

MEDO Plans Point Douglas Village

A campus-style development is in the works that will transform part of Winnipeg's downtown into a business and community space much like Osborne Village. **By Dave Wilkins**

The Métis Economic Development Organization (MEDO), the economic development arm of the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF), plans a three-phase redevelopment program near the heart of downtown Winnipeg that will feature housing, businesses and a community green space much like Osborne Village, says Blake Russell, MEDO's Chief Executive Officer.

"MEDO's two-pronged mandate is to generate profit and to reinvest a sizeable chunk of that profit back into the community for the benefit the Métis people and all Manitobans," Russell stresses.

This mantra has led MEDO to develop an ambitious plan to redevelop properties it owns or manages within the Point Douglas area into a campus-style community patterned after the successful Osborne Village.

"Self-sufficiency and self-determination are necessary goals for all Métis so that they may live better within our urban environment. Point Douglas has a rich history for Manitoba and the Métis people. Our development plan will realize our goals while benefiting the Point Douglas community and preserving and revitalization this historic setting," says Russell.

"Our strategy includes moving over 300 community-focused businesses into the neighbourhood. We want to create a mixed-use green-space environment serving as a destination and service centre for the community," says Ryan Paradis, MEDO's Manager of Planning and Development.

He adds that the Point Douglas Village plan includes redeveloping the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) and MEDO head office at 150 Henry Ave. (MEDO manages the building for the MMF) and adjacent properties owned by MEDO, and redevelopment of "MEDO Square," a nearby group of MEDO-owned properties on Sutherland Ave. (the former Naylor Publications building). The two redevelopments are adjacent to the Disraeli Freeway and will be connected via a green walkway.

Currently MEDO Square has several tenants including Bluesky Digital, Park Avenue Vending and Coffee, the Métis Child and Family Services Authority and

the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, among others. MEDO is in the process of adding new tenants.

Another aspect of the village is an urban park space between Thunderbird House and the Salvation Army. "MEDO Developments has been actively working with the Salvation Army, the Thunderbird House, Winnipeg Downtown BIZ, the

United Way, the Red Road Lodge, and the City of Winnipeg in the planning process.

"An urban park has little financial gain for MEDO, but it speaks to how we want to help the community—by beautifying the neighbourhood and making the area safe to visit and enjoy. It will be a place all Winnipeggers can visit and enjoy," says

Paradis.

Recognising MEDO for its unique approach to community development, it was recently nomination for a Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce Spirit of Winnipeg Award. The award recognizes innovation, and striving for better approaches and practices that contribute to the vibrancy of businesses and the city.

The Ambitious Three-Phase Plan

The first phase of MEDO's plan, already underway, is the redevelopment of the MMF and MEDO head office building on Henry Ave. and the adjoining parking lot that faces the Disraeli Freeway.

The second phase would see the addition of two more floors and two outside atriums for the head office, and construction of a village-style campus on a large, surface parking lot immediately north of the head office. The campus development will include an underground parkade, a central plaza, and more than 6, three- or four-storey buildings housing up to 50 small businesses—many of them Métis or aboriginal owned—and an estimated 225 high-quality residential units similar to the converted warehouse-style condos in downtown Winnipeg.

Russell estimates the campus development will cost between \$15 million and \$25 million, while the expansion of the MMF building will likely cost between \$8 million and \$10 million.

Phase three will be the redevelopment of a number of other properties in the Point Douglas area.



Aerial view of MEDO's Point Douglas redevelopment showing the underground parking, a pavilion with green space for events such as a farmers market, mixed-use walkway environments, and green roofing.

MMF and MEDO

The Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) is the government of the Métis people of Manitoba. The non-profit federation was founded in 1967 to represent the cultural, social and political interests of the Métis, says Blake Russell, MEDO's Chief Executive Officer.

The federation's head office has been located in South Point Douglas since 2004. The head office houses its key service delivery agencies and departments dedicated to maintaining and improving quality of life for its over 40,000 members and the estimated 100,000 Métis in the province. MMF services include Métis Child and Family Services, Health and Wellness, the Adult Learning Centre, Métis Justice Institute, Community Housing Managers and the Provincial Recruitment Initiative.

Russell notes that the Métis have a long historical relationship with the City of Winnipeg. The original settlements within present-day Winnipeg were founded by the Métis. In 1855, the Council of Assiniboia appointed Métis William Ross the first Post Master for Red River. The postal service was operated out of Ross's home on Market Avenue. The land on which City Hall itself rests was gifted to Winnipeg by a Métis family in the early 1870s. The world famous and long-running Festival du Voyageur was co-founded by Métis George Forest in 1970.

Today, the Métis commitment to Winnipeg's community continues with such MMF programs as It's My Community Too in partnership with the City of Winnipeg. The federation also partners with many Winnipeg-based businesses on workforce training opportunities and works to provide affordable housing for many Winnipeg residents.

The Métis Economic Development Organization (MEDO) is the economic development arm of the MMF. "MEDO's purpose is to improve the quality of life for Métis people, fostering strong, healthy and self-reliant families, communities and businesses by understanding the barriers to Métis economic development, positioning people and businesses to take advantage of economic opportunities and helping build networks and partnerships. MEDO makes strategic business decisions based on generating profit and building capacity for the long-term sustainability of the Métis Nation within Manitoba and for all Manitobans," says Russell.

"Through the revenue generated by MEDO, our goal is to make the MMF self-supporting," he adds.

MEDO's property management and development arm, MEDO Developments Ltd., is a construction management and land development firm working with the public and private sectors to create large-scale opportunities for redevelopment and construction in the Manitoba marketplace. MEDO Developments is currently spearheading a project to develop housing, businesses and community green space for the Point Douglas area, much like Osborne Village.