

# **Assembling Spaces**

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**A Case Study on the Process of Producing  
True North Square, Winnipeg MB**

by:

**Evan D. Sinclair**

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**Department of City Planning  
Faculty of Architecture  
University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg**

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## **Abstract**

The production of urban space is increasingly influenced by concepts, techniques, and practices circulating between cities. While this phenomenon has been criticized for its potential to disregard local context, it has also been commended for its potential to introduce tried and tested concepts. In examining the process of producing True North Square, a mixed-use development in downtown Winnipeg, this case study explores how knowledge was mobilized from other North American cities and, in turn, re-assembled in the context of privately-owned public space. Using document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and a context study as the primary research methods, this thesis recommends that planners, architects, and developers mobilizing knowledge from other cities should put more emphasis on processual factors – including principles behind decision making, contextual influences, and responses of local users – as opposed to the physical outputs. In doing so, the study also identifies relevant lessons for producing flexible and contextually appropriate privately-owned public spaces, as well as approaches for their subsequent management.

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## Interview Participant and Research Site References

Throughout this thesis I make reference to interview participants according to their role in the subject case study. While minimal information is provided regarding the positions of the participants in an effort to protect their identities, it is however, important to qualify their statements by distinguishing between the types of contributions they made to the project. The following list outlines the three groups I created for the interview participants.

TNS Development Team Members 1 and 2	Participants from True North Real Estate Development, an arm of True North Sports and Entertainment, assigned to the True North Square project.
TNS Design Team Members 1 and 2	Participants from the private firms assigned to lead the architectural and landscape architectural design process.
CoW Representatives 1 and 2	Participants from the City of Winnipeg involved in reviewing and approving the True North Square project.

Various references are also made to elements of the subject case throughout this thesis. Distinguishing between them is of importance because, although much of the discussion is centred on the project in its entirety, this research is particularly focused on True North Square Plaza. The following list outlines the five ways in which I make reference to the case.

True North Square	Phase 1 of the development project in its entirety.
TNS Plaza	Primary plaza extending between the two towers.
Sports Legacy Plaza	Ancillary plaza located in the northeast corner.
Publicly Accessible Spaces	Inclusive of TNS Plaza, Sports Legacy Plaza, and the outdoor staircase.
TNS Public Realm	Inclusive of the Publicly Accessible Spaces and the surrounding sidewalks, streets, and skywalks.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The mobility of people and information between cities has been intensified by the introduction of new technologies, allowing external actors and ideas to have a greater influence over the planning, design, and production of urban space. More recently, experts within the planning field have begun to take a critical look at this phenomenon, identifying both benefits and challenges to circulating concepts, techniques, and practices from place to place (Healey, 2011). While this approach has been criticized for its capacity to disregard political and social influences, as well as ignore the local context in which ideas are applied, it has also been commended for its potential to introduce tried and tested concepts (McCann & Ward, 2012; Sadik-Khan & Solomonow, 2017).

True North Square, a development currently under construction in downtown Winnipeg, represents a case in which inspiration was drawn from precedent projects in other North American cities. My interest in True North Square originates from early media releases referencing exciting developments from cities such as Los Angeles, Toronto, and Kansas City. While citing these precedents may be useful for enticing the imaginations of local residents, there has been little discussion about how they were discovered, the extent to which they were used, and how they were adapted to suit the Winnipeg context. As such, True North Square presented an excellent opportunity to explore these factors, from which lessons have been drawn regarding the mobilization of knowledge from other cities.

In addition to the precedents inspiring it, much of the information released about the project to date has been focused on TNS Plaza, a privately-owned public space featured in Phase 1 of the development. The plaza extends between the two towers on site, connecting pedestrians to the adjacent streets and amenities, in addition to offering space for programmed and passive activities. True North Sports and Entertainment, the developer of the project, has resolutely expressed their aspirations for the plaza to match the highest quality experiences in

North America. In setting this goal, similar to the overall vision, the planning and design of the publicly accessible plaza anchoring the development has also been influenced by various elements of the precedent projects.

Currently in Winnipeg, the central downtown area features a limited amount of public space, whether publicly- or privately-owned and operated. Due to budgetary constraints and inter-municipal competition for investment, cities have become increasingly dependent on the private sector for providing space for the public (Leary-Ohwin, 2016; Németh & Schmidt, 2010). As opposed to genuine public spaces, which are governed by a common set of guidelines, privately-owned public spaces allow private owners and operators to introduce their own set of rules and regulations (Kayden, 2000). However, the conceptualization of public and private space in the urban environment is complicated by cases where, at times, publicly-owned space is overly managed to control behaviour (Barrett, 2013), whereas urban space in private ownership can “exhibit genuine qualities of publicness” (Leary-Ohwin, 2016, p. 5). This can be influenced by a multitude of factors, including the orientation of the space, the details of the design, and the presence of security.

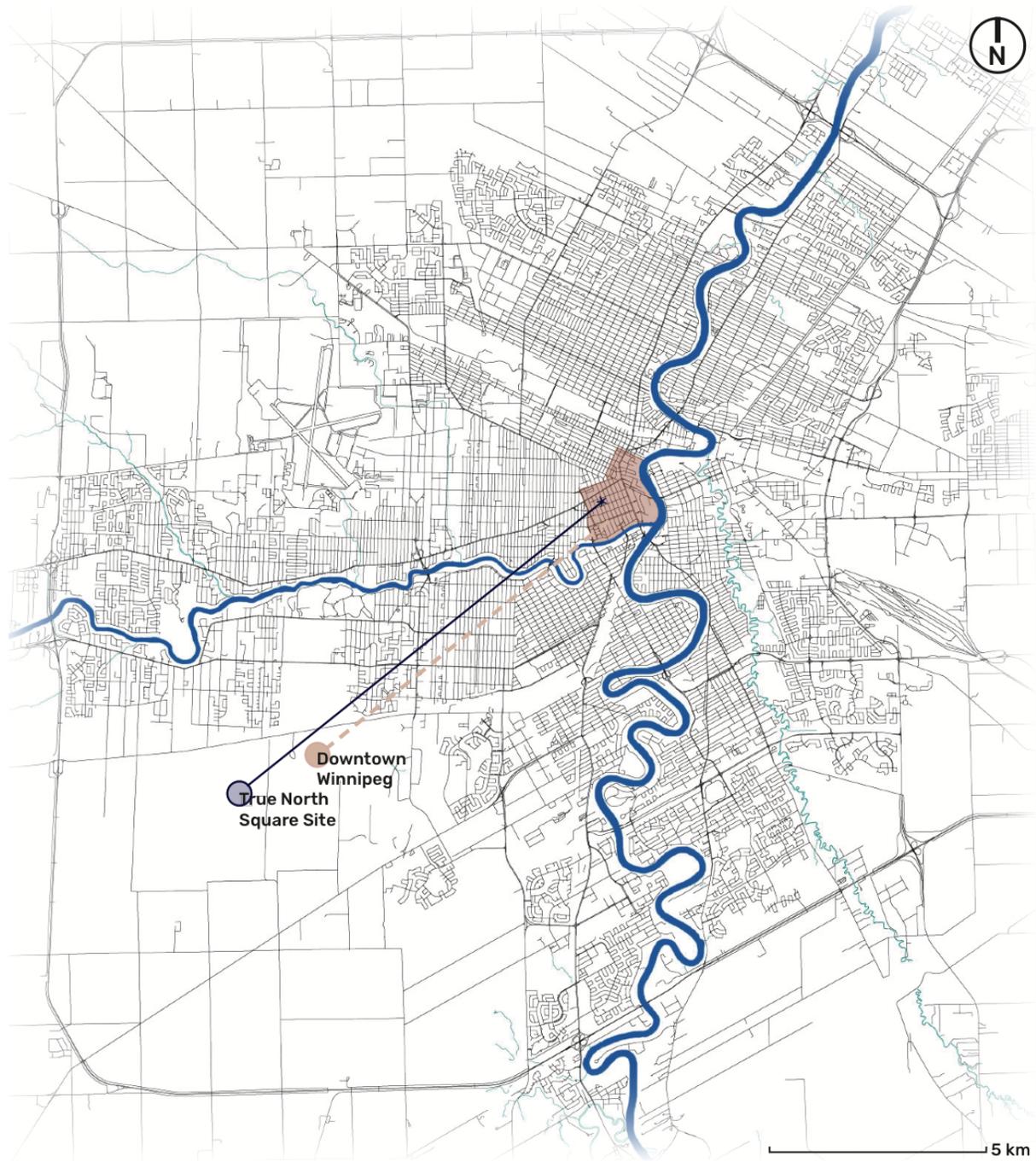
With the connection between planning, design, and management of the plaza space in mind, this research addresses three primary components of the case: the manner by which knowledge was mobilized from other cities; the way this knowledge was introduced to new contexts; and, the considerations that were made for local users to take part in assembling the space through use. As professionals use successful concepts from other cities to gain support and increase exposure for new development proposals, a lack of consideration for distinct local character and social context can be emphasized in cases where publicly accessible spaces are privately managed. If these spaces demonstrate unfamiliar concepts, as well as overly regulate how, when, and by whom they can be used, the potential for them to be adapted through everyday practice and interpretation is limited (Harvey, 2003; Lefebvre, 1991).

## 1.1 Case Study Background

True North Sports and Entertainment (TNSE) issued a press release on February 24, 2016, formally announcing its intention to go forward with the True North Square development. In association with its partner, James Richardson and Sons, Limited (JRSL), True North Square was introduced to the public as “an iconic mixed-use development in the heart of downtown Winnipeg” (TNSE, 2016) (see Figure 1). TNSE, owner of the Winnipeg Jets National Hockey League franchise and Bell MTS Place, is a sports and entertainment company headquartered in Winnipeg. JSLR, also headquartered in Winnipeg, is involved in a variety of business realms including real estate, financial services, and investment.

The development is comprised of four towers spanning two separate sites, as illustrated in Figure 2. The site for Phase 1 – the core of the project – is located at 242 Hargrave Street, while the site for Phase 2 is located at 220 Carlton Street. Phase 1 of construction is currently underway, featuring a 17-storey office tower, a 25-storey residential tower, two levels of below-grade parking, Sports Legacy Plaza, and TNS Plaza. The start date for construction of Phase 2 has not been confirmed, but the plans for the site feature two towers, including a 275-unit hotel and a 130-unit condominium building (PCL, 2018). According to Jim Ludlow, President of True North Real Estate Development Limited, the goal is “to design spaces that provide for the highest standards of workplace flexibility... and to create complementary public spaces and urban experiences that match the best in North America” (TNSE, 2016).

The announcement of True North Square emerged following a period of substantive growth in downtown Winnipeg. As reported by the Institute of Urban Studies (McCullough & Distasio, 2015), major investments in the area had exceeded \$2.4 billion over the most recent 10-year period. Evidence of this trend is visible throughout the downtown landscape, including private and public projects such as the expansion of the RBC Convention Centre (\$180 million) and the construction of Centrepont (\$100 million).



**Figure 1:** Context of True North Square within Downtown Winnipeg. Sinclair, 2018

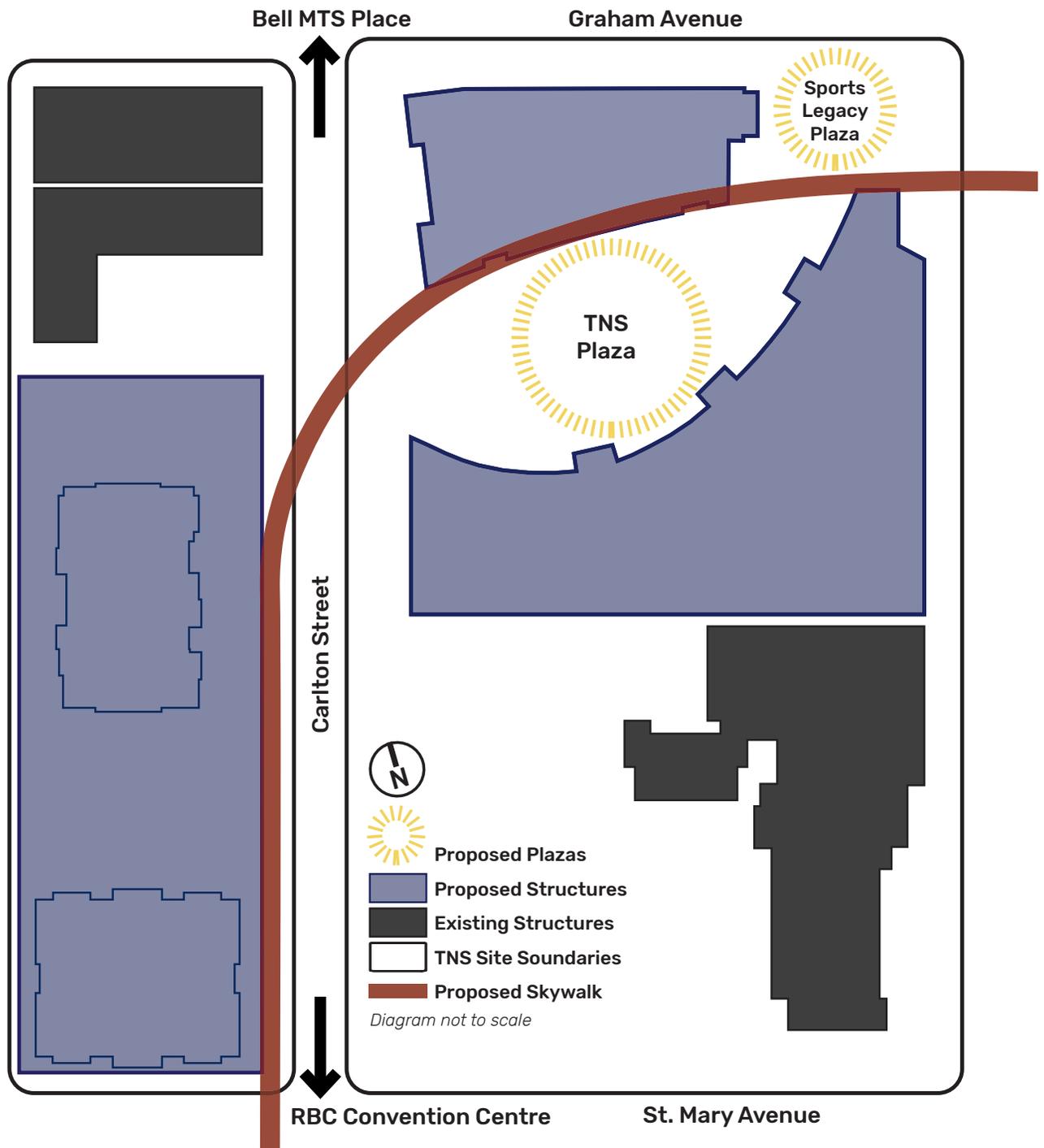


Figure 2: True North Square Site Layout. Sinclair, 2018

This demonstrated a major shift from the preceding period of 1984-2004, during which time investment in the downtown remained low to modest, notwithstanding the introduction of the MTS Centre (now Bell MTS Place) in 2004. In fact, this new 15,000 seat complex constructed by True North Sports and Entertainment foreshadowed their eventual purchase of the Winnipeg Jets NHL hockey team in 2011 (CBC News, 2011). While these more recent surges in development activity are largely attributed to the role of private investment, a number of other factors have been identified as critical for supporting private interests; three of which are closely related and applicable to the True North Square development.

The first factor contributing to the revitalized downtown economy is the emergence of CentreVenture Development Corporation (McCullough & Distasio, 2015), an arms-length agency of the City of Winnipeg with a mandate “to provide leadership in the planning, development, coordination, and implementation of projects and activities in the downtown” (CentreVenture, 2018). Since its inception, the agency has been instrumental in identifying and coordinating development opportunities for the downtown area, largely by establishing innovative partnerships involving private-public cooperation. The second factor is the focus of development in strategic areas of downtown, such as Market Lands, Waterfront, and the Sports, Entertainment and Hospitality District (SHED) where True North Square is located. Directing development to these specific areas is a top priority for CentreVenture, which it can achieve by connecting private interests with government funding opportunities (CentreVenture, 2018). The third relevant factor can be summarized as strengthened government support, as evidenced by factors such as government offices relocating downtown, new programming being introduced to the area, and – perhaps most importantly – the provision of increased funding for development. In 2009, the Province of Manitoba passed the *Community Revitalization and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Act*, which was used to designate the entire SHED as a “TIF District” (McCullough & Distasio, 2015). The SHED boundaries are shown in Figure 3.

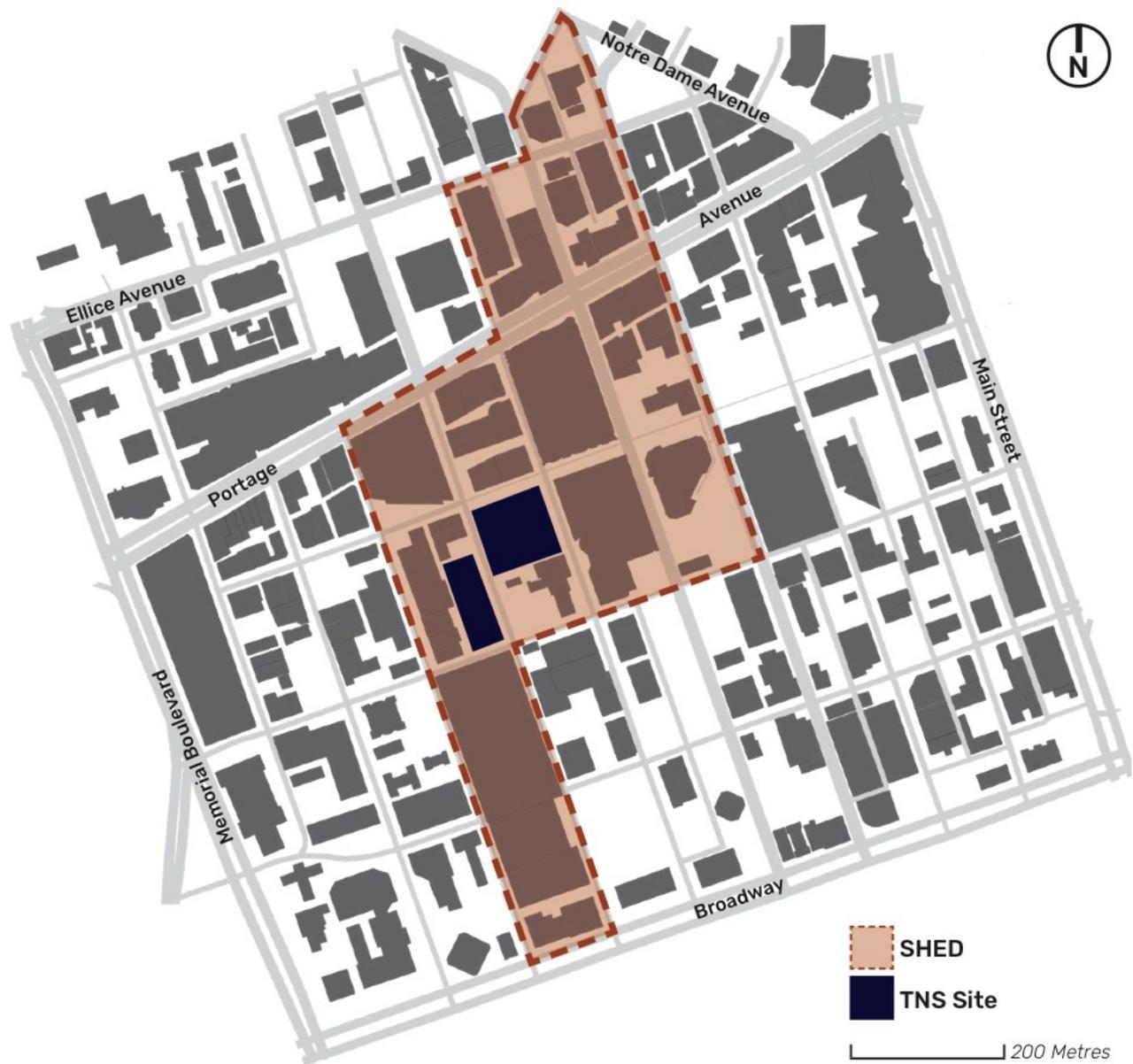


Figure 3: SHED Boundaries. Sinclair, 2018

TIF is a tool for encouraging development in a specific geographic area by offering a tax freeze on the assessed value of the property at the time of designation. For a designated period, either a portion or all of the tax revenue generated above the base value – referred to as the increment – is directed toward redevelopment within the TIF district (Federation of Canadian Municipalities [FCM], 2015). However, the Province of Manitoba and City of Winnipeg take a unique approach to using the tool, discussed further in Chapter 4. With CentreVenture directing the allocation of the TIF funds in the SHED (CentreVenture, 2018), the City of Winnipeg approved a \$25 million capital investment to support development within the district; a cost shared equally between the provincial and municipal governments (City of Winnipeg, 2017). In March of 2017, City Council voted in favour of future tax rebates for True North Square through the TIF initiative, allocating funds to improve various aspects of the public realm surrounding the development, such as skywalks, streetscaping, and intersections, as well as \$3.2 million to assist directly with the construction of TNS Plaza (City of Winnipeg, 2017c).

To date, the public has been provided with multiple press releases, newspaper articles, promotional videos, and presentations on the True North Square development. These promotional efforts have been largely concentrated on TNS Plaza, extending across Parcel 1 between the 17 and 25-storey towers to a second plaza on the northeast corner of the site. For instance, the CentreVenture (2018) website states “The entire development will be centred on a new public space, designed with year-round programming and events”. This is echoed by the comments of TNSE representatives, including those previously mentioned by Jim Ludlow, which he himself reiterated in a more recent press release by stating “This [TNS Plaza] will be the exciting part of the project” (TNSE, 2016). These mediums of communication have surely generated excitement for the project, with TNSE taking further steps to animate the public’s expectations by promoting inspirations for the project from cities like Toronto, Kansas City, and Los Angeles (TNSE, 2016). Progress on the project to date is shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4:** True North Square. Sinclair, 2018

## **1.2 PURPOSE**

In researching the production of True North Square, with a particular emphasis on the TNS Plaza and the Public Realm, this case study explores how knowledge has been mobilized between cities and, in turn, re-assembled within the context of a privately-owned public space. I examine: how TNSE discovered and selected the precedent projects inspiring True North Square; the reasons for identifying them as successful; the key actors involved and their roles in the process; how the team members learned about the precedent projects; the extent to which they were used, how they were adapted to the local context; the municipal review and approvals process; and, approaches to managing the space to achieve TNSE's vision for the project. In doing so, the goal of the research is to identify opportunities for using the approach more effectively in the planning and design process of urban development projects, as well as to outline relevant lessons for producing adaptable, accessible, and contextually appropriate privately-owned public spaces.

## **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

There are three key research questions guiding the research:

- I. How were the precedents inspiring the concept of True North Square and its Publicly Accessible Spaces selected and how was knowledge about the precedents generated?
- II. Was consideration given to the specific context of Winnipeg while mobilizing these design concepts, and if so, how?
  - Were City of Winnipeg representatives influential in this area?
- III. What lessons can planners, designers, and developers draw from the process of producing True North Square to more effectively mobilize knowledge from other cities?

## 1.4 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

As outlined in Chapter 2, a significant body of literature is currently available on the theory of policy transfer, from which an increasing amount of work is emerging on knowledge mobilization. In shifting its focus to the details of process, including how ideas are discovered, interpreted, and adapted, knowledge mobilization serves as a useful framework for understanding how concepts are circulated from place to place. However, where the framework is limited for studying developments such as True North Square is its lack of consideration for space. As such, this research seeks to address this by complementing the framework with a spatial component, for which I have drawn on the concepts of *spatial assemblage* and *the right to the city* in relation to privately-owned public space. In doing so, the research recognizes urban space is not only influenced by the initial planning and design process, but also subsequent approaches to management. While the topics of *knowledge mobilization* and the right to the city do cross over in the literature, there is no distinct case connecting the ideas to allow for a planning and design process to be examined in relation to management practices. This research creates a bridge between the two critical components of experiencing an urban space, while offering direction for future studies of a similar nature to be undertaken.

In exploring the case of True North Square, this research also identifies implications for practice by considering how key actors involved in the process mobilized knowledge from other North American cities and, in turn, introduced it into a new context. While planners and urban designers have a tendency to draw inspiration from other projects, it is important to consider how this approach to producing urban space can be done effectively, as well as what some of the potential limitations might be. With this in mind, the case study offers valuable lessons for planners, architects, and developers mobilizing knowledge between cities. Further, in addressing the relationship between design, ownership, and management of urban space, the study offers recommendations to municipal representatives and operators of publicly accessible spaces for maintaining an inclusive public realm.

## **1.5 CHAPTER STRUCTURE**

In Chapter 1, I introduced the topic of research, provided a background for the case study, outlined the purpose and significance of the study, and presented the key research questions directing the project. To provide theoretical context to the case study and a framework for guiding the research, Chapter 2 discusses: the right to the city as it relates to privately-owned public space; public policy and urban development; and, knowledge mobilization and assemblage. In Chapter 3, I describe the type of case study I am undertaking (exploratory) and the methods I used to collect (context study, document analysis, semi-structured interviews), code, and analyze the data. In Chapters 4 and 5, I present a comprehensive review of the policy and regulatory context influencing development in the case study area, as well as an overview of the area's social and physical characteristics. These chapters were primarily informed through the context study and the information gathered through document analysis. In Chapter 6, I present a detailed and, as much as possible, linear analysis of the process of producing True North Square, which is mostly drawn from information gathered through the semi-structured interviews. In Chapter 7, I distill the analysis from the preceding chapters by directly applying the theories discussed in Chapter 2 to the research. Finally, Chapter 8 provides a conclusion to the research by summarizing how the research questions were addressed, extracting key discoveries and lessons learned, and offering some final thoughts for directing future study.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter focuses on literature addressing privately-owned public space and public policy relating to urban development, as well as the concepts of *policy transfer* and *knowledge mobilization*. It begins by providing a general definition of the “right to the city” with an emphasis on the contribution of Lefebvre (1968), and proceeds to explore its relation to privately-owned public space. At the foundation of this relationship is the notion that public space in the urban environment is not neutral; rather, it is a constantly changing site of social struggle where rights to use value and exchange value are confirmed or denied (Mitchell, 2003). While this review draws on the concepts of *use value* and *exchange value* as used in the literature on the right to the city, the applicability of the theory is somewhat limited at this time, as True North Square is still under construction and the spaces are not in use. However, related literature on privately-owned public space serves as a useful context for the subject case study, as well as for considering future approaches to managing TNS Plaza.

Subsequently, the review transitions to a discussion of the relationship between public policy and urban development, considering the role of private interests in the production of urban space. Addressing this body of research is important, as private interests can directly influence public policy by leveraging their investments, while municipal representatives can use incentives to request public amenities in return. The final part of the review explores the concepts of policy transfer and knowledge mobilization and assemblage. After briefly defining the concept of policy transfer, including a description of the process and typical actors involved, I offer an overview of common critiques for using this approach to shape and influence urban environments. Drawing on more recent literature in this area, the review considers how this process can be used more effectively for the mobilization and assemblage of innovative ideas – including those related to spatial design – from one location to another. Drawing primarily on the work of Cook (2008), McCann and Ward (2011), and McFarlane (2009), this broadened

understanding serves as the theoretical framework by which the case of True North Square is examined. Through this lens, it considers the process of knowledge mobilization and assemblage in relation to privately-owned public space, outlining relevant lessons for producing adaptable, accessible, and contextually appropriate public spaces.

## **2.1 Defining the Right to the City**

In 1968, French Marxist philosopher and socialist Henri Lefebvre developed the concept of the *right to the city* in his book, *Le droit à la ville* (Lefebvre, 1968). At the time of this work, Lefebvre was influenced by the dismay of working class Parisians forcefully dislocated by large, state-organized projects justified in the name of urban renewal (Leary-Ohwin, 2016). As explained by Harvey (2012), Lefebvre was calling for a response to the crisis of everyday city life, as well as demanding the establishment of a less alienating and more meaningful alternative. Through this declaration, Lefebvre (1968) was addressing two distinct groups in this book. First, was those who were directly oppressed by the crisis; those whose immediate needs were not satisfied, such as “the homeless, the hungry, the imprisoned, [and] the persecuted on gender, religious, racial grounds” (Marcuse, 2009, p. 190). Second, the demand was directed at those who were sharing in the material benefits of society, but were limited in terms of creative expression and social activity (Harvey, 2012).

Lefebvre has since been critiqued for leaving his concept of the right to the city underdeveloped and too vague to be of practical use (Leary-Ohwin, 2016). This accusation has been countered by others who suggest he intentionally left the concept malleable, allowing it to remain a constant work-in-progress. As such, the concept has subsequently been used and interpreted by a wide range of academics and interest groups for different purposes and agendas over time (Mitchell, 2003). For instance, Harvey (2012) offers a complimentary definition to Lefebvre’s, asserting the right to the city means everyday users of urban space are

not forced to accept what already exists, but instead, are afforded the ability to imagine and shape the city according to their own desires. Harvey's application of the concept is consistent with Lefebvre's differentiation between experts (e.g. planners, architects, and political actors) who conceive of spaces and the non-experts (e.g. everyday users) who find their identity and sense of meaning rooted within them. Although non-experts are exposed to the social struggles and processes that occur in these spaces, local authorities and experts often ignore such socio-spatial differences, resulting in the production of "homogenous built and social environments" (Carp, 2008, p. 130). These spaces not only fail to represent the experiences of everyday life, but also ignore the way in which cities actually function (Wendt, 2009). The outcome, as described by Weber (2002), is a "struggle between use and exchange values – between those with emotional attachments to place and those without such attachments" (p. 519).

One of the key rights to the city articulated by Lefebvre during the 1960s was the right for citizens to enjoy urban space for its use value, which at the time was being denied by political decision makers who were prioritizing exchange value instead (Leary-Ohwin, 2016). The use value of space refers to the ability of citizens to access places where personal interpretations and meaningful interactions can be experienced (Mitchell, 2003). Exchange value, in contrast, is defined by Althusser (2014) as "the value obtained for the commodity when exchanged for a proportion of the value of another commodity" (p. 6).

In *Urban Fortunes*, authors John R. Logan and Harvey L. Molotch (1987) discuss how cities actually get built. In doing so, the authors explore the role of different actors in producing space by examining the relationships between residents, industry, real estate, and policy makers. From these relationships, according to the authors, a struggle emerges between those pursuing exchange value and others pursuing use value, which they suggest determines the shape and growth pattern of a city. In defining this struggle, the authors write: "The sharpest contrast... is between residents who use place to satisfy essential needs of life, and

entrepreneurs who strive for financial return, ordinarily achieved by intensifying the use to which their property is put" (Logan & Molotch, 1987, p. 2).

Following this dichotomy between pursuers of use and exchange value, Logan and Molotch (1987) offer three general observations to conceptualize the different relationships capitalists and residents have to place. First, they assert capitalists derive a less diffuse satisfaction from place, as their primary concern is centred on the profitability of their operations. Second, capitalists have more opportunities than residents to relocate if local conditions worsen, including less sentimental ties to family and better access to employment. Notably, the authors suggest capitalists who have not committed significant investments to a given location are particularly mobile. Third, the way in which capitalists use place is more resilient to factors such as noise and odor, contrasted with residents' more fragile forms of use (Logan & Molotch, 1987). In regards to the case of True North Square, however, the lead developer (True North Sports and Entertainment) departs from this profile of capitalists in all respects, as they maintain residence, a corporate base, and significant investments in the City of Winnipeg, including Bell MTS Place. As such, the applicability of Logan and Molotch's (1987) assertion is based more on its distinct difference, rather than its consistency with the subject case, suggesting the categories defined by the authors are not relevant to all urban development projects.

In fact, since these assertions were forwarded by Logan and Molotch (1987), authors Cox and Mair (1989) have pointed to inconsistencies in their application of use value and exchange value, as in some cases the lines between the terms become blurred. Further, by establishing an either-or relationship between the terms, it is difficult to consider cases where the land previously held very limited use value (e.g. surface parking lots), but through the development process, the use and exchange value were enhanced concurrently. For example, the repurposing of land for commercial services can result in use value gains for residents while increasing the exchange value of the land, particularly when desirable amenities such as a grocery store or pharmacy are introduced. This question is particularly relevant for city centres,

where professionals and policy makers are eager to update and rehabilitate areas to attract people, encourage investment, and maintain a competitive edge over peripheral developments.

In studying a case like True North Square, conceptualizations of the relationship between use value and exchange value serve as an important foundation for considering public benefits related to urban development. In particular, when investigating the process of producing the Publicly Accessible Spaces in downtown Winnipeg, further depth has been added to my analysis by exploring details related to the approach to design, the role of various actors involved, and their intentions for managing the space. In turn, this has allowed me to determine how TNSE anticipates the Publicly Accessible Spaces contributing to the public's interests, as well as what types of uses they foresee being encouraged. While the precedents and preliminary images promoting the development have translated TNSE's vision to the public, few details about Public Realm design and management have been established.

## **2.2 Privately-Owned Public Space**

Ownership rights over urban space are of critical importance and, as Mitchell (2003) writes, "who has access to public space, and who is excluded, define the 'right to the city'" (p. 6). Public space is considered by many theorists to be a fundamental contributor to a safe, viable, and socially stimulating urban environment (Németh & Schmidt, 2010; Sorkin, 1992). For Lefebvre (1991), it is an urban space *par excellence* (Leary-Ohwin, 2016, p. 8) – an absolute necessity for facilitating social cohesion and spectacular cultural action, through which everyday space is attributed new meaning. However, in a society dominated by private space, Mitchell (2003) asserts there is limited potential to find public space that provides groups or individuals with representation that is "full, adequate and self-directed" (p. 33).

More recently, an increasing number of authors have begun to draw a connection between privately-owned public spaces (POPS) and downtown revitalization (Barrett, 2013;

Bodnar, 2015; Németh, 2006). POPS exhibit varying degrees of “publicness”, a quality that can be evaluated according to factors such as how often and how easily a space can be accessed, as well as how rigorously users and uses of that space are regulated (Németh & Schmidt, 2010). Downtown revitalization in post-industrial cities is often challenged by municipal budgetary constraints, which requires additional effort on the part of local governments to attract investment into core areas (Németh, 2006). This translates into municipal governments partnering with private investors by offering incentives such as zoning variances, exceptions to maximum building heights, and even property-tax enticements (Molotch & Logan, 1987). In exchange for this public support, municipal governments may require private interests to provide something in return, which commonly materializes as POPS in the form of plazas, park-lets, or pedestrian corridors. While such arrangements may be well-intentioned, in that they offer citizens access to urban space, the lack of guidelines for how they are to be managed and operated by private entities can create significantly different spaces than the traditional streets, sidewalks, and parks people rely on (Németh & Schmidt, 2010). As TNS Plaza is a privately-owned public space, the authors’ concerns related to the management of POPS is directly applicable to the analysis of the subject case. However, there is a distinct difference between the subject case and these more common examples, in that the developer chose to feature the space as opposed to being mandated to include it.

In *Urban Fortunes* (1987), Logan and Molotch draw attention to the indispensable relationship between people and place, as all human activity – including social interactions – must occur somewhere. However, this inherent interest in place can conflict with the interests of capital investors (Logan & Molotch, 1987), who often demand the prioritization of “visual coherence and order... and enhancement of security measures” (Németh, 2006, p. 305). In this sense, the political potential of public space is also severely limited, as it has traditionally provided groups progressing a political agenda with a platform to be seen and heard (Bodnar, 2015). Rather than embrace the potential for these spaces to serve such social and political

functions, private ownership allows POPS to be restructured to portray a neutral and attractive image (Mitchell, 2003), thereby establishing a normative guide for how they can be used and by whom. However, public ownership can lead to a similar outcome, as according to Barrett (2013) many municipal downtown plans endeavor to maintain a seemingly stable urban environment by imposing regulations on the right to use public space. While those engaging in commercial activities within spaces are welcomed, others who are considered a threat to the value of that space are excluded, such as the homeless, public protestors, or loitering youth (Barrett, 2013).

These efforts by municipal governments to portray a particular image and, in turn, “attract more people” (Molotch, 1976, p. 328) draw attention to the fact that public ownership does not guarantee adequate public access (Németh & Schmidt, 2010; Springer, 2012). The conceptualization of public and private space in the urban environment is complicated by cases where, at times, publicly owned space is overly managed to eliminate difference and impose appropriate behaviour (Barrett, 2013), whereas urban space in private ownership can, and does, “exhibit genuine qualities of publicness” (Leary-Ohwin, 2016, p. 5). For example, Rahder and Milgrom (2004) draw on Yonge-Dundas Square in Toronto as a publicly designated space that is heavily regulated and requires permits for anything beyond passive activities. For Németh and Schmidt (2010), past critiques of privately-owned public spaces are limited by only considering the factor of ownership, as the authors find it necessary to compare between private and public management practices to provide a truly meaningful measure.

In carrying out a comprehensive study of private and public management practices, the authors conclude that, although private spaces were effective at encouraging use (e.g. festival programming), they were also more active about controlling behavior than the public spaces were (Németh & Schmidt, 2010). Shaftoe (2008) picks up on this notion and, in referencing enhanced surveillance efforts in the United Kingdom, states “if places are over-regulated in an oppressive manner they become less convivial and, indeed, quite intimidating, even for people who are there perfectly legally” (p. 125). In fact, as a result of issues resulting from these types

of practices, the mayor of London has recently announced a new charter will be drafted to regulate the management and operation of privately-owned public spaces in the city (Shenker, 2017). This action is not just an important check on the power of corporations, but also, an important gesture by a municipal government to support access to the public realm. This example serves as an important reference for making recommendations regarding the management of TNS Plaza.

Mitchell (2003) discusses the importance of difference in cities by asserting that, by default, “cities were necessarily public— and therefore places of social interaction and exchange with people who were necessarily different” (p. 18). Harvey (2012) describes such encounters as conflictual and dialectical, offering users the potential to continuously pursue originality within urban spaces. Further, Németh and Schmidt (2010) uphold that such differences are not only constructed in city space, but actually serve to construct life and space within cities. While these notions of spatial production support the right to the city envisioned by Lefebvre, who argued the city should be shaped by the collective vision of all citizens, municipal representatives commonly disregard this approach to producing space. Nevertheless, Mitchell (2003) maintains that, even when public spaces originate as a *representation* of the expert’s intention, they can be appropriated through continued use to become *representational* of the public’s vision (Mitchell, 1995). This assertion by Mitchell (1995) effectively articulates the possible tension between mobilizing knowledge to plan and design urban spaces, while also managing them to exclude local interpretation of unfamiliar concepts. While the expert might consider the spaces they produce as neutral, in reality they are sites where perceptions of use are validated or denied, rights to resources are established, and social and political struggles are brought to light (Bodnar, 2015; Leary-Ohwin, 2016; Mitchell, 1995).

In Lefebvre’s seminal text, *The Production of Space* (1991), he asserts “the silence of the ‘users’ is... the entire problem” (1991, p. 365). Building on this idea, theorists such as Bodnar (2015), Mitchell (2003), and Barrett (2013) have all expressed concern for those who

are restricted from accessing, interpreting, and shaping urban space. From this conversation, two different perspectives are evident, both of which are related to the process of producing urban space. The first more directly emerges from Barrett's (2013) claim that, for city planners charged with the task of guiding downtown development, issues of exclusion and social justice are often "pushed to the back burner" (p. 24). In turn, planners and designers of urban space fail to consider the various users who are absent from the conversation when plans and designs are being formulated (Barrett, 2013; Cook, 2008). Alternately, a second perspective materializes from Mitchell's (2003) argument, which upholds urban space can be interpreted and, in essence, recreated by the user when adequate access is permitted. In effect, by situating the case study in the context of privately-owned public space, I examine how these common challenges can be addressed by asking if local users were considered in the design process, as well as make recommendations based on the literature for managing the public realm. Although, as indicated by experiences in other cities (Kayden, 2000; Németh & Schmidt, 2010), there is also an important role to be played by municipal policy in these matters. Thus, it is necessary to look beyond the role of planners and urban designers by directing the conversation toward the relationship between local political leaders, private interests, and members of the public.

### **2.3 Public Policy and Urban Development**

In the influential work *City Limits* (1981), author Paul E. Peterson offers a typology of public policy arenas in the urban context, which is comprised of developmental, redistributive, and allocational policies. He suggests these three policy areas, classified in relation to their impact on the city's economic interests, are performed to varying degrees of effectiveness by different levels of government. According to the author, developmental policies enhance the productivity of cities. More specifically, they are meant to improve a city's economic position in relation to its competitors by stimulating growth in the local economy, building the local tax base, and introducing supplementary resources to be used for the community's welfare. In general, he

argues developmental policies are widely embraced as a result of the positive economic outcomes they yield, which are greater than the costs they impose on residents of the city. Alternately, policies negatively impacting the local economy but benefiting low-income residents are referred to as redistributive policies. Often they are directed toward providing citizens more equal access to public services, which in turn, helps the needy and more vulnerable members of the community at a cost to the national government and tax-paying residents. Finally, allocational policies, which according to Peterson (1981) are neither developmental or redistributive, have very little effect on the economic state of a city. Allocational policies fall in the middle ground between economic development and resource distribution. Many local government services can be classified as such – also referred to by the author as housekeeping services – because they benefit all members of the community by safeguarding against such incidents as misuse of public property and violations of persons and property (Peterson, 1981).

At the local level, it is not uncommon for autonomous development authorities (e.g. Chambers of Commerce) and powerful individuals (e.g. business leaders) to play influential roles in creating and implementing developmental and allocational policies; in large part due to their self-financing capacity. According to Logan and Molotch (1987), when it comes to shaping the growth pattern of cities, the influence of place entrepreneurs – including local business persons in property investment, development, and real-estate financing – cannot be overstated. As expressed by the authors, “local business people are the major participants in local politics” (p. 62). The conglomeration of pro-growth actors, associations, and government bodies makes up what the authors refer to as the “growth machine”. In a perpetual search for exchange value, even observed in already successful cities, Logan and Molotch (1987) suggest growth machines compete with one another to attract a limited amount of mobile capital.

However, Cox and Mair (1989) have also pointed out ambiguities with the authors’ depiction of such actors, as well as their inferred pro-growth ambitions. For example, by the end of the book the superordinate position of the growth machine in restructuring the city is scaled

back, and the role of “neighbourhood groups striving for use value from place” (p. 292) is recognized alongside the roles of rentiers and capitalists (Cox & Mair, 1989). Further, Logan and Molotch (1987) fail to recognize the fiscal limitations of municipal governments when it comes to investing in large infrastructure projects, or redistributing benefits to low-income residents. Thus, in asserting the position of power held by local entrepreneurs is strictly to ensure policy related decisions are made to reflect their best interests – such as creating optimal conditions for intensifying land use in a specific area – they are ignoring the potential for these actors to guide development in a manner that is beneficial to the public.

In *Regime Politics* (1989), Clarence N. Stone departs from this line of thinking by taking a more optimistic stance on the role of the local business community. Through this detailed case study of politics in Atlanta during the mid-twentieth century, Stone argues the city’s urban coalition – defined as a diverse set of public and private interests with the capacity to govern – carried out a number of complex projects by offering selective incentives to agents with the required financial capital and political influence. By offering this depiction of a pluralistic governing authority, the author is recognizing the dependency of the city’s elected officials on the resources of the business elite.

According to Stone (1989), selective incentives are traditionally used by both public and private entities to supplement group benefits by offering individual rewards. Considered an essential tool for establishing and maintaining cooperation within urban coalitions, selective incentives can be used when substantial group action is required, but a strain exists between individual interests and group advancement. In some cases, selective incentives can be employed to bridge gaps between groups with diverging interests by diminishing issues or building on areas where there is potential to unite. To illustrate the concept, Stone (1989) draws on a period of contestation between political leaders and the business elite in Atlanta, during which time a program was introduced to encourage minority business enterprises. While the business elite initially resisted the program, they eventually recognized the potential it offered to

establish cooperation within the coalition and, in turn, minority entrepreneurs were provided with valuable contracts. As such, the business elite were civic minded in their support of initiatives that would better the city, but the results just happened to play out in their favor as well (Stone, 1989).

However, Stone (1989) also suggests there is an intimate link between selective incentives and the principle of investor prerogative, which is an approach to “eliminating disincentives for a privileged group” (p. 175). The unification of the business elite through the use of selective incentives and upholding of investor prerogative both builds their base of power and acts as a mechanism for downplaying competing interests (p 171). While the case of Atlanta is unique, in that these incentives were controlled and directly distributed by the business elite – who are not always guided by a *grand vision* for the community (p. 206) – at the local level, politicians and planners should recognize the interests of the greater public when considering the implementation, reformation, or abolishment of developmental and allocational policies. More recently, in the paper titled *Rethinking the Politics of Downtown Development*, Strom (2008) departs even further from Stone’s line of thinking, arguing downtowns are no longer the regional centre of economic life. Instead, the author asserts downtowns are becoming more of a focus for cultural and entertainment functions, which has begun to change the landscape of the investment community and how they are perceived publicly. This point is directly applicable to the subject case study, as TNSE’s aspiration is to further define the entertainment district by enhancing experiences in the area.

As the case of True North Square demonstrates, private investors do play a substantial role in shaping urban growth. Moreover, in acquiring public funding to assist in its production, the project exhibits how private interests can influence allocational policies to support their developmental goals. In examining the production of True North Square, I intend to explore the approval process of the project’s plan and design, which will provide me with a sense of how municipal urban planners and designers asserted their influence to ensure development is

aligned with the interests of the public. Specifically, I hope to gain an understanding of how these actors perceived TNSE's approach to producing the project by mobilizing knowledge from other North American cities, as well as generate a clearer understanding of TNSE's overall commitment to the City of Winnipeg.

## **2.4 Mobilizing the City**

The theory of knowledge mobilization is situated within the larger concept of policy transfer and, as such, the literature reviewed on the topic begins by defining this root theory and outlining the primary critiques of how it has been used previously. In particular, McCann and Ward (2011) identify three issues with mainstream work on policy transfer, from which they and other authors offer direction for future study (Cook, 2008). In exploring the process of producing True North Square, knowledge mobilization serves as an appropriate framework for guiding the study, as the development was largely inspired by similar projects in other North American cities.

However, as the case is centred on a development project as opposed to a policy, the concept is limited for this particular study in its lack of consideration for space. As such, I draw on the concept of assemblage to complement the theory of knowledge mobilization, as it allows me to consider how the output of the process will function on a daily basis.

### **2.4.1 Defining and Advancing Policy Transfer**

Policy transfer has commonly been used in political science literature as an umbrella concept for "policy making elites who import innovatory policy developed elsewhere in the belief that it will be similarly successful in a different context" (McCann, 2011, p. 210). For instance, Cook (2008) identifies a number of cities that have become renowned for their urban policy initiatives, such as Barcelona for its active public spaces, or New York City for its rigid policing strategies. As such, for cities experiencing similar issues related to quality of public space or inadequate security, they could potentially transfer the approaches taken by Barcelona or New York and

use them to inform or shape their own strategy. This notion certainly has relevance to the case of True North Square, but is not necessarily applicable, as the project is of a different nature and scale.

In considering how the theory has been used previously, McCann and Ward (2011) offer three specific critiques of the mainstream literature on policy transfer. The first, which is reiterated by Cook (2008), is centred on the degree to which previous research has focused on the identities and activities of actors involved in the transfer process. While identifying and categorizing the actors is an integral part of understanding the process of knowledge circulation, the authors argue the tendency to over-emphasise this component limits any analysis of the actual process or practice. A second critique of traditional approaches to studying policy transfer relates to the scale it typically addresses. By predominantly examining the phenomenon at the national scale – as opposed to the municipal scale or even site-specific cases – the importance of alternative scales for conceptualizing the way policies or ideas are produced and implemented on the ground is ignored. Finally, McCann and Ward (2011) express concern over traditional notions of ‘transfer’, which the authors describe as being too *literal*. In reality, the exchange of ideas from one locale to another is not a matter of simply importing a fully-formed and ready-to-use policy, but rather, it is a much more complex process that involves selectivity and multilateral agreements. Though it is important to draw on traditional policy transfer literature, moving beyond this approach allows for important advancements, such as consideration for smaller scales, in addition to placing greater emphasis on process and practice.

In order to advance understandings of policy transfer beyond the mainstream literature, Cook (2008) offers a framework made up of six categories that address the dis-embedding, mobilizing, and re-embedding of policies. According to the author, consideration for all six categories is necessary to generate an adequate understanding of a policy transfer case. -First, the author sees a need to identify and assess the environment of discontent with current

domestic policy. Second, he emphasizes the importance of enquiring about the process of selecting and interpreting policies as being appropriate to transfer. Third, Cook suggests identifying how the policy has been adapted to suit the new context. Fourth, he cautions of policy-makers using the successes of policies and places from elsewhere to justify their prescriptions, requiring attention be given to the source of these narratives and how the success is translated to others. Fifth, the author deems it necessary to determine who was involved and what their role was in the policy transfer process. Finally, Cook (2008) establishes the people, places, or policies excluded from the transfer process must also be included in the analysis. In providing this framework, the author upholds there is an opportunity to recognize the processual nature of policy transfer, which he, among others (McCann & Ward, 2011), see as being a necessary departure from past approaches.

In recognizing the critiques of Cook (2008) and McCann and Ward (2011), this case study on True North Square has endeavoured to address such shortcomings and, in regards to the scale of the case, partially fill existing gaps in the literature. In doing so, the framework for studying policy transfer advanced by Cook (2008) has been used to help direct this research toward focusing on process. However, where it falls short for this particular case study is its lack of consideration for space, in that the output of the process will be further shaped through use. As such, I apply additional understandings of knowledge mobilization and *spatial assemblage* in a subsequent section, which I use to complement the other components of this framework.

#### **2.4.2 Process and Actors**

The flow of people, vehicles, and information constituting the urban environment has been intensified by the emergence of new technologies focused on closing the geographic divide between places. This phenomenon has resulted in “powerful changes in the urban, regional, and global fabric of spaces” (Sheller, 2004, p. 43). McCann and Ward (2011) give the example of “solutions-starved actors” (p. 45) who typically scan the internet for examples of pretested

policies deemed as 'best practices' to potentially import to their own city. Even at a distance, social connections can be established and knowledge can be transferred between such actors through different forms of communication, such as email, teleconferencing, or cellular applications. Further, authors like González (2011), McFarlane (2009), and McCann (2013) draw on the increased physical mobility of actors who visit cities that have successfully addressed issues common to the urban environment, which González (2011) refers to as "policy tourism". Moreover, the cities that have developed successful urban policy models and spatial designs are able to utilize new forms of technology to market such achievements as commodities, referred to as "policy boosterism". McCann (2013) discusses this concept using the example of "Vancouverism", a label which the City of Vancouver promoted fervently during the 2010 Winter Olympics. For those officials in attendance from other cities and countries, the event largely became an educational exhibition featuring photographs, models, and plans depicting Vancouver's innovative urban design approach (McCann, 2013).

White and Punter (2017) recently conducted a study to examine the City of Toronto's attempt to reproduce aspects of Vancouverism in a development known as the Railway Lands. Located west of Downtown Toronto, the Railway Lands took shape from a vision set forth by an Urban Design Task Force with representatives from the council, local community groups, and landowners, as well as support from a working group comprised of local design experts and members of the private development company Concord. The vision was inspired by a number of recommendations outlined in the Urban Design Guidelines which, largely influenced by aspects of the Vancouverism model, were collectively produced by these different actors. Most notably, the Railways Lands were to adopt features such as tower-podium style buildings, high residential density, and a generous public realm with a lively street environment.

Despite the effort put into establishing the guidelines, city planners had failed to appreciate the level of design detail required to make the tower-podium model successful, and the development was met with much criticism from experts and community members alike.

Simple oversights such as the use of taller, bulkier towers constructed of inferior materials “created a design language that lacked the subtle qualities celebrated in Vancouver” (White & Punter, 2017, p. 11). The authors concluded that, while using the Vancouverism precedent to inform their concept helped Concord to acquire the Railway Lands, the attempt to recreate what had worked well in Vancouver was unsuccessful in the Toronto context. In effect, the Railway Lands demonstrated how the construction of urban space is “a contextually grounded process that is shaped more by local politics, institutional practices and development norms than it is by the power of a particular design ideology or model” (White & Punter, 2017, p. 12), and thus, represents the inherent challenge of reproducing urban spaces in different cities.

Aligned with this notion, authors such as Cook (2008) and McCann (2013) suggest it is necessary to ask who the most influential actors involved in these processes are and, in turn, who is able to benefit from the transference of ideas across borders. Referred to by McCann and Ward (2011) as *transfer agents*, those typically involved in the policy mobility process include local politicians, consultants, investors, real estate developers, city managers, architects, and high profile planners (González, 2011; McCann, 2011; McCann & Ward, 2011). McCann (2011) offers a more in-depth analysis in identifying the associated actors, for which he has created three distinct categories. The first represents local policy actors, which may be comprised of policy professionals (e.g., urban planners), private policy consultants employed by the state, and civil society groups (e.g., non-profits or political activists). The second category is a collection of individuals, firms, and think tanks providing consulting services for the purpose of educating others on best practices or becoming educated on such practices themselves. The third, broadly referred to as informational infrastructures, encompasses institutions, individuals, organizations, and technologies involved in the construction, representation, and interpretation of best policy practices. For example, a professional organization such as the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) can legitimize particular urban policy experts based on the presenters they invite to conferences, as well as give credit to specific cities based on where these events are

located. While these three categories offered by McCann (2011) are useful for considering the variety of actors who can contribute to the process, the transfer agents identified previously are more applicable to the subject case, as those primarily involved are developers and consultants.

### **2.4.3 Critiques of Policy Transfer**

According to McCann (2011), all of the primary agents responsible for mobilizing urban policies and ideas can be characterized as “a new specialist elite” (p. 114), which poses the risk of transforming cities in a manner that benefits affluent groups while further marginalizing those who are excluded from the process (McCann, 2011). Although they are not considered active agents in the transfer process, members of the public represent a critical audience whose support is required by those with a growth agenda (McCann, 2013). Thus, in order to bring the public on-board for certain projects, it is necessary for transfer agents “to create a general sense of local common purpose in order to naturalize the notion that certain types of development and growth are good for everyone” (McCann, 2013, p. 8). As established by Peterson (1981), this is most easily achieved when policies or projects can demonstrate a benefit to the local economy, thereby creating a common incentive. However, in considering this critique in relation to the subject case, the common incentive promoted by TNSE was less focused on the local economy, and more so on the introduction of the TNS Plaza.

It is then critical to consider whose interests are represented by the types of ideas and policies being transferred, in addition to how they are branded and marketed to the local population (McCann, 2013). In many cases, transfer agents utilize static representations of concepts and spaces they wish to emulate in order to appeal to affluent demographics, while ignoring historical and social factors integral to constructing an equitable urban environment (Massey, 2005). For Cook (2008), this approach fails to acknowledge that, when it comes to determining the success and appropriateness of a policy transfer process, the results are dependent on how effectively the transfer agents adapt the idea. This critique offers helpful

direction for analysing the way in which the precedents inspiring True North Square were presented in public presentations, media releases, and news articles.

#### **2.4.4 Benefits of Knowledge Mobilization**

As underscored by McCann (2013), whether it is through research, travel, or personal networks, urban planners and design consultants have a tendency to transfer best practices from elsewhere. Put another way by Healey (2011), “In this field, we are continually producing, critiquing, applying and circulating concepts, techniques and practice experiences from one place and time to another” (p. 189). While McCann (2013) does recognize the potential challenges associated with this approach, he also acknowledges, “on the other hand... how advocates of alternative policy models have used similar forms of global-urban networking to achieve innovative policy change” (p. 22). Recently, author and former New York City Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan (2016) expressed this concept more explicitly in a chapter titled *Stealing Good Ideas*: “Cities are inspiring one another and choosing from the menu of options that other cities provide, and sometimes the borrowing city puts the ideas together in bold and unexpected ways” (p.109). In this sense, the author is acknowledging the potential for the recipient city to adapt ideas based on their own needs, rather than importing fixed or “static” representations, as cautioned by Massey (2005). Cook (2008) supports this notion by drawing on the mobilization of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) from the United States to England. Through a case study on this process, the author suggests England found success with the model by identifying transferable lessons from the relatable experiences of specific areas in the United States, allowing the policy to be “deliberately reshaped to ‘fit’ its new economic, social and cultural contexts” (p. 791). As such, in order to effectively mobilize knowledge or draw on ideas from precedents in other cities, transfer agents should focus their attention on the process as opposed to the final product. In doing so, urban planners, designers,

and developers can benefit from both the successes and challenges of actors in other cities, allowing them to avoid the same mistakes themselves.

#### **2.4.5 Knowledge Mobilization and Spatial Assemblage**

As proposed by McCann and Ward (2011), in addition “to following policy actors and policies, we can also follow places” (p. 47). The authors clarify they do not mean literal movement, but a figurative mobilization of certain places in relation to specific models. According to Massey (2005), this perception of space as mobile directly opposed previous understandings of the spatial as fixed. In order to depart from traditional policy transfer literature and generate a better understanding of spatial mobility, Massey (2005) asserts “A re-imagination of things as processes is necessary... for the reconceptualization of places in a way that might challenge exclusivist localisms” (p. 20). Aligned with this notion, McCann (2011) cautions transfer agents to consider mobilization as “a social process operating through and constitutive of social space” (p. 117). When considering urban policymaking and design in terms of the connections between locations, this perspective not only emphasizes the flow of knowledge from one place to another, but also, recognizes knowledge is only actionable when it is embedded within a particular social, spatial, and institutional context.

In an effort to address McCann’s (2011) concern, Sheller (2004) suggests it is necessary to move beyond the language of *networks*, a term commonly used in traditional policy transfer literature to address the flow of knowledge between places. For Sheller (2004), the term fails to encompass “the blurred boundaries of social interaction” (p. 47) by conveying orderly nodes and connections between actors and places. This notion is supported by McFarlane (2009) who proposes the use of *translocal assemblage* instead. First, the author offers the term “translocal” to blur, and perhaps surpass, the unnecessary distinction of local and global. Second, McFarlane (2009) asserts the transition from networks to “assemblages” is necessary because the term is more appropriate for conceptualizing connections between groups and places, as

they “are not simply a spatial category, output, or resultant formation, but signify doing, performance, and events” (p. 562).

McCann and Ward (2011) apply the term *assemblage* in a similar way, asserting it can be used “to encourage both an attention to the composite and relational character of... cities and also to the various social practices that gather, or draw together, diverse elements of the world into relatively stable and coherent *things*” (p. 43). Further straying from the literalist trap set by the policy transfer perspective, this approach suggests connections between places are better understood when the assembly, disassembly, and reassembly of knowledge is considered, which by extension, results in the assembling of urban space (McCann & Ward, 2011). In turn, the concept of assemblage not only captures the history of connections through which urban space is created, but the capacity for spaces to inevitably exceed those connections by adapting to future uses as well (McFarlane, 2009). This understanding of assemblage as a continuation of the knowledge mobilization process is particularly relevant for the case study and, in effect, serves to complement the framework offered by Cook (2008).

In considering the potential for spaces to exceed expectations by adapting over time, there is a potential cause for concern when the success of doing so is dependent on processes of social interaction and individual interpretation, which are potentially restricted by models of private ownership. With this in mind, Sheller (2004) writes:

Without assuming that everyone takes part in such social practices (given the unevenness of new technology adoption, the social stratification of cultural practices, and the powerful forces of social exclusion), it would be timely to consider how such transformations might affect normative models of ‘good’ public space and civic life. (p. 43)

Aligned with this notion and the concepts of knowledge mobility and assembly (McCann, 2013; McFarlane, 2009; Sheller, 2004), I examine the production of True North Square by focusing on the process of mobilizing concepts from other North American cities. Further, by identifying and engaging with the primary actors involved in its production, I enquire as to whether they considered the appropriateness of the space for facilitating social and cultural experiences

distinct to the local Winnipeg context, as well as offer recommendations for managing the space to accommodate a variety of uses and users.

## **2.5 Summary**

The above discussion has identified and reviewed the writings of various topics relevant to this major degree project: the right to the city; privately-owned public space; municipal public policy; and, policy transfer and knowledge mobilization and assemblage.

I have drawn on literature discussing the right to the city because of its importance for informing downtown planning and urban design processes. In particular, the concepts of use value and exchange value are of relevance to the case study, as they serve as a foundation for considering public benefit. For Lefebvre (1968) and authors subsequently inspired by the theory, there was, and still remains a need to address the divide between the experts producing spaces and the everyday users who find meaning rooted within them. In reviewing writings on the theory in relation to the context of privately-owned public space, two streams of thought emerged regarding spatial production: who is considered during the design and planning process; and, how is the urban environment managed to allow for equitable access and meaningful interpretation. With these ideas in mind, there is a clear emphasis placed on understanding the process by which space is produced, in addition to observing how it functions in situ. As such, the process of knowledge mobilization and assemblage, situated within the greater body of work on policy transfer, serves as the theoretical framework for this case study. Notably, the concept of *assemblage* serves to better address the spatial nature of the project, recognizing the output of the process is subject to further adaptation over time. Thus, in an effort to generate a better understanding of the True North Square development process, this framework allowed me to analyse such factors as: aspirations; key actors; influential policies; inspirational precedents; and, plans for future management.

While the theories of knowledge mobilization and the right to the city both address a tangible understanding of urban space, each emphasizes the importance of conceptual factors as well, including the social, political, and cultural contexts in which the spaces are situated. As such, there is a common hope present in each, which is that urban space will not be restricted to the way it was produced by experts and elected officials, but rather, will remain open to interpretation and the possibility to exceed the expectations of those who conceived of it.

## **3.0 METHODS**

### **3.1 Research Strategy**

This major degree project uses a case study as the overarching research strategy. Gray (2014) defines the case study as “a research strategy which focuses on gaining an understanding of the dynamics present within single settings... from a much more focused range of people, organizations or contexts” (p. 312). While there are different understandings of case studies within the social sciences, it is generally considered appropriate for exploring real-life phenomena through detailed analysis of events and contextual factors, as well as the relationships that can be observed between them (Farthing, 2016; Gray, 2014; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) identifies three different types of case studies: descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory. My research used an exploratory approach to examine True North Square’s design and planning process, as I began by asking more general questions aligned with the theoretical framework, from which more specific themes were identified and expanded upon. This case had not been studied previously through an academic lens. In order to generate an in-depth understanding of this case I have: analyzed relevant policies, regulations, and documents; assessed the surrounding site context; engaged with key actors; and, examined the benefits and challenges presented through the knowledge mobilization process.

The research is a single case study; an approach encouraged by authors such as Flyvbjerg (2006), Berg (2008), and Yin (2014). Yin (2014) outlines five rationales for single case research, including instances when the case is considered to be critical, unusual, common, revelatory, or longitudinal. The proposed research is aligned with Yin’s (2014) category of unusual cases, as I have not encountered a case study connecting literature on privately-owned public spaces with the concept of knowledge mobilization, which are both key elements of the True North Square development. Further, as few privately-owned public spaces currently exist within downtown Winnipeg, there is limited information available on them within this context.

While TNSE has made the precedents inspiring the project available to the public, they have been publicly less forthcoming with important details such as how the precedents were discovered, the extent to which they were replicated, and how they were adapted for Winnipeg's context. As such, I explored this process to determine these sorts of details to gain an in-depth understanding of the case.

As with all social science research, the validity, generalizability, and reliability of the study must be consistent throughout all stages. The construct validity of this exploratory research is achieved by establishing a clear connection between my research questions, selected methodology, and potential sources of data. In regards to generalizability, while the case itself is unique, the approach to researching it should be replicable (Yin, 2014). Thus, the generalizability of the study can be observed from my research questions and detailed documentation process. Moreover, despite critics asserting one cannot make generalizations based on the findings of a single case, Flyvbjerg (2006) proposes "formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas the 'force of the example' is underestimated" (p. 12). The reliability of the study has been accomplished by providing the reader with as much detail and general information as possible. In doing so, I have endeavored to avoid making inferences by clearly connecting my findings to the data, while also allowing the reader to interpret the data for themselves (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

### 3.1.1 Case Study Context

The case study is situated within the context of privately-owned public space in the urban environment. It explores the process of producing True North Square, with a particular focus on the TNS Plaza featured within Phase 1 of the development. Located in the heart of downtown Winnipeg between Bell MTS Place and the RBC Convention Centre, the introduction of this one-million-square-foot-plus private development will surely have an impact on the current state of the city's core area. More specifically, with a substantial amount of public funding being

directed to the TNS Public Realm through the TIF program, concerns have been raised about the overall accessibility of the development's Publicly Accessible Spaces. After examining True North Square's process of mobilizing knowledge from precedents such as Maple Leaf Square (Toronto), LA Live (Los Angeles), and the Light and Power District (Kansas City), this research investigates this issue by asking members of the TNS Development Team about their intentions for the Publicly Accessible Spaces. Subsequently, the research considers potential management practices for maintaining an open and inclusive public realm, as well as identifies lessons for producing privately-owned public space by mobilizing knowledge from other cities.

### **3.2 Data Collection**

With the intention to provide a detailed description of the True North Square development process, data was primarily collected using qualitative methods, reflecting the exploratory nature of the research questions being addressed. Aligned with McCann and Ward's (2011) methodological approach to studying *through* processes of mobilizing knowledge, the following strategy for data collection has allowed the research to go beyond tracing the origin and journey of knowledge from elsewhere, investigating how and why these particular precedents were adopted, as well as what the implications may be for the local context. As Phase 1 of True North Square has yet to be completed, the selected methods also reflect limitations of the time and resources available for completing the project.

#### **3.2.1 Context Study**

I began my research process by developing and challenging my current understanding of the social and economic milieu of downtown Winnipeg. In particular, I focused on the area surrounding the True North Square development site by identifying surrounding land uses, illustrating circulation on and around the site, and characterizing the demographic of residents. This was necessary before any discussions could commence regarding the contextual

appropriateness of True North Square and the degree to which precedents were adapted. To achieve this, I reviewed previous research conducted within downtown Winnipeg, referenced satellite imagery, and examined census data, in addition to engaging in walking tours and site visits of the surrounding area. This information has assisted me in contextualizing and interpreting my other sources of data, as well as directly addressing research question II and III.

### 3.2.2 Document Analysis

As established by Farthing (2016), “All research studies use document analysis in one way or another” (p. 136). To address research question I and III, I reviewed previous documentation and studies of the precedent development sites, in addition to regulatory and planning policy documents, meeting minutes, and media reports relevant to True North Square. While news articles are the most easily accessible, I ensured any information taken from those sources was validated with more official documentation (e.g. council agendas and minutes, interview data etc.). Policy analysis was particularly important for this research, as development in downtown areas is subject to additional municipal reviews and design guidelines.

### 3.2.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

To address research question I, II, and III, I engaged key informants in semi-structured interviews between the months of February and July, 2018. Aligned with Berg’s (2008) suggestions for conducting individual case studies, rather than relying too heavily on a single key interview this research sought additional sources of information to verify claims and identify relationships between actors involved in the process. The key-informants were selected based on their integral involvement with the True North Square development process, whether in the planning, design, or review stage. While the majority of prospective participants were identified from publicly accessible information online and presentations delivered at public events, several were provided with my contact information from TNSE members and, in turn, reached out to me

directly with an interest to partake in the study. This step involved receiving the organization's support to carry out the research with no formal stipulations in place.

In total, six (6) interviews were conducted, each of which lasted approximately one-hour. In one case, due to time constraints, a research participant submitted answers to the interview schedule digitally, rather than engaging in an in-person interview (City of Winnipeg Representative 2, March 2, 2018). In another, due to geographical constraints, the interview was conducted over the phone (TNS Design Team Member 2, July 12, 2018). All other interviews were conducted in-person, lasting between 40 and 80 minutes, and recorded to be reviewed, transcribed, and coded at a later date. All participants were provided with the opportunity to review their transcripts in order to verify accuracy, add to responses, or redact sensitive information. Further, in recognition of the relatively small planning and development community in Winnipeg, participants were provided with a chance to review their pseudonyms to ensure their identity was sufficiently protected. A balanced sample of key informants was achieved, which included participants from the City of Winnipeg, True North Real Estate Development Limited, and the private design consultant teams for the project. By including participants from both the private and public sectors, a diverse range of perspectives and opinions have been gathered, which is important for ensuring the validity of the findings.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

Farthing (2016) describes data analysis as “the stage of research when your primary interest is in developing an argument about the claims that can be made on the basis of the research you have conducted” (p. 149). Considering this case study is centered on a process, as opposed to assessing the performance of the completed project, this research is exploratory and the data is mainly qualitative in nature. As such, I have taken a qualitative approach to content analysis, which did not require the use of computer software.

### 3.3.1 Content Analysis and Coding

Based on the research design and selected methods, the data generated is qualitative in nature. The documents and grey literature I gathered were categorized as either descriptive or causal, and further coded based on relation to the planning process and site design. Interview transcriptions were categorized and coded in a slightly more complex manner blending manifest and latent analysis strategies (Berg, 2008). In the interest of depicting the process of producing True North Square in as linear of a fashion as possible, a manifest coding approach was first undertaken to organize content according to the project timeline. Next, a latent approach was employed to identify content with the potential to portray a deeper structural meaning. All data categorized as latent was further coded according to themes, which were created both inductively and deductively; deductive in the sense I relied on the underlying theoretical framework to identify key aspects of the case to understand, while inductive in the sense I remained open to additional themes emerging, particularly in relation to privately-owned public space.

### **3.4 Biases and Limitations**

A motivating factor for selecting this topic is based on my origins in Winnipeg and, therefore, my familiarity with development activity in the downtown. For the sake of integrity and breadth of scope, my findings include as much detail and general information as possible to avoid making inferences based on personal experience or preference regarding the area surrounding the site (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Further, considering True North Square remains incomplete at the time of producing this document, I have had no interactions with the site that would have influenced the research. In fact, I believe my familiarity with the surrounding downtown area has been of benefit to the project.

As mentioned previously, this research is being undertaken with the expressed support of True North Real Estate Development, which poses a potential bias in terms of how the

information was gathered and reported. With that being said, I have endeavored to provide a balanced perspective to the findings by talking with members of the public sector, in addition to members of the TNS Development and Design Team. While all information gathered from members of these organizations has been done transparently, I recognize there is still potential for these actors to be influenced by the prominence of TNSE within the development community. As such, whenever relevant, throughout the reporting process I have incorporated academic literature and additional opinions detailed within the media. Finally, it should be recognized the intent of this project was to undertake a detailed study on the case, which would not have been possible without the unique knowledge possessed by members of True North Real Estate Development and their Design Team. Overall, these biases were found to be minimal and did not adversely affect the validity or reliability of the study.

Four limitations of the research in particular are noteworthy and, as will be discussed in a later chapter, provide some direction for further study. The first limitation is related to the timing of the research and the progress of the True North Square development. Although nearing completion, Phase 1 of the project is still under construction, which restricted me from engaging with the space or assessing any aspects of the project beyond process. The second limitation is a product of the relatively small planning and development community in Winnipeg. While authors such as McCann and Ward (2011) express the importance of explaining political processes in relation to development projects, in an effort to protect the participants from undue harm, anything political beyond the planning and urban design review process has fallen outside of the project scope. The third limitation is related to the extent of this major degree project, as well as the amount of time I had been allocated to complete it, which meant I did not have the capacity to discuss all aspects of the True North Square development process. The fourth limitation also derives from the scale of this project, as there would be benefit to giving further attention to Tax Increment Financing, with a particular emphasis on how it is used in the context of Winnipeg, as opposed to just focusing on its application the case of True North Square.

Future research may be conducted in these areas to compliment this case study and help to inform best planning, design, and development practices in the City of Winnipeg and elsewhere.

## **4.0 PLANNING POLICY AND REGULATORY CONTEXT**

The analysis of my research is divided into three chapters. This intent of this chapter is to portray the mechanisms currently in place to attract and guide development decisions in Winnipeg. These mechanisms, in effect, communicate to the development community what the expectations and desired outcomes are for the City. In all cases, proponents of development projects must submit their plans for review to the City's Planning, Property and Development Department. While the general requirements and processes of approval vary by project, the Department is responsible for ensuring all new development aligns with the City's immediate and long-term objectives. Projects located in the downtown, such as True North Square, are subjected to a more rigorous review process than developments located in peripheral areas. As such, the following section offers an overview of the policies, regulations, and guidelines applicable to True North Square from an urban planning and design perspective, which include: *The City of Winnipeg Charter Act (2002)*; *OurWinnipeg (2011)*; *Complete Communities Direction Strategy (2012)*; *Downtown Urban Design Guidelines (2005)*; *Downtown Zoning By-law No. 2004.100 (2004)*; and, the SHED Plan (2014). In this chapter, I primarily rely on information gathered through an analysis of these documents, with some additional information drawn from semi-structured interviews to support or contrast points when applicable.

### **4.1 The City of Winnipeg Charter Act S.M. 2002 c. 39**

The Province of Manitoba introduced *The City of Winnipeg Charter Act S.M. 2002 c. 39* (Manitoba Laws, 2002) to define the authorities of the municipality in matters related to governance, planning, and development. For example, the Act mandates the City to adopt development plans, such as *OurWinnipeg (2011)*, and outlines corresponding processes for reviewing and amending the plan. Of particular relevance to the True North Square development, however, is s. 222 titled Tax Increment Financing, which grants City Council the

ability to “establish tax increment financing programs in designated areas of the city for the purpose of encouraging investment or development in those areas” (Manitoba Laws, 2002).

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a tool used by various levels of government to publicly subsidize infrastructure and community improvement projects. While TIF is applied differently across various administrations, the underlying premise of the tool generally remains the same, which is that significant investment in an area results in property values increasing and, in turn, greater tax revenue for the municipality. This increase in tax revenue is referred to as the *tax increment*. Therefore, in order to encourage investment in specific areas, administrations will agree to freeze property values at the assessed rates prior to any improvements being made (FCM, 2015). In turn, developers of those properties are exempt from paying the higher tax increment for a set period of time, which can extend for as long as 25-years in the Province of Manitoba. In other cases, municipalities still collect the tax increment and enter it into a reserve fund, which is to be directly invested into improving infrastructure and the public realm surrounding the property. However, in the Province of Manitoba, the funds can be distributed directly to “the person in whose name the community revitalization property is assessed” (Manitoba Laws, 2009, s. 15.6.a.).

The City of Winnipeg’s ability to establish TIF programs followed the Province of Manitoba’s introduction of *The Community Revitalization Tax Increment Financing Act C.C.S.M. c. C166* in 2009. Under this Act, the eligibility criteria for receiving TIF designation are defined as: significant improvements to the property are to occur; and, it is in the public interest that the improvements be made. While the criterion of making improvements to the property is relatively straightforward, the Act does not define the *public interest* in relation to the second criterion, conveying little direction for how TIF is intended to be used. Further, by allowing funds to be dispersed directly to the owners of community revitalization properties, the *public interest* is subject to their interpretations of what constitutes *economic and social development*, as

opposed to mandating the money be spent on improving infrastructure or enhancing authentic public space.

## **4.2 OurWinnipeg**

*OurWinnipeg* (City of Winnipeg, 2011) is the official municipal development plan for the City of Winnipeg. In general, the plan defines a long-range vision for the City to work toward, and articulates and directs the type of growth required to achieve it. Considering its application to the entire city, *OurWinnipeg* remains relatively broad in its level of prescriptiveness. For instance, rather than offering detailed plans for neighbourhoods or specific corridors, the document outlines more general development goals for the city as a whole. However, in recognizing the unique potential and importance of the downtown, the plan does identify distinct objectives for the area.

For all development projects situated in downtown Winnipeg, such as True North Square, the plan provides some guidance in terms of what the City will generally support. Aligned with the plan's description of downtown as the "entertainment, cultural and economic heart of our city" (s. 01-1c, p. 34), a top priority is to enable projects that will draw people to the area outside of regular business hours. The benefits of doing so are not only economic, in that more people translate to more customers and higher levels of investment, but are related to safety as well. Active streets and sidewalks are thought to increase perceptions of safety through natural surveillance (Bellamy, 2015). Moreover, the plan also emphasizes the objective of increasing residential opportunities downtown, which should accommodate a wide range of housing needs. Finally, the plan aspired to high standards of urban design for all downtown projects, which should include quality public spaces that are attractive, unique, and functional. As such, the spaces should be designed with aesthetics and practical use in mind, allowing them to be accessed easily and enjoyed by a wide variety of users.

### 4.3 Complete Communities Direction Strategy

*Complete Communities Direction Strategy* (City of Winnipeg, 2012) serves as a companion plan to *OurWinnipeg* by more resolutely directing growth and defining objectives for certain areas. In relation to the True North Square site, the plan also outlines six key directions and corresponding implementation tools for the downtown, which expand upon those identified in *OurWinnipeg*. The key directions established for downtown include: organizing downtown; places to live downtown; places to work and learn downtown; places to relax and enjoy downtown; high-quality places downtown; and, getting from place to place downtown. While the key directions alone offer little guidance, each is accompanied by a series of sub-directions and implementation tools to demonstrate levels of municipal support and areas for potential partnerships.

Specific to infill projects such as True North Square, *Complete Communities* supports the redevelopment of surface parking lots in downtown Winnipeg. For example, under the direction of *getting from place to place*, a parking strategy is described as being necessary to “reduce the amount of surface parking Downtown” (s. 03-1f, p. 32). Further, under the direction of *places to live downtown*, the plan encourages “the redevelopment of surface parking lots in defined areas in support of increased residential and mixed-use development” (s. 03-1b, p. 20). In doing so, the City is attempting to focus new development in underutilized areas and capitalize on existing infrastructure, which it is willing to take added measures to encourage.

As for partnerships, under the direction of *places to relax and enjoy downtown*, the plan clearly articulates the City’s intention to “Facilitate favourable conditions for public and private investment through the assembly of vacant properties or surface parking lots” (s. 03-1d, p. 26). Moreover, under the direction of *places to work and learn downtown*, the plan outlines the City’s intention to use relevant incentive tools to encourage new office development to locate in the downtown area. This opportunity is reiterated under the direction of *organizing the downtown*,

which establishes the City's willingness to provide "incentives for investment to achieve the amenities and design standards associated with each area-specific node" (s. 03-1a, p. 16). However, the plan is not specific about the types of incentives the City is willing to provide, nor the community amenities they would potentially request in return.

The City's perception of public space as being important for creating a welcoming, attractive, and distinct downtown is affirmed in *Complete Communities*. For instance, under the direction of *high-quality places downtown*, the plan expresses the City's intent to "prioritize investment in public places that directly support existing and new high density mixed-use development" (s. 03-1e, p. 28). The connection between private development and public space is further reinforced in the introduction to the section, which states "Design of public realm will work hand in hand with the design of private developments" (s. 03-1e, p. 27), allowing dense development to be complimented by quality public space. While the term *quality* is used repeatedly to describe the City's expectation, little detail is offered in terms of how quality would be evaluated, or what types of public spaces are actually desired. As such, the plan's direction for public space in the downtown reads more as a strategy for attracting development opportunities, as opposed to a guide for creating interesting places for people.

#### **4.4 Downtown Zoning By-law No. 2004.100**

*The Downtown Zoning By-law No. 100/2004* (City of Winnipeg, 2004) is separate from the Zoning By-law (No. 200/2006) in force throughout the rest of Winnipeg. While both are intended to advance policies in *OurWinnipeg* and the *Complete Communities Direction Strategy* by regulating real property and development, the Downtown Zoning By-law more specifically aims to "support and advance the unique and distinctive neighbourhoods, functional districts, character areas, and focal points that combine to form a diverse, vibrant downtown" (City of Winnipeg, 2004, p. 2).

The Downtown Zoning By-law defines and regulates areas according to four different sectors, including Multiple-Use, Character, Downtown Living, and Riverbank. Each sector has a unique intent and directs decisions on built form, land uses, and signage accordingly. The True North Square site is located within a sector designated as *Multiple-Use*, which is “intended to encourage the range of uses, sites, activities and buildings typical to a... central business district” (p. 38). Accordingly, permitted uses include office, restaurant, retail, and multi-family, all of which are consistent with those proposed for True North Square. As stated by City of Winnipeg planning staff, the Multiple Use sector in the Downtown Zoning By-law is intentionally permissive to encourage development within the area, typically avoiding the need for proponents to re-zone properties (CoW Representative 1, February 7, 2018). In fact, the permissiveness of the Multiple-Use sector is not just limited to land use, but extends to the bulking regulations as well. For example, the by-law does not define a maximum building height for the sector, but rather, sets a general maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of 12 (increased to 15 for buildings along Portage Avenue and Main Street).

In contrast, the Downtown Zoning By-law is more prescriptive when it comes to regulating the public realm, upholding the Multiple-Use sector’s specific goal to “enhance pedestrian comfort and encourage high-quality built form” (p. 38). Such key considerations as building placement, façade treatment, entryways, and signage are detailed in the By-law, upheld by the advisory Urban Design Review process that all downtown “development, redevelopment, expansion, demolition, or exterior alteration... visible from public rights-of-way or rivers is subject to” (s. 250.1, p. 31).

#### **4.5 Downtown Urban Design Guidelines and Urban Design Advisory Committee**

The goal of the overall downtown design review process is to ensure the “thoughtful integration of development proposals into their local context” (City of Winnipeg, 2005, p. 2) and confirm consistency with *OurWinnipeg* and the *Complete Communities Direction Strategy*. The process

is comprised of four stages that begin with an early *consultation*, followed by the submission of a formal *application* and its subsequent *review*, concluded with *recommendations and approval*. While the Urban Design Advisory Committee (UDAC) remains integral throughout each stage, the *Downtown Urban Design Guidelines* (City of Winnipeg, 2005) are a more practical resource for proponents prior to the early consultation taking place, as it allows them to develop their early concepts consistent with downtown design directions.

The *Downtown Winnipeg Urban Design Guidelines* (City of Winnipeg, 2005) focus on two specific areas, which are urban design and its relation to the public realm, as well as the quality of architectural design. For the public realm, the guidelines outline the six principles by which design review decisions are made, including: enhancing pedestrian comfort, safety, and accessibility; creating identifiable places where contextually appropriate; respecting the urban tradition of streets and blocks; celebrating and building on the best features of the surrounding context; contributing to important vistas and linkages; and, animating the interface between interior and exterior spaces. As for architectural design, there are five principles directing review decisions, including: striving for quality and character; integrating public art; practicing heritage conservation; designing for refinement and integration; and, practicing sustainable designs. In practice, these principles are intended to simply safeguard a minimum standard established by the City of Winnipeg, while UDAC advises proponents to ensure they are complied with and exceeded when possible.

UDAC members, representing a range of design and development professions, are appointed by the Standing Policy Committee on Downtown, Heritage and Riverbanks (City of Winnipeg, 2005). According to a City of Winnipeg representative, the role of the committee is “to offer local knowledge, experience, and encouragement toward achieving design excellence for all new development” (CoW Representative 2, March 2, 2018). Focusing on contextual fit and quality of pedestrian experience, the committee reviews all proposed development in the downtown and provides recommendations to the Director of UDAC on urban design matters.

While the committee's recommendations are not technically enforceable, the Director takes their input very seriously and, whenever possible, encourages proponents to incorporate their feedback throughout the development process (CoW Representative 2, 2018). All projects within the downtown, including True North Square, must be formally approved by the Director or an authorized delegate prior to commencing construction. As such, despite the fact that the design review process is not open to the public, those appointed to the Committee are meant to act as representatives of the public's interests by ensuring new development is contextually appropriate and improves the pedestrian experience (CoW Representative 2, 2018).

#### **4.6 The SHED Plan**

Whereas development plans like *OurWinnipeg* are relatively ambiguous, constrained to some degree by a city-wide scope, district plans are able to provide a greater level of detail and prescriptiveness by focusing on smaller geographic areas. *The SHED Plan* (CentreVenture, 2014) specifically addresses the area defined by the District boundaries (see Figure 5), within which the True North Square site is located. In doing so, the document serves as a tool for guiding the decisions of stakeholders by establishing a vision for the SHED, defining design directions, and identifying key locations for development. Notably, the plan was created by CentreVenture Development Corporation, but was not adopted by City Council and is, therefore, not enforceable.

The vision for the SHED is based on the following six principles and objectives: activating the district; creating connections; protecting investment; promoting innovation; improving safety and security; and, coordinating management. Ultimately, in pursuit of the established vision, the Plan intends to "create a lively and distinct District that becomes a driver for further investment and economic development" (CentreVenture, 2014, p. 4). While endeavoring to activate the area and improve perceptions of safety reflect a commitment to enhancing the public realm, other aims such as promoting innovation, coordinating



**Figure 5:** Proposed MPI Development Site in The SHED Plan. Sinclair, 2018

management, and protecting investment – along with the stated intention to stimulate economic development – suggest the document is more focused on planning for business than people. This direction is, however, aligned with the mandates of the CentreVenture Development Corporation. Nevertheless, drawing additional people to the area is necessary to support desired increases in economic activity, which the plan promotes more thoroughly in a series of design concepts for key locations in the District.

One of the locations for which a design concept has been developed is the Phase 1 True North Square site. Referred to as the Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI) Development in *The SHED Plan*, the concept embraces the site's location at the heart of the District and draws on its potential to connect the RBC Convention Centre and Bell MTS Place (see Figure 5). Further, consistent with the actual True North Square site layout, the SHED Plan suggests the MPI design will be “anchored by a ‘content plaza’ at grade that allows pedestrians to easily circulate through the development” (p. 23). The plaza, according to the plan, has the potential to become the nucleus of the SHED by facilitating “numerous public uses” (p. 22), including concerts, seasonal markets, and sponsored productions. In fact, the consistency between the SHED Plan and True North Square development even extends to the orientation of buildings and flow of pedestrian traffic, making the only notable difference the addition of residential as a featured use.

#### **4.7 Summary**

In summary, the True North Square development is generally aligned with the municipal planning policies and regulations in place for downtown Winnipeg. In particular, the project conforms to the City of Winnipeg's key directions for the downtown, including: redeveloping surface parking lots; adding to the residential stock; offering public spaces; expanding the presence of entertainment amenities; and, enhancing opportunities for economic investment.

Moreover, despite some public opposition to allocating TIF support to the project (City of Winnipeg, 2017c), TNS meets the criteria specified within *The Community Revitalization Tax Increment Financing Act C.C.S.M. c. C166* (2009). In regards to the Downtown Zoning By-law and corresponding urban design review process, based on information provided by the City, it is apparent they are intended to act as mechanisms to ensure downtown development is contextually appropriate. While it is difficult to determine how consistently effective they are at doing so, the formal review and subsequent recommendations made by municipal planners and designers for True North Square are discussed in Section 6.5, demonstrating the areas that were the primary focus of City of Winnipeg Representatives.

## **5.0 SITE CONTEXT**

This chapter, as complement to the previous addressing policies and regulations applicable to the site, introduces the physical and social characteristics of the research site by discussing: location within downtown Winnipeg; history and notable characteristics; demographics; surrounding land uses; and, circulation. The intention of this chapter is to provide thorough context for subsequent discussions of how the development fits within its surroundings. Information was gathered by conducting walking tours and site visits, referencing satellite imagery, and examining census data. At full build-out, True North Square will occupy two sites separated by Carlton Street, which are planned to be developed separately as Phases 1 and 2 of the project. This research primarily addresses Phase 1 for three reasons. First, the final site design for Phase 2 has not been discussed publicly in great detail. Second, construction on the Phase 2 site has yet to begin, while construction on the Phase 1 site is scheduled to be completed by fall of 2018. Third, and most importantly, the Publicly Accessible Spaces this research is focused on are features of the Phase 1 site.

### **5.1 Study Area**

True North Square is centrally located in downtown Winnipeg (see Figure 1). The site is situated within a distinct downtown area, defined physically by major thoroughfares at each of its edges. As shown in Figure 6, Main Street is located to the east, Broadway to the south, Memorial Boulevard to the west, and Portage Avenue to the north. For additional context, the north boundary has been extended beyond Portage to Ellice Avenue.

The historic city centre – defined by the intersection of Portage Avenue and Main Street – is situated just one block north and five blocks east of the site. As the Portage and Main intersection has remained closed to pedestrians for over 40-years, its once bustling sidewalks are now largely devoid of activity at grade (Schlesinger, 2017). While consensus over reopening



**Figure 6:** True North Square in Relation to Proposed and Historical City Centre. Sinclair, 2018

the intersection has been far from established, it is clear the prioritization of cars on the street over people on the sidewalk has left many Winnipeg residents disappointed (Kives, 2017b). In turn, TNSE has recognized the opportunity to poise their project as a new, more people friendly downtown centre, promoting it with the tagline: “redefining the heart of the city” (Schlesinger, 2017). The relationship between the two locations is shown in Figure 6.

Prior to construction for Phase 1 commencing, the 242 Hargrave site served as a surface parking lot for downtown employees and visitors. Across the street, the Phase 2 site at 220 Carlton was previously occupied by the Best Western Carlton Inn. The 3-storey motor hotel was constructed between 1960-61 and was demolished in 2013. However, prior to constructing the Carlton Inn, the site also served as a parking lot for employees of the T. Eaton Company (Winnipeg Architecture Foundation, 2018). As construction of Phase 1 continues, the Phase 2 site is being used for general storage and parking to support these efforts in the interim period.

The site for Phase 1 is bound by Graham Avenue to the north, Hargrave Street to the east, St. Mary’s Cathedral to the south, and Carlton Street to the west. Bell MTS Place, formerly known as the MTS Centre, is located northeast of the site at the intersection of Hargrave and Graham. To the northwest, the Manitoba Hydro Building stands at 22-storeys, offering a visual bridge between the site and Portage Avenue. Cityplace is situated directly to the east, which neighbours the City of Winnipeg’s Millennium Library. The Phase 2 site is defined by Carlton Street to the east, St. Mary Avenue to the south, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet to the west, and ballet school residences and a temporary site office for True North Square to the north. The RBC Convention Centre is located across St. Mary Avenue and extends almost far enough south to reach Broadway. Notably, the site is positioned directly between the RBC Convention Centre and Bell MTS Place, allowing it to provide a north-south connection between these two important downtown attractions (see Figure 7).

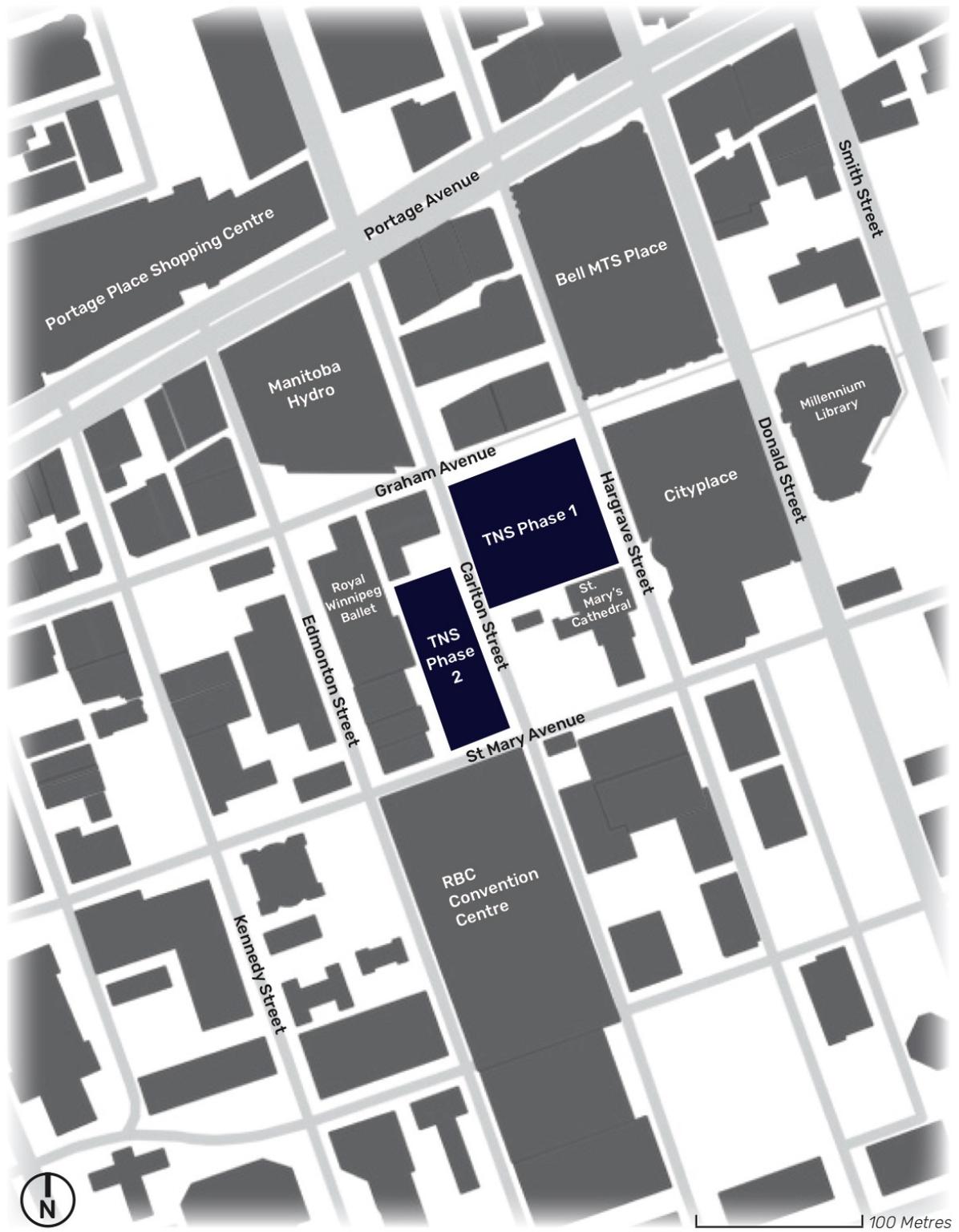


Figure 7: True North Square Phases and Surrounding Site Context. Sinclair, 2018

## 5.2 Demographics

The site is located within census tract (CT) 0013.00. Since 2016 census data is not yet available for downtown Winnipeg, a Central Business District (CBD) category has been created by combining five CTs, including 0013.00, 0014.00, 0023.00, 0024.00, and 0025.00 (see Figure 8). This geography is consistent with the Statistics Canada CBD definition (McCullough, Distasio, & Shirtliffe, 2017). The Winnipeg (CY) category is defined by the city’s legal boundaries and, as such, does not account for areas outside those boundaries within the Census Metropolitan Area (CMA).

According to 2016 census data, there were 1,675 people residing within the site’s CT, demonstrating a rise from 1,495 residents in 2011. As compared to the other categories, the CT’s 11.9 percent increase outpaces the 7 percent increase in the CBD, as well as the city’s overall population increase of 6.3 percent (see Table 1). This trend is generally consistent with a projected 2.2 percent annual increase in the downtown population, which accumulates to 11 percent over the 5-year census period (McCullough et al., 2017).

**Table 1:** Population Trends (Statistics Canada, 2017a-f)

	CT 0013.00			Winnipeg CBD			Winnipeg (City)		
	2011	2016	% Change	2011	2016	% Change	2011	2016	% Change
<b>Total (#)</b>	1,495	1,675	11.9	16,673	17,830	7.0	663,617	705,244	6.3

The population within CT 0013.00 demonstrates some notable divergences from both the Winnipeg CBD and overall city. To begin with, the CT’s population is comprised of only 5.4 percent of persons between the ages of 0-14, which is more than tripled by the city-wide figure of 16.8 percent, and more than doubled by the CBD’s figure of 12.5 percent. On the opposite end of the age spectrum, 5.1 percent of the CT’s population is within the 85+ category, more than double that of the CBD and city overall. Unsurprisingly, the highest proportion of residents within the CT are among the 15-64 age category, comprising 78.5 percent of the total population



**Figure 8:** Winnipeg CBD Census Tracts. Sinclair, 2018

(see Table 2). However, a more detailed breakdown of these cohorts shows nearly 40 percent of this category fall within the 25-34-year range, amounting to a total of 505 residents.

**Table 2:** Population Characteristics – 2016 (Statistics Canada, (Statistics Canada, 2017a-f)

	<b>CT 0013.00</b>	<b>Winnipeg CBD</b>	<b>Winnipeg (CY)</b>
<b>0-14 years (%)</b>	5.4	12.5	16.8
<b>15-64 years (%)</b>	78.5	74.2	67.5
<b>65 years + (%)</b>	16.1	13.3	15.6
<b>85 years + (%)</b>	5.1	2.3	2.4
<b>Average age (#)</b>	42.3	39.8	39.9

As shown in Table 3, while CT 0013.00 has a slightly higher population density than the city overall, it has a much lower population density than the Winnipeg CBD. In terms of tenure types, the 2016 census reports 100 percent of private dwellings within CT 0013.00 as being rental, with an average of 1.5 persons per household. Such a relatively small household size results in CT 0013.00 demonstrating a median household income below that of the CBD and city overall. However, when compared to one-person households, CT 0013.00 actually emerges with the highest average median income of \$38,784.00.

**Table 3:** Household Characteristics – 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2017a-f)

	<b>Household Characteristics (2016)</b>		
	<b>CT 0013.00</b>	<b>Winnipeg CBD</b>	<b>Winnipeg (CY)</b>
<b>Total Private Dwellings (#)</b>	1,385	11,041	294,245
<b>Average Household Size (#)</b>	1.5	1.8	2.5
<b>Population Density (per sq. km)</b>	1,675.0	5,450.5	1,518.8
<b>Rental Households (%)</b>	100.0	80.3	35.0
<b>Median Household Income (\$)</b>	40,960.00	43,518.00	68,402.00
<b>Median One-Person Household Income (\$)</b>	38,784.00	35,428.00	37,389.00

Although it is difficult to draw conclusions with a limited number of residential units, the demographics for the area reveal three factors in relation to the True North Square development. Firstly, the residential population in CT 0013.00 has increased at a more rapid rate than the city overall, suggesting there is an existing community of residents who will be affected by changes made in the area. Secondly, relative to the Winnipeg CBD and city overall, the existing population in CT 0013.00 can be characterized as older, which will affect the types of services and public amenities being demanded. Lastly, a lack of home ownership in the area could mean fluctuations in vacancy rates and, as a result, varying demand for commercial, retail, and hospitality services outside of standard business hours.

### **5.3 Land Use**

The area surrounding the site supports a variety of uses including educational, institutional, cultural, commercial, spiritual, and residential locations. In addition, parks and plazas and properties serving as surface parking lots have also been included. As shown in Figure 9, the prevalence of each use ranges, as commercial, cultural, and institutional locations appear much more frequently than residential, spiritual, and educational locations do. Moreover, the amount of land being used for surface parking vastly exceeds that designated to parks and plaza spaces. For the purposes of this examination the different land uses are defined as follows:

- *Cultural* locations are considered as uses contributing to arts and entertainment.
- *Institutional* locations include all those owned or operated by municipal, provincial, or federal bodies.
- *Commercial* locations include a variety of for-profit uses, including retail, office, and purpose-built parkades, as well as restaurants, bars, and hotels.
- Standard definitions of *spiritual*, *residential*, and *educational* uses have been applied.



Figure 9: Surrounding Land Uses. Sinclair, 2018

As part of the SHED, True North Square is located in close proximity to some of downtown's most significant cultural amenities, including Bell MTS Place, the RBC Convention Centre, and the Winnipeg Art Gallery further west beyond Memorial Boulevard. However, the most prominent land uses in the area, as shown in Figure 9, are institutional, commercial, and surface parking. The relation between the uses is clear, as owners and tenants of these buildings uphold the need for parking to accommodate their customers and employees. Presently, nearly one quarter of Winnipeg's downtown is occupied by surface parking lots, considered by some local experts to be a contributor to blight and a threat to the area's economic vitality (Bellamy, 2015). Further, Figure 9 also demonstrates a dearth of parks and plaza spaces in this downtown area, only two of which were confirmed to be privately-owned public spaces. While some may argue the seasonally harsh weather conditions deter downtown employees from using outdoor spaces, increasing residential density in the area will certainly require more parks and plaza spaces to be offered, as residents occupying condominium and apartment buildings will seek such amenities in lieu of private yards (City of Winnipeg, 2012).

#### **5.4 Site Circulation**

Circulation around the site is facilitated by a network of streets, sidewalks, and skywalks (see Figures 10 and 11). These various options are intended to accommodate private vehicles, buses, pedestrians, and cyclists at grade, while offering a climate protected option for pedestrians above grade as well. The introduction of True North Square will expand upon the current skywalk system to allow for a connection to Cityplace and, by extension, Bell MTS Place. In Phase 2, the skywalk will be further extended to allow for a connection to the RBC Convention Centre. The Publicly Accessible Spaces featured in Phase 1 are intended to make the site permeable at grade as well, allowing for pedestrian circulation between Graham Avenue, Carlton Street, and Hargrave Street.

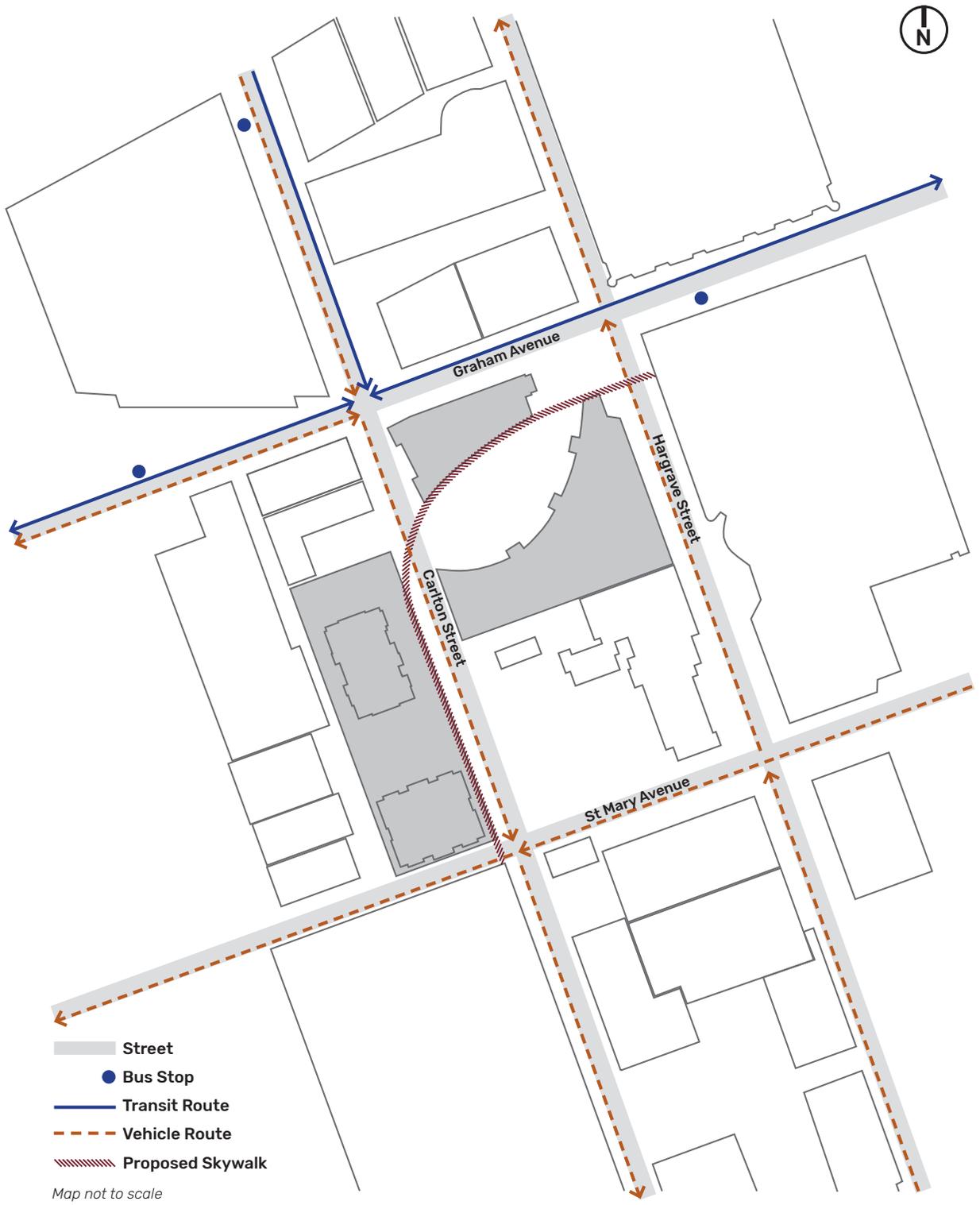


Figure 10: Vehicle Circulation. Sinclair, 2018

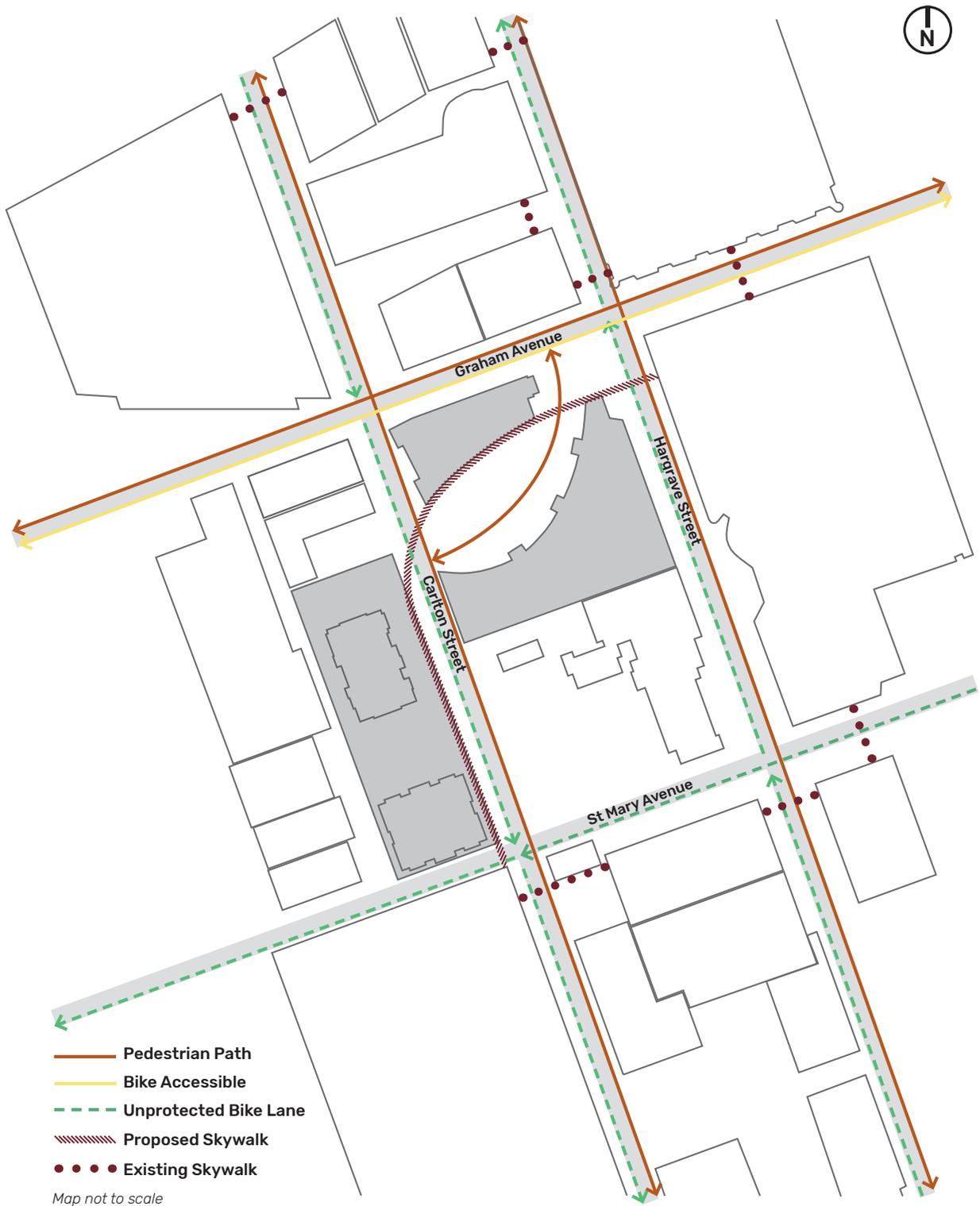


Figure 11: Pedestrian and Cyclist Circulation. Sinclair, 2018

## **6.0 ANALYSIS OF THE PROCESS OF PRODUCING TRUE NORTH SQUARE**

A variety of factors have been influential in shaping and advancing the process of producing True North Square. This chapter explores several themes identified through the research process that relate to mobilizing knowledge from other cities, adapting ideas to a local context, and implementing privately-owned public spaces. The themes have primarily been drawn from data gathered through semi-structured interviews with key actors involved in the process. Interviews were conducted between February and July of 2018, including participants from True North Square Real Estate Development (TNS Development Team Members 1 and 2), the architectural consulting team (TNS Design Team Members 1 and 2), and the City of Winnipeg's Planning, Property and Development Department (CoW Representatives 1 and 2). The True North Square development process was rather unique, in that True North Sports and Entertainment (TNSE) continuously provided the public with information regarding their inspiration and intention for the project, as well as updates on the progress of the development. As such, I also draw on media releases, news articles, and public presentations to support my analysis where applicable. The final section, however, looks beyond the development process to consider how TNS Plaza can be programmed and managed to achieve their intended objectives.

### **6.1 Discovering the Precedents**

From the beginning of the development process, TNSE established the importance of creating public spaces that “match the best in North America” (TNSE, 2016), which they reinforced by citing precedents from other cities inspiring the project. As such, this section considers how precedents were discovered and selected, as well as identifies the consistencies between them (Cook, 2008). While members of the TNS Development Team discuss researching developments across North America for a variety of reasons, including office space design,

washroom detailing, and food hall programming, the precedents they regularly reference from Los Angeles, Toronto, and Kansas City are recognized as being the most influential to the overall project vision and TNS Public Realm (TNS Development Team Member 1, February 25, 2018). While the Ice District in Edmonton has been regularly promoted to the public, as identified through a review of media releases and public presentations from TNSE, a lack of reference to it during the semi-structured interviews has resulted in it being left out of the analysis. This step, in effect, represents the *dis-embedding* of knowledge from other North American cities (Cook, 2008; McCann and Ward, 2011).

#### **6.1.1 Maple Leaf Square – Toronto, Ontario**

Located on the site of the former Railway Lands in downtown Toronto, just west of the Scotiabank Arena (formerly Air Canada Centre) and north of the Gardiner Expressway, Maple Leaf Square was introduced to the city in 2011 (ArchDaily, 2011). The 2.1-acre development is anchored by a publicly accessible square with a giant screen for showing sporting events, surrounded by a residential, office, retail, entertainment, and hotel complex. Jointly developed by Lanterra, Cadillac Fairview, and Maple Leafs Sports and Entertainment (MLSE), who own the nearby arena, the square is a common destination for sports fans to rally before games. Bremner Boulevard, a street rapping around the northern and eastern extent of the site, is often closed down to enhance these public events (MLSE, 2018). Interestingly, there are colloquial references to the development having been inspired by L.A. Live, another of the precedents referenced by TNSE (Triposo, 2018).

According to TNS Development Team Member 2, the use of Maple Leaf Square as a precedent was purely by accident. In fact, while there are some similarities in the details of the spaces, Maple Leaf Square provided TNSE with more information regarding lessons learned. For example, one Development Team Member recalls seeing an opportunity to be more prescriptive with their design, stating “we looked at the plaza proper... and some of the

challenges they had in simple operations” (TNS Development Team Member 2). As they went on to note, TNSE was able to observe some key factors for informing the True North Square design:

*So we look at Maple Leaf Square; well they shut the streets down, there was an existing hotel there, there was an existing office tower beside it, and the activities really drove how that square operated. This is really: let’s design it based on all of those activities and try to minimize the challenges that they have. Really simple challenges like washroom facilities, street closures, security, all of these things were taken into consideration. (TNS Development Team Member 2)*

This assertion is supported by members of the Design Team, one of whom recalls perceiving Maple Leaf Square as more of a temporal space that only saw use because of the screen, rather than acting as an intimate civic space to be used for passive daily activities. Therefore, rather than designing a central square that needed to adapt to the surrounding buildings and uses, TNSE saw an opportunity to design the entire site with the central plaza and its programmed and passive activities in mind.

### **6.1.2 L.A. LIVE – Los Angeles, California**

L.A. LIVE is a 27-acre development located in the South Park area of downtown Los Angeles. The project serves as a hub within the Los Angeles Sports and Entertainment district, featuring the STAPLES Center multipurpose arena and Nokia Theatre, as well as upscale residential, retail, office, restaurants and bars, two hotels, and a variety of publicly accessible parks and open spaces. Constructed in multiple phases between 1999 and 2012, the project was financed entirely by private investments, developed and subsequently operated by the Anschutz Entertainment Group (AEG). However, much of the project’s success is attributed to the close relationship the developer formed with the City of Los Angeles, as the City’s Community Redevelopment Agency was able to condemn and convey the previously neglected land to the project, premised on the assumption the development would bring life to the area and invigorate the ailing convention centre (Urban Land Institute [ULI], 2012).

The L.A. LIVE project, as specified by TNS Development Team Member 2, was recognized as a great example of a purpose-built arena district. TNSE did not begin visiting the project with the intention of replicating it in Winnipeg, but rather, were attending National Hockey League games with the Winnipeg Jets. In turn, members of TNSE were able to observe how people experienced the district before and after hockey games, which seemed to be successful at drawing people to the area and retaining them for extended periods. In fact, in drawing inspiration from the precedent, one member of the TNS Design Team asserted “L.A. LIVE was all about the space that could be used for a hockey team and as a celebratory space” (TNS Design Team Member 1). Beyond the game-day events, L.A. LIVE also allowed TNSE to consider how the spaces could be activated outside of programmed activities. In turn, the organization was able to observe the importance of offering a mixture of uses, including the pillars of residential, office, retail, and publicly accessible spaces (TNS Development Team Member 2).

### **6.1.3 Power and Light District – Kansas City, Missouri**

Spanning nine city blocks in downtown Kansas City and covering 13.7-acres of land, the Power and Light District was completed in 2008 to serve as a catalyst for investment in the area, which had been declining since the 1960s. The site features a variety of civic and cultural uses, including Kansas City Live!, an open-air plaza extending over an entire block, as well as the Sprint Center, a publicly-owned arena seating approximately 18,000 people. Further, the Power and Light District offers a diverse mix of commercial, retail, office, and residential uses, in addition to a hotel and multiple entertainment venues. Notably, the development is the product of a private-public partnership between Kansas City, the State of Missouri, and the Cordish Company (ULI, 2009).

While the Sprint Center is a multi-use indoor arena, it does not host a National Hockey League team, suggesting the selection of this precedent was perhaps more intentional than the

others. As established by one member of the TNS Development Team, when looking to this precedent for inspiration, “Kansas City Power and Light was really more about the planning and redesign of a downtown” (TNS Development Team Member 2, June 6, 2018). In approaching the development from this angle, TNSE was able to observe how successful the development was at *redefining* downtown, an objective they had established themselves for True North Square. From the perspective of one Design Team member, the use of the Kansas City Power and Light District was also about the public realm, which allowed them to explore the idea of how a theme to the spaces could work.

#### **6.1.4 Key Commonalities Between Precedents**

Although the precedents described above are different in some respects, as demonstrated by their range in scale and models of implementation, they also demonstrate three key commonalities. First, the nature of each development is consistent, in that they were intended to compliment an entertainment district and enhance related activities in the surrounding area. Second, the range of land uses of the precedents are generally aligned, as they each include the pillars of residential, commercial, retail, office, entertainment, hospitality, and publicly accessible space. Finally, the importance of private investment in bringing each project to life is clearly articulated. This factor in particular speaks to the arguments of Logan and Molotch (1987), detailing the important role played by place entrepreneurs – including local business persons in property investing, development, and real-estate financing – in shaping the growth pattern of cities. However, the case of True North Square is more closely aligned with the concept of a governing coalition offered by Stone (1999), which demonstrates the ability of these actors to assist cities in competing for development opportunities, as their investments into these commonly underutilized or neglected areas act as a catalyst for generating economic growth.

### 6.1.5 Unprecedented Plans

Understanding the local environment of discontent is an important step for detailing knowledge mobilization (Cook, 2018). In the case of Winnipeg, the planning of a purpose-built arena district was a new concept, as the introduction of the MTS Centre to the downtown was a departure from the previous arena's peripheral location. While True North Square itself represents only one component of the larger puzzle, as generally defined by the SHED boundaries (see Figure 5), TNSE sees the project as an opportunity to add some of the critical elements required for such a district to succeed. For instance, having observed many arena districts in other cities through their travels with the Winnipeg Jets National Hockey League franchise, TNSE found those that featured a mixture of uses to be most successful. As detailed by one member of the TNS Development Team, "we got the opportunity, when we built the MTS Centre, to go see other cities and see what's successful and what's not successful. What's working and what's not working" (TNS Development Team Member 2). Further, as suggested in Figure 9, there are no large scale mixed-use developments in the area oriented around a publicly accessible space. Thus, as a result of their observations and experiences in other cities, as well as a lack of local examples to draw from, TNSE selected mixed-use arena districts with central spaces as their favoured precedents (TNS Development Team Member 2).

When contrasted with the concept of *policy tourism* (González, 2011; McCann & Ward, 2011), the case of True North Square demonstrates both consistencies and differences with literature on the subject. For example, McCann and Ward (2011) define those guiding the process as transfer agents, who are commonly investors or real estate developers standing to benefit from the initiative. This depiction of transfer agents is consistent with those who were leading the process from TNSE, which included some of the most executive members of the company responsible for guiding the True North Square development. Yet, the manner in which the precedents were discovered diverges from common depictions of policy tourism. While it is not uncommon for transfer agents to physically visit the precedent locations, as described by

authors such as González (2011) and McCann (2013), they typically do so with the intention of seeking solutions to local issues. In some cases, cities actually draw in transfer agents by promoting their successful approaches to solving common urban problems, known as policy boosterism (McCann, 2013). However, the cities where the precedents are located do not promote the projects in a consistent manner with depictions of policy boosterism, such as the infamous Times Square in New York City (Sadik-Khan & Solomonow, 2017).

## **6.2 Creating the Vision and Building a Team**

Establishing a project vision is important for a multitude of reasons; whether it is to communicate intentions to external stakeholders, guide the efforts of internal team members, or build public support and identify potential partnerships. In the case of True North Square, as is common for large-scale projects, creating and sustaining a consistent vision has been critical for advancing the development process to the point it is today. As reported by participants from the TNS Development Team, the original vision for the project was inspired by two primary goals: providing a connection between the MTS Centre (now Bell MTS Place) and the RBC Convention Centre; and, developing a central plaza feature based on the successes of other cities. This section elaborates on these two components to offer a more thorough depiction of TNSE's aspirations to create "a transformative mixed-use project that is integral to the success of downtown Winnipeg" (TNSE, 2016a), which they hope will ultimately defining a new city centre. Further, this section also discusses the approach taken by TNSE to build their team for the project, in addition to explaining why it was important to communicate their vision to the team from the outset.

### **6.2.1 Planning for Connectivity**

The TNSE main offices are located at 345 Graham Avenue, neighboured by the TNS Phase 1 site to the south, and the Bell MTS Centre to the east. Since completing construction of the

arena in 2004, members of the organization have had a substantial amount of time to become familiar with the area, as well as reflect on how users of the building engage with spaces surrounding the site. According to TNS Development Team Member 2, the number of people exiting the southwest doors after events was reported to be *surprisingly high* from a building operations perspective, meaning there is something drawing people to Graham Avenue as opposed to Portage Avenue to the north. While the intentions of those thousands of attendees cannot be known for certain, TNS Development Team Member 2 speculates it is related to the bus corridor, the Cityplace shopping centre, and the overall quality of the pedestrian experience offered along Graham Avenue. Simultaneously, recent structural renovations and enhanced programming at the RBC Convention Centre have also been drawing more people into the surrounding downtown area, resulting in higher volumes of people outside standard business hours. However, TNSE identified the nearly contiguous chain of surface parking lots – previously including 242 Hargrave Street and 220 Carlton Street – as a physical divide between the two amenities, requiring an intervention to facilitate better connectivity and improved experiences for people. While one member of the TNS Development Team acknowledges the project will not be a panacea, they are confident the project will facilitate the circulation of more people into the area, as has been the case in other cities across North America (TNS Development Team Member 2).

### **6.2.2 Designing for Cohesion**

As previously discussed, TNSE owns and operates the Winnipeg Jets, a revived National Hockey League franchise. Through this role, members of the organization spend a significant amount of time traveling to other North American cities for league games, which has allowed them to visit many other arenas and observe the types of development surrounding them. By experiencing what these other cities offered, TNSE recognized the potential to introduce a similar arena district to Winnipeg. In particular, the organization was drawn to the precedents

with a *centre*, which was not necessarily a plaza, but a distinct place connecting and concentrating the various activities. While not all of the arena districts featured the same types of uses and activities, those that successfully supported retail, office, residential, and public space appeared to be the most effective at attracting people to the area beyond the big events. In turn, a prominent central plaza to balance game-day celebrations and day-to-day activities became an integral feature of True North Square. As described by TNS Development Team Member 2, the plaza was envisioned as “an ice cream scoop, scooping out the middle of an ice cream bowl”, or by TNS Design Team Member 1 as a block of ice with a curvilinear shape melted through it by the movement of the sun. Finally, by complimenting the plaza with a mixture of uses and programmed activities, the team envisioned the project not only defining a focal point for the SHED, but redefining the centre of the downtown as well (TNSE, 2016a; TNS Design Team Member 2).

### **6.2.3 Ideas Competition**

Rather than release a request for proposals to undertake the project, which is common practice in the private sector, TNSE took a more elaborate approach to selecting their Design Team. The organization began canvassing architects in 2014, seeking proponents to transform their preliminary vision for the project into a feasible design concept. Within months, TNSE had established the parameters for an official ideas competition, to which three firms based in Toronto and one firm in Vancouver were invited to participate. In order to encourage participation and establish eventual ownership of the materials produced, a stipend was paid to each of the invited teams. Initially, TNSE made presentations to the four teams, outlining such pertinent information as their underlying vision for the project and the precedents it had been inspired by, as well as more general details about the development program and site context. According to TNS Design Team Member 1: “we met with them three times through the process, where we would put out some initial ideas and they would give us feedback. It wasn’t just a

design competition where you worked in a vacuum off the program.” In taking this approach, TNSE was not only able to determine their favourite design concept, but also which team responded best to the direction they provided.

#### **6.2.4 Lead Architects**

The contest produced four very different submissions and, following a series of meetings and reviews, in addition to a formal interview process, TNSE selected Perkins + Will of Vancouver as the successful participant and lead architect for the project. According to members of TNS Development Team and Design Team, the decision was based on many different factors, but three were of particular importance. First, the design proposed by Perkins + Will was cost effective, as determined by the main contractor and project partner, PCL Construction. Second, the thoughtfulness of the design itself spoke to TNS Development Team Members and representatives of TNSE, as it effectively incorporated their feedback and responded well to the site context. For example, TNS Design Team Member 1 suggested “every other submission had a very tall tower, and we created an assemblage of buildings that worked together to create a space.” Third, and perhaps most importantly, was the local knowledge and understanding Perkins + Will demonstrated throughout the competition. Led by Ryan Bragg, who originates from Winnipeg and began his career in the city before relocating to Vancouver, the Perkins + Will submission was particularly conscious of local challenges and opportunities. As asserted by TNS Development Team Member 2, “it can’t be overemphasized, but there was a connection to Ryan Bragg because of his relationship to Winnipeg.”

Following the competition, Perkins + Will partnered with the Vancouver based firm PSF Studio, specializing in landscape architecture and urban design. Having recently acted as the lead landscape architects for the Manitoba Hydro Building across the street, PSF Studio also demonstrated a thorough understanding of the surrounding site context, making them well placed to take on the same role for the True North Square project. As explained by TNS Design

Team Member 1, “the nice thing about PSF is we work with them a lot, we know them well, and we think about urban spaces in similar ways.” Further, the greater attention to detail PSF brought to the landscape design was recognized as important for identifying potential issues, as well as adding new layers of interest to the public realm component.

### **6.2.5 Local Partners**

To compliment the architecture and landscape architecture leads, TNSE procured the services of Architecture 49 as the local architect, and McGowan Russel Group as the local landscape architect. In talking about their relationship with the local partners, one member of the TNS Design Team recognized the importance of their contribution, stating “we wanted them involved in the beginning so they could be our advocate here and so that we could share the design” (TNS Design Team Member 1). The importance of the local architect and landscape architect was reiterated by members of the TNS Development Team, with a particular emphasis on their knowledge of City regulations and approval procedures.

Behind the scenes, TNSE was incorporating the services of other local actors as well. For instance, by including PCL Construction in the selection process from the beginning, TNSE was able to ensure the proposed designs were economically feasible (TNS Development Team Member 1). Finally, the organization was also benefiting from the involvement of their building operations and events teams, which allowed them to consider how people were circulating in and outside of the Bell MTS Centre, as well as the potential impact upcoming programmed events might have on the True North Square development.

### **6.2.6 Benefits of the Approach**

By holding the contest to develop preliminary design concepts with the project lead, as well as incorporating local sub-consultants and contractors from the beginning, TNSE was able to build a team that was invested in their vision. As articulated by TNS Development Team Member 1:

“we all sat around back in the beginning of 2016, and everybody went around the table and explained why they were there. I believed everybody when they said there was a bigger thing about Winnipeg and about community that they believed in for this one.” Further, by adopting this more elaborate process, TNSE was able to ensure the design was feasible from both a regulatory and economic perspective.

However, even though the concept and team members had been selected, the design process was really just getting started, as all of the crucial details that would define the shape and composition of the site were still unresolved. In reflecting on this transitional stage of the project, TNS Design Team Member 1 recalled the challenge they encountered in finding a balance between TNSE’s intent for the project, which was to create a space inspired by arena districts in other North American cities, and their desire to imbue the design with the city’s local essence through architectural and planning mediums. With that being said, TNS Design Team Member 1 also expressed their appreciation for TNSE communicating this objective from the beginning, which may have not been as clearly articulated without holding the contest initially.

### **6.3 Mobilizing Knowledge**

Understanding how knowledge from other cities was interpreted is crucial for assessing the process of using precedents, including the methods employed to generate an understanding of the projects, as well as the way in which they were presented in the recipient locality (Cook, 2008). From the first presentation TNSE gave to the prospective contest participants, they were clear about the guiding vision for the project and the precedent projects inspiring it. Following the selection of their Design Team, TNSE continued to uphold the importance of the precedents, leaving it up to the Design Team members to gain a more thorough understanding of them. In a similar sense, TNSE has been actively promoting the precedents to the public since some of their earliest press releases for the project, often showing a single rendering of each. The intent of this section is to elaborate on why TNSE presented the precedents from

other North American cities in a particular way, as well as to discuss the TNS Design Team's approach to studying them, which in effect, represents the *mobilization* of knowledge (Cook, 2008; McCann & Ward, 2011).

### **6.3.1 Translating the Precedents**

For TNSE, using the precedents to express their aspirations was important throughout the development process, as it allowed them to establish consistent expectations among the Design Team members and the general public. Further, it allowed them to generate excitement for the project and a common sense of purpose among future users who would be able to live, work, and play in the space. However, for a multitude of reasons, the way in which they communicated ideas about the precedents differed greatly between these two groups.

Since formally announcing the project in 2016, TNSE has regularly updated the public through press releases and social media accounts, as well as by engaging with local media outlets. Through these mediums, such precedent projects as the Power and Light District, L.A. LIVE, Maple Leaf Square, and Ice District are regularly mentioned and sometimes promoted with single renderings. Notably, in cases including the CanU9 Summit and Winnipeg Design Festival, key actors involved in the project have given public presentations offering greater detail about the precedents. Notwithstanding these examples, the public is generally presented with a simple representation of the developments, aligned with Massey's (2005) concern for transfer agents using static representations to appeal to specific demographics. However, the common purpose promoted by TNSE to gain support departs from critiques of the approach (McCann, 2013; Peterson, 1981), as it was centred on a civic space and a reorientation of the downtown centre as opposed to economic benefits (TNS Development Team Member 2). Moreover, there is also a benefit to providing such minimal reference to precedents, in that it allows members of the public to interpret their own possibilities for the development. Further still, by offering reference to relatable Canadian cities such as Edmonton and Toronto, Winnipeg residents can

absorb the aspirations of the project and generate their own expectations based on personal experiences.

On the other hand, when communicating the precedents to the TNS Design Team, TNSE was presenting more of a challenge for them to *meet a standard* (TNS Design Team Member 1). Although, the challenge was not an effort to be prescriptive about design details, as one TNS Design Team member explains “they weren’t tied down to any particular forms or elements” (TNS Design Team Member 2), but more about interpreting the importance of certain spaces and how the various elements worked together to be successful. As explained in greater detail by another member of the TNS Design Team:

*True North had done their homework. They understood some of the basic things that worked in a transit-oriented or a mixed-use project with a good public realm, and they sought out projects that did that very well. So, activity at grade, small store fronts rather than these big blank faces, all those types of things. Visual porosity, physical porosity, interaction with the adjacent buildings – all of those things were really important. And they came to the project with that and they never left it. (TNS Design Team Member 2, May 13, 2018)*

While TNSE was clear in how they communicated these aspirations, they did not enter into the process knowing what the right answer would be for achieving them, particularly in the context of Winnipeg. However, based on the assertions of the TNS Design Team, it is also clear they were shown a much more dynamic version of the precedents than the general public was. Whereas the public was presented a more minimal reference, allowing them to interpret the potential of the project according to their own experiences, the TNS Design Team required a more thorough understanding of the precedents, for the practical reason of being more actively involved in producing the project. As such, in order to effectively permeate True North Square with elements of the various precedents, they were also expected to do their due diligence by studying them beyond what TNSE presented.

### 6.3.2 Studying the Precedents

In order to generate a more thorough understanding of the precedent projects, TNS Design Team Member 1 asserts “without question, the best thing is to plant your feet on the space.” In doing so, there are two key factors that can be taken into consideration you would otherwise be unable to, which include *context* and *scale*. While there are a number of techniques for studying a space, TNS Design Team Member 1 upholds the importance of focusing efforts on understanding these two elements, as they did in the case of True North Square. The justification for the assertion is straightforward and, to some extent, relatable for anyone who takes an interest in urban design:

*I'm sure you've been to places where you've watched video, you've seen photos, you've assessed all of the attributes of a really successful public space, and then you get there and you go 'wow, I had no idea, this is so different', and it's usually about scale and context. Those are usually the things that get messed up.*  
(TNS Design Team Member 1)

Regarding scale, TNS Design Team Member 1 suggests it is easy to get wrong because of how we are wired as people, in that we have a tendency to associate one concept with another we are more familiar with. In reflecting on their own habit of doing so, they explain:

*I think we inherently place in our mind an association with a space when we see it and we're not in it. So if you're research something and you see something, you go 'oh that reminds me of this space', and inherently you wind up introducing the scale of the second space to the first one, even though it could be completely wrong.* (TNS Design Team Member 1)

However, by actually traveling to the space and experiencing it first-hand, the participant suggests you can more accurately interpret the scale of various elements and how they work together. For example, TNS Development Team Member 2 explains how important carrying out *crowd studies* was in the precedent spaces, with a particular emphasis on L.A. LIVE and Maple Leaf Square. Led by members of the TNS Design Team, they studied the day-to-day activities within these developments, including what the capacity of the spaces were and how effectively they facilitated various uses. In doing so, one member of the TNS Design Team explains: “we

were looking at it from both, ‘what are the physical attributes that make a space successful’ and, ‘what other underlying factors are there that do not necessarily meet the eye if you’re just a visitor in a place?’” (TNS Design Team Member 2). The key factor not obvious to the eye, in this sense, is the principle or intention behind the form, as compared to how it is actually being used. With this in mind, examining the actual physical forms of the space becomes less important than understanding the principle for including them, in addition to how they perform. In turn, the team was able to adapt the TNS Plaza concept to an appropriate scale for Winnipeg, as well as consider how the uses they anticipated might differ from everyday reality.

In thinking beyond of the precedents, the second factor shifts attention to the surrounding context, including the spaces and uses around the site. The importance of context was also supported by CoW Representative 1, who suggests “everything is about context.” Often, as explained by TNS Design Team Member 1, architects and urban designers will showcase projects without any reference to the features around them. As a result, there can be a poor dialogue between the elements of the new development and the surrounding context, including building heights, materials, and circulation. In mobilizing knowledge from the precedents to the downtown Winnipeg site, one member of the TNS Design Team suggests “I think True North Square is going to be very different because, very much so, we relied upon the context to complete the picture. Good, bad, ugly – everything around us” (TNS Design Team Member 1). By traveling to the precedents to “stand and actually feel...that visceral experience of being in the place” (TNS Design Team Member 1), and embracing the features surrounding the True North Square site, the chance of avoiding the literalist trap (McCann, 2011) and mobilizing knowledge in a contextually appropriate manner is greatly improved.

### **6.3.3 Key Considerations for Knowledge Mobilization**

When mobilizing knowledge from other cities, there will inevitably be an aspect of interpretation and translation to other parties, as suggested by the framework put forth by Cook (2008). In

carrying out this process, it is important to recognize the knowledge itself is not being mobilized in its final form (McCann, 2011), but rather, that it requires further study and consideration. As expressed by one member of the TNS Design Team:

*You name it and there is always a precedent to take a look at, and it becomes this ménage of ideas... none of them provide a road map or an answer, but they hopefully provide some impetus to do something in particular. To create a desired response. But they also actually bring up questions... and that question is actually more important. The question and the investigation that occurs as a result of us bringing one idea forward and someone else seeing the repercussions through a different lens. (TNS Design Team Member 1)*

As demonstrated by the case of True North Square, there is a benefit to not being overly prescriptive about communicating precedent projects, both to members of the Design Team and the general public. By taking this approach, the chances of mobilizing knowledge in a malleable way is increased by allowing it to remain open to interpretation, as opposed to transferring a literal model to a different destination (McCann, 2011). Further, by encouraging the TNS Team Members to study the precedents on their own accord, they were able to more effectively adapt important factors of the design, such as context and scale (TNS Design Team Member 1). This effort was also complimented by generating a greater understanding of the principles behind certain elements and how they were actually being used (TNS Design Team Member 2). As emphasized by a member of the Design Team, it was valuable to subject their own interpretations of the precedents to the opinions of others, whether it was their colleagues or the local partners. These additional lenses challenged any assumptions they might have made and, in turn, forced them to consider how different people would experience elements of the space (TNS Design Team Member 1). However, it is also important to communicate aspirations for projects such as True North Square in a manner that sets realistic expectations, to avoid dishonestly generating public support (Cook, 2008).

## 6.4 Producing True North Square

After building an understanding of the actors involved, how the precedents were discovered, and how knowledge was mobilized, I now focus attention on how the ideas were reshaped and implemented in a new location (Cook, 2008). In doing so, a greater emphasis can be placed on the social, spatial, and institutional context in which the knowledge is embedded, as opposed to remaining fixed on the flow of knowledge between places and actors (McCann & Ward, 2011). True North Square presents an interesting case, in that multiple precedents were used and an attempt was made “to pull certain elements out of all those examples” (TNS Development Team Member 2), which in turn, were utilized in the design. This section explores various stages in the process of producing True North Square’s Publicly Accessible Space, including how a local context was applied to knowledge mobilized from the precedents, the approach to planning spaces according to TNSE’s aspirations, and the assembling of design details. This step, in effect, represents the *re-embedding* of knowledge from other cities (Cook, 2008).

### 6.4.1 Applying Local Context to the Precedents

In considering how members of the TNS Design Team applied the local context of Winnipeg to the precedent projects, three distinct factors emerged from the discussions, which were climate, culture, and economics. Without considering these factors in relation to unique local characteristics, the project could, as one TNS Design Team member put it, “fail dramatically” (TNS Design Team Member 1).

Consideration for climate and the natural elements is a crucial aspect of public realm design (Shaftoe, 2008) and, when it comes to Winnipeg, protection from cold winds is likely to be at the forefront of users’ concerns. When addressing this challenge, one member of the TNS Development Team stated: “There is nothing you can do about it, it’s a windy spot, there’s a tower there already” (TNS Development Team Member 2). Members of the design team reiterated this point and to address the challenge, they undertook wind modeling studies along

Graham Avenue to determine where winds were coming from, in addition to how the built form influenced them. As one member of the TNS Team Design explained:

*What's interesting is Graham and St. Mary's are these massive wind tunnels, and so if you're not careful about what you do, and if you open up to them, you could actually channel wind into them and exacerbate the problem. So we created some real podiums that would block the wind by creating a street wall, and then we literally carved out the middle of the scheme, the proposal, in order to capture the sun. (TNS Design Team Member 1)*

Thus, in mobilizing knowledge from cities such as Los Angeles, differences in weather conditions were at the forefront of the design process. In the case of True North Square, by including precedents from other Canadian cities with similar climates, such as Toronto, elements from one project could be used to complement others and address challenges such as wind, or take advantage of opportunities like capturing natural sunlight. Further, as discussed previously, the local knowledge of the TNS Design Team was considered to be an asset in this regard. One member of the TNS Development Team recalled the challenges they experienced working with outside consultants during the initial contest and how a lack of local knowledge influenced their concepts (TNS Development Team Member 2). One of the Design Team members themselves recognized how advantageous local knowledge was throughout the process, suggesting "if you don't have that knowledge, you run the risk of leaving stuff on the table and not taking advantage of it" (TNS Design Team Member 1).

One example of a climate related design element the Design Team needed to grapple with was the skywalk, which is an elevated, weather protected walkway. From the beginning of the design process, TNSE established the True North Square towers would be connected to the surrounding downtown skywalk system, allowing people to circulate between the Bell MTS Centre and RBC Convention Centre (see Figure 11) without stepping foot outside (TNS Design Team Member 1). However, these types of systems have more recently drawn criticism from planners and architects, as they have a tendency to draw activity away from the streets and sidewalks (CoW Representative 1). Moreover, in reflecting on personal experiences using the

existing system, team members recognized how easy it is to become lost and disoriented (TNS Design Team Member 1 & 2). In an effort to mitigate such potential outcomes, TNS Design Team Member 1 describes trying to ensure users would be able to see outside, allowing them to understand where they came from, where they were going, and how to get down to their destination. With these design interventions in mind, they noted that the incorporation of the skywalk system was not only an adaptation to the local context, but in an effort to fix some of the City's past mistakes, an adaption from the local context as well.

Designing for the climate in Winnipeg goes hand-in-hand with designing for culture as, put candidly by TNS Development Team Member 1, "it is god damn cold, but we're going to make the best of it." This sentiment is particularly important for the TNS Plaza, as it is intended to serve as a gathering place for members of the public to watch hockey games, most of which are played in the fall and winter months. In considering the culture in Winnipeg throughout the design process, one member of the TNS Design Team asserted "what happens in L.A. is just not going to happen in Winnipeg... there is a different approach to the way one deals with social space; the way one celebrates" (TNS Design Team Member 1). When mobilizing knowledge from Maple Leaf Square in Toronto, for example, the TNS Design Team observed the square was not actively used as a civic space outside of game-day events. Rather than being discouraged by the discovery, the Design Team put confidence in the level of "social and cultural cohesion" (TNS Design Team Member 1) they knew Winnipeg to have, adapting the plaza design to act as a physical containment for large gatherings and celebrations (TNS Development Team Member 2). In making these points, members of the TNS Development Team and Design Team made reference to the recent white-out parties in the area, which drew tens of thousands of residents into the street to watch the Winnipeg Jets playoff games. One member of the TNS Development Team recalled the TNSE operations personnel being shocked by the numbers and, as True North Square and Hargrave Street are meant to serve as the future site of these parties, slightly anxious about accommodating such large crowds (TNS

Development Team Member 2). In thinking about these types of events and the precedent projects, one TNS Design Team Member suggested “that would never happen in one of the American cities... it’s just not the same community there; Winnipeg has a sense of community that belies its size” (TNS Design Team Member 1).

In considering the economics associated with the True North Square project, the size of Winnipeg and its downtown population certainly had an influence over how the design was adapted from larger cities like Toronto, Los Angeles, and Kansas City. For instance, with only a reported 1,675 residents within the Census Tract (see Table 1), there is a challenge in supporting commercial and retail uses after standard business hours. In fact, while discussing the skywalk system and featuring commercial above and at grade, TNS Design Team Member 1 stated “Winnipeg does not have enough population and enough activity to support both of those.” Further, it is clear by the size of the True North Square towers there was consideration for how much commercial and residential space the Winnipeg market could absorb (TNS Development Team Member 2). While the precedent projects feature much larger structures, such as two 65-storey towers at Maple Leaf Square (MLSE, 2018) and a 57-storey tower at L.A. LIVE (ULI, 2012), the 25- and 17-storey towers featured in Phase 1 of True North Square are a more appropriate scale for the local context. Finally, the design of the project had to be affordable itself, as TNS Design Team Member 1 identified: “We have the unfortunate reality in Winnipeg of having some of the highest construction costs in Canada and some of the lowest returns on lease rates.” As such, elements such as materials, parking structures, and of course, provision of publicly accessible space had to be taken into careful consideration to ensure the project remained financially feasible (TNS Development Team Member 1).

#### **6.4.2 Planning the Publicly Accessible Spaces**

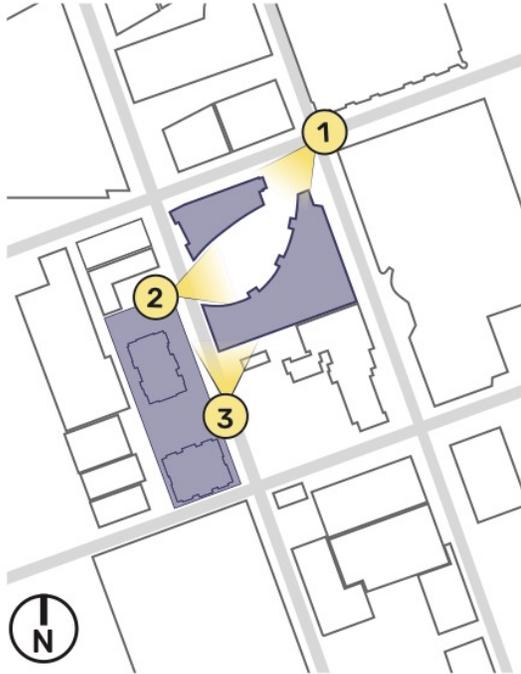
While many aspects of True North Square interface with the Public Realm, including the skywalks, glazed building exteriors along Graham Avenue, and planned elevated intersections

at grade with the sidewalk, TNSE's primary focus has been the TNS Plaza. However, in addition to TNS Plaza, the site features an additional Publicly Accessible Space that has recently received more attention (Bellamy, 2018), in addition to a park space that was planned but did not materialize. Figure 12 provides an image and demonstrates the locations of each of the three Publicly Accessible Spaces. In considering the original plan to incorporate all three spaces into the Phase 1 site, TNS Design Team Member 1 explained "it was about creating spaces that would have different uses – allow for different uses."

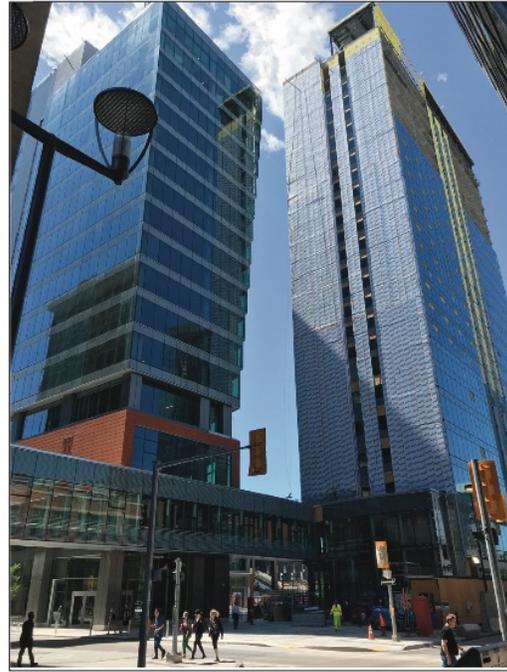
The main Publicly Accessible Space referred to as *TNS Plaza* is at the centre of the site between the two towers. Drawing much attention throughout the process of the project, TNS Plaza serves several important purposes. The primary intention behind the plaza, as asserted by members of the TNS Development Team and Design Team, is to create an activated space 365 days a year. For instance, by providing a place to gather and celebrate before, during, or after hockey games at the arena (TNS Design Team Member 1). However, there is also a great focus on drawing people to the site on non-game days by programming the space in a variety of other ways, including plans for a skating rink, stage, and large media screen (Schlesinger, 2017). Further, TNS Plaza is meant to provide a common space for customers and employees in the buildings and surrounding area. Finally, the TNS Plaza is designed to circulate people between the Bell MTS Place and Carlton Street, along which the RBC Convention Centre is located (TNS Development Team Member 2).

The second Publicly Accessible Space, currently referred to as *Sports Legacy Plaza*, is located at the northeast corner of site. Opening up to Bell MTS Place and Cityplace at the corner of Graham Avenue and Hargrave Street, the plaza is intended to provide a clear dialogue with the arena, serving as a temporal space that comes to life during game days. After speaking with the City of Winnipeg and establishing Hargrave Street could occasionally be shut down for events, TNS Design Team Member 1 explains: "What we've done there is we've raised the intersection so there is no depression at the curb; it's flat straight across... but as a result, that

**Perspective Key**



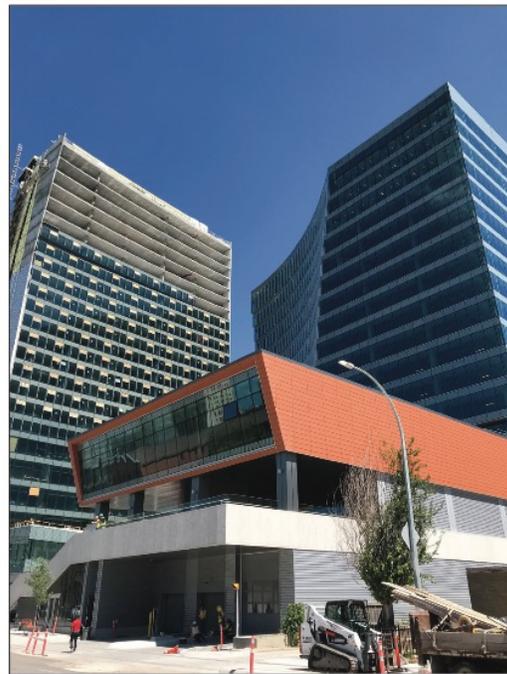
**1. Sports Legacy Plaza**



**2. TNS Plaza**



**3. Proposed Location of Incline Park**



**Figure 12: TNS Publicly Accessible Spaces. Sinclair, 2018**

space feels more like a contiguous space. It's not a corner and then a street – the street is part of the space.” In providing this connection to Graham Avenue, it is clear TNSE is hoping to attract many of those people leaving events at Bell MTS Place from the southwest doors, as noted earlier. However, the overall affect the project will have on Graham Avenue is yet to be seen, as some local experts have raised concerns over the shadows the tower is anticipated to cast on the adjacent sidewalk and street (Markusa, 2016).

The third Publicly Accessible Space planned for True North Square, previously referred to as *Incline Park*, was not realized in the final design. Appearing only in earlier renderings and plans for the project, the park was intended to extend down from the top of the stairs leading to the second level of the office tower, providing a green path down to the church's property below. As described by TNS Design Team Member 1, the Incline Park was really about a passive space, which would have facilitated different uses from the plazas below. However, due to a lack of interest from church representatives, TNSE was not able to negotiate a compromise and was forced to remove the park from their plans. In reflecting on the loss of the space, TNS Design Team Member 1 stated: “I think it would have been a much bigger move from a planning perspective; when you think about the city and movement through the city, that's the piece that's missing.” Of note, the stairs remained in the plans and are also intended to act as a component of the Publicly Accessible Spaces, where employees, residents, and visitors to the site will be encouraged to sit or scale.

Despite giving up one of the spaces intended for the project, members of the TNS Development Team and the Design Team are confident the Publicly Accessible Spaces will sufficiently achieve their aspirations. In reflecting on the process of producing the TNS Plaza, TNS Design Team Member 1 asserted: “we really wanted to tie in to what we understood to be the essence of the project, which wasn't architectural – it was actually planning. It was all about the in-between spaces. It was all about the square.” Throughout the planning process, the TNS Design Team was driven by questions of how users would react in and move through the Public

Realm with the street wall in place, working toward the goal of creating “a really vibrant civic space” (TNS Design Team Member 1).

### **6.4.3 Assembling the Publicly Accessible Spaces**

After being encouraged to study the precedents further, members of the TNS Design Team were able to look at the projects through their own lenses of expertise and, in turn, select pieces they thought were most appropriate to inform the design. As explained by TNS Design Team Member 1, when looking at a precedent TNSE considered good to inform programming, their team actually found much more interest in spatial composition and consideration for the public realm. Put another way, TNSE knew how they wanted the public realm to function, but they weren't attached to particular forms or elements from the outset (TNS Design Team Member 2). As such, although TNSE provided direction after discovering the original precedents, they provided the Team members with plenty of room to interpret the projects themselves and create something unique for True North Square.

While there are clear parallels that can be drawn between design elements in True North Square and the precedent projects, such as a large media screen similar to L.A. LIVE and Maple Leaf Square, the plaza was “such a unique space that... the actual design had to be derived from its form, location, and architecture surrounding it” (TNS Design Team Member 2). In reflecting how this played out in the space, TNS Design Team Member 2 affirmed none of the elements could be directly transferred, as even simple concepts of seating and a stage needed to reflect what TNSE was trying to achieve in the space. For example, the stage in the design is also intended to be used for public seating or other passive activities, as opposed to becoming a single use object. As explained by the TNS Design Team Member, the challenge was:

*So it's good to provide seating elements, but where? If you're trying to maintain a place that is flexible, if you're trying to layer as many functions on every element you are putting in the place, then you need to be very deliberate about where you place these permanent features; in order to provide a very vibrant every day*

*space that doesn't take away the flexibility required in an urban plaza space.*  
(TNS Design Team Member 2)

Thus, in order to not restrict TNS Plaza from accommodating a large number of people during events, there was a clear need to leave as much open space as possible. For instance, rather than including a large water feature in the centre, as some early promotional materials showed, the decision was made to scale it back to not limit the long-term flexibility of the space, while still providing some stimulation and noise. Further, in attempting to layer as many functions as possible into the elements, one member of the TNS Design Team described efforts to incorporate features for a variety of day-to-day uses when there are no programmed events (TNS Design Team Member 2).

In considering how to incorporate features with layered uses and predict how people might react to the space, a TNS Design Team Member explained:

*I think using other examples, like going out and doing your research and seeing how things are... you can find three spaces built in a similar way and have a predictable outcome, then yeah, you can be assured that's probably going to happen. I think what's more interesting is when you've got three very different approaches and, as designers, you go "hmm, what's most appropriate for this one". And you're picking something that's not an anomaly, but it's more unique, or perhaps contextually responsive. Then you're dropping it in and saying "well how does it work in this scenario?" Then you massage it and you try and create something.* (TNS Design Team Member 1)

Thus, in promoting the importance of testing and massaging various ideas, TNS Design Team Member 2 is explicitly cautioning against dropping an idea into a city without considering the implications. Moreover, what is perhaps more interesting about the statement is the preference expressed to draw inspiration from very different approaches, as opposed to using three similar examples in form and outcome. For instance, by taking three projects with very different scales, such as Maple Leaf Square, the Power and Light District, and L.A. LIVE, the effectiveness of different elements regarding the design and programming of the public realm can be assessed. In turn, details such as the size of plaza, the porosity of building materials, and the orientation of

benches and planters can be applied, massaged, and assembled based on perceived best practices and responsiveness to local context.

## **6.5 Obtaining Approval**

As discussed previously in Chapter 4, the City of Winnipeg plays an important role in attracting, directing, and approving development in the downtown. This is achieved in a number of ways, including the implementation of planning policies, such as *OurWinnipeg* and *Complete Communities*, in addition to Zoning By-laws to help regulate and enforce those policies. Further, particular to development located within the downtown, the City has established mechanisms for reviewing and guiding urban design, with special attention given to how it will impact the public realm. In the words of one City of Winnipeg Representative, “our sounding board – for any development – is ‘how does it fulfill our policies’ and ‘how does it fulfill our design guidelines’” (CoW Representative 1). This section discusses the True North Square development from the perspective of City of Winnipeg representatives by drawing on the policies, by-laws, and review processes they depend on to direct growth according to the City’s aspirations. Finally, I discuss the City of Winnipeg’s use of tax-increment financing (TIF), for which the TNS Plaza and the surrounding Public Realm have been approved for support.

### **6.5.1 Policy Directions**

According to CoW Representative 1, when it comes to assessing the appropriateness of downtown development, “we try and take our policy direction and our work plan directive from our municipal development plan.” The official municipal development plan, *OurWinnipeg*, puts a strong emphasis on not only encouraging entertainment and shopping in the downtown, but increasing residential as well. This initiative is reiterated in the companion document, *Complete Communities*, which discusses land use planning in greater depth and the City’s development vision. In reflecting how True North Square was assessed, CoW Representative 1 affirmed “it

meets those policies... in terms of introducing more residential, introducing more commercial, more active and lively space.”

Interestingly, despite not being formally adopted by City council, CoW Representative 1 was also adamant on the importance of the SHED Plan for guiding development on the site. In describing the role of the plan, they explained:

*[TNSE] were basing this whole concept on the SHED Vision Plan which was developed years earlier. So I think they were fairly successful in taking the key thrusts and objectives in that SHED vision, which had to do with: creating a link between the Convention Centre and MTS Centre; creating public space; creating excitement and urban activity... so those are all the key components of what was desired for this site. They came along and said “we can do all those things within our own programming”. (CoW Representative 1)*

Thus, along with the policy documents *OurWinnipeg* and *Complete Communities*, the vision for the site outlined in the *SHED Plan* and the greater directions described for the district were all taken into consideration by the City of Winnipeg Representatives during the review process.

In considering how the City’s policy documents could function better in these types of processes, CoW Representative 1 identified three key areas. First, they suggested “that there is really a lot of them [policies], which can be overwhelming.” With 2 pages specifically discussing directions for downtown in *OurWinnipeg* and 15 pages in *Complete Communities*, there is a concern this amount of content is actually discouraging, rather than encouraging downtown development. Second, in referencing critiques they had heard from other actors, CoW Representative 1 stated: “There’s also a concern that some of the language is overly vague, so sometimes you have a lot of policies, but it’s not always really clear how they direct the activities of city staff and decision makers.” Third, the hope is to put more focus on urban form in future iterations of the document, as opposed to just land uses. In doing so, a more distinct connection between urban form and vitality could be established, which is not currently prevalent (CoW Representative 1).

### 6.5.2 Zoning Considerations

Under the Downtown Zoning By-law No. 100/2004, the True North Square site is located within the *M District*, signifying Multiple Use, which one City of Winnipeg Representative described as “the most permissive” (CoW Representative 1), notwithstanding the larger bulk regulations found along Portage Avenue and Main Street (City of Winnipeg, 2004). The reason for making this suggestion is in relation to the as-of-right entitlements, as the area is already designated for high-density, mixed-use development. This is meant to attract more development opportunities to the area, as there is seldom need for a re-zoning process requiring public hearings and more extensive review processes. Instead, after a protracted period of minimal growth in the area, there was a desire to “streamline approvals [and] make it as easy and attractive as possible for those interested in development to locate downtown” (CoW Representative 1)

For the True North Square development, the review process found the project to be generally in compliance with the *M District* regulations, aside from six small details requiring variances, all of which related to loading stall and parking stall dimensional standards. In fact, one was as minor as gaining the City’s approval to feature a loading height of 11.81 feet rather than 12 feet. As described by one City of Winnipeg Representative:

*The height was fine, the setbacks were fine, and the land uses were fine. It really came down to those nitty-gritty details where there were some minor dimensional glitches... our recommendation was approval.* (CoW Representative 1)

From the perspective of TNS Design Team Member 1, “compared to most cities there are no regulations... which is good and bad” — good in the sense they are trying to encourage people to develop in the downtown, but bad in the sense they are setting a low expectation for developers. Further, as compared to cities such as Vancouver where there is much more negotiation between the City and developers, in Winnipeg the lack of restrictions limits its ability to leverage incentives for community benefits. However, as explained by CoW Representative 1, “where you probably don’t have a re-zoning process... in lieu of that, what we have is a fairly rigorous design review process.”

### 6.5.3 Urban Design Review

For development projects located in downtown Winnipeg, the Urban Design Review process is informed by key considerations in the Downtown Zoning By-law and Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, which CoW Representative 1 described as the advisory committee's "bible". The review itself is undertaken by the Urban Design Advisory Committee (UDAC), comprised of volunteer members from various design and development backgrounds (see Section 4). As explained in greater detail by CoW Representative 2:

*The Urban Design Advisory Committee's (UDAC) role is to offer local knowledge, experience and encouragement toward achieving design excellence for all new development. The Committee's role is advisory to the Director. They provide recommendations on urban design matters associated with major development projects focusing on contextual fit and creation of a high quality pedestrian environment. (CoW Representative 2)*

True North Square was reviewed twice by UDAC; once during the conceptual design stage and another time during the detailed design stage. Each review included a formal presentation to the committee by members of the TNS Development Team and the Design Team, for which they created a robust package demonstrating a full contextual analysis, project vision, and public realm design. Incorporated into the presentation materials were the precedent projects, including Maple Leaf Square, L.A. Live, and the Power and Light District, which one CoW Representative 2 described as helpful for visualizing the possibilities a new entertainment district might have. In reflecting on the review process, TNS Development Team Member 2 explained: "Generally, I think we really showed them we were interested in hearing what they had to say, and we had all the information ready. We had all the main guys involved in the project at those presentations to show that this really did mean a lot." As depicted by CoW Representative 2, the review focused on the quality of the public realm and how it interfaced with the buildings, giving careful consideration to the plaza in terms of accessibility, safety, inclusiveness, wind, shadowing, design quality, use/functionality, image, and character. In providing recommendations, there were some simple requests during the conceptual stage to

incorporate more seating and planters, as well as to improve the accessibility of some elements. No concerns, however, were expressed regarding the appropriateness of the development for the context of the area.

One representative of the City of Winnipeg did express some persisting concerns – mostly directed toward large downtown development projects in general – in regards to an interesting plaza drawing people from the sidewalks to the internal spaces. While the desire of the City to have the outdoor space was affirmed, one participant posed the question: “Where all of the focus is on the space, and the back of the building is along the sidewalk... what does that mean for the sidewalk experience?” (CoW Representative 1). Nevertheless, members of the TNS Development Team and Design Team expressed their consideration for this factor, particularly in using glazing on the buildings to ensure visual connections between the internal and external spaces (TNS Design Team Member 1).

#### **6.5.4 Tax Increment Financing**

An important consideration for the Publicly Accessible Spaces featured in the True North Square development is, unlike many privately-owned public spaces found in other cities (Kayden, 2000; Logan & Molotch, 1987; Németh & Schmidt, 2010), they were not required by the City provide them in exchange for an incentive. However, in choosing to incorporate a significant amount of publicly accessible space into the development, the project earned the City of Winnipeg’s financial support through the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) program. To date, the project has mobilized \$17.6 million dollars previously approved for the SHED to be invested into skywalks, intersection upgrades, and sidewalk enhancements in the vicinity of True North Square (City of Winnipeg, 2017a). Further, an additional \$3.2 million will be contributed by the City of Winnipeg directly to the TNS Plaza (City of Winnipeg, 2017c), with a requested \$5.7 million still pending decision by the provincial government (Kavanagh, 2018). Notably, under the previous provincial administration, funding from the TIF program had been approved in-principle

to support the Sports Legacy Plaza and streetscape, TNS Plaza, Carlton Parkway (Phase 2), and Incline Park (removed), in an effort to “build publicly accessible spaces, much like other big city downtown squares” (Province of Manitoba, 2016, p. 1). According to TNS Design Team Member 1, “without the TIF funding, the [TNS] Plaza would not exist the way it does.”

A number of actors have questioned the allocation of public subsidies to the project, such as members of council who think the corporate success of TNSE should disqualify them from such support (City of Winnipeg, 2017c), in addition to a local planning expert who is concerned over how *public* the plaza will actually be (Markusa, 2016). Notwithstanding these concerns, one representative from the City of Winnipeg explains: “The philosophy was if they are creating a public space intended to be an extension of the sidewalk, that there was merit in the City making a contribution to the public space, because... we do the public realm and open space kind of stuff” (CoW Representative 1). In further refining this assertion, the CoW Representative explained that, considering the costs of design, management, and construction being absorbed by TNSE, partnering on the project was a much more fiscally responsible decision for the City than trying to build a public space somewhere else. As demonstrated by Figure 9, there is a minimal amount of plaza and park space currently offered in the surrounding area, which points to the City’s limitations in undertaking such initiatives.

In considering the potential benefits that would be accrued from providing public support to the project, aside from “an overall net gain” (CoW Representative 1), the City is hopeful the project will be a catalyst for revitalizing downtown and creating “not only a desirable place to live, work, and do business, but a point of pride that will offer something for everyone” (CoW Representative 2). In considering the aspirations for the project described by members of the True North Team, it is apparent the hopes of the City are not unfounded, or unlikely to materialize. As outlined by one member of the Design Team:

*You’re looking at a public space True North wanted to build – and it wasn’t entirely altruistic, they had their reasons for building it as well – but it is a gift to the Cit. I think in True North’s case they definitely have a high level of expectation*

*for design and construction, so they are placing that on themselves as opposed to the City doing it.* (TNS Design Team Member 1)

One does not need to look further than the legislation on the TIF program itself to find truth in this claim. In summary, as long as it can be satisfied *significant improvements* to a property have occurred, and that it is in the *public's interest* these improvements occur, a project is potentially eligible for support under the Act (Manitoba Laws, 2009). In thinking about how incentives are used differently in other cities, TNS Design Team Member 1 suggests a feature like the TNS Plaza would have been donated by the developer in exchange for building more density, but “that whole balance just doesn’t exist in Winnipeg” (TNS Design Team Member 1). While local developers such as TNSE are willing to provide public benefits without being mandated to do so – as they are already invested in the area and, therefore, have further interest in the success of the project – there is less at stake for developers who do not have a similar local commitment. Moving forward, as the City continues to encourage development downtown by seeking partnerships with private interests (CoW Representative 1), it would be beneficial to consider implementing “stronger policies” (TNS Design Team Member 1) in relation to their provision of financial support.

## **6.6 Managing the Publicly Accessible Spaces**

As asserted by Shaftoe (2008), “Arguably, the way public spaces are managed (and animated) is as crucial to their success as their physical attributes” (p. 125). Since formally announcing the project, TNSE has been adamant about the importance of TNS Plaza for the True North Square development, as indicated by the organization’s goal to “create complimentary public space and urban experiences that match the best in North America” (TNSE, 2016). Through discussions with members of the TNS Development Team and Design Team, as well as CoW Representatives, these aspirations have only further been confirmed. For example, in explaining the choice to direct so much focus on TNS Plaza, TNS Development Team Member 2 indicated:

“without the public spaces, the success of the overall project for the community just wouldn’t be there.” In recognizing these aspirations for the plaza spaces, the intent of this section is to consider how best this can be achieved by considering lessons from other cities and, by adopting the approach of knowledge mobilization, offers recommendations for managing the public realm. These lessons are drawn from academic literature, municipal by-laws, and planning policies.

### **6.6.1 Balancing Control and Flexibility**

With the finishing touches about to be put on Phase 1 of the project, the tenants, customers, and employees will soon begin bringing True North Square to life. Further, as the existing downtown community and workforce gain familiarity with the site, people will begin visiting the Publicly Accessible Spaces and demonstrating the various ways in which they can be used. In describing how they hoped TNS Plaza would be used by the public, TNS Design Team Member 1 explained:

*I think the difficulty is – and it can be serendipitous, or it can be challenging – is when you take an idea and you thoroughly vet it and you scrutinize it, and you think you’ve figured it all out, and then it has a life of its own. Which the same with any design. Any piece of architecture has a life of its own. Any piece of urban design does. And sometimes you can’t predict where it’s going to go. I think it’s more prone to happen when you pull an idea from somewhere else and you drop it in, because that’s difficult to predict. (TNS Design Team Member 1)*

Underlying this statement is the principle that urban space has potential to surprise even those who are responsible for producing it – particularly when an unfamiliar or new concept is introduced into the urban environment, as it is difficult to anticipate how the public will react to it. This notion is aligned with Mitchell’s (1995) assertion that, even when urban space is produced as a “representation” of the expert’s intention, it can be appropriated through continued use to become “representational” of the public’s vision. However, in order for a space to exceed the expectations of the expert, it must be managed in a way that allows for these types of meaningful interpretations to occur. For example, permitting the space to be used for public

presentations could animate the site outside of business hours, while also supporting educational institutions located in the area.

Notably, in observing the management practices of privately-owned public spaces in New York City, Németh and Schmidt (2010) concluded that, while these spaces effectively encouraged use, they also attempted to control behaviour through consistent programming. In turn, the authors found those who were operating the space to be manipulating use through steadily planned events and activities, as opposed to offering “respite from the hustle and bustle of life in a dense, urban environment” (Németh & Schmidt, 2010, p. 20).

In the case of True North Square, while many of the proposed programs will appeal to the public and surely attract attention, the caution to avoid *over programming* the space should be taken into consideration. For example, if the public becomes too familiar with TNS Plaza serving strictly as an *event space*, it may actually be disadvantageous to TNSE’s aspirations for the site to support a variety of day-to-day activities (TNS Development Team Member 2). Importantly, one member of the TNS Design Team recognized the difficulty in guiding these types of objectives within urban spaces, asserting:

*My excitement in a project is... when you come back to it – the place 5-years later – and you just sit back and watch how people use it. And you’re just an innocent bystander, but it’s educational because there are always things that happen that you have no control over. Things you wish didn’t happen, or things that happen that you had no idea would, and they are great; both happen... There is no way to control that. (TNS Design Team Member 1)*

In a sense, this description of observing spaces makes a case for embracing the lack of control over how users interpret space, as in the end, they could potentially decide not to use it at all if too many restrictions are in place. However, as demonstrated by the intention to include Incline Park, TNSE has clearly recognized the importance of allowing for passive uses within the Publicly Accessible Spaces. Despite having to abandon the plans for the park, there is still significant potential for TNS Plaza to serve this purpose outside of programmed events. Not only would this enhance the potential for True North Square to become a representational

space for members of the public, but also, it would be less onerous for TNSE to regularly attract people to, as the plaza would become the destination in itself.

### **6.6.2 Complementing Safety with Accessibility**

As Shaftoe (2008) had argued, the safety and comfort of users within publicly accessible spaces should be a high priority for those in charge of managing them. As TNS Plaza and Sports Legacy Plaza are located on private property, this responsibility will fall upon TNSE. With the details of such arrangements still being sorted out, including partnering with the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ to assist with management after standard business hours, it will be important for the organization to establish a clear set of guidelines for maintaining a safe and inclusive space (TNS Development Team Member 1).

Previous studies on the safety and perceived comfort of public spaces suggest there is a risk in over-regulation or extraneous surveillance (Mitchell, 2003; Shaftoe, 2008). For example, Shaftoe (2008) notes that, while the use of closed-circuit television cameras (CCTV) in the United Kingdom was intended as a tool for crime prevention, their use has recently come under criticism for the negative affect they have on conviviality. While these types of techniques may result in a heightened perception of safety for some, it is often at the expense of others, as many people are uncomfortable with heavy policing practices (Shaftoe, 2008). Moreover, in their study centred on the different management techniques of private and public space, Németh and Schmidt (2010) found that private spaces typically had an increased presence of surveillance cameras and security guards, compared with public spaces that more heavily relied on natural surveillance techniques.

In discussing the affects True North Square may have on the surrounding Public Realm, CoW Representative 2 suggested: “It should improve the safety and increase vitality due to more feet on the street. The safest streets are busy and active – people attract people.” This notion is reiterated by a multitude of experts on the topic, including Németh and Schmidt (2010),

Shaftoe (2008), and, of course, Jacobs (1961). All of them uphold the importance of “eyes on the street” in the form of increased activity is the most effective way to improve perceptions of safety. Further, the design details of True North Square may also have a positive impact in this regard. For instance, TNS Development Team Member 2 explained: “The other thing that we spent a pile of time on is the interaction between the main floor tenancies and the plaza proper. The porosity of the space and the glazing.” With this distinct effort in mind, it is likely the activity within the buildings will help contribute to a feeling of safety and comfort within the Public Realm, which would be complimented well by encouraging both passive and programmed uses within the space – a concept that is in-step with the aspirations for TNS Plaza (TNS Design Team Member 1).

### **6.6.3 Distinguishing Between Private and Public**

With more and more privately-owned public spaces appearing in cities such as London, New York, and Toronto, planners and elected officials have begun considering how these spaces can best serve the needs of the public. In each of these cities, there has been a movement toward putting policies in place to ensure owners and operators maintain a high degree of transparency with their rules and regulations, including the provision of signage to indicate the space is publicly accessible. For example, the City of Toronto (2014) has recently released a set of *Urban Design Guidelines for Privately-Owned Publicly Accessible Spaces*, which clearly establish “POPS [privately-owned public spaces] should have clear and visible signage to identify them as publicly accessible space” (p. 29). As for New York, Kayden (2000) details a number of clauses in the City’s bylaws requiring the provision of signage in privately-owned public spaces, asserting “Public knowledge about public space is a sine qua non for public use and access” (p. 28). Perhaps most recently, London has taken concerted actions to address the corporate management of privately-owned public space (Shenker, 2017), including direction to

enhance the legibility of these spaces through the provision of adequate signage and an overarching charter to regulate management (Greater London Authority, 2017; Shenker, 2017).

Considering privately-owned public spaces of this scale are still uncommon in downtown Winnipeg, as indicated by comments of TNS Development Team Member 2 and the surrounding land uses discussed in Chapter 5, unsurprisingly, there are no policies currently in place to stipulate how they are to be presented to the public. Further, considering True North Square will accommodate residents and tenants, there will be portions of the development with restricted public access. As such, TNSE has a unique opportunity to set a positive precedent for privately-owned public spaces in Winnipeg, as well as address claims the plaza “looks like it’s on private property” (Markusa, 2016). In reality, perceptions of publicness will likely differ within the space, as will feelings of comfort and safety. However, by providing clear signage indicating the TNS Plaza and Sports Legacy Plaza are intended for public use, the goal of animating the spaces with day-to-day activities would be articulated to all members of the public.

## 7.0 DISCUSSION

Through exploring and analyzing the process of producing True North Square, a number of ideas have emerged in relation to theories on knowledge mobilization and the assembly of urban space, public policy and urban development, and the right to the city in the context of privately-owned public space. The intent of this chapter is to discuss the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 as it relates to the analysis of the case in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. As advancements in technology continue to facilitate the mobility of people and information between cities, allowing external actors and ideas to have a greater influence over the planning, design, and production of urban space, it is timely to consider how to most effectively use this approach. While only the “test of time” (TNS Design Team Member 1) can truly determine the success of an urban space, detailing processes of producing them is important for considering the principles behind certain decisions and, in turn, what key lessons can be drawn to inform future practice. For example, although the subject case study is limited in terms of time, as Phase 1 of True North Square is still under construction, outlining the intentions of TNSE for TNS Plaza establishes a baseline for determining its ultimate success. To allow for a high degree of replicability and to potentially inform subsequent case studies of a similar nature, the framework guiding the analysis is detailed in the discussion to follow.

### 7.1 Progressing and Complimenting Mobilization with Assemblage

In an effort to advance beyond mainstream policy transfer literature, which has been critiqued for its tendency to ignore process and depict the approach as being too literal (McCann & Ward, 2011), Cook (2008) offers a framework comprised of six factors: the local environment of discontent; the process of selecting and interpreting appropriate ideas to transfer; the ways ideas are adapted for a new context; the manner in which they are translated as successful to others; the actors and their associated roles; and, the people, places, or ideas excluded from

the process. In providing this framework, the author argues that there is an opportunity to generate a fuller understanding of policy transfer by portraying its processual nature, which includes the dis-embedding, mobilizing, and re-embedding of policies. However, as outlined in Chapter 2, this framework falls short for the subject case study in its lack of consideration for space. As such, my final category of analysis, which is the future management of the Publicly Accessible Spaces – with a particular emphasis on TNS Plaza – has relied on the concept of *assemblage* offered by McFarlane (2009) and McCann and Ward (201). Importantly, for these authors, assemblage not only captures the history of connections through which urban space is created, but signifies subsequent events, performances, and actions. To illustrate how the framework has been applied to the case, Table 4 offers the various factors used in relation to a sample finding from the analysis, which allowed the research to have a more processual focus.

The initial environment of discontent leading to the use of precedents and mobilization of knowledge is, according to Cook (2008), an important starting point for understanding the process. In the case of True North Square, the offices of TNSE are located directly north of the Phase 1 site, and this allowed members of the organization to become familiar with the opportunities and shortcomings of the immediate area. In particular, they recognized the series of surface parking lots between Bell MTS Place and the RBC Convention Centre as an opportunity for redevelopment, which would serve to enhance connectivity and improve the overall experience for people within the area. This initiative was further validated by the number of people the organization observed exiting the arena onto Graham Avenue after events. In turn, aligned with Strom's (2008) assertion that downtown development is increasingly focused on introducing cultural and entertainment functions, as well as the *SHED Plan* supporting all aspects of the development, TNSE began considering options for how the site could achieve these aspirations.

**Table 4:** Cook’s Adapted Theoretical Framework Applied to the Case Study

Phase	Factor Description	Case Example
Dis-embedding, Mobilizing, Re-embedding and Assembling	The key actors involved and their associated roles in the mobilization process.	Members of TNSE discovered the precedents while their Design Team helped to interpret and research them.
Dis-embedding	The environment of discontent with current local downtown development and amenities.	TNSE recognized poor connectivity between Bell MTS Place and RBC Convention Centre and a lack of interesting amenities in proximity.
	The process of discovering precedents and interpreting them as being appropriate to mobilize.	TNSE discovered Maple Leaf Square as a precedent offering important lessons for introducing a plaza space to an arena district.
Mobilizing	The way in which the knowledge was drawn from the precedents and presented as successful to members of the public.	TNSE presented the precedent projects to the public using images with reference to high-quality publicly accessible spaces.
	The places and precedents considered inappropriate to mobilize and excluded from the process.	TNSE intentionally excluded projects that did not have a central focal point to draw together different activities and animate the space on a daily basis.
Re-embedding and Assembling	The way in which knowledge drawn from the precedent projects was adapted for a new context.	Members of the Design Team adapted the shape and scale of the fountain to allow for more flexibility in terms of programming and use in the plaza.
	The way the project is designed and managed to allow for a variety of uses and interpretations of the space.	The Design Team’s incorporation of a stage that also serves as seating is meant to encourage day-to-day use, which could be complimented by signage to encourage public access.

In considering the key actors involved in the knowledge mobilization process for True North Square, the members of TNSE and the architects and designers comprising their team are aligned with the “transfer agents” identified by McCann and Ward (2011). As specified by the authors, those typically contributing to the process include investors, real estate developers, and architects, consistent with the subject case. The primary transfer agents, being high profile members of TNSE who traveled to various North American cities with the National Hockey League franchise owned by the organization, were the initial actors who discovered the precedents and selected them as being applicable to the context of Winnipeg. In this sense, the case departs from notions of “policy tourism” advanced by authors like González (2011), as the precedents were not deliberately sought out for use. Even so, as the process moved forward, it was the lead architectural and landscape architectural members, comprising the TNS Design Team, who further influenced how the precedents were studied and applied to the project.

Cooke (2008) highlights the ways in which actors extract a model to be transferred from its territorial, political, and social context is an important component of the process to understand. Recognizing the issues that have arisen when past cases have transferred a policy or concept too literally (Punter 2017), the actors should endeavour to understand more about the factors which led to its success, or in some instances failure. In considering how this can be applied to the case of True North Square, the interviewed members of the TNS Design Team recounted taking a very methodological approach to learning about the precedents and drawing elements from them. For example, TNS Design Team Member 1 verified the importance of experiencing the space, which allowed for a deeper understanding of scale and surrounding context. Further, it provided an opportunity to observe how various elements were used under different circumstances. However, the most important factor noted by the TNS Design Team Members were not the physical elements themselves, but the principles behind the choices to include them and, subsequently, the lessons learned over time. It is these factors, as opposed to fountains, television screens, or grand staircases, that featured a more prominent role in the

interpretation and dis-embedding of knowledge. As such, according to members of the TNS Development Team and Design Team, cases were not only excluded or included based on their success, but on the lessons or principles they offered in their shortcomings as well.

Despite TNSE articulating in detail to the Design Team Members how they drew inspiration from each precedent, less information was provided to the public, as most presentations or media releases simply referenced the projects with a single image. While this approach reflects the “static” representations of concepts and spaces referenced by Massey (2005), it also avoids being overly prescriptive in how TNS Plaza was intended to be used, allowing members of the public to interpret the potential of the space themselves. Further, the use of the precedents to promote the project also served to create a common purpose for supporting it, which was centred on the benefits of TNS Plaza for the public. This focus is distinctly different from Peterson’s (1981) assertion that the most effective – and prevalent – public benefit promoted by developers is a boost to the local economy. Thus, in an effort to meet the expectations of the public and their own aspiration to activate the space 365-days a year, a great deal of effort was invested into adapting the various elements for the site context.

As specified by Cook (2008), any transfer process requires a great deal of *reshaping* to successfully adapt ideas to new economic, social, and cultural contexts. This notion is supported by McCann and Ward (2011), who describe the exchange of ideas from one locale to another as not simply a matter of importing a fully-formed and ready-to-use idea, but rather, a much more complex process involving a variety of evolutions and mutations along the way. These conceptualizations of knowledge mobilization are critical for understanding the process of producing True North Square, as the use of various precedents required many different elements to be combined, shaped, and massaged into a cohesive and contextually appropriate design. As affirmed by TNS Design Team Member 1, the most critical factors to consider when drawing elements from the precedents were culture, climate, and economics. For example, the composition of the buildings on the site are intended to block wind and provide shelter to the

users of TNS Plaza. Again, these factors are closely aligned with those identified by Cook (2008), with the single difference of a consideration for climate, which reflects the more spatial and physical nature of the subject case study. While these factors are important for overall experience, TNS Design Team Member 2 was more concerned over the flexibility of the space and adaptability of the elements. For instance, rather than introducing a large purpose-built stage, as was observed in precedent projects they studied, the stage element for True North Square is also intended to function as day-to-day seating or other passive purposes. With these aspirations in mind, the analysis departs from the factors and phases outlined in Cooke's (2008) framework and, in drawing on the concept of *assemblage* (McCann & Ward, 2011; McFarlane, 2009), considers how the public realm may continue to be shaped through use and interpretation over time.

Aligned with definitions of *assemblage* that not only signify an output, but also encompass processes of actions and events, the degree to which True North Square's Publicly Accessible Spaces accommodate various uses may largely determine its popularity and success. In drawing on the work of Massey (2005), McCann defines place as an "event... the coming together of the previously unrelated, a constellation of process rather than a thing... open and... internally multiple" (p. 109). In this sense, Massey's (2005) perception of space itself as being mobile reflects its constantly changing nature, and its composition of processes as the multiple experiences within it. As acknowledged by TNS Design Team 1, you can try to encourage people to use a space a certain way, and even look at examples of projects that have done so successfully, but ultimately the space will "have a life of its own." It is this notion of process and liveliness that the addition of *assemblage* to the framework is intended to encompass. Put another way by McFarlane (2009), "*assemblage* emphasizes spatiality and temporality: elements are drawn together at a particular juncture only to disperse or realign, and the shape shifts... according to place and the 'angle of vision'" (p. 562). While the ability to apply this factor to the case study was limited by time, as Phase 1 of True North Square is still

under construction, it serves as an important foundation for considering management practices and offering direction for future research.

## 7.2 The Evolving Relationship Between Public Policy and Urban Development

In discussing how cities get built, Logan and Molotch (1987) assert the influence of place entrepreneurs – including local business persons in property investment, development, and real-estate financing – cannot be overstated. Peterson (1981) and Stone (1989) build on this notion by outlining the dependency of municipal governments on the resources of the business elite. In the case of True North Square, the alignment of the project with the plans and regulations in place for downtown Winnipeg demonstrate the City's desire to attract this scale of development to the area, which they are unable to undertake independently. As explained by one City of Winnipeg Representative: "For the most part, the City is not building housing, office, educational, institutional – all those things we talk about in our municipal development plan. So of course, the private sector is critical, we don't development otherwise" (CoW Representative 1). Notwithstanding the support present in the municipal planning policies, the City of Winnipeg still took additional measures to encourage this desired investment in the downtown.

Németh (2006) addresses the challenge many post-industrial cities face in attracting investment into core areas, requiring them to partner with private investors by offering incentives such as zoning variances, density bonuses, or property tax enticements (Logan & Molotch, 1987). This phenomenon is directly applicable to the subject case, as prior to TNSE building the MTS Centre (now Bell MTS Place) in 2004, downtown Winnipeg had endured an extended period of relatively low investment. However, after taking such measures as establishing the City's arms-length development agency CentreVenture, in addition to introducing the TIF program, the landscape for investment substantially improved. Importantly, through these mechanisms, True North Square received financial support from the City of Winnipeg and Province of Manitoba through the TIF program. As discussed previously, with these funds being

allocated to support Public Realm investments, such as sidewalk, street, and skywalk upgrades surrounding the site, the case demonstrates an example of the City of Winnipeg protecting “investor prerogative”. As outlined by Stone (1989), prioritizing investor prerogative is typically done to protect and encourage investment in a specific area. However, additional support from the City has also been directly allocated to TNS Plaza, which is aligned with the type of group benefit Stone (1989) identifies as being used to build public support.

While it was supported publicly through the TIF program, unlike most privately-owned public spaces, the provision of TNS Plaza was not something the City required. As explained by Németh (2006), in exchange for allowing exceptions to development standards or subsidized development costs, many municipal governments require private entities to provide a public amenity in return, which commonly materialize in the form of privately-owned public spaces. With this in mind, the case of True North Square demonstrates a reverse of this process, in that TNS Plaza was “not something they were forced to do, but a critical component of something they planned to do” (TNS Design Team Member 2). Further, as expressed by other members of the TNS Development Team, the success of the overall project worked better when the community benefit was the focus, as many of the new commercial and retail tenants will depend on activity and a steady presence of people in the vicinity (TNS Development Team Member 2). In this sense, the case aligns much more with Stone’s (1989) more optimistic stance on the business community as civic minded individuals, whose actions benefiting the City just happen to result in benefits for them as well. Further, as compared with Logan and Molotch’s (1987) characterisation of capitalists within the growth machine, TNS demonstrates a much stronger commitment to the City by maintaining its headquarters in Winnipeg and demonstrating a history of substantial investment in the downtown.

### 7.3 Prioritizing the Flexibility of the Public Realm

For Lefebvre (1991), public space is an absolute necessity for facilitating social cohesion and spectacular cultural action, through which everyday space is attributed new meaning. The importance of such space has clearly been demonstrated by the case of True North Square, as throughout the project, much of the focus remained on TNS Plaza and other elements of the Public Realm. However, TNS Plaza and Sports Legacy Plaza represent examples of privately-owned public spaces (TNS Development Team Member 1). As opposed to genuine public spaces, which are subject to standard municipal guidelines, private entities are able to impose their own rules and management practices (Kayden, 2000). As such, for the majority of the time, the way in which these Publicly Accessible Spaces are managed and operated will be at the discretion of TNSE. However, Barrett (2013) asserts the conceptualization of public and private space in cities is complicated by cases where, at times, publicly-owned space is overly managed to control behaviour (Barrett, 2013), whereas privately-owned space can “exhibit genuine qualities of publicness” (Leary-Ohwin, 2016, p. 5). In addressing this issue, Németh and Schmidt (2010) argue that more factors than just ownership need to be considered, including the orientation of the space, the details of the design, and the presence of security. As TNSE has firmly expressed their intention for TNS Plaza to be inclusive and encourage a variety of day-to-day activities, such as by not designing it to be “an internalized courtyard plaza, but with its tentacles kind of spreading out” (TNS Design Team Member 2), factors such as security, programming, and presentation can be taken into consideration to ensure these aspirations are achieved.

In discussing the importance of difference in cities, Mitchell (2003) maintains that, even when an urban space is conceived as a representation of the expert’s intention, it can be appropriated through everyday use to become representational of the public’s vision. This idea is reflective of Lefebvre’s (1991) concept of differential space, within which many daily users find a sense of meaning through free and complete access (Leary-Ohwin, 2016). In the case of True

North Square, this notion is aligned with the intention of the *experts*, as one member of the TNS Design Team explained a great deal of effort was put forth in designing elements of TNS Plaza to be adaptable to various uses. Further, according to the Design Team member, the permanent features in the space were planned and designed to ensure they would not restrict its ability to facilitate events and gatherings, while still offering the required elements for encouraging day-to-day use (TNS Design Team Member 2).

Even so, as suggested by authors like Shaftoe (2008), the approach to managing public space is as important for ensuring regular use as the design itself. This is reiterated by Németh and Schmidt (2012), as they observed privately-owned public spaces to be effective at encouraging use through design, while attempting to control the behaviour of users through management and excessive programming. Further, authors such as Kayden (2000) identify issues with how some privately-owned public spaces are presented, while Shaftoe (2008) and Mitchell (2003) take issue with the over securitization of others. As such, in order to ensure TNS Plaza is regularly used by members of the public, the factors of security, presentation, and programming should all be taken into consideration. With a design in place to encourage flexibility, accommodate a variety of uses, and invite passersby into it, the right management techniques could effectively contribute to creating a space the public can partake in assembling, which in turn, may reflect the kind of space Lefebvre (1991) establishes as being an absolute necessity for urban life.

## **8.0 CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this research was to examine how knowledge was mobilized from other North American cities to inspire and produce True North Square. In particular, this research focused on TNS Plaza and other components of the Public Realm, as the intention was to assess how elements of precedent projects were interpreted, adapted, and applied in the context of private-owned public space. To generate a detailed understanding of this process, I conducted semi-structured interviews with representatives from the City of Winnipeg, members of the True North Real Estate Development, and key members of the Design Team. Further, to provide context for how the project fits within the surrounding area and aligns with the City's development goals, I gathered information from municipal policies, by-laws and guidelines, satellite imagery, and personal observation. As well, in recognizing urban space is not only influenced by the initial planning and design process, but also subsequent approaches to management affecting everyday use, the final section of analysis considers a number of relevant factors for maintaining inclusive and activated Publicly Accessible Spaces. To achieve this, I primarily relied upon previous case studies, academic literature, and portions of the semi-structured interviews. By bringing together these various opinions and sources of information, a comprehensive understanding of the process has been formed, beginning with the initial stages of developing a vision, through to the municipal review process and, finally, consideration for future approaches to programming and management.

The intent of this chapter is to revisit the research questions guiding the case study, summarize key findings and lessons learned, and provide recommendations for future research in relation to the subject case or cases of a similar nature.

## **8.1 Revisiting the Research Questions**

In Chapter 1, I identified three research questions guiding the case study. This section presents the answers to each of those questions.

### **How were the precedents inspiring the concept of True North Square and its Publicly Accessible Spaces selected and how was knowledge about the precedents generated?**

Through their travels with the Winnipeg Jets, the National Hockey League franchise owned by TNSE, members of the organization were able to experience many different arena districts across North America. They observed some to be more successful than others in certain respects, but they believed that those with central focal points bringing together the various activities of the area were best aligned with their aspirations. While the members of the organization first generated information through their own experiences, they subsequently requested that members of the TNS Design Team study the precedents and, in turn, assemble certain elements from each into the design of True North Square and the Publicly Accessible Spaces. In order to do so effectively, members of the TNS Design Team had to research the precedents by visiting key locations and observing how they functioned. Through a combination of these observations and background research into why certain design and planning decisions were made, general principles and lessons learned were drawn from each, which were then used to inform the planning and design process for True North Square.

### **Was consideration given to the specific context of Winnipeg while mobilizing these design concepts, and if so, how? Were City of Winnipeg representatives influential in this area?**

Throughout the planning and design process, a great deal of consideration was given to the surrounding site context, as well as the greater context of the City of Winnipeg. While

developing the concept, members of TNSE were specifically inspired by the potential for the development to connect two major downtown amenities, being the RBC Convention Centre and Bell MTS Place. As such, this specific goal served as a key consideration for guiding planning and design decisions. In regards to site planning, when mobilizing knowledge from cities such as Los Angeles, Kansas City, and Toronto, elements of the design were adapted for the local climate, culture, and economic contexts. For example, a great deal of thought went into the wind conditions along Graham Avenue, which can create an uncomfortable outdoor experience during a Winnipeg winter. In turn, one of the towers was strategically placed along Graham Avenue to create a street wall blocking TNS Plaza from wind, while the orientation of the second tower serves to maximize solar exposure. When it came to the details of the public realm and mobilizing knowledge to inform the physical features within it, such as a fountain, television screen, and seating, the design and placement of the elements required careful consideration for the site conditions. For instance, considering TNS Plaza was smaller than some of the precedents being used, the permanent structures within the space needed to be scaled and orientated in a manner that would allow it to remain flexible and functional for hosting events.

The policies and review processes set in place by the City of Winnipeg are intended to ensure new development is appropriate for the surrounding context. While in effect, the ambiguity of the municipal development plan and permissiveness of the downtown zoning by-law limit the degree of influence they have, the downtown Urban Design Advisory Committee and guidelines are more meticulous in reviewing and approving development projects. In the case of True North Square, however, no concerns were expressed by the committee regarding the appropriateness of the development for the surrounding area. Further, although not enforceable, having the SHED Plan available for reference provides an easy justification for how the project aligns with the City's downtown growth objectives.

**What lessons can planners, designers, and developers draw from the process of producing True North Square to more effectively mobilize knowledge from other cities?**

Through conducting semi-structured interviews with key actors involved in producing True North Square, a number of key lessons emerged for planners, architects, and developers mobilizing knowledge from other cities. The following five lessons are offered as a summary of the most important considerations expressed by interviewees.

*Challenge your own interpretations:*

Everyone experiences spaces differently, interpretations of precedents as being successful or not should be challenged. When applying a concept or idea from another city the opinions of others should always be sought in an effort to gauge how various users might react.

*Use consistent precedents among team members:*

Urban development projects are typically comprised of experts from various backgrounds and, as such, must incorporate a variety of perspectives into any plan or design. To increase the chances of a coherent result, consistent precedents should be used among team members and the inspirations drawn from each should be clearly communicated to one another.

*Apply the principles and lessons learned as opposed to the output:*

Simply dropping an idea from one city into another without considering the implications has been shown to achieve poor results. Instead, experts should invest time into understanding the principles behind certain decisions and the lessons learned from performance, which in turn are the most effective elements to apply to development processes in other cities.

*Consider scale and context:*

As many videos, photos, and project briefs often ignore surrounding context and, in some instances, serve to exaggerate project elements, it is important to personally experience the space and observe how it is influenced by the features around it.

*Expect the unexpected:*

Even if you take three precedents that have achieved similar results and, in turn, attempt to replicate them, there is no guarantee your project will have a comparable outcome. Since all urban design is subject to the preferences and interpretations of the user, projects will inevitably take on a life of their own. In some instances, using dissimilar precedents can provide a better sense of how various project elements may perform, but in the end only time will tell.

## **8.2 Key Findings and Lessons Learned**

In studying the process of producing True North Square, with a particular emphasis on TNS Plaza and the Public Realm, the use of various methods has allowed me to examine the case from conception through to future considerations for management. The intent of the document analysis was to understand the planning policy and regulatory context by which projects such as True North Square find abundant support. Additionally, to comprehend how knowledge from other cities was mobilized to inspire the project and, in particular, applied to the planning and design of the publicly accessible plazas, semi-structured interviews with key actors were conducted. Relatedly, in an effort to substantiate the interview participants' claims regarding the appropriateness of the project for downtown Winnipeg, a thorough context study was carried out on the surrounding area. In turn, through the analysis of this information in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, three key findings emerged in relation to privately-owned public space, the exchange between public policy and urban development, and the mobilization of knowledge from other cities. A lesson is drawn from each of these findings with the potential to be applied by planners, designers, or developers in other projects of similar scope and scale.

### **The flexibility of privately-owned public spaces is dependent on both design and management.**

As emphasized by members of the TNS Development Team, the intent of TNS Plaza is to function as an open and inclusive space, accommodating a range of uses for day-to-day

occupants and attendees of downtown events. This intention was strongly reiterated by members of TNS Design Team, articulated by their efforts to plan and design the space to suit the local context, attract passersby from the surrounding skywalks, sidewalks, and streets, as well as remain flexible to the various interpretations of daily users. In fact, maintaining a high degree of flexibility was asserted to be one of the most important principles guiding the process, as members of the TNS Design Team upheld the difficulty in predicting how people will actually use various elements of the space. While these considerations are sure to play a significant role in activating TNS Plaza, literature on the subject of privately-owned public space suggests design itself is not enough to ensure frequent use, as there are several key factors to consider in relation to management as well. Drawing on existing literature and policies and regulations in other cities, managing TNS Plaza to maintain a high degree of flexibility will depend upon how the space is presented, programmed, and secured. Importantly, if people do not perceive the space as being open to passive uses and accommodating to their various interpretations, the potential for the space to meet and exceed to expectations of the TNS Development and Design Team will be limited.

**Lesson Learned: To produce flexible spaces that attract and retain users as often as possible, it is not only necessary for planners, architects, and developers to consider how the featured elements will accommodate multiple uses, but how approaches to managing the space will affect people's perceptions of it as well.**

**Developers who are locally invested are more likely to consider community benefits.**

TNSE is headquartered in Winnipeg and, with their main offices facing the True North Square site, they had an intrinsic commitment to producing a high quality project. Further, as the owners of the Winnipeg Jets National Hockey League franchise and neighbouring Bell MTS Place, TNSE was already invested – both financially and sentimentally – in True North Square contributing to the success of the area. As such, without any mandate from the City of

Winnipeg, TNSE has incorporated a significant amount of Publicly Accessible Space into Phase 1 of the project. While members of the TNS Development Team admit the incorporation of TNS Plaza and Sports Legacy Plaza was not entirely altruistic, as they wanted to provide an engaging Public Realm to attract and support customers of the retail spaces, they also had an urge to give sports fans and attendees of downtown events somewhere to celebrate. However, developers with no such local investment would have less reason to provide local benefits, unless otherwise required by municipal representatives or policy directions.

As indicated by TNS Design Team Member 1, development in other cities generally involves a negotiation between public and private interests, which requires municipal authorities to use incentives as leverage for making demands. In the case of Winnipeg, the policies and regulations directing downtown development are so permissive there is little opportunity to make any such demands, or offer incentives beyond what is already permitted. While projects such as True North Square can benefit from public subsidies through the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) program, the policy lacks a solid framework for determining what the developer must contribute in return, as the criteria for eligibility and using the finances are ambiguous.

**Lesson Learned: Municipal authorities should implement planning policies and regulations that provide them with a foundation for leveraging public benefits through private development. While locally invested developers are more likely to provide such benefits without being mandated to do so, municipalities should ensure clear policies are in place to guide discussions with private interests who are not locally based, or have not undertaken local projects previously.**

**Looking beyond the physical output while mobilizing knowledge from precedents resulted in a more contextually appropriate plan and design.**

In discussing how the precedents from other North American cities were used to inspire and inform True North Square, both members of the TNS Design Team and Development Team

were adamant the project's physical features were not their primary focus. Instead, they placed greater importance on the array of processual factors influencing how the projects performed, such as the principles underlying planning and design decisions, the surrounding site context, and the ways in which people used the spaces on a daily basis. Ultimately, by focusing more on these processual factors, members of the TNS Design Team were able to mobilize this knowledge to inform their own discussions and decisions, while also developing a plan and design that was tailored to the local context. Further, as emphasized by TNS Design Team Member 1, while precedents can be useful for predicting performance and functionality, the urban space will eventually take on a life of its own through everyday use. As such, rather than using three precedents that all achieved the same result, looking at projects with varying outcomes – good and bad – was more productive for developing a flexible design. In turn, by taking this array of processual factors into consideration, knowledge was mobilized from other cities while still considering the needs of local users who, after all, will continue to assemble the urban space through use and interpretation.

**Lesson Learned: When mobilizing knowledge from other cities to inspire and inform urban spaces, it is important for planners, architects, and developers to put greater emphasis on the processual factors influencing the project, as opposed to focusing only on the physical output. Otherwise, if you do not adequately understand why it succeeded or failed, it will be difficult to adapt the concept to be successful in a new context.**

### **8.3 Closing Remarks**

This thesis has created a theoretical framework for studying the process of producing True North Square by connecting the concept of knowledge mobilization to literature on privately-owned public space and public policy related to urban development. In doing so, I was able to discuss various aspects of the subject case, including: how precedents were discovered and used to inspire the vision; the approach to selecting a design team; the methods used to study

the precedents; the ways in which knowledge was mobilized and adapted to the Winnipeg context; the process of municipal review and approval; and, considerations for future management of the Publicly Accessible Spaces. Still, there are several aspects of the study that could be developed further through future research, whether on the subject case or a different case of a similar nature.

One of the initial factors drawing my attention to the True North Square project was the allocation of public subsidies to TNS Plaza through the TIF program. For myself, as well as others within the planning community, this raised the concern of directing public dollars toward amenities located on private land. While TNSE has firmly asserted they intend for TNS Plaza and the additional Publicly Accessible Spaces to be open and inclusive, the concern remains for future projects undertaken by different developers, as a brief overview of the Manitoba TIF legislation reveals there are very limited conditions for how the funds are used. As such, further analysis into how TIF is being used in Manitoba to produce public benefits would be valuable, as would an assessment of how TIF is used in other provinces and states by comparison.

Another area of the study that would benefit from further investigation is the variety of actors involved in downtown development processes. While this research found a balance by including participants from the TNS Development Team, TNS Design Team, and the City of Winnipeg, including representatives of organizations such as CentreVenture would add further depth to the analysis by expanding on the political aspects of such projects. Due to constraints related to time and, in particular, the potentially sensitive nature of such information, I limited my analysis to the formal design and zoning review process.

Perhaps the most significant limitation of this case study is that Phase 1 of True North Square was still incomplete at the time of writing. As such, the final factor of the theoretical framework, related to *assembling the Publicly Accessible Spaces*, is solely based on the stated intentions of the TNS Development Team, as opposed to observations of how the Publicly Accessible Spaces are actually used and managed. This thesis, in describing the intentions of

TNSE and the principles behind the planning and design decisions, would serve as a solid foundation for future research on such matters. In doing so, beyond identifying opportunities for mobilizing knowledge more effectively between cities, this thesis and associated future studies can provide direction for producing flexible and contextually appropriate privately-owned public spaces – as this thesis was largely motivated to do.

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## Appendices

## **APPENDIX A: Interview Schedules for Public and Private Sector Participants**

### *Private Sector*

The private sector interview schedule is broken down into four sections. The first section was used to build a rapport with the participants and offer them further context. It also allowed the participants to ask any final questions for clarity before we begin. The second was intended to answer Research Question I, focusing on the process of selecting precedents and collecting information about them. The third was intended to answer the subsection of Research Question I, as well as Research Question II, centred on adapting the precedents to the context of Winnipeg. The fourth section was intended to answer Research Question III by reflecting on the benefits and challenges of the process.

### *Introduction*

- 1) Before we get started, do you have any questions about me or my research?
  - 1.1. Could you tell me a couple of things about yourself?
  - 1.2. How long have you been involved in the development or design field?
  - 1.3. What was your role in the process of producing True North Square?

### *Mobilizing the Precedents*

- 2) A significant amount of the public discussion about True North Square was centred on the precedents used to inspire it. I'd like to ask you a couple of questions about process of finding and selecting the precedent developments. The intent is to generate an in-depth understanding of the process you went through.
  - 2.1. Were you involved in finding the precedent developments?
    - 2.1.1. If so, were there other precedents you looked at that you didn't include?
    - 2.1.2. If not, what are your thoughts on the precedents that were used?
  - 2.2. What was some of the criteria used to select the precedents?
  - 2.3. How was information about the precedents gathered?
    - 2.3.1. Did you travel to these development sites?
    - 2.3.2. Did you speak with some of the actors involved in producing them?

### *Using the Precedents*

3) While some of the precedents are cited in articles and media releases, little detail is provided about which aspects of the developments were used, or to what extent. Further, there has been some criticism of the precedents for being exclusive to certain users. I'd like to ask a couple of questions relating to this topic to build a better understanding of how the precedents were used.

- 3.1. Which characteristics of the precedents did you think would most benefit the True North Square project?
  - 3.1.1. To what extent were these characteristics replicated for True North Square?
- 3.2. Were the characteristics used from the precedents adapted to Winnipeg's context?
  - 3.2.1. If so, how were they adapted?
  - 3.2.2. If not, why did you feel they suited the context of Winnipeg as they were?
- 3.3. Was there any consideration in the design process as to how accessible the public realm will be?
  - 3.3.1. Who do you envision being the primary users of the space?
  - 3.3.2. Will the management and regulation of the space reflect the precedents?

### *Reflecting on the Process*

4) Before we conclude, I just wanted to ask a couple of more general questions about your experience during the process.

- 4.1. What were some of the benefits you found to using precedents from external cities?
- 4.2. What were some of the challenges you encountered to using these precedents?
- 4.3. Are there specific approaches to mobilizing precedents you would recommend to others?
- 4.4. Is there anything else you would like to add about the process before we finish?

### *Public Sector*

The public sector interview was also broken down into four sections. The first section served to build a rapport between myself and the participant, in addition to offering them further context for the project if requested. The second was intended answer Research Question II by reflecting on the review process of the development and the way in which it was presented to them by TNS. The third section was intended to answer Research Question III by exploring the process of permitting the development. The fourth section was intended to answer the subsection of Research Question III by more generally reflecting on the permitting process.

### *Introduction*

- 1) Before we get started, do you have any questions about me or my research?
  - 1.1. Could you tell me a couple of things about yourself?
  - 1.2. How long have you been involved in the planning or public policy sector?
  - 1.3. What was your role in the process of producing True North Square?

### *Reviewing the Development*

- 2) There has been plenty of public discussion around the precedents used by TNS, in addition to criticism from experts for their exclusivity to certain users. I'd like to ask a couple of questions relating to this topic to build a better understanding of the project's intended public benefit.
  - 2.1. How was the development's design and programming presented to you?
    - 2.1.1. Did the developers explain how the project was adapted to Winnipeg?
  - 2.2. Did the use of precedents from other cities pose any concerns for you?
    - 2.2.1. If so, what aspect of this approach concerned you most, and why?
  - 2.3. Who do you think the primary users of the space will be?

### *Permitting the Development*

- 3) I would like to ask a couple of questions about the process of permitting True North Square.
  - 3.1. What do you predict the impact of the site will be on the surrounding area?
  - 3.2. Are you aware of any requests being made to change aspects of the development?
    - 3.2.1. If so, what was the basis for making these requests?

3.3. Are there any guidelines (provincial or municipal) you are aware of for managing privately-owned public spaces?

3.3.1. Was there any discussion of how the space would be managed?

*Reflecting on the Process*

4) Before we conclude, I just wanted to ask a couple of more general questions about your experience during the process.

4.1. What recommendations would you give to developers mobilizing and using precedents from other cities?

4.2. Is there anything else you would like to add about the process before we finish?

## **APPENDIX B: Email for Initial Contact with Recruiting Participants**

Dear (Participant),

I am a student in the Master of City Planning program at the University of Manitoba. As a part of this program, I am undertaking a Major Degree Project ('thesis') centred on exploring the process of producing True North Square with a particular interest in how precedent developments were selected and used. Please find attached a "Project Background Information Sheet" which will provide you with more information about the project.

I would greatly appreciate your participation in a one-on-one, in-person interview related to this research. The interview is planned to be a relatively informal 'semi-structured' discussion containing between 15 and 20 questions and sub-questions and should last roughly 1 hour. The interview would take place at a time and place of your choosing.

If you have additional questions or would like further information about the project, please feel free to contact me by email at \*\*\*\*\* or by phone at \*\*\*\*\*.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Gratefully,

Evan Sinclair, BA (Dev. & Geo.), MCP (Cand.)

## **APPENDIX C: Project Information for Prospective Interview Participants**

You have been invited to participate in a research project I am undertaking that is centred on the process of producing True North Square. In order to conduct this investigation, I will be interviewing key actors of the process to ask them to reflect on their role and experience with the project. This research is constitutive to my Master of City Planning Major Degree Project (thesis) and is being supervised by Dr. Richard Milgrom in the Department of City Planning. In particular, this research aims to explore True North Square's process of mobilizing precedents such as: Maple Leaf Square (Toronto); the Ice District (Edmonton); LA Live (Los Angeles); and, the Light and Power District (Kansas City). By identifying why these precedents were selected, to what extent they were used, and how they were potentially adapted to suit the context of downtown Winnipeg, this research will contribute to literature on this subject by considering the benefits and challenges encountered by the actors involved.

At no point is this research intended to critique the structural design of True North Square, but rather, to provide a detailed case study of the process undertaken to produce it. Documenting such unique approaches to development projects can be of value for future practitioners looking to undertake similar processes.

This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board. Should you have any questions or concerns about the nature of this research, you can contact the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) by phone at 204-474-7122 or email at [humanethics@umanitoba.ca](mailto:humanethics@umanitoba.ca).

## APPENDIX D: Research Participant Information and Consent Form

### Faculty of Architecture

#### Statement of Informed Consent

- Research Project Title: *‘Assembling Spaces: A Case Study on the Process of Producing True North Square, Winnipeg MB’*
- Principal Investigator: Evan Sinclair, Graduate Student, Master of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba  
*Email: \*\*\*\*\**  
*Phone: \*\*\*\*\**
- Research Supervisor: Dr. Richard Milgrom, Head, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba  
*Email: \*\*\*\*\**  
*Phone: \*\*\*\*\**

#### **Introduction**

You have been invited to participate in a research study. This consent form, a copy of which you may keep for your records, is intended to ensure you have consented willingly and with all necessary information. It explains what is involved in the research and what is expected of you as a participant.

#### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this research is to explore the process of producing True North Square, particularly as it relates to mobilizing and adapting precedents from external cities. It will examine the criteria for selecting precedents and the approach used to transfer various aspects of them by speaking to key actors involved in the process. This approach to transforming urban space has been both commended for its potential to introduce tried and tested concepts, as well as criticized for its potential to ignore local context. I intend to add to the literature on this subject by considering some of the benefits and challenges encountered in the case of True North Square in Winnipeg, MB.

## **Study Procedures**

By participating in this study, you will be asked a series of questions pertaining to your role in producing True North Square, with a particular focus on how the precedent developments were selected and used to guide the process. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed. It is expected to take approximately 60 minutes to complete. ***You will be given the opportunity to see your transcription before the research is finalized.*** During this time, you will have the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the data, redact any information you do not want to be made public, and ensure your anonymity is sufficiently protected. This ‘feedback period’ will begin no more than six (6) weeks after the interview has taken place and will conclude at a date to be determined by the interviewee and principal investigator.

## **Participant Risks and Benefits**

This research project is foreseen to pose minimal risks to you, the interview participant. Your identity (e.g. name, place of employment) will not be included in the study. However, recognizing the development and planning community is relatively small in Winnipeg, you may be identifiable to your peers based on your role or contribution to the project. I will endeavour to minimize this risk by providing you with the opportunity to review your transcript over the ‘feedback period’, as to request any edits or redactions be made before the research is submitted. The benefits to the participants include the opportunity to further share the details of producing True North Square, to reflect on what the limitations and benefits of the process were, and to consider ways of potentially improving the publicly accessible space as it takes shape.

## **Audiotaping and Confidentiality**

The interviews will be audio-recorded for transcription at a later date and stored on a password protected computer, to which only the Principal Investigator and Research Supervisor will have access. After the feedback period has elapsed, all identifiable information will be removed from your transcript, with the exception of your general participant group (e.g. project design contributor). This will make it so it is no longer possible to associate your data with your identity. This data will be destroyed one year after successful submission of the research project, or October of 2020, whichever comes first.

### **Dissemination of Results**

Research findings will be disseminated in hard copy at the University of Manitoba's Architecture / Fine Arts Library, in digital format on the University of Manitoba's M Space, and at my oral defence (which you may attend). If desired, I will also send you a summary (1-3 pages) of the project results via email once the date for my oral defence has been set. It is also possible this research could feature as a part of conference materials or in an article for publication.

### **Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal from the Study**

Your decision to participate in this study is *voluntary*. You are free to refuse participation or withdraw from this research. Withdrawal may occur up to six (6) weeks after the feedback period has been initiated, after which time your data will be made anonymous (it will be impossible to connect your identity to your data). Should you choose to do so, your data will be destroyed no more than one (1) week following your request to withdraw. Confirmation of its destruction will be delivered via email.

If you choose to participate, you maintain the right to refuse to answer any of the interview questions.

### **Statement of Consent**

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB). If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) by phone at 204-474-7122 or by e-mail at [humanethics@umanitoba.ca](mailto:humanethics@umanitoba.ca). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

If you agree to each of the following, please place a check mark in the corresponding box:

- |  |                  |           |
|--|------------------|-----------|
| I have read or it has been read to me the details of this consent form.  | Yes ( )          | No ( )    |
| My questions have been addressed.  | Yes ( )          | No ( )    |
| I agree to have the interview audio-recorded and transcribed.  | Yes ( )          | No ( )    |
| I agree to be contacted by phone or e-mail if further information is required after the interview  | Yes ( )          | No ( )    |
| I agree to have the findings (which may include quotations) from this project published or presented in a manner that does not reveal my identity. | Yes ( )          | No ( )    |
| Do you wish to receive a summary of the findings?  | Yes ( )          | No ( )    |
| How do you wish to receive the summary?  | Surface Mail ( ) | Email ( ) |

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (print name), agree to participate in this study.

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX E: Core Certificate of Completion

PANEL ON  
RESEARCH ETHICS  
*Navigating the ethics of human research*

TCPS 2: CORE



# *Certificate of Completion*

*This document certifies that*

**Evan Sinclair**

*has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement:  
Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans  
Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)*

Date of Issue: **4 February, 2017**