

Winnipeg Free Press - PRINT EDITION

Surface parking lots face remake

Longboat, Artis partners in project

By: **Martin Cash**

Posted: **1:00 AM** | Comments: **0 (including replies)**



MIKE DEAL / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS [Enlarge Image](#)

This surface parking lot on Carlton south of Graham is one of two MPI owns downtown that are slated for redevelopment.

A one-year exclusive option to develop two large parking lots owned by Manitoba Public Insurance in downtown Winnipeg has been granted to a partnership between Longboat Development Corp. and Artis REIT.

There were few details Thursday of what might be built on the sites on Carlton Street south of Graham

Avenue and on the west side of Donald Street south of St. Mary Avenue, but mixed-use projects are expected.



Enlarge Image

MPI's Marilyn McLaren says the insurer intends to keep ownership of the land. (WAYNE GLOWACKI / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS ARCHIVES)

The one specific in MPI's announcement was the developments will have at least the same number of parking spots as now -- 329 -- but they will be in parkades and/or underground rather than on surface lots.

Scott Stephanson, president of Longboat, a development company owned by the Chipman family, said the concept proposal for the Carlton Street property includes some kind of public gathering space.

"This is a very exciting for us," Stephanson said. "Now, over the next six to nine months, we'll work diligently with our development team to come up with a plan that MPI will be on board with."

Earlier this week, some details of an expanded Winnipeg Convention Centre were revealed. That project will mean expansion of the convention centre on another large surface parking lot on the south side of York Avenue.

MPI CEO Marilyn McLaren said the Longboat/Artis presentation was the best of the 12 submissions in meeting the criteria laid out in MPI's call for expressions of interest. Central to that was a need to incorporate the principles envisioned for the downtown sports, entertainment and hospitality district (SHED).

She said MPI intends to maintain ownership of the land and may also invest in the development.

"We think it is a very good fit for the corporation," she said. "They (Longboat/Artis) will make sure everything they come up with in their plans will truly succeed. It will not be speculative."

The same developers are responsible for the \$75-million 311 Portage at Centrepont complex under construction across from the MTS Centre. The Chipman family are also partners in the ownership of the MTS Centre and the Winnipeg Jets hockey team.

The development of the two surface parking-lot properties is seen as key to the ongoing ambitious redevelopment of downtown.

"We are looking for vibrant mixed-use developments," said Ross McGowan, the CEO of CentreVenture, the group that has played a leading role in marshalling downtown development. "We hope it will include a major public plaza, specialty retail, food and beverage emporiums, commercial, office, perhaps even residential on the site."

McLaren made a point of expressing a desire that rental housing be a component of the project.

Stephano Grande, head of the Downtown BIZ, said these properties are crucial because they are right in the middle of downtown's four largest traffic generators -- the Graham Avenue transit mall, the MTS Centre, the Millennium Library and the convention centre.

"Getting the development right is so critical to creating the vibrancy that we're looking for," Grande said.

"There is the opportunity to have some storefront restaurants and retail, and we're hoping the developers are thinking about something wonderful at grade level. Parking has to be part of the mix. I think the office market is starting to pick up again, with vacancy rates at all-time lows and we would love to see housing for all income levels."

The developers have a year to come up with a proposal that MPI will sign off on. Whatever they do, they will be able to benefit from about \$8.3 million worth of street improvements made possible through additional property taxes generated from the new developments, but used exclusively in the SHED. Managed by CentreVenture, the street work will include new lights, paving, benches, signage and planters.

"The whole area will look like it has been planned together," McGowan said.

martin.cash@freepress.mb.ca

Find this article at:

<http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/business/surface-parking-lots-face-remake-160801105.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.