

announce "24 HOUR SURVEILLANCE...WPS CCTV IN EFFECT." The atrium near the mall's Ellice Avenue entrance is lined with knee-high planters—perfect for sitting and especially necessary for elderly mal-goes—but mall security has covered them with bold red and black signs that read "PLEASE DO NOT SIT ON THE PLANTERS" and threaten "CHARGES UNDER THE TRESPASS TO PROPERTY ACT." Each year since Idle No More, grassroots rallies have been held in the mall denouncing mall security's treatment of Indigenous peoples. Carrying signs, waving flags, and beating drums, people deliberately sit on the planters.

For Julie, a community organizer in the neighbourhoods north of Ellice Avenue—an area sometimes known as the Central Neighbourhoods, which includes Central Park, Centennial, and West Alexander—Portage Place is a major flash point in the battle over Winnipeg's city centre that pits poor, working-class, Indigenous, and people-of-colour residents against capital bent on catering to affluent white suburbanites. Julie, who is in her forties, has worked for a number of community organizations in the Central Neighbourhoods, including an immigrant and refugee social service organization; an advocacy group for incarcerated women; and, most recently, a grassroots community development corporation. More and more, Julie said, city-centre residents rely on Portage Place and downtown dollar stores to obtain the basic necessities of life, especially now that neighbourhood grocery stores have largely abandoned the city centre. "Where do people shop in Centennial?" said Julie. "There's no place for people to shop in Centennial, with the closing of Reddiger's, and the closing of Extra Foods that was on Cumberland, there's really no place, and so people now are shopping at Dollarama, they're shopping at Giant Tiger, people go to Portage Place to shop."²⁶⁷ Julie dismissed the imaginary dividing line—often invoked by CentreVenture—between the supposedly commercial downtown and the residential inner city as concealing this reality: "I think a lot of the people that are living in Central Park, they don't register for a lot of these [pro-business] organizations," said Julie. "I think they're invisible for a lot of people." As Julie's comments show, those who assume the existing city-centre community is present, human, and valuable—rather than disdainful and disposable—tend to perceive the dominant bloc's intense policing and displacement as an inscrutable, aggressive affront, neither a necessary nor a reasonable way to improve the city for anyone.

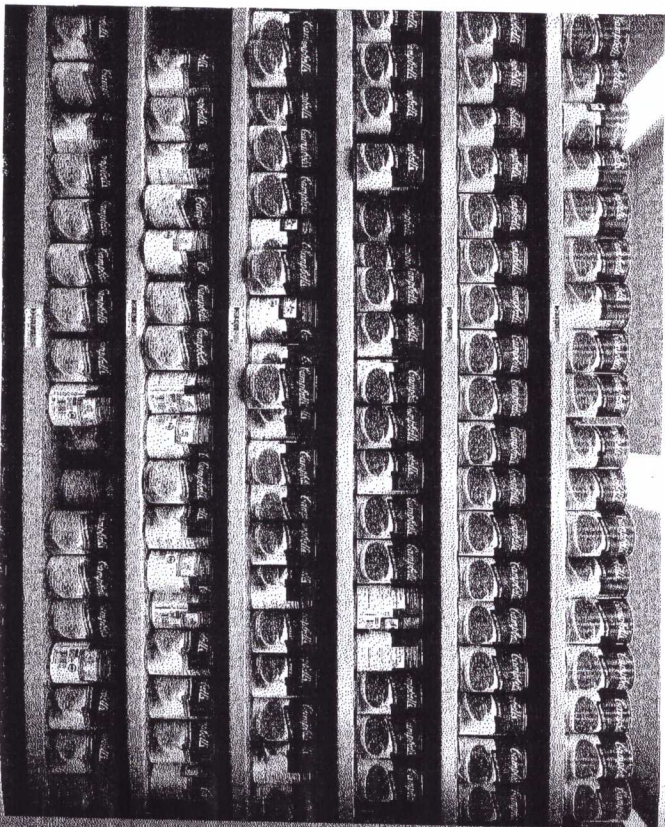
Winnipeg's city centre, as this brief sketch indicates, is already a place where the lives of thousands of families, children, elders, and parents take place. It is a territory that is crucial to the sustenance of life itself, where children and elders are cared for, where basic necessities—affordable groceries, hot food, children's toys, diapers, furniture, health care—are procured, and where people meet to socialize with one another. In this way, it is a crucial site of social reproduction, the whole set of mundane activities necessary to maintaining human life. Mapping this geography—however fleetingly—exposes

the racism of CentreVenture's common sense hierarchy of people and places that matter. It also, perhaps, indicates the possible contours of a radical development vision aimed at maintaining and expanding space for life itself—rather than for capital accumulation—through which infrastructure for giving birth, educating children, feeding families, and housing the elderly becomes the measure of urban progress.

teenagers, and elders picking through racks of shirts, jackets, and boots, and browsing aisles of fruit, bread, and canned goods—are by far the busiest places on Portage Avenue.

One of the liveliest corners of the SHED is Ellice Avenue and Hargrave Street, home to a large medical clinic and to the Quest Hotel, which bills itself as an “independent living facility providing accommodations for senior and/or tenants with special needs as well as First Nations medical access.” The lobby of the Quest buzzes with people of all ages—children run around, elders chat on couches—and the dining room offers a popular hot buffet. Posters in the lobby speak to a northern First Nations audience, advertising weekly buses departing the Quest for places such as Easterville Junction (450 kilometres north of Winnipeg, near Chemawawin Cree Nation), and upcoming membership meetings for northern First Nations. Angela, the community organizer I spoke with, pointed out that CentreVenture systematically targets the most visible clusters of Indigenous peoples on city streets, and predicted that once CentreVenture shut down the St. Regis and the Carlton Hotels, the Quest would, sooner or later, be the next target.

Spaces of sustenance. Sports, Hospitality, and Entertainment District, Winnipeg, ca. 2018.



Across the street from the Quest is Portage Place, the shopping mall—formerly owned by multinational corporation Cadillac Fairview and now owned by Vancouver-based Peterson Group—built by Lloyd Axworthy and the CAI after co-opting the people’s development vision articulated by the rail relocation movement in the 1970s and 1980s. Above all else, Portage Place is a bricks-and-mortar manifestation of public funding stolen—out of day cares, affordable housing, and community health clinics—from the people of Winnipeg’s city centre. In a fitting twist, however, high-end retailers and restaurants catering to suburbanites have largely abandoned the mall since the 1980s, and it has increasingly come to serve the requirements of the city-centre community as it actually exists. Among other things, Portage Place now offers several dollar stores, a youth break-dancing non-profit, and a welfare office.

Portage Place is a modern-day successor to the Main Street strip in certain geographical imaginings of the city. “I saw you one last time in Portage Place,” Trevor Greeyes writes in his poem “The Strip,” about a woman the protagonist met years earlier on Main Street.



the 1980s—is becoming commonplace, says the head of the city's arms-length development agency." The *Globe's* business section heralded CentreVenture for "helping to drive up property values" and noted "Winnipeg was the third-fastest growing commercial real estate market in the country, posting a 16.8 percent return for 2012."²⁸ "We're now seeing national and international developers coming to town," McGowan told the *Free Press* a few months later, "and they're game-changers."²⁹

ON THE NEW FRONTIER

As CentreVenture deployed its "small management" operation against specific people and places in Winnipeg, it demonstrated the way in which abstract capitalist processes such as turnover time can come to depend heavily on the specific cultural, and especially racial, histories, customs, and dynamics of different places. In its attempt to manage a risky commodity phase—in addition to hotel shutdowns, increased policing, and even a proposal to give a \$10,000 public subsidy to anyone purchasing a city-centre condo—CentreVenture offered weekly "downtown urban living tours" to drum up interest among real estate agents and prospective condo buyers. The tours confronted urban-wing representatives with the actually existing people and places of the city centre, revealing how they are troubled or comforted by particular material intersections of race, class, and physical appearance, and exposing—more concretely than any press release or newspaper article—the rubric against which the dominant bloc judged various parts of the city.

One afternoon in the summer of 2013, eight people—five real estate agents and three CentreVenture employees—took a tour led by Jon, a CentreVenture employee in his thirties who dutifully guided the group west down Portage Avenue from a business plaza at Portage and Main.³⁰ Portage Avenue bustled with people, including lanyard-marked office workers, bus stop crowds in dirty sneakers, and small groups sitting on concrete planters parhanding. After guiding the tour past a group of the latter, Jon stopped in front of the MTS Centre and turned the tour's gaze across the street to the construction site where a crane towered over a turn-of-the-twentieth-century bank's columned facade. This was where the new "Bargain World" would have opened several years ago, Jon told the tour; if McGowan had not flown to Toronto to tell the "Bargain World" executives to forget the idea, "How would you like it if you had a dollar store right in the middle of your downtown," said Jon, imitating McGowan's plea to the developer. Having barely escaped that fate, Jon went on, the land was now the future home of the Chipmans' CentrePoint complex, the "impetus," said Jon, for CentreVenture's TIF zone. "It represents everything we're trying to do," Jon explained, saying that CentrePoint would be "mixed-use" and exemplify quality design. The realtors nodded in agreement.

Before moving on, Jon pointed to a boarded-up storefront two doors down from the CentrePoint construction site, the former "4-Play" bar and restaurant—"a horrible

name for a bar," Jon pointed out—and said there were plans for a "microbrewery" there. One of the realtors asked about a store, O'Calcutta, that sat immediately next door to CentrePoint and looked a little rough around the edges. "That's where you can get a John Lennon t-shirt and a bong," Jon said with a kind of light-hearted contempt. The realtors giggled. "John Lennon t-shirt and a bong," they repeated nervously. Jon tried to reassure them by saying that the owners of the O'Calcutta building "would get a great price" when they sold.

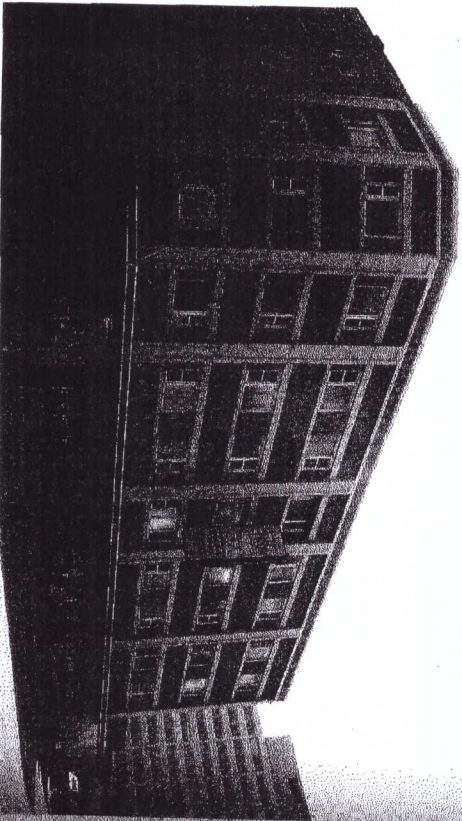
Jon guided the tour a few steps farther and pointed to an abandoned building across the street. He said that a "major financial institution" had recently committed to the space. "They've told us it's definitely not the Dollar Store, or," he corrected himself, "the Cash Store" (a Canadian payday-loans chain). Jon turned down Donald Street, past the Bargain Store, one of the many large dollar stores already doing business in the area. "It's not really what you want to see across from your NHL arena," said Bethany, a CentreVenture employee carrying a sign that read "TIME TO LIVE HERE" and featured a picture of a suited white man superimposed on to Waterfront Drive. CentreVenture, Bethany said, is "trying to work with the building's owner to get something in there that we want to see."

The tour turned south off Portage Avenue, behind the MTS Centre. Stopping in front of a huge parking lot, Jon spoke about the towers planned for the site. "This is going to be the keystone development," he said, pointing at the parking lot. He talked about "linkages" and "connections" between the future towers and CentrePoint, the Glasshouse Skylofts, and the MTS Centre. Jon told the tour that there would be a large outdoor public space incorporated into the development, for people to gather in "when the Jets win the Stanley Cup." "We've also purchased the Carlton Hotel," Jon added, the Carlton visible across the parking lot. Jon said that the Carlton would be replaced with a larger, much more luxurious hotel. "The church, too, can you buy that?" asked one of the realtors, pointing toward an old church at the end of the parking lot. "No," Jon explained, "it's a national historic site." "Is there a shortage of hotel space, or just too many crappy old hotels?" asked another realtor. Since the purpose of the convention centre expansion is to attract bigger conventions, Jon replied, the area will also need bigger hotels. "We need the hotels to get the conventions." The realtors nodded. "Is this where the screens are going to be?" one of the realtors asked Jon, who nodded. The realtor—who was then selling the Chipmans' Glasshouse Skyloft condos—enthusiastically explained that huge outdoor TV screens would show hockey games there one day. "Just Google SoPo." "We've sold sixty units already," another Glasshouse realtor chimed in, adding that young professionals were extremely interested in SHED condos.

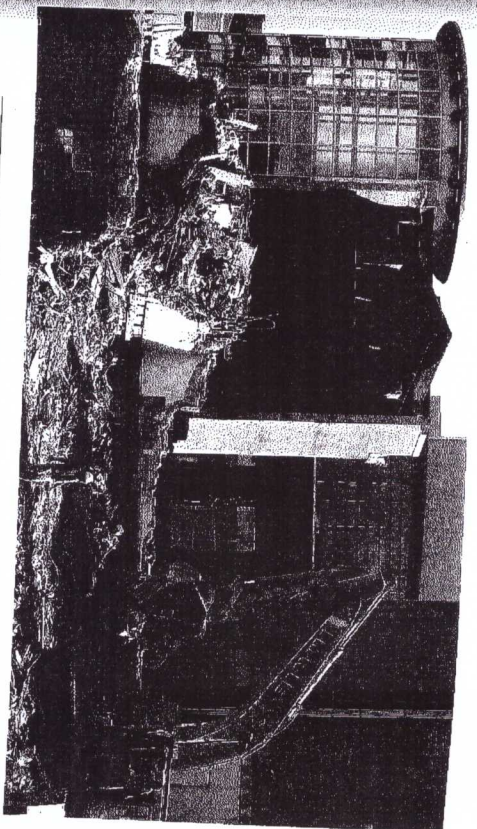
The tour headed into a nearby shopping mall where an elaborate simulated Glasshouse Skylofts condominium—complete with stylish clothes in the closet and big photographically books on the coffee table—had been set up. Jon announced that this was the end of the tour. Realtors eagerly guided prospective buyers through the suite, distributing

corruption allegations, which focused on Katz's activities in the same year—by way of explaining City Council's almost \$7 million commitment. CentreVenture demolished the Carlton in the summer of 2013 and offered no relocation program for residents of either the Carlton or the St. Regis, emphasizing that both had provided “short term” to “medium term” housing. “There are sufficient spaces in the other hotels nearby to handle the (two) losses,” McGowan told reporters when pressed to explain CentreVenture's responsibility for the loss of over 200 low-income housing units in the downtown.³¹ CentreVenture would later transfer the hands under the Carlton to the Chipman family, who in partnership with the billionaire Richardson family and the billionaire Gagliardi family (the Vancouver-based owners of the NHL's Dallas Stars) would replace the Carlton with a \$400 million luxury condo, hotel, retail, and office complex—dubbed “True North Square”—for which they received over \$20 million in public subsidies, including millions of dollars over and above their SHED TIF subsidies.³²

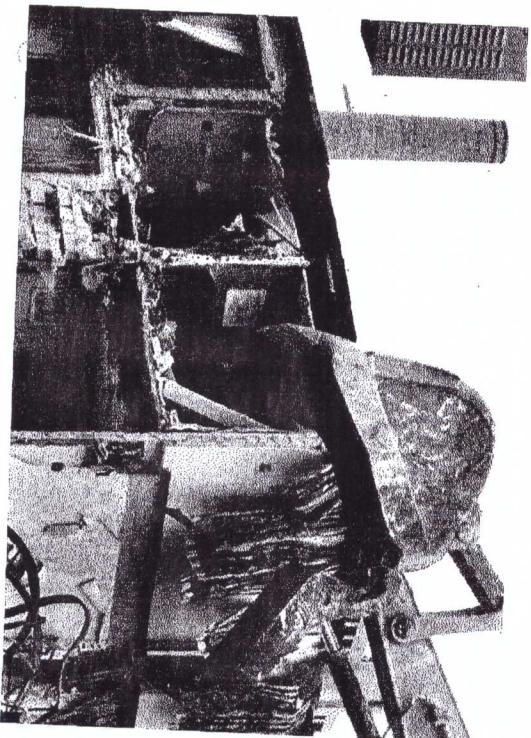
Although CentreVenture handled the St. Regis and Carlton shutdowns less than sensitively, it was not until February 2013 that public criticism of CentreVenture's scorched-earth approach to the SHED seemed to galvanize. On February 22, 2013, McGowan appeared on CBC radio to announce that CentreVenture was in negotiations—which would ultimately fail—with the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission (MLCC)



Clearing the city: The St. Regis Hotel, after being shut down by CentreVenture and Fortress Real Developments Inc., Smith Street at Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, ca. 2018.



Destruction in advance of the Chipmans' CentrePoint complex, Portage Avenue at Donald Street, Winnipeg, ca. 2012. Photo by Joe Bryska, Winnipeg Free Press, September 15, 2012. (Courtesy of Winnipeg Free Press)



CentreVenture demolishes the Carlton Inn, Carlton Street at St. Mary Avenue, Winnipeg, ca. 2014. Photo by Wayne Glowacki, Winnipeg Free Press, April 21, 2014. (Courtesy of Winnipeg Free Press)

consultation mechanisms would give community residents a voice in determining how TIF funds could be best used to address the needs of the surrounding community, such as by investing it in affordable housing for the area's lower-income residents.²¹ The CCPA also noted that the Manitoba School Board Association opposed the taking of revenue from public education for private developers in the name of "community revitalization," arguing that "schools themselves are important players in building stronger communities, particularly in marginalized areas such as Winnipeg's inner city."²² Premier Selinger and the NDP Government did not acknowledge such criticisms, sticking steadfastly to the urban-wing ideology that downtown capital investment of any sort held universal benefits for the region.

By late 2012, CentreVenture had put in place everything it needed to take action on behalf of the Chipmans, Thomsons, Germaines, Ledohowskis, and the rest of their class. The authority had taken on the task of reorganizing the urban wing into a new coalition (the "Downtown Council"), drafted a plan of action (the *Portage Avenue Development Strategy*); drummed up renewed support from media and politicians; and secured a new source of financing to carry out its plan (the province's first TIF zone). This was community organizing—in the politically neutral sense of the term—at its finest.

In the course of doing so, CentreVenture reframed an eleven-block area around the MTS Centre as a place of exceptional importance to the city's future, where usual levels of tolerating difference would no longer be exercised, and existing inhabitants would no longer be welcome. In essence, this was a redrawing of the city's apartheid geography. This idea, which rolled easily off the tongues of politicians, journalists, and CentreVenture officials, demotized existing residents (widely understood to be Native but rarely acknowledged as such) as "drunks," "panhandlers," and "vagrants," and celebrated future inhabitants (widely understood to be white but rarely acknowledged as such) as "families," "professionals," "students," and "tourists." Existing inhabitants were charged with taking the city away from its proper occupants, who—with the help of strong-willed and visionary leadership—would soon regain it. Popularizing this feeling about the city's past, present, and future would remain a key way of justifying endless public transfers—of land and money—into the pockets of billionaires.

REDRAWING THE LINE

Newly flush with cash, CentreVenture embarked on its "mall management" vision, which soon revealed itself as a direct attack on existing inhabitants of the area. On November 15, 2012, CentreVenture announced the first major expenditure of its new \$25 million SHED fund: it had purchased the St. Regis, one of the hotels near Portage Avenue that in recent years had come to host more and more of the "clientele" displaced from the Main Street strip. The St. Regis's 101 rooms predominantly hosted families from First Nations communities visiting the city for medical care, according to media

accounts and CentreVenture's own press release. The St. Regis's bar had also been a long-time hub of the Winnipeg Two-Spirit community.²³ The St. Regis happened to sit on two blocks from the Chipmans' under-construction CentrePoint boutique hotel, office, and luxury condo development, which McGowan would soon describe as "the iconic face of the SHED, ground zero for the redevelopment...the spark that lights the fire throughout the district."²⁴

CentreVenture announced that it would immediately shut down the St. Regis's bar and lease the hotel back to its previous owner—prominent Winnipeg developer Karam-paul Sandhu—until a redevelopment deal could be brokered.²⁵ The purchase of this downtown hotel and parking lots is a major achievement for CentreVenture and the City of Winnipeg. Mayor Katz said of the deal, "In order to attract public and private investment, an Investment Protection Strategy became the backbone of our Portage Avenue Development Strategy," said McGowan in a prepared statement about the purchase. In a speech to local realtors days after purchasing the St. Regis, McGowan spoke about CentreVenture's recent activities in the SHED: "This has sent a clear message to the private sector that a new era has emerged, that we want a great downtown, and that if you choose to invest here, our standards have been raised and your investment will be supported and protected."²⁶ While CentreVenture's purchase did not lead to the immediate removal of the existing community, it essentially put the future of First Nations families in the area at risk—a harbinger of greatness and high standards in the eyes of the Chipmans and their class.

CentreVenture and Mayor Katz were initially careful not to articulate this dynamic in public explanations of the St. Regis buyout, but local newspaper editors were not. The *Free Press* lauded CentreVenture for facilitating the removal of the St. Regis—in effect renewing the spirit of urban apartheid that treated Native people south of Portage Avenue with extreme hostility—and described its inhabitants in virulently derogatory terms. "The troublemakers, addicts and aggressive panhandlers may try to move to nearby upscale hotels," the *Free Press* warned, casting CentreVenture in the role of hotel owners, police and several agencies to prevent that from happening.²⁷ The editorial long march of forced hotel closures, and went on to call for "real solutions...to lift the homeless, addicted and mentally ill out of their misery." "Otherwise," the newspaper concluded, "they will remain a permanent stain on the conscience of the community."²⁸ What the *Free Press* failed to acknowledge, of course, was that a century and a half of racial capitalist development—in the lineage of the agenda it celebrated—had produced the misery it bemoaned and systematically prevented the realization of proposals that would have alleviated it.

McGowan later confirmed that a war-like mentality was indeed at the root of CentreVenture's actions: "Part of the rationale for buying the St. Regis was that when we were

to fund other improvements in the area. "It can be done," the *Free Press* continued. "All it takes is an agreement to act decisively for the greater good of the community."¹¹ The *Sun* pushed CentreVenture to go even further with its "mall management" strategy. "[C]onsider making the area a 'zero-tolerance' zone for public intoxication, panhandling and vagrancy," the *Sun* wrote. "Until these crime-related issues are addressed first, no amount of boutique hotels or TIF zones will make people go downtown and stay downtown—especially after 5:30 or 6 p.m." "These beverage rooms and hotels," the *Sun* went on, "are simply feeder zones that fuel the downtown's demise."¹²

Less than a year later—in what many Winnipeggers consider a miraculous advancement for the city—Winnipeg's city centre received an investment that gave CentreVenture's SHED plans a new, high-profile context. On May 20, 2011, the Chipman family, in partnership with billionaire David Thomson—chairman of Thomson Reuters and Canada's richest person¹³—announced that they had purchased the NHL's Atlanta Thrashers and were in the process of relocating the team to Winnipeg for the upcoming 2011–12 NHL season. The new NHL franchise—which would bring back the old "Winnipeg Jets" name (the original Winnipeg Jets departed for Phoenix, Arizona, in 1995)—would play in the MTS Centre. A month after the NHL announcement, the formerly anonymous developer who had originally prompted CentreVenture to draft its *Portage Avenue Development Strategy* was revealed to be the Chipman family themselves, under their Longboat Development Corporation banner.

CentreVenture announced that the Chipmans would construct the first major development in the new district—a 20-storey, \$75 million hotel, restaurant, retail, and office tower complex called "CentrePoint"—on the land CentreVenture had purchased in order to thwart the arrival of the "discount retailer." McGowan had reportedly travelled to Montreal to convince the Germaine family, described by the Manitoba media as "the Chipmans of Quebec," to build a hotel on the site in partnership with the Chipmans. It was reported that the tower would include a 150-room hotel owned by the Germaine family; office space for the Winnipeg headquarters of Alberta-based resource extraction consultants Stantec Consulting; a 450-stall parking garage; and restaurant and retail space.¹⁴ City Council, through its Winnipeg Parking Authority, provided \$5 million for the project.

Politicians of all stripes hailed the publicly funded boutique hotel as evidence of a reanchoring victory. "Downtown Winnipeg's historic comeback as an exciting destination for Manitoba families and visitors alike is in full swing," Manitoba's NDP premier Greg Selinger enthused. "This major private investment next to the home of the reborn Winnipeg Jets," Selinger continued, advancing a vision of Manitoba state-capitalism reminiscent of the 1960s Manitoba Development Fund, "demonstrates the kind of private-sector confidence that results when governments, agencies and community partners work together toward a shared vision of renewal."¹⁵ Formerly "one of the most active members"¹⁶ in the grassroots resistance to the CAI, who fought to privilege

affordable housing and education over the dominant regional bloc's vision of corporate redevelopment in the 1980s, Selinger now chose to educate the public on the importance of public funding for large capitalist development projects aimed at tourists. The reversal of Selinger's opinion, after gaining state power, indicates the hegemonic power of the urban wing's subsidies-for-capital agenda.

The next day, it was announced that local hotelier Leo Ledohowski—owner of the multinational Canad Inns chain—would receive \$3 million in state funding to turn a theatre formerly owned by CentreVenture into a "state of the art conference, banquet and meeting facility." CentreVenture had sold the 90-year-old Metropolitan Theatre (or the MET) to Ledohowski four years earlier for a mere \$100,000. The \$20 million development would add two new bars and a large banquet space to the SHED. "I think many high school graduations will be held here," Ledohowski told the *Free Press*. Winnipeg City Council and the Province of Manitoba each gave Ledohowski \$1.5 million for the project. "The province is demonstrating its confidence in the future of downtown Winnipeg," said NDP MLA Ron Lemieux. "The MET renovation project will create another star attraction for the city centre."¹⁷

Despite the urban wing's open excitement, and the announcement of almost \$100 million in new real estate investment in two days, the arrival of the NHL—which brought Centre—cast an anxious light on the still disinvested, heavily poor, working-class and Indigenous downtown. McGowan attempted to foment such anxieties in order to garner support for the SHED TIF zone, for which CentreVenture had yet to receive provincial support. "Think of television broadcasts on Portage Avenue," he told the *Free Press* soon after the NHL's return. "What's the backdrop to our international media exposure? Is it a surface parking lot or is it a vibrant district?"¹⁸ McGowan's take was accurate in some ways; the arrival of the NHL to Portage Avenue brought national, if not international, attention to the area.

The new spotlight amplified the anxieties of the urban wing. "The Winnipeg Jets are packing in the fans and sold out for years to come," Toronto-based The Canadian Press wrote in a nationally syndicated piece. "But does the return of the NHL hold the benefits for the city's troubled downtown boosters have always insisted would materialize?" It did not, according to The Canadian Press. "Boarded up windows, payday loans storefronts and dollar stores aren't going to draw tourists or suburb dwellers, who complain about panhandlers, drunks, litter and crime," continued the article, which was almost entirely framed around comments from McGowan. "The real challenge is changing the demographic of the people who frequent the area, a loaded issue but something that has to happen if new development is to work," says McGowan. "The piece concluded with comments from an unnamed "activist working on homelessness issues" who critiqued the dominant development vision. "It detracts from the work we're doing here," the activist told The Canadian Press. "Low income people need housing. They should be

country's so-called global cities, Winnipeg had long been considered a stable, low-risk, low-return market for investors and an ideal outlet during economic bust times. In an effort not to squander the opportunity, the urban wing of Winnipeg's dominant bloc leapt into action to coordinate a new round of regional planning. CentreVenture remained the redevelopment vehicle of choice for the urban wing in this phase, but its capacities were redirected. Rather than attempting to lure capital in general to an area of its choosing, as it had done on Main Street, CentreVenture followed specific capitalists to an area of their choosing, and then acted on their behalf to secure the area against financial risk.

The new planning phase was made public in a 2010 City Council meeting, where the city's Director of Planning, Property, and Development, Barry Thorgrimson, informed City Council that an unnamed real estate developer had requested a meeting with CentreVenture in autumn 2009, to discuss the developer's repatriations about a new Portage Avenue development he was plotting. "The developer's main concern with developing on Portage Avenue was related to protecting their significant investment," Thorgrimson continued. "In January 2010, CentreVenture assembled the Downtown Council to discuss issues surrounding our downtown and what needs to be done to protect private and public investment."²

This small "Downtown Council," acting in solidarity with the anonymous developer, would chart CentreVenture's course into the next decade. Unsurprisingly, the group consisted exclusively of long-time urban-wing members of the dominant regional bloc, including representatives of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce; Economic Development Winnipeg Inc.; Destination Winnipeg; two city-centre business improvement districts (BIDs); the Winnipeg Convention Center; and the WPS.

Meetings with the Downtown Council redirected CentreVenture's geographical focus away from the Main Street strip. "From those sessions," CentreVenture CEO Ross McGowan wrote in a 2010 report, "our vision and action plan will direct us as we 'Turn the Corner' to focus our revitalization efforts on another important artery—Portage Avenue." McGowan's report, entitled "Turning the Corner," included photographs of the new "revitalized" white-collar Main Street appearing in rear-view mirrors, while photographs of Portage Avenue—now referred to by CentreVenture as "Winnipeg's most significant street"—appeared through front windshields.

The Downtown Council's plan, it would later become evident, was not to attract capital in general to Portage Avenue, but to remake the area for a wealthier, more lucrative consumer. Like the old Main Street strip, Portage Avenue in the 2000s was not unprofitable; capital was accumulating and many people were getting rich from the existing landscape of low-income hotels, fast-food restaurants, bars, dollar stores, and payday loans outlets. But the largely poor, largely Indigenous human geography of this capitalist landscape was perceived as a threat. Existing inhabitants were considered incompatible with a new, more profitable city dependent on the consumption of people

who were understood to desire the kind of socially homogenous, sanitized, and controlled environments they'd grown accustomed to through various apartheid regimes.

McGowan presented CentreVenture's new *Portage Avenue Action Strategy*—later renamed the *Portage Avenue Development Strategy*—to City Council in the summer of 2010. It was another moment in which CentreVenture needed to justify ongoing operating funding and continued political support. Central to McGowan's presentation was the recognition that much if not most recent investment in the city centre had come from the state, rather than private capital. "While public investment is often the necessary catalyst of development, our real objective should be to attract and support private investment, the true indicator of economic success and community well-being," McGowan argued.³ "In order to achieve this objective it is essential that a comprehensive plan be in place—one that articulates a vision, that encourages and supports such investment and most importantly protects that investment." McGowan was emphatic: "This fundamental principle of investment attraction and protection is the cornerstone of the *Portage Avenue Action Strategy*."⁴ To attract public and private capital, McGowan vigorously defended, is required.⁵

Coming on the heels of the global financial crisis, the *Portage Avenue Action Strategy* dwelled on the fundamental fragility of capital accumulation. As Karl Marx explained in *Volume One of Capital*, capital accumulation is the perpetual cycling of value between the money form and the commodity form, whereby money is turned into commodities that are turned into even more money—also known as surplus value—in perpetuity. A key moment within this cycle is the time between capital investment and return on investment, the moment after money has been turned into commodities but before it has been turned back into surplus value. This moment is infused with uncertainty and anxiety for capitalists, since there is always a risk of not turning commodities back into even more money. In this case, the risk was that condominiums, hotel rooms, and banquet halls built in Winnipeg's city centre would not sell, or not sell fast enough. The speed with which this cycle moves—also known as turnover time—is extremely important to capital, for every day that value remains in the commodity form the investor effectively loses money.⁶

This "commodity phase," then, is a moment of tremendous fragility, and it can prompt capitalists to engage in heightened levels of social, political, and geographical intervention, which often takes the form of colonial violence. The same dynamic, for instance, characterizes the struggle over oil pipeline construction (which several of the millionaires and billionaires invested in Winnipeg's city-centre real estate also have a hand in). Oil producers can extract all the oil in the world, but if they can't get the oil to market, it's effectively worthless. Many things threaten capital's ability to turn commodities into money, but when the commodity is a segment of the built environment—because it cannot be picked up and moved—the character of the space surrounding the commodity