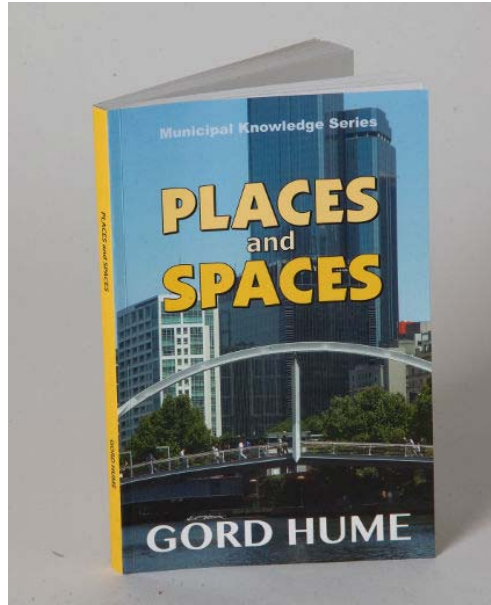


In his new book, former London politician Gord Hume looks at how a city's planning decisions can lead to economic growth



By Patrick Maloney, The London Free Press
Tuesday, August 12, 2014 6:58:27 EDT PM



City council members mulling the contentious plan to build a new downtown concert hall may want to read a former London politician's new book before making a decision.

While Gord Hume, doesn't write specifically about the proposed performing arts centre in his just-published book, *Places and Spaces*, the complex nature of all big-ticket public projects — and they don't get much more complex than concert venues — is a focus.

Harkening back to his early days at city hall in the late 1990s, Hume cites the lessons learned from three major downtown investments — Budweiser Gardens, Covent Garden Market and the Central library branch — that could prove useful to council today.

"There will be controversy. There will be negativity. There will be opposition," Hume writes in the chapter titled *If You Don't Build It, They Won't Come*.

"Can you stand up to the public scrutiny and media pressures? Is council committed?"

The trouble with major public investments is just one part of Hume's 172-page book, the fifth he's written since retiring from politics in 2010. *Places and Spaces* is published by Municipal World.

Hume has described the book as a look at how a city's planning decisions — specifically a focus on better urban design — can translate into economic growth and prosperity. It creates what he terms the "civic DNA" of a community.

"Marvellous design elements form a community's distinctive identity," Hume writes. "These become the personality of your city or town. They quickly shape your image and what people around the world will come to know about your community."

And how can a city ensure the right things happen?

Hume suggests it begins at the ballot box, when citizens elect politicians.

"A city can be changed by a single council decision about what to build, where to build and how to design it," he writes.

The book is available at municipalworld.com.

patrick.maloney@sunmedia.ca

twitter.com/patatLFP