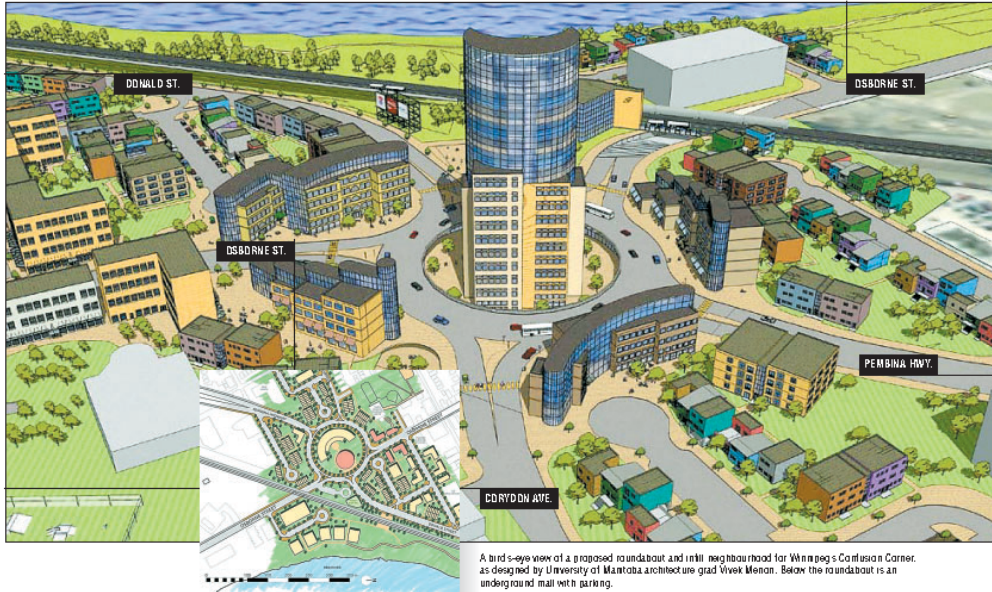


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PERSPECTIVE

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A bird's-eye view of a proposed roundabout and infill neighbourhood for Winnipeg's Confusion Corner, as designed by University of Manitoba architecture grad Vivek Menon. Below the roundabout is an underground mall with parking.

EXTREME MAKEOVER

Architecture students redesign city's biggest problem areas

By Mary Agnes Walsh

SOME of the coolest and most creative plans to revamp Winnipeg are born in a frenzied, cluttered mess of studios in the University of Manitoba's architecture building.

You've probably never heard of these plans, and you've probably shrugged off some of the ugly buildings, wacky intersections, and forsaken spaces students want to transform.

How about levelling Confusion Corner and rebuilding it as a funky neighbourhood with an **IKEA**? How about a world-class aquatic recreation centre on the floodway? What if the grungy, leaky, scary pedestrian tunnels under City Hall became a vibrant walkway connecting far-flung parts of the Exchange District?

While other cities have invested millions in beautiful, sometimes radical architecture, Winnipeg has lagged behind.

But there are signs it might be catching up, according to David Wily, dean of the architecture faculty. The glassy Millennium Library, the Esplanade Riel and the burgeoning debate over what kind of suburb should be built in Waverley West has turned people's attention to good design, arguably for the first time since the turn of the last century.

The U of M's would-be architects are quietly nudging that shift. The *Free Press* has chosen some of their most inventive design projects — five among hundreds — to highlight.

CONFUSION CORNER: AN URBAN WASTELAND

CONFUSION Corner isn't just Winnipeg's worst traffic oddity. It's an undeniably wasted space next to the third most densely populated urban neighbourhood in Canada.

Everyone curses Confusion Corner's traffic, no one walks there, and there are no homes, even though it's surrounded by some of the city's most hopping neighbourhoods.

Recent master's graduate Vivek Menon, now working for Winnipeg's MCM Architects, spent a year wandering the wasteland, chatting with city traffic engineers and planning a way to meld a major intersection with an infill neighbourhood that could better connect Osborne Village with Lord Robert and Riverview.

Menon didn't necessarily want to fix the confusion, though, which has become one of Winnipeg's most grudgingly beloved quirks. Instead, the crazy corner became the theme of a new neighbourhood.

Menon settled on a roundabout with a 14-storey office tower in the centre. Below is an underground mall with parking, and around the circle is a cluster of Times-Square-like commercial developments such as an **IKEA** and an **EMV**. Nearby is a big bus depot that incorporates a rapid-transit line planned through the intersection.

Townhouses and mixed-use buildings — that's offices or shops on the main floor and apartments or condos above — would fan out into the neighbourhood from the traffic circle, mixed with parks and bike paths.

"It's not a formal grid pattern and it still keeps some of the character," said Menon. "It's sort of a more-controlled confusion."

Menon acknowledges it would take a lifetime to overhaul Confusion Corner. But if the city at least built the roundabout, using land it already owns, that could be the catalyst that creates a new neighbourhood.



Continued on B4



Exchange District roundabout



Exchange District roundabout



Exchange District roundabout



Exchange District roundabout



Exchange District roundabout



Exchange District roundabout

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AUTHOR EVENTS

FRED PENNER
Friday, December 2, 6:30 pm, Grant Park

TARA WOODBURY & KRISTA LAWSON
Friday, December 2, 7:30 pm, Portage Place

ÉTIENNE GABOURY
Sat, December 10, 2 pm, Portage Place