Brandon MB
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• Major urban centres in Manitoba
  • Winnipeg pop 500,000
  • Brandon pop 46,000
  • Thompson pop 10,000
• Everitt & Ramsey 2002 writing about reviving inner city Brandon
Brandon MB, January evening
Some media

• Leaving Brandon
Hansel & Gretl Schnitzel Haus
Brandon MB

• A small, regional prairie city
• 46,000 pop with a 180,000 pop shopping area
• Built on agricultural servicing, rail facilities, food processing
• Economic growth has slowed
  • Farming declining in employment, east-west rail traffic in decline
  • City is distant from metropolitan heartlands at the core of the New Economy
Suburban Brandon

• Post 1960 growth moves to the suburbs
• Shift of middle-class residential to suburbs
• Development of suburban malls, plazas, big box campuses
• Hotels with indoor pools
  • Great way to allow rural folks to have winter getaways
Figure 1
Improvement districts in Brandon

1. The Town Centre
2. Former Eaton Store
3. Municipal Designation
4. Villa Louise
5. Playground
6. Pedestrian Bridge
7. Riverbank Centre
Inner Brandon

- Decline of traditional urban core of Rosser Ward
  - Still has 5500 people and 500 (mostly local) businesses
  - Some gentrifiers
  - Significant poverty, with a strong Aboriginal dimension
The Gallery

• Bulldoze 2 city blocks to build the Gallery, 1980.
• Inward-facing retail bubble with no street presence
  • Vacuumed the remaining businesses off the downtown streets
• Fails to halt inner city decline
• In economic trouble by the 1990s
Figure 2
Entrance to the Town Centre in downtown Brandon. Clock is original from Reesor's store, 1882. Also an example of BIA improvements.
Figure 3
View of Town Centre from East End. The remains of the Eaton's signage is hidden under street light and among trees.
Gallery/Town Centre

• Closure of Eaton’s 1999, occupancy crashes to 50%
• Mall changes hands 4 times, renamed and reflagged as Town Centre, renovated
• Becomes a medical-based service mall, with library and art gallery
• Regional Health Authority becomes a key tenant
  • Close to its inner city clients
Other Initiatives

• Business Improvement Association
  • Promotes $3m makeover of downtown streetscape
  • Promotes parades, festivals

• Brandon MHAC
  • Promotes heritage conservation
Other Initiatives

• Riverbank Inc
  • Promotes potential of nearby natural heritage

• Neighbourhood Renewal Corp
  • Promoting family settlement/housing in inner city
  • May lead to ‘dehousing’ of welfare-dependent folk
DENSE NESTING COVER - MIXED GRASS PRAIRIE RESTORATION

Dense Nesting Cover (DNC) which provides cover and protection for waterfowl and other animals, is a mix of several varieties of native grasses.

Native species are used because they have evolved to survive, with little maintenance, the extremes of our frigid prairie winters and the heat of summer.

Green Needle Grass

Switch Grass

Western, Slender & Northern Wheat Grass

Big, Little & Sand Bluestem

Prairie Sand Reed

Purple Prairie Clover

Indian Grass

Canada Wild Rye

Sideoats Grama


As you stand here, imagine what the prairie looked like when all that could be seen for miles was grass like this! This small stand of native grasses approximates the appearance of those miles of prairie prior to European settlement.

This stand of DNC was established with the generous financial help of Monsanto Canada Inc.
Brandon MB

• Suburbs gain a Canada Games sports complex
• Most of the city’s big cultural events and festivals happen at a suburban arena near the Shopper’s Mall
  • The Keystone Centre
Other possibilities

• Persuade University of Brandon to shift classroom and research space to the under-used core of the city
• Engender a more lively downtown arts/music scene
• Ask the University to help find some new directions for the downtown area
Conclusions

• Difficult for small towns to navigate their changed circumstances
• Brandon has a history of botched attempts at reviving its downtown
• Small agricultural town in an era of declining farm population
• Small prairie city remote from the pulse of the creative urban economy