers and predators can be controlled through proper, effective policing — but they are not even trying. Earlier this year, a businessman observed a drug deal being transacted on his property and confronted them. He took pictures of the people and vehicles involved — he was assaulted and called the police. When they responded, the police said they had instructions from the Crown attorneys not to arrest or issue a summons about it. Is it any wonder why the downtown continues to deteriorate?

If the city police and Crown attorneys do not wish to even attempt to do their jobs, perhaps it is time for a more radical approach — the municipal policing problem. While dealers and predators might not be jailed for first offences, after three or four offences they will be, and the problems can be brought under control or at least not increase. Perhaps it is time to disband the Brandon Police Service and have the city hire the RCMP municipal branch to provide policing services for the city.

One thing is certain: if the problem is not addressed, it will get worse, and with it will come declining property values and property taxes that will have to be made up by transferring the deficit created onto the residential tax base.

Aside from this obvious situation, the city is in the process of trying to dispose of or redevelop the property on Ninth Street and Princess Avenue, and these problems only act as an impediment to any proposed future redevelopment.

STEVE BAKER
Brandon