

An impartial jury, which includes the heads of architecture schools at the universities of Illinois and Minnesota, will meet for 24 hours in late April to choose first-, second- and third-place winners.

They will split \$100,000 in prize money.

The projects will also be vetted by Winnipeg Transit, traffic and planning staff, as well as a committee comprising Portage and Main's key landowners. The public will have a chance to view the proposals and vote on their favourite, as well as voicing their views at some public forums tentatively slated for late spring.

Work could begin in a year or two, Bridgman said.

Mayor Glen Murray used the competition's launch to make a pitch for vibrant cities that reflect their status as the engines of the Canadian economy and the tax generators for the other levels of government.

Stop 'penny-pinching'

He said it's time for cities to stop their "penny-pinching discount mentalities" and start investing in beautiful, forward-thinking structures such as the Esplanade Louis Riel (Provencher pedestrian bridge).

"I drew a line in the sand, and the reaction was a million-dollar toilet," said Murray, referring to the public hubbub over the cost of a restaurant plaza on the bridge. "That was the level of discourse."

He called Portage and Main "the traffic equivalent of a boarded-up building" that should be a gathering place for Winnipeggers.

The winning project must enrich the culture and economy of the intersection, connect the diverse parts of downtown such as The Forks and the Exchange District, encourage the coexistence of cars and pedestrians and be environmentally friendly.

The city experimented last year with a competition to design a recreation centre in the east Exchange District. The competition was a success, but city planning boss Harry Finnigan said he wanted Round 2 to produce something that could actually get built.

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Murray launches City Crossing competition yesterday, inviting international architects to submit designs for a \$10-M facelift for Portage and Main.

Big order, big corner

Worldwide contest launched to design better Portage & Main

By Mary Agnes Welch

THE world's best architects have five months and an imaginary budget of \$10 million to solve a problem that's plagued Winnipeg for more than 25 years — the fate of Portage and Main.

The City Crossing design competition, launched yesterday in the TD Centre, offers \$100,000 in prizes to the

architects able to turn Portage and Main into a pedestrian-friendly intersection that reflects Winnipeg's history and promotes economic development.

That could mean removing the concrete barriers erected in 1976 to stop pedestrians from crossing the street, a move that forced those on foot into an underground mall and spawned years of controversy.

"We don't know what to do with it," said Wins Bridgman, a local architect

and the competition's co-ordinator "If we had a simple solution we wouldn't need a competition. We're at an impasse, a 25-year impasse."

But Bridgman acknowledged the winning project could encounter turbulence, as the intersection is controlled not just by the city but by big-name landowners, including the Bank of Montreal, MTS and Winnipeg's most powerful families — the Richardsons and the Aspers.

"It's a politically complex project," said Bridgman, who hopes the private landowners will be willing to support it if they have input into the selection.

Designers will have a \$10 million "budget" to work with, and Bridgman hopes the competition will attract as many as 100 submissions from architects and urban planners worldwide.

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