

510 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG CITY HALL
Green Blankstein Russell and Associates
(Bernard Brown and David Thordarson, principal designers), 1962-1964



It would be difficult to find a more well-known, public building than its City Hall. It is the centre of its political life and the place where citizens have direct contact with their governmental leaders. Winnipeg's magnificent new City Hall Complex opened on a cold, blustery day in October 1964.

Winnipeg's City Hall, its third, is a two building, \$8.2 million complex connected by an underground tunnel and separated by an open courtyard. The Council Building is 2½-storeys high, clad in limestone from the Garson, Manitoba quarries and accented with dark, polished granite, bronze, glass block and Quebec granite. The north side features the centrally-placed recessed grand entrance, south façade, facing William Avenue is interrupted by doorways fitted with bronze grating and full-height window openings with green-hued glass block. The east and west façades are similarly designed highlighted by bronze screening, green-hued glass block and a narrow belt of glass encircling the structure between the ceiling of the colonnade and the building.

The Administrative Building is a seven-storey structure also clad in limestone and granite. The main (south) façade faces the Council Building and features upper storeys with a grid of wide

horizontal limestone bands intersected by thinner vertical elements and filled with charcoal-coloured stone and green glass block. Two one-storey wings run south from the east and west sides of the building to partially enclose the courtyard. The north side of the building includes a ramp with access to the basement.

The original courtyard featured a large fountain and planters. When Unicity amalgamated the surrounding municipalities in the early 1970s, ceramic crests of each of the jurisdictions were installed. This space was redesigned in 2003.

The interior finishes of the Council Building include limestone, terrazzo floors, wood and bronze. Council Chambers boast a 200-seat gallery and the Mayor's Office and committee rooms are found on the second floor. Tunnels in the basement lead to the Civic Parkade (now closed), the Administration Building and the Centennial Concert Hall Complex. In the Administration Building, much of the interior has been renovated as departments have come and gone. There are still examples of the original 1960s glass and wood office dividing system on some of the floors.

The complex is one of the City's best examples of the International Style of Modern architecture, an expression of modern construction materials and technologies, specifically steel framing and reinforced concrete, leading to buildings with hard, angular edges and severely plain surfaces. The extensive use of large areas of glass gave the style its lightness of appearance. The rise of this style internationally coincided with the maturation of the University of Manitoba's School of Architecture, which by the 1950s was graduating some of the finest young practitioners in Canada, many of whom stayed in the City to form partnerships with other graduates. This combined with the growth of Winnipeg as a regional commercial centre and a heightened demand for modern office space. A need for headquarter buildings, an expanding economy and talented architects and firms led to the design and construction of many internationally acclaimed buildings in downtown Winnipeg, pushing the limits of the modern style.

The architects responsible for the City Hall Complex and many other fine Winnipeg structures, were the local firm Green Blankstein Russell and Associates (Bernard Brown and David

Thordarson, principal designers). Founded in 1932, the firm grew to become one of the City's most influential and today operates as Stantec.

The City Hall Complex is an integral part of the group of 1960s Modern architecture structures in the area that include the Concert Hall, Planetarium and Manitoba Museum across Main Street and the Public Safety Building and Parkade across King Street. Its high level of exterior integrity adds to its importance.

Elements of the building that would require approval if alterations were planned are:

Exterior elements:

a. Site and Courtyard:

- i. the two separate buildings with facing main entrances separated by an open courtyard;
- ii. three-sided loggia created by the Administration Building;
- iii. the three light standards with 5 white globes in the east and west plazas;
- iv. the five globe light fixtures and matching plant brackets mounted on each of the south walls of single storey wings of the Administration Building;
- v. the ceiling mounted white cylinder lights in the U-shaped loggia;
- vi. the twelve ceramic city crests around the face of the loggia;
- vii. the free standing "CITY HALL" signs at the northeast and northwest corners of the Council Building; and
- viii. the date stone tablet mounted in the east plaza entry stairway.

b. Council Building:

- i. symmetrical, north-facing 2-storey structure with smooth-cut limestone cladding resting on a dark, polished granite base that includes built-in benches on the east and west sides;
- ii. the modular composition of the smooth Tyndall stone cladding, glass block and dark granite plinth;
- iii. the main (north) façade with its centrally-placed recessed entrance supported by a pair of thin columns and the unadorned window openings of the second storey;
- iv. the east and west façades identically designed with colonnades of unadorned columns, large ground floor window openings partially filled with glass block and upper level openings shaded by bronze screens;
- v. the rear (south) façade with limestone walls interrupted by doorways fitted with bronze grating and two-storey windows filled with glass block;
- vi. the varied roof height creating clerestory windows encircling the structure; and
- vii. the flat, unadorned roofline.

c. Administration Building:

- i. symmetrical, south-facing seven-storey structure with smooth-cut limestone cladding and polished granite base with extended one-storey wings running south along the east and west sides;
- ii. the modular composition of the smooth Tyndall stone cladding, glass block and dark granite plinth;
- iii. the main (south) façade with recessed ground and second floors and upper storeys featuring a grid of wide horizontal limestone bands intersected by thinner vertical elements, charcoal-hued window accenting and thin window units set in glass block filled openings;
- iv. identically designed side façades (east and west) with large openings on the second floor and centrally-placed window openings on all upper floors;
- v. the rear (north) façade with raised entrance and loading ramp on the ground floor, large second storey openings and upper floors of similar design to the front façade;
- vi. the flat, unadorned roofline; and
- vii. the one-storey wings partially enclosing the courtyard with peristyle colonnades on the interior elevations and dark granite bases and large openings filled with thin clear glass and glass block on the exterior elevations and topped by modest limestone balustrades.

Interior elements:

a. Council Building:

- i. the main floor lobby with limestone walls, terrazzo floors, wood doors, and wood, glass and bronze accenting;
- ii. central granite staircase with glass and bronze elements;
- iii. wood office/meeting room doors with vertical strip accenting on both floors;
- iv. the volume of space in the two-storey Council Chamber with public gallery seating in wood on two sides (east and west), clerestory windows, public entrances on the second floor and a ceremonial entrance through glass doors with bronze screens at the staircase landing;
- v. the gold 'mosaic' ceiling in the Council Chamber;
- vi. the circular wood Councillors' table;
- vii. the open second floor reception area with limestone finishes, clerestory windows and squared columns;
- viii. the original wood finishes of the second floor committee rooms;
- ix. the metal pendant light fixtures in the north committee room and mayor's office; and
- x. the second floor ceiling lighting designed in 7 x 7 grids of recessed squares, each holding a fixture, with one grid within the Council Chamber and two lighting the staircase and 2nd floor reception area;

b. Administration Building:

- i. the main floor lobby with limestone, dark brick and wood panelled walls, terrazzo floors, wood doors, and bronze and glass accenting;
- ii. the second floor lobby, ante lobby and conference rooms with dark brick and wood panelled walls, terrazzo floors, wood doors, and bronze window frames and accents;
and
- iii. the upper floor office space with examples of the original wood and glass partitioning.