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# Driving downtown development

## CentreVenture unveils new plans at annual meeting

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*The Carlton Inn will be demolished and a new hotel might rise from the rubble.*

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Most annual meetings are spent looking back on the year that was while people anxiously await the adjournment so they can hit the food table and socialize.

CentreVenture Development Corp. did not host a typical AGM Tuesday morning.



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*Artist's conception of the ALT Hotel.  
(WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)  
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The downtown development agency used the occasion to unveil a pair of actual news announcements -- the decision to demolish the Carlton Inn on Carlton Street and to put out an expression of interest on the St. Regis Hotel this weekend.

The 108-room, low-budget Carlton property will meet the business end of a wrecking ball in August, Ross McGowan, president and CEO of CentreVenture, told 100 people gathered at the Metropolitan Entertainment Centre.

An expression of interest is already in progress and an announcement of what will become of the site, situated across St. Mary's Avenue from the Winnipeg Convention Centre, will be made in late fall. McGowan hinted strongly that a hotel might rise from the rubble.

The late 2012 purchase of the Carlton Inn for \$6.5 million was a "very significant" move for CentreVenture as part of the ongoing development of the Sports, Hospitality and Entertainment District (SHED), he said.

"We're trying to drive development north of the Convention Centre and increase the density of the downtown between (there) and the MTS Centre. A hotel can service conventions, Manitoba Hydro and the MTS Centre," he said, noting the ALT Hotel, currently under construction at the corner of Portage Avenue and Donald Street, will also service the downtown market.

Last November, convention centre officials unveiled a \$180-million plan to nearly double its size and make it the fourth-largest publicly owned convention centre in Canada behind Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver.

CentreVenture purchased the St. Regis Hotel on Smith Street last year and promptly closed down its beverage room and removed all of the video lottery terminals.

Just what will happen to the one-time trouble spot still remains to be seen, McGowan said.

"We have no preconceived notions. We're seeing what interest is out there from the development community. A number have expressed interest already. It could be a hotel, it could be anything. Let's see what creativity is out there in the marketplace. It's a great piece of property," he said.

CentreVenture is also working on a deal to redevelop the James Avenue pumping station.

It was difficult for McGowan, who has been on the job for six years, to mask his optimism about the prospects for downtown Winnipeg.

"Five years ago, we didn't have any cranes downtown. In the next two to three years, we could have as many as a half-dozen," he said.

The sites include the convention centre, the redevelopment of the MPI parking lot and the Glasshouse condominiums.

While most of CentreVenture's activity is focused within specific areas of downtown Winnipeg, it has also been providing some consulting services to the City of Brandon as that city attempts to reinvigorate its

own downtown.

"We're exchanging information and shortening their learning curve. It's a different scale but the problems are the same," he said.

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