



Architect's rendering, Merchants Corner.

## **RENAISSANCE OF MERCHANTS CORNER - CREATING A NORTH END EDUCATION HUB**

An exciting, community-led development is taking shape in Winnipeg's North End. The Merchants Hotel, known as "the Merch," is now being redeveloped into an innovative educational and student housing complex called Merchants Corner. The three-storey building at 541 Selkirk Avenue was originally constructed in 1913 as a hardware store and converted in 1933 into the Merchants Hotel. What used to be a beer vendor and problem area known for rowdies and petty crime is becoming a beacon of hope for the community and a tipping point— socially and economically — in the future of Winnipeg's North End.

### **EDUCATION**

The building is part of an emerging North End educational hub on Selkirk Avenue that includes the University of Winnipeg's Department of Urban and Inner-City Studies, CEDA-Pathways to Education, University of Manitoba Inner City Campus, Urban Circle Training Centre, and the Aboriginal Education Directorate. In addition, Frontier College will offer literacy programs to pre-school children and their parents. Winnipeg Public Library staff will also program the community common space. Approximately 40% of area families are led by single parents, many of them young and Aboriginal. North End high school graduation rates are well below average at 55%, and in some neighbourhoods are as low as 25%.

The facility will offer an intergenerational education space for children, teens, mature students and family members of all ages. Youth will find role models and families will learn together. There is a trickle-down and trickle-out effect to successful education. As people in the community see their friends and family succeed, they will also be drawn to education. School readiness and high-school graduation rates will rise and university education will become normal, in an area where that is not now the case.

CEDA will support 300 students annually to graduate high school. Urban and Inner-City Studies expects its enrolment to double within five years to 450 students.

### **HOUSING**

The new facility will feature 30 affordable one, two and three-bedroom units, with priority for students with children. Makoosag Intergenerational Childcare Centre is located nearby on Selkirk Avenue. Housing and childcare are two crucial student supports.



## RETAIL ENTERPRISE

When Merchants Corner opens, the goal is to include a coffee shop and community kitchen.

## THE NUMBERS

The government of Manitoba, through Manitoba Housing and Community Development, has committed more than \$15 million to the project. The community is continuing to raise \$3.7 million to go towards capital costs, technology infrastructure and training spaces within the complex including the community kitchen and social enterprise café.

## THE BUILDING

The project and building were designed with extensive community consultation and are rooted in what the North End community has long wanted. The space is strongly influenced by Aboriginal values and educational practices, which reflect the demographics of the community. Elders Stan McKay, Stella Blackbird and Ann Callahan have helped guide the community vision for Merchants Corner.

## QUICK FACTS

- 15,000 square feet of education space
- 30 residential units (one to three bedrooms) with rent geared-to-income
- Coffee shop at street level to open Merchants Corner to the community

## KEY MILESTONES

- April 2012 – A community coalition of approximately 20 North End organizations including the North End Community Renewal Corporation, Urban Circle Training Centre Inc., The Selkirk Avenue BIZ, Andrews Street Family Centre, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad Inc., Community Education Development Association (CEDA), the University of Winnipeg Department of Urban and Inner-City Studies and SEED Winnipeg join forces to redevelop the Merchants Hotel.
- April 29, 2012—Merchants Hotel closes.
- 2014–2015—the government of Manitoba, through Manitoba Housing and Community Development, commits more than \$15 million to the project.
- Fall 2014—community begins active fundraising.
- Fall 2015—community seeks to reach \$3.7 million fundraising goal.
- September 16, 2015—community celebration to swing the sledgehammer: The original three-storey Merchants building is being gutted and converted. The exterior restoration is adhering to heritage principles. The adjoining one storey restaurant/ beverage room, constructed in the 1950s is being demolished to make way for the new addition.
- Early 2017 – anticipated grand opening.

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## HOW YOU CAN HELP

All financial gifts however big or small are appreciated. We are also seeking corporate donors willing to help furnish the educational and community spaces including computer equipment. Donations accepted on-line here:

[canadahelps.org/dn/18585](http://canadahelps.org/dn/18585)