



MERCHANTS CORNER INC.

541 Selkirk Ave
Winnipeg, MB.
R2W 2M8

**AGM – December 17, 2020
Merchants Corner Inc. (MCI)**

**Annual Report
April 1, 2019 – March 31, 2020**

Word from the Board Chair 2020 – Robert Neufeld

Almost 10 years ago, Merchants Corner Inc. (MCI) held consultations which brought the North End community together to create Merchants Corner. Through these consultations a vision was created to co-located education, housing, safety, culture and meeting place for good food and connection. At the beginning of this year the construction phase was complete and we have moved on to focus on operations and programming.

I would like to thank the MCI board of directors for their hard work meeting monthly to keep our vision and plans alive. Many thanks to our Coordinator Shannon Bunn for her hard work this year coordinating our work around Covid-19 restrictions. We are also thankful for the work of our Community Connectors Roberta Greyeyes and Mike Maple. I want to especially thank our outgoing board member Indigenous Knowledge Keeper Kathy Mallet who has been with Merchants Corner from the beginning. She is resigning from the board and has a class room named in her honour at MCI. In her place, we welcome Connie West Buck who has agreed to join the board as our Indigenous Knowledge Keeper. Thanks, Connie, for joining us.

In 2020, the board and staff met monthly. We are very grateful to the Winnipeg Foundation for the community coordination and connection grant they gave us. The grant helped fund our Community Coordinator and Connector positions for this year. The board and staff focus this year has been the following:

- Complete a 5-year strategic plan with the Board of Directors (in progress)
- Obtain Charitable Status for Merchants Corner Inc (in progress)
- Coordinate the roll out of Perfect Place Catering and Café Social Enterprise (ongoing)
- Market Merchants Corner and create strong working relationships (limited due to Covid-19)
- Develop summer tenants so we are at capacity all year long (Limited due to Covid-19)
- strengthen connector relationships with anchor tenants and residents (on going)

Many thanks to our partners/tenants: The Urban and Inner City Studies Program, Community Education Development Association (CEDA), Perfect Place Café and Catering (PPCC), administrative Partner North End Community Renewal Corporation (NECRC), folks who have used our facilities and our residential tenants. We are thankful to our developer the University of Winnipeg Community Renewal Corporation (UWCRC) for helping complete the construction of the Selkirk Avenue (South Side of the project). We also thank our other developer and building manager Winnipeg Housing and Rehabilitation Corporation (WHRC) for helping us finish Pritchard Housing (the North Side of the project). They also maintain and manage our building. We thank our Architect Mistecture for designing such a beautiful building

Merchants Corner Inc. demonstrates the strong community pillars of education, housing, cultural sensitivity and safety. We hope to keep moving in line with our project charter and the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation commission as noted in our bylaw and annual report. On behalf of the board and staff, we thank the community for their support. We trust our staff, anchor education tenants, students and visitors will soon be able to return to normal programing as we move through and past the challenges of this past year.

Annual Report

April 1, 2019 – March 31, 2020

Project Overview

Merchants Corner Inc. (MCI) is a community hub in the North End of Winnipeg with the support of many partners, funders and the North End Community. The building and project hosts educational programming, shared classrooms, student housing, space for community gatherings, and a community café.

MCI is consistent with the spirit of reconciliation and inter-generational learning which makes the complex a center of positive change and community development. MCI serves the University of Winnipeg Urban and Inner-City Studies Program and CEDA Pathways to Education high school students. It also hosts the AYO movement every Saturday and their 13 Moons Program.

MCI seeks to be a safe space for learning and transformation for the community. Areas of services provided now and in the future include: education, cultural events, intergenerational activities, youth activities, skills building, special interest courses, community drop-in, food security, healing, children's activities, and fitness.

MCI Purpose – Articles of Incorporation

Acquiring, leasing and/or developing real property in the North End of Winnipeg to provide premises at/or below market rates to and for the use and benefit of registered charitable organizations and foundations that carry out charitable activities in Winnipeg;

Acquiring, leasing and/or developing real property in the North End of Winnipeg for the purpose of improving economic opportunities and social conditions in the north end of Winnipeg;

To advance education by acquiring, leasing at below market rates and/or developing, facilities and infrastructure situated in the North End of Winnipeg to be used for educational purposes;

To relieve poverty by acquiring, leasing at/or below market rates, and/or developing student housing and residential to be used by individuals who are low income as residential accommodation. (see MCI Bylaw)

The project charter created for the redevelopment of Merchants Corner provides the following guiding principles:

Co-operative Connection

The project will create a cooperative connection between groups and facilities in the community and proposed facilities on site. The project will encourage collaborative partnerships and build on existing strengths for the well-being of the greater community.

Mixed Use

The project will be developed as a mixed-use facility and include a mix of residential, educational, retail and community components.

Sustainability

The project will be founded on the principles of holistic sustainability on all levels including economic, environmental, social and cultural sustainability. The project will be mindful of community wellness and spiritual wholeness toward the Seventh Generation.

Community Economic Development Principles

The project will be guided by CED principles including developing local resources, an inclusive process, holism, collaboration and sustainability.

Intergenerational

The project will include places and opportunities for people of all ages and stages of life including elders, youth, adults, children and families.

Universally Accessible

The project will ensure all facilities are universally accessible to all citizens.

Governance

Members of the Corporation are North End Community Renewal Corporation (“NECRC”) and The University of Winnipeg Renewal Corporation (“UWCRC”) and such other persons as are admitted to membership by resolution of the board of directors and who agree to be members.

MCI will hold its Annual General Meeting within one hundred and eighty (180) days following the end of the Corporation’s fiscal year. The Annual General Meeting shall review and approve the audited financial statements for the preceding fiscal year, appoint an auditor, appoint new board directors, amend these bylaws under the provisions set out in Article 6.6 and conduct any other such business as may come before it.

The MCI board met regularly during the past year to shape and move the project forward. The MCI bylaw is in need of some changes as the organization moves from Capital to Operations. (*see attached*). The board is made up of representatives from the founding partners UWCRC and NECRC and community representatives as per the bylaw.

The board depended on its developers to follow the construction process and received regular reports from UWCRC for the South project on Selkirk Avenue and WHRC for the North Project on Pritchard Avenue.

Construction Update

Developer South Side: University of Winnipeg Community Renewal Corporation (UWCRC)

Partial occupancy of Merchants corner was achieved by December 18, 2017 with Interim Occupancy in April 2018 and full occupancy granted June 26, 2018. Outstanding items for completion include the exterior ramp on the west side of the building which UWCRC and WHRA are working with the City of Winnipeg to complete since the work of the local infrastructure improvements by Nelson River Construction deleted the ramp. The City's project manager has been engaged but is yet to provide a date of completion or an action plan on finishing the work.

Developer North Side: Winnipeg Housing and Rehabilitation Corporation (WHRC):

WHRC is responsible for the property management of both sites, Merchants Corner and Merchants Corner Housing. The tenancy of the residential units opened and are now at full occupancy. Meetings have taken place with the tenants to review the building and have included presentations on safety and security. WHRC continues was involved with the coordination of warranty items post construction at both sites ensuring that the new buildings are kept in top condition.

Manitoba Housing – Project Partner

Manitoba Housing was actively involved in overseeing the construction of both Merchants Corner and Merchants Corner Housing. In particular, Manitoba Housing administered the Province of Manitoba's funding commitment of \$5,500,000 for Merchants Corner Housing and \$8,015,393 for Merchants Corner. Manitoba Housing continues to be actively involved in ongoing decisions that alter the estimated project costs or the scope of the projects.

NECRC: Administrative Partner

North End Community Renewal Corporation participated in the project as the local renewal corporation and administrative partner. NECRC continued to provide support to the Board and sub-committees. Specifically, NECRC has provided all administrative responsibilities for staffing at Merchants Corner including financial services, auditing, book keeping and payroll.

Building Operations Plan

WHRC has contracted to manage the building on behalf of MCI. Marketing and rent up discussions are conducted monthly at MCI board meeting and move-in's started January 2018. Rental rules and regulations along with a priority system for eligible applicants were established. All property management services including an operations plan and budgets were created through direction provided by, and in consultation with, the board of MCI.

Building Tenancy

University of Winnipeg - Urban and Inner City Studies Program (UIC) offers courses during the day Monday to Friday 8:30 am to 4:00 pm, and on Saturdays 8:30 am to 12:00 pm. In 2010, UIC established its program in the north end with an intention to increase enrollment for individuals who have never considered attending a post-secondary institute. To ensure student success UIC has developed a unique program model which includes limiting class sizes (maximum 25 students), providing extra student support systems, and implementing a curriculum with a strong Indigenous character. Enrollment has steadily grown since 2010; approximately 40% of students are Indigenous and/or have grown up in the North End. In addition, many of the UIC students and graduates have taken on active leadership roles in their community.

Community Education Development Agency, CEDA-Pathways to Education offers free, after school tutoring and mentoring programs during the evening from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm. CEDA's program model is designed to help students grades 8 through 12 reach their fullest potential through academic achievement, high school graduation, and post-secondary opportunities. CEDA currently serves the following areas: Lord Selkirk Park, Dufferin, William Whyte, and North Point Douglas. Their partner schools include Children of the Earth, R. B Russell, St. Johns, Tec Voc, Niji Mahkwa, David Livingston, William Whyte, and Isaac Newton. In addition to their after school program CEDA provides free summer school throughout the month of July for students who require it.

AYO! (Aboriginal Youth Opportunities) is a youth movement from Winnipeg's North End. They develop relationships with organizations, media, government and businesses in order to empower each other. This group is led by young people volunteering and sharing their gifts with others. They listen to the ideas of young people, plan them, and love them until they become reality. They are committed to helping our North End to heal and will work with those who share our vision to provide ABORIGINAL YOUTH with more OPPORTUNITIES! AYO was a tenant for part of the year and used the Merchants Corner Saturday evenings for their 13 Moons program. AYO contributed to the MCI in encouraging us to be involved with youth and the needs of all community members in our decision making.

Merchants Corner Housing (MCH), which is managed by Winnipeg Housing and Rehabilitation Corporation, features 30 units of affordable housing for students and their families. MCH consists of 2 complexes located at 540 Pritchard Avenue and 541 Selkirk Avenue. Each complex houses 1, 2 and 3 bedroom suites, and 1 unit that is Wheelchair-accessible. The vision for MCH is to address the housing needs within Winnipeg, and to make housing available to students attending classes in Merchants Corner, community members who are accessing support services in the area, youth aging out of care, and finally students from other educational institutes in need of housing.

The University of Winnipeg Student Association (UWSA) has an office in the building.

Perfect Place Café & Catering held a soft launch on November 4, 2019. The café is owned and operated by two local Indigenous community members Erica Contois and Destiny Michell. Since the launch of the cafe, it has brought new energy to the community and has become the new space for gatherings and meetings for students, community groups, and other local businesses. The official grand opening of Perfect Place Cafe & Catering was held on Saturday, January 25, 2020; approximately 150 guests attended the event including community leaders, local artists, and team members from The Winnipeg Blue Bombers. The Café had to adjust to Covid-19 restrictions and closed near the end of the year. We hope they can reopen as soon as COVID restrictions allow.

Community Use

MCI has worked with other organizations to deliver their programming, activities and services in line with our project charter. The community room, seminar room and common space are regularly scheduled for meetings, events, classes, workshops and other activities.

Through our community driven programming, MCI has partnered with NECRC for the Annual North End Hamper initiative. MCI acted as a central location for community members to register for a hamper, as well a distribution center for pick up of the hampers. Recipients included MC Housing residents, students who attended programming at MCI, and the wider North End community.

The shared use of the building has raised awareness of Merchants Corner, brought more community members into the complex and help them feel welcome and comfortable at Merchants Corner.

In December 2019, MCI and CEDA hosted a gathering to honour Kathy Mallett, a long-time serving board member who dedicated many years of work in the community including the redevelopment of Merchants Corner. A Room Naming Ceremony was held to acknowledge Kathy's significant contributions to improving the quality of life in our city; the Community Room was renamed the Kathy Mallet Room, as well a plaque was installed to commemorate Kathy's life and work. Many of Kathy's closet friends, former colleagues and family attended the celebration.

Merchants Corner Staff and Program Planning

As part of our commitment to provide programming that is community driven, MCI contracted AMR in 2017 to conduct a comprehensive community consultation that will shape the programs and activities in the newly redeveloped Merchants Corner. The document was used in preparing proposals for future operations.

Merchants Corner Inc. was awarded a one-time grant from the Winnipeg Foundation to move our Community Consultation Report into action. This 12-month project allowed MCI to hire two positions outlined in the 2017 AMR Consultation report- a Community Coordinator, and a Community Connector.

With the support of the Winnipeg Foundation, MCI was able to hire three local members to carry-out these positions Shannon Bunn as our Community Coordinator, and Roberta Greyeyes and Mike Maple as our Community Connectors.

Conclusion

Our sincere gratitude goes to the community and Coalition Partners who are the reason the Merchants Corner project exist. The board of directors will continue to work closely with you to ensure that this project will reflect the vision of our community and be a catalyst for the continued healing of our residents. Much appreciation goes to the board members for participating and shaping the vision for Merchants Corner. The attendance of board members and partner staff at board meetings and careful oversight is much appreciated. We would also like to thank the developers UWCRC and WHRC, our architect Mistecture, our construction manager Penn Co., and administrative partner NECRC for their work on the project. We acknowledge the work of our fundraising committee and funders for their generous support for the project. A special thank you to Manitoba Housing for their contributions.