

by Jonas Lehrman

ON POSTCARD

It is often enlightening to check the picture postcards on sale at local outlets to find out what buildings and views are considered attractive and imageable. It may be even more instructive to consider why these images have their particular appeal to the public mind. Sometimes the building illustrated is not one that an architect with an educated taste may have chosen, but almost invariably the building has some memorable aspect about it, whether or not it is supported by some additional historic or symbolic significance.

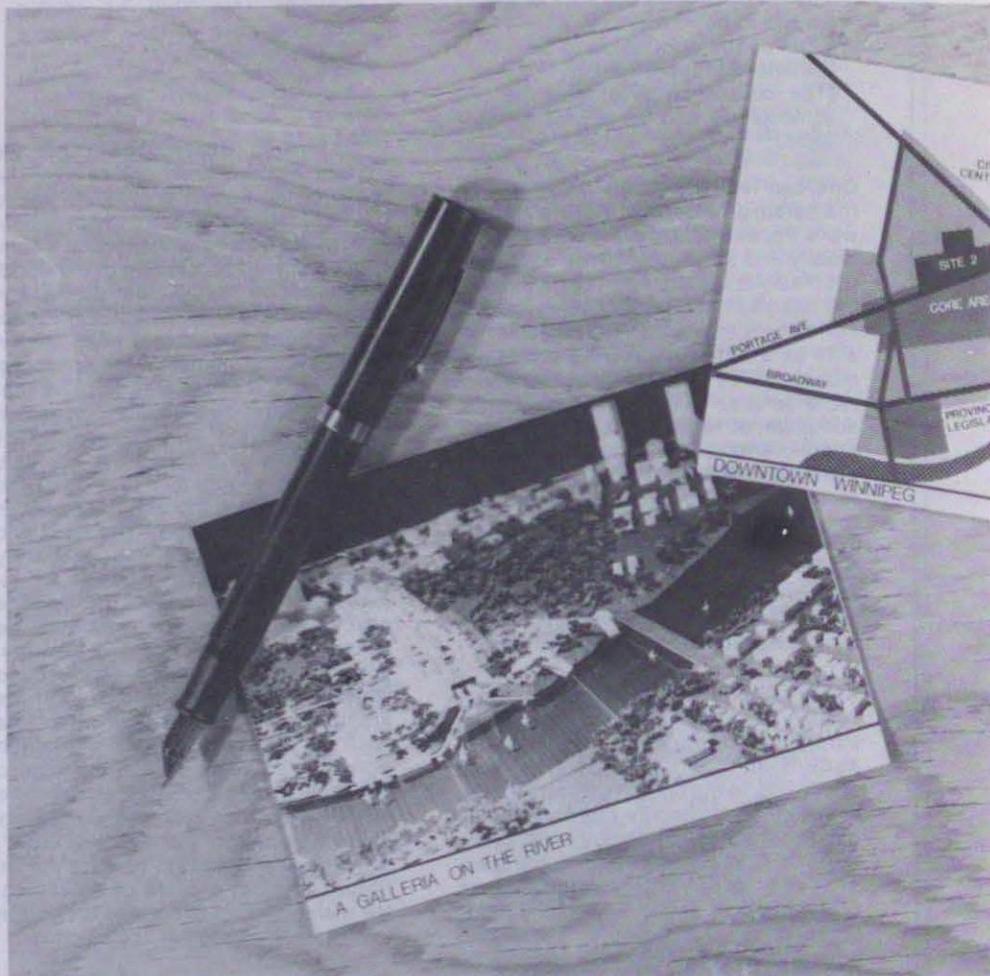
It is also illuminating to see how often a place, rather than a particular building, has caught the public imagination; a place perhaps not of the quality of the Piazza San Marco in Venice, but perhaps like Toronto's Nathan Phillips Square or Victoria's Bastion Square.

Unfortunately, Winnipeg does not possess such a place. The need is currently met by one or other of the large downtown department stores, shopping centres or cafes. But people should not be under pressure to buy something, even coffee, if they merely want to indulge the very human desire to sit and watch other people go by.

Recognising this need, students in the Pre-Masters Regular class in the University of Manitoba's Department of Architecture formed groups to develop a proposal for a central place, or roofed public plaza, in the context of a specific location of the downtown area of Winnipeg. The Urban Room was to be easily accessible yet free of vehicles, while providing a place for people to meet in a climate controlled environment.

Inherently attractive to undertake as was this project, it was no mere flight of fancy unrelated to 'the real world'. The City of Winnipeg needs such a place, the downtown core has many underdeveloped sites containing one and two storey structures and parking lots, and the current \$96 million Core Area Initiative provides *inter alia* the facility for property acquisition.

Each of the six groups in the class had a distinctive idea to offer. What follows are illustrations of two of the projects, with written descriptions by the group involved.



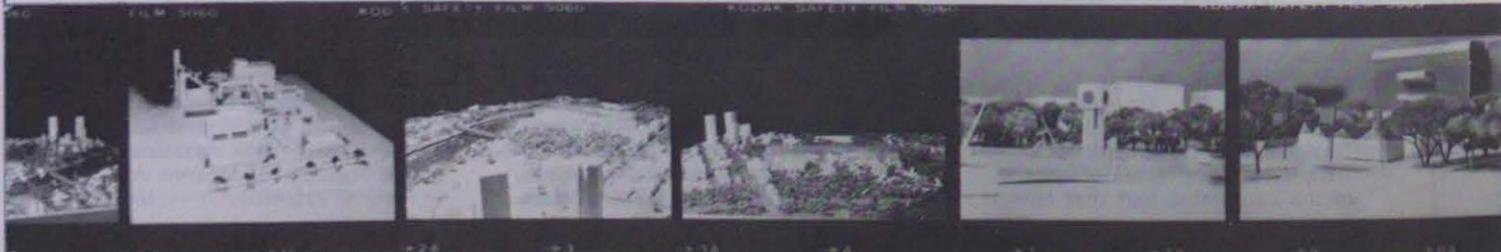
A GALLERIA FOR WINNIPEG

D. Davidson, M. Krapez, P. Petkau, B. Sparrow

In providing a central meeting place for Winnipeg, it was decided that this facility could not only fulfill this function but also utilize many potential, existing, but unrealized amenities. The CN railyards were seen as a symbolic entrance to the site and structure, which extends the axis that terminates in a marina, and visually terminates in the ruins of St. Boniface cathedral, an important landmark in Winnipeg.

The space within the gallery could be utilized on a year round basis, with a mixed use infrastructure to attract users and provide something of a population base. This would consist of shops, residential/hotel, squares, trees, interior gardens, all of which connect to a terraced development on the exterior. Riverboats and a monorail connect at the east end of the facility.

River development is extensive, allowing for maximum access to the river's edge. Winter activities could extend from the structure to the river surrounding park.



S AND PLACES

University of Manitoba
Urban Design 1982

a number of defined districts: The Bay-Eaton's corridor; Old Market Square; the medium-high density housing around the Cumberland area; the Portage and Main financial district; and so on. The site we have chosen possesses the potential of acting as a central communicating link for all of these places. It has a ready clientele of residential, business, shopping, university and visiting people. We have re-inforced each of these activities at the periphery of our site to increase their density and have then provided a variety of passive or active areas with spaces of varied character. Included are fast food outlets and a beer garden, a tram stop and bus shelter, a speaker's corner, a sculpture garden, an amphitheatre, a carillon and a clock-tower. Some activities provided for include jogging, ice and roller skating, outdoor chess, an artists' bazaar, and playing fields.

One major part of our proposal is to relocate the Free Press newspaper offices and printing plant in a new building on the corner of Portage Avenue and Colony Street and to renovate the existing building to provide studio and office space for Winnipeg's cultural groups such as the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the Contemporary Dancers, various ethnic groups, theatre companies, film companies and so on. The ground floor of the building would have public spaces for reading rooms, lounges, billiards, and a room for chess and other board games.

We feel that the proposal submitted would increase the desirability and amenity of living, working, shopping and visiting in the city center.

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to search for a downtown site. This also inherently satisfied some major criteria for a 'meeting' place.

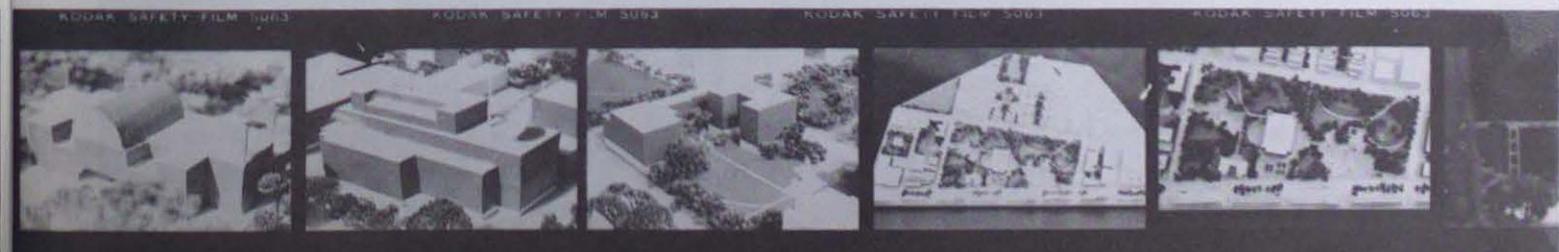
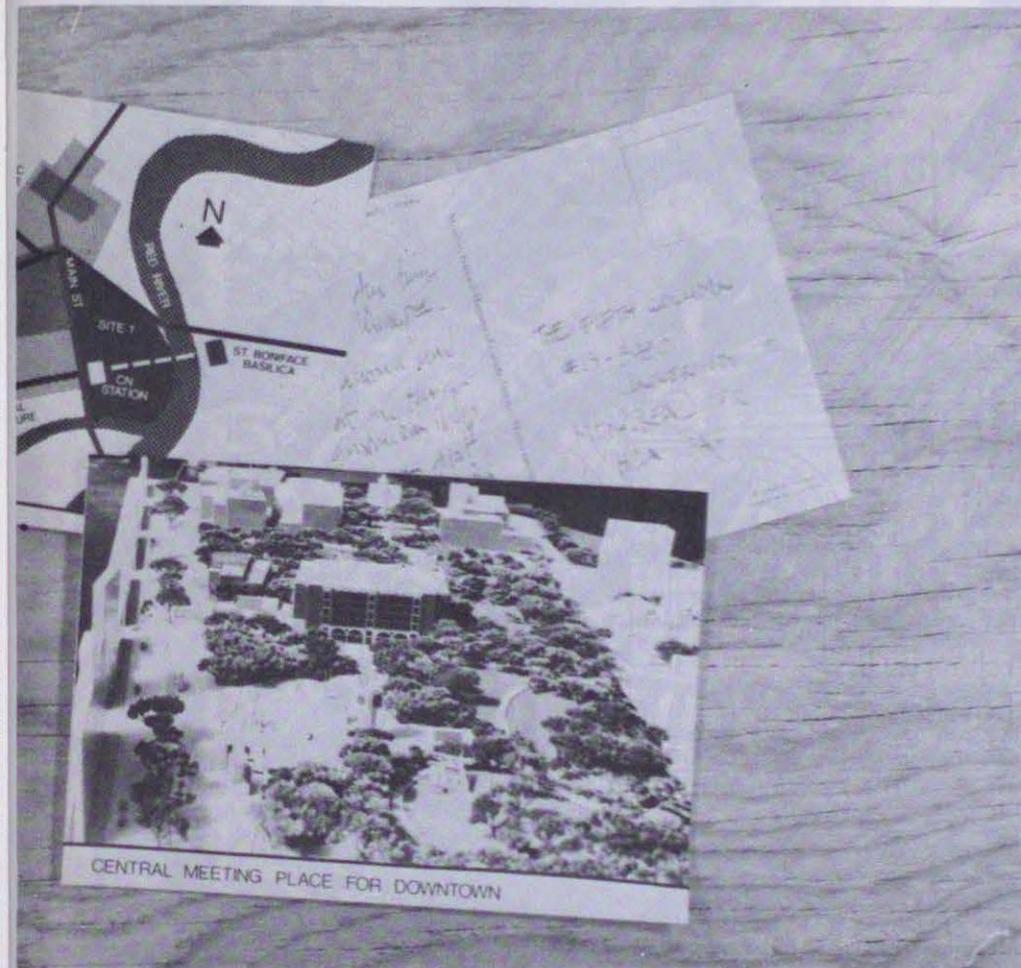
The site we eventually used - the north side of Portage Avenue - was chosen because it is a rapidly dying area near Winnipeg's heart. In 1982 approximately seventy-five percent of the land in the blocks between Portage Avenue and Ellice Avenue is parking lot or alley way; major growth in the Winnipeg core is presently taking place from Portage Avenue to the Convention Center.

Central Winnipeg is de-centralized into

A CENTRAL MEETING PLACE FOR WINNIPEG

Colin Friesen, Hendrik Herfst, Glenda Jowsey, Garth Norbraten, Bob Taylor

In our design we attempted to solve a real problem. We felt that the challenge of working towards a solution which dealt with the present deterioration of urban form in Winnipeg could excite our imagination although it held more constraints than the other directions we could have taken. A perceived need for a central development to re-establish downtown as a functional core lead us





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