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## Plan needed

By: Staff Writer

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WHEN the idea of building a new \$150-million football stadium in South Point Douglas was floated earlier this year, it was promoted as one of the best ways of developing a derelict part of the city and contributing to the rebirth of the downtown. Residents and urban theorists rejected the notion that a megaproject would solve the area's problems, but the debate became moot when the stadium's proponents decided to move to greener pastures at the University of Manitoba.

Fortunately, however, South Point Douglas's brief moment in the limelight has generated sustained interest in the opportunities and challenges of the historic area. Except for a handful of homes, the area is an ugly industrial wasteland with nothing to recommend it, but for two central assets: It's located on the shoulder of the downtown, and its southern boundary hugs the Red River, just north of Waterfront Drive and its stylish condos and lush riverbank landscaping. Location, as they say, is everything.

With the right mix of housing, recreation and commercial users, the area would be a natural and trendy extension of the downtown and a fitting bookend to the development at The Forks. The district needs a development plan, but mostly it needs developers with confidence and a vision of how a northern extension of Waterfront Drive could be incorporated into the fabric of Winnipeg's sprawling downtown.

CentreVenture, the city's downtown development agency, has proposed taking the area under its wing, claiming it has the expertise and track record needed to produce results. The agency is proposing that the downtown zoning bylaw be amended to include South Point Douglas, thereby expanding the size of the city's already large downtown.

It would be much simpler, however, if city council merely expanded the mandate of CentreVenture and any other programs that might benefit South Point Douglas, rather than gerrymandering the downtown to solve a temporary problem. The province's plan to introduce tax increment financing, which is meant to help decrepit areas that would not normally be developed without government assistance, will be available in Point Douglas, regardless if it is part of the downtown.

Defining the downtown and its boundaries is a tricky business, but few people think it should be bigger than it is now, since it would only lead to a dispersal of efforts and of the limited resources available. South Point Douglas is one of Winnipeg's oldest neighbourhoods. It requires a fresh face and a new look, regardless whether it is located in the downtown or not.

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