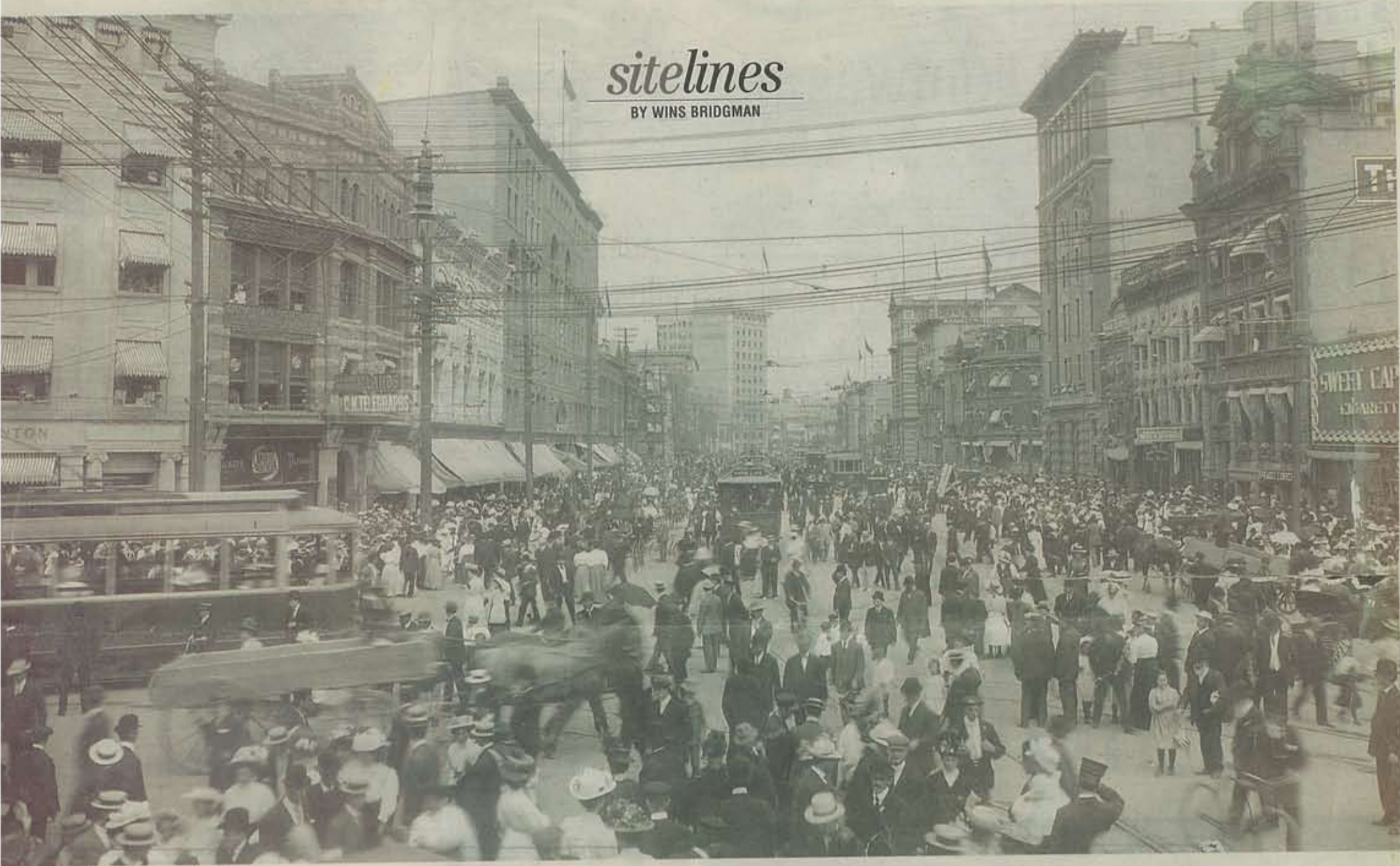


# urbanjungle

*sitelines*

BY WINS BRIDGMAN



Portage and Main was filled with strikers and onlookers during Winnipeg's 1919 General Strike.

## Street cred

THE INTERSECTION OF PORTAGE AND MAIN DEFINES DOWNTOWN — AND WINNIPEG'S IDENTITY

**D**ESIGNERS from all over the world are currently developing strategies to redevelop Winnipeg's Portage and Main.

It's all part of City Crossing, the city's international Design Competition launched in December. The submission deadline is April 21.

City Crossing does not tell designers what to do at the famous corner. Instead, the competition brief asks, "How can we balance between the needs of vehicles and pedestrians? How can we enhance the quality of street life? How can we anticipate and encourage extraordinary public events at Portage and Main? How can public and private interests benefit from the redevelopment of this intersection? How can Portage and Main integrate the downtown and the city as a whole? Perhaps some of the answers to these questions can be found in the historic character of this

intersection itself — not the history of the buildings, but in the life of the public spaces around the buildings.

Portage and Main has always defined the downtown. It has always defined Winnipeg's presence nationally, as the following examples demonstrate.

**In 1909:** Hundreds of pedestrians crowded the 20-foot-wide board sidewalks on both sides of Main Street to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee.

**Armistice Day, Nov. 11, 1918:** Images of Portage and Main show the intersection filled with pedestrians interspersed with streetcars and buggies. The celebration of the event was paralleled all over the world. It occurred in Winnipeg — apparently spontaneously — at Portage and Main.

**May/June 1919:** The intersection was used as a show of equestrian force by Royal Canadian Mounted Police trying to enforce order during the famous 1919 General Strike. Pedestrians and strikers looked on from the sidewalks ready to take over the streets. Control of Portage and Main represented control of the City.

**June 1972:** Steven Juba and Bobby Hull marked

Hull's signing with the Winnipeg Jets of the fledgling World Hockey Association at Portage and Main.

In 1974, the city celebrated its 100th birthday party at Portage and Main.

Photographs of these events were gathered by Giles Bugailiskis, the city's senior heritage planner. (These archival photos may be viewed online at [www.winnipeg-design-competition.org](http://www.winnipeg-design-competition.org).)

They show a place where — surprisingly enough — pedestrians and vehicles appear to co-exist and tolerate each other. People seem to be talking to one another in the middle of the street. Even in strong wind. Even in the middle of winter.

To reclaim Portage and Main is not to gaze nostalgically at the past. Its redevelopment can represent in our time a new balance between place and journey, public life and privatized travel.

Bugailiskis refers to the intersection as a heritage character defined by its own name: Portage and Main — both an intersection en route, and its own place as the main street of Winnipeg. Our downtown. The historic soul of the city.

**WHAT ARE YOUR OWN IDEAS AND VIEWS FOR THE CROSSING? SEND THEM TO:**

**City Crossing  
Winnipeg International Design Competition 2004  
Attention: Professional Advisor**  
City of Winnipeg  
Planning Property and Development Department  
Planning and Land Use Division  
15-30 Fort St.  
Winnipeg, Man.  
R3C 4X5  
or e-mail [dapr@mts.net](mailto:dapr@mts.net).

We'll publish your entries on the City Crossing website and exhibit them with the City Crossing submissions this spring.

*Wins Bridgman is the professional advisor to the City of Winnipeg for City Crossing City of Winnipeg International Design Competition.*

*Sitelines is an open column on urban design, written by local experts.*