

4. A Gallery of Significant Mid-Century Modern Sites in Manitoba

Manitoba has a striking collection of extant Modern buildings. With the international connections of many of its mid-century architects, these buildings represent a local manifestation of a worldwide movement. A remarkable number of Modern buildings, of a range of types, are still extant. Many of these represent a new design approach to an ancient (e.g. churches), relatively long-standing (e.g. banks and schools) or decades-old (e.g. offices) building type. Others are wholly new building types that were in step with broad societal changes. Among these are suburban developments, strip malls and shopping centres, and one-off projects like drive-in movie screens. Following is a guide to some of the most significant modern sites—in addition to those discussed earlier under individual architect and firm names—in the province. Not surprisingly, the majority of these sites are in urban areas, and particularly in Winnipeg. The gallery of sites is organized by the following functional distinctions, and accompanying texts describe the type through issues of architectural character as well as through typical challenges that attend them as potential heritage sites.

See also the buildings pictured elsewhere in the report. A number of these sites have been demolished or altered, or have come under threat since the first draught of this report in 2010.

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Civic and Government Buildings

Civic buildings in the mid-century period provided an ideal opportunity for communities to express their progressiveness, and the centennials of Canada in 1967 and of Manitoba in 1970 were the perfect time for renewal. In the case of downtown Winnipeg, the City Hall complex, together with the Centennial Concert Hall and Manitoba Museum, were part of an urban renewal project intended to bring renewed life and prosperity to the depressed inner city. These were built as part of the celebrations surrounding the centennial of Canada's confederation and also the centennial of the year that Manitoba became a province of the new country.

With its focus on light, air and progress, International Modernism provided an ideal aesthetic for an era of growth and hope. In contrast, another part of the North Main urban renewal program, the Public Safety Building, is an unusual example of a Brutalist style building clad in stone. The functions inside a Brutalist building can often be "read" on the exterior, as is the case here with the jails on the third and fourth floors. Such a building presents a public relations challenge today, but if the vertical fins and massive forms do not seem particularly friendly, it is likely that they were not intended to be.



Brookside Cemetery Administration Building, 3001 Notre Dame



Former St. Boniface Civic Centre. Etienne Gaboury, 1962-64. 227 Provencher Boulevard



Steinbach City Hall, Norman Reimer, 1965



R.M. of St Clements Municipal Building, Hans Peter-Langes, 1968



Public Safety Building, Winnipeg, Libling, Michener and Associates, 1965



Brandon Land Titles Office



Royal Canadian Mint, Gaboury Lussier Sigurdsson/Number Ten Architectural Group, 1975. 520 Lagimodière Boulevard, Winnipeg



City of Winnipeg Fire Department Station #1, 65 Ellen Street

Cultural and Recreational Complexes

The relatively-affluent years of the 1950s and 60s provided great opportunity for civic development, ranging from regional projects, such as local libraries, to larger downtown complexes. Many of these buildings have retained their exterior appearance to a great extent, though we must use our imaginations to understand how dramatically forward-looking they must have appeared when they were built. The PanAm pool is shown below in photographs dating from near the time of its construction, as its interior and entrance area have been heavily altered.

Cultural and recreational buildings present possible designation opportunities; they are quite visible and often held in high esteem by the community. In addition, more often than not they retain their original functions for a long time and are thus often less prone to alteration.



Winnipeg Public Library, Fort Garry Branch.
George A. Stewart, 1956. 1360 Pembina Highway, Winnipeg



Winnipeg Public Library, St. Vital Branch.
George A. Stewart, 1963. 6 Fermor Avenue, Winnipeg (*building now under threat from amalgamation with another branch*)

Centennial Concert Hall and Manitoba Museum, Moody, Moore/Green, Blankstein and Russell/Smith, Carter, Searle, 1967 (concert hall) and 1973 (museum)



Pan Am Pool. Smith Carter Parkin, 1966. 25 Poseidon Bay, Winnipeg (historic photographs; building has been heavily altered)



J.R.C. Evans Lecture Theatre, Brandon University, 1961



Masonic Temple, 1969. Osborne Junction, Winnipeg.

Churches, Synagogues, Temples

Religious buildings of most denominations have long been seen as sites for which extravagant architecture and lavish decoration are appropriate. The mid-century period, with its de-emphasis on ornament and rejection of historicism, saw a change in this approach. Churches and synagogues became more stark, often depending on effects of light and space for their emotional impact. Some avoid historical reference entirely, while others interpret traditional forms in a modern idiom (for example, at Holy Family Ukrainian Catholic Church, below). Religious buildings present a tremendous opportunity for heritage conservation. There is great potential for working with the institutional owners to develop schemes for good conservation practices. Many people see such buildings as a pinnacle of architectural and heritage achievement, and do not need to be persuaded to see them as worthy.

On the other side, declining participation in traditional denominations presents a challenge as buildings may be sold for conversion to other uses. There are, however, good examples of sensitive conversions that may serve as models for successful transformations.



Shaarey Zedek Synagogue, Winnipeg, Green Blankstein and Russell, 1949



Holy Family Ukrainian Catholic Church, Winnipeg, Zunic and Sobkowich, 1962



St. Andrew's United Church, 255 Oak Street, Winnipeg. Moody & Moore, 1953



Lutheran Church of the Redeemer. John N. Reimer, 1963. 59 Academy Street, Winnipeg



St. Peter's Lutheran church. Gaboury Lussier Sigurdson Venables, 1970, 65 Walnut Street, Winnipeg



Donnelley United Church, 1226 Waller Avenue, Winnipeg. Moody & Moore, 1961.



St. Claude Roman Catholic Church, St. Claude, Etienne Gaboury, 1964



Silver Heights United Church, 199 Garrioch Avenue, Winnipeg. Doy Gillmore & Al Waisman, 1965.



Blessed Sacrament Roman Catholic Church, Etienne Gaboury, 1966. Wabasha Street at Harold Avenue, Winnipeg (Transcona)



St. George's Anglican Church, 5th Street & Southern Avenue, Brandon. K.R.D. Pratt, 1956

Public Schools

The emergent modernist style was widely used for schools in the post-1945 period. Rural districts saw the consolidation of schools in the 1950s with one-room schoolhouses being replaced by larger schools, set in towns and villages, which would serve a much larger area. An example is the Fannystelle School—an example of the vernacularization of Modernism—with its smooth stucco surfaces, crisp, linear decoration and small cantilevered canopies over the doors.

To accommodate the post-war baby boom, the Winnipeg School Division built a number of schools using a Moderne aesthetic. Restrained decoration typically takes the form of some horizontal banding such that seen on Rockwood School, below, and the entranceways are emphasized with curved and fluted motifs and often with extra height. Many older school buildings received gymnasium additions in the mid-century period, with the one at Earl Grey School being a creative response to a particularly elegant original building. By the 1960s, Modernism was the inevitable style for new school buildings.

Schools are heavily affected by issues of ongoing maintenance and changes in educational ideology and standards such as safety and accessibility that can result in insensitive alteration. These need not pose an insurmountable problem if the people in charge are aware of the issues and the heritage value of the buildings in their care.



Fannystelle School, Fannystelle, 1951



Rockwood School, 1949-50; annex in 1952



Kelvin High School, 1963-65. 155 Kingsway Avenue, Winnipeg



Earl Grey School Gymnasium, 1965. 340 Cockburn Street, Winnipeg



Nellie McClung School, Manitou. Smith, Carter, Searle, 1964.

Colleges and Universities

To meet the baby boom generation, Canadian colleges and universities expanded rapidly in the late-1950s and early 1960s. Even institutions that were founded much earlier underwent extensive building during this period, and 1960s Modernist buildings often dominate.

The issues surrounding college and university buildings are similar to those around schools, though there is more likelihood that these buildings will see their primary functions change. In addition, because universities are generally growing within limited boundaries, there is often a need to pack more buildings into existing spaces, often ruining intended sight lines and sometimes almost obscuring original buildings.



University of Manitoba, St. John's College and Chapel, Moody & Moore, 1958



University of Manitoba, Mary Speechly Hall. Waisman Ross, 1962-64



University of Manitoba, University College, Moody, Moore and Partners, 1964



University of Manitoba, Faculty of Music. Smith Carter Searle, 1965



University of Manitoba, Former Fitzgerald Building, School of Art. Smith Carter Searle, 1965



University of Manitoba, Robson Hall. Ward McDonald and Partners, 1969



University of Winnipeg, Lockhart Hall. Moody, Moore and Partners, 1970



Red River College, Building "B", 1963



University of Winnipeg, Centennial Hall, Moody, Moore, Duncan, Rattray, Peters, Searle, & Christie, 1970-2

Office Buildings

Cheap electricity, together with new technologies in lighting and cooling, changed the basic form of the office building.

Windows no longer had to open, and natural light was less important. The flexible interior spaces of frame and curtain wall construction made International Modernism an excellent choice for many building types. In its early days, it also looked strikingly contemporary, and could help to create a positive corporate image just as terracotta ornament had done a generation or two earlier.

Many office buildings change hands often and are at fairly high risk of both unsympathetic alteration and deferred maintenance. Recladding can drastically alter the appearance of a building, while some, like the Stanley Knowles Federal Building in Winnipeg, are almost unrecognizable under later additions and alterations.



Northern Sales Building, Waisman, Ross, and Associates, Winnipeg, 1953



Great West Life, Green, Blankstein and Russell/Morani Morris, 1955-58



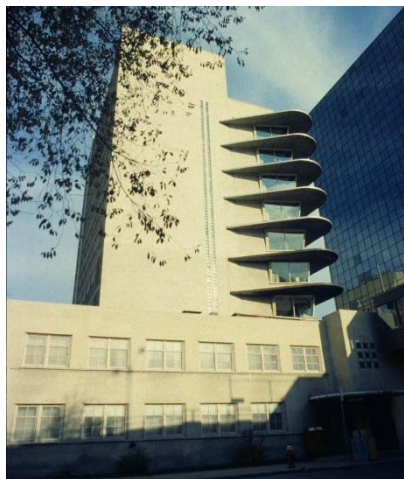
Manitoba Health Services, Etienne Gaboury for Libling, Michener and Associates, 1959



219 Kennedy Street, Winnipeg



Manitoba Building (Former St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Building, 1954), Moody Moore and Partners, 1954



Winnipeg Clinic, with 1947 and 1961 additions.



Former National Revenue Building/ Stanley Knowles Federal Building, Moody Moore and Partners, 391 York Street, Winnipeg (historic photograph; *building greatly altered*).



Otis Elevator Building. 203 Sherbrook Street, Winnipeg



Former Winnipeg Builders' Exchange. Waisman Ross & Associates, 1967. 290 Burnell Street, Winnipeg



329 St. Mary's Road, Winnipeg



Former Archdiocese of Winnipeg Chancery Office. Green Blankstein Russell & Associates, 1965. 50 Stafford Street, Winnipeg (exterior and courtyard; *central glazed portion of facade recently altered*)



10 Donald Street, Winnipeg



Richardson Bldg, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill/Smith, Carter, 1967-9

Banks

Well into the twentieth century, banks tended to have historical features (most often from the classical tradition) intended to create an aura of grandeur and associations with longevity. Even small-town banks often have such features, while major urban branches might resemble classical temples. As these overt classical allusions were stripped away in the mid-century period, rich materials and grand spaces were used with the same purpose, especially in town or city centres. Many of these buildings have a strong sense of corporate identity

They are at risk because the large, open banking halls that were still traditional in the mid-century period are no longer standard; the automation of teller services has also resulted in the need for many fewer branches. These conditions invite demolition or reuse—sometimes insensitive. Even with their clean lines obscured by inappropriate signage and other excrescences, these buildings may often be identified by large banks of windows, night-deposit drops, and sometimes corporate symbols.



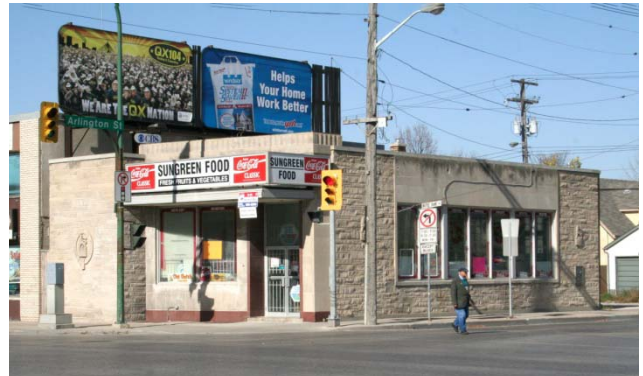
Former Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, 1954. 412 Graham Avenue, Winnipeg



Former Bank of Montreal, 1957. 333 Portage, Winnipeg (under threat from massive alteration as part of APTN)



Former Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, 2181 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg



Former Imperial Bank, 909 Notre Dame Avenue, Winnipeg

Retail

The mid-century saw the construction of many buildings for retail purposes, almost invariably associated with extensive parking for the new age. These buildings were often intended to attract customers through eye-catching, up-to-the-minute architecture and this has made them very vulnerable to demolition or loss by alteration as they continue to be updated to meet changing fashions. At Winnipeg's Polo Park Shopping Centre, for example, it is difficult to make out the original outlines in the building as it now stands. Insensitively-done neon or backlit signage and large posters can also obscure the appearance of a building, disguising expanses of plate glass and regular grids.

Some other buildings have been luckier, and may retain much of their original appearance and even their distinctive signage. It is worth noting that a Vancouver Safeway, of the same design as the one below, has been placed on the Canadian Register of Historic Places.



Safeway, Main Street, Winnipeg, Waisman and Ross, 1963 (once common, these buildings are rapidly disappearing)



Polo Park Shopping Centre, Winnipeg, Green, Blankstein and Russell, 1958 (historic photos; building massively altered)



Silver Heights Strip Mall, Portage Avenue, Winnipeg



412 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg



3307 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg.



Hudson Building, 1959, 414 Graham Avenue, Winnipeg



Baked Expectations. Sid Diamond for Kurnasky & Weinberg, 1954. 161 Osborne Street, Winnipeg (see below).



Omega Building, 424-438 Graham Avenue, Winnipeg

GRAND OPENING

We Proudly Present The New
GLOW'S PHARMACY
161 OSBORNE ST. off Wardlaw Ave.



DESIGNED BY SID, DIAMOND, B. ARCH.
America's finest drug store embodying the latest trend in design for shopping comfort.

OFFICIAL OPENING SAT. MAY 29th.
SEE OUR FLYER FOR SPECIALS — FREE GIFTS FOR ALL — DOOR PRIZES ETC.

Congratulations Are Extended From The Following Firms . . .

Henry Hector General Contractor 226 Phoenix Bldg. — Ph. 93-1891	Goldin & Co. Ltd. Tobacco and Confectionery 49 Albert St. — Ph. 92-1341	J. B. Electric Electrical Contractors 116 Woodbridge Road — Ph. 6-2475
Kurnasky & Weinberg Architects	Wildor Drug 52 Albert St. — Ph. 93-6421	Canada Photo Co. Suppliers of Albigram, the finest in album prints
Sterling Agencies China Ware 43 Albert St. — Ph. 93-6624	Aetna Roofing Co. Ltd. Bonded Roofers 1138 Main St. — Ph. 59-6025	260 Edmonton St. — Ph. 93-3119
Brown & Rutherford Fixtures	Winnipeg Photo Photo Finishing Experts 350 Donald St. — Phone 93-5518	Duchon Sign Co. "The brightest name in neon" 1244 Main St. — Ph. 52-7103
Sutherland & Buchanan — Ph. 59-7311		

Suburbs and other Autocentric Sites

By mid-century, private automobiles were becoming ubiquitous, leading to radical changes in urban design and the development of new building types. Suburban development had a profound effect on cities as people began to perceive dense urban areas as dirty, dangerous and inconvenient. For those who could afford them, suburbs were touted as the “answer to the problem of our crowded cities.”¹

Among many more conventional suburbs, Wildwood Park, with its houses oriented inward to a green common space and turning their backs to the crescent-shaped streets, was a radical departure from most urban or suburban design, then and now. The amenities it provided were intended to “make wearisome trips downtown unnecessary.”

Mid-century Manitoba saw several new building types designed specifically to serve cars. These include the parkade (introduced to Winnipeggers—and probably Manitobans—by the Bay downtown in 1954), and drive-in versions of restaurants and movie theatres. The strip mall, indoor shopping centre and large grocery store emerged, while restaurants and retail establishments, set back behind their parking lots, sprang up along major roads.

Many of these buildings types are threatened by changes in taste and aesthetics. Drive-in movie theatres are nearly extinct, while drive-in restaurants have been replaced by drive-through windows. Where they survive intact, however, mid-century commercial establishments may actually profit from a resurgence of interest in mid-century design.



Hubert Bird (developer) and Green, Blankstein and Russell, Wildwood Park, Winnipeg, 1947

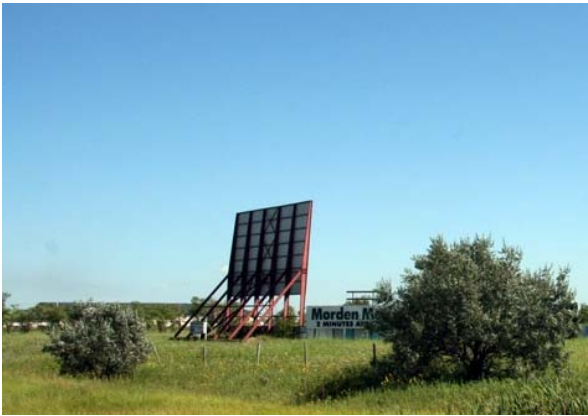


Garry Parkade, Libling and Michener, 1963. 295 Garry Street, Winnipeg.

¹ Advertisement for Wildwood Park, *Winnipeg Free Press* (19 November 1947): 24.



**Rae and Jerry's Steakhouse, Winnipeg,
Smith, Carter and Katelnikoff, 1957**



**Stardust Drive-In Movie Theatre, Morden
(soon closing owing to the transition to
digital technology)**



**Dutch Drive-Inn, original canopy, 1957. The
Pas.**

Residential Architecture

Mid-century residential architecture was built in a range of styles from the traditional to the ultra-modern. Winnipeg has a fine collection of architect-designed single-family houses, some designed by the architects for their own families. Many are High Modernist in style, but an exception is Etienne Gaboury's own house, which is an example of regionalist modernism that draws on local traditional forms and materials such as the cedar shingles, pitched roof, and projecting bay to create a design that is both wholly modern and sympathetic to the local vernacular.

A neighbourhood such as Winnipeg's Silver Heights, with its elegant gateposts, features more modest houses that, together, are redolent of the post-war dream of nuclear families living in detached houses in leafy suburbs.

The sheer numbers of residential buildings from this period make it impractical to deal one-to-one with their owners. Houses and apartments are frequently updated and altered as families grow and tastes change. The recent rise of the "home improvement" culture—promulgated on television and in books and magazines—increases the prevalence of residential alteration, though mid-century modern design has recently risen in popularity and this may lead to the preservation of some residential buildings.



Blankstein Residence, 95 Waterloo Street, Winnipeg, Blankstein and Coop, 1956



76 Wilton Street, Winnipeg



F. Burshtein House, Winnipeg. Gustavo da Roza, 1969.



Gaboury Residence, St. Boniface, Gaboury, Lussier & Sigurdson, 1968



**Donahue Residence, 301 Hosmer Blvd,
Winnipeg. James Donahue, 1955.**



**Waisman Residence, Winnipeg. Waisman,
Ross & Associates.**



**Thunderbird Apartments, 2150 Portage
Avenue**



2187 Portage



Billingsley Manor, 2515 Portage Avenue



**Grosvenor House Apartments, 811
Grosvenor Avenue, Winnipeg. Libling,
Michener and Associates, 1962.**



Silver Heights Gate, Portage Avenue at Mount Royal Road, Winnipeg. William D. Lount, 1950-51



23 Harmon Drive, Winnipeg



126 Hearne Drive, Winnipeg



93 Rowand Drive, Winnipeg

Town Complexes

As Manitoba's natural resource industries began to develop, communities were founded or expanded in more or less remote areas. A military establishment such as that at Fort Churchill is another example. At the height of the Cold War, nearly 4,500 people lived in Fort Churchill in housing built for the purpose. The community of Pinawa was built from the ground up, and was intended to provide all the amenities of a long-standing community.

These communities tend to be located in areas now experiencing depopulation. Even where the founding industry is still operating, in most cases many fewer people are required to run increasingly-mechanized processes. Finding other uses for buildings in is a major challenge when the population has shrunk dramatically.



Athlone Crescent, Pinawa, 1963



Churchill, Manitoba, photo c. 1960



Former Atomic Energy of Canada Limited Staff House, Pinawa, 1963

Hotels/Motels

Widespread car ownership made travel more affordable and more common, and led directly to the development of the “motor hotel,” or motel. Motels and smaller hotels typically have large parking lots in front, while a centrally-located tower will invariably have a parking garage. In the case of a building like the Radisson, in Winnipeg (below), the parking garage comprises the lower section of the building, and helps determine its form.

Like retail establishments, hotels and motels are frequently updated to attract customers. These alterations may be quite superficial, but changing expectations may also lead to major renovations. Independent motels are under threat from chains.



Chalet Motel, Brandon



Former Brittany Inn, 1958. 367 Ellice Avenue, Winnipeg



Manitou Motor Inn, Manitou



Capri Motel, 1819 Pembina Highway, Winnipeg



Radisson Hotel, Winnipeg, Number Ten Architectural Group, 1969

Airports and Air Traffic Control Towers

The airport replaced the railway station as the symbolic gateway to the city in the twentieth century. Like Winnipeg's airport terminal building, airports in major cities were often strong architectural statements, featuring public art and dramatic spaces in the most advanced styles.

They are at risk from changing technological needs. In addition, any building that was intended from the start to make a bold and modern statement is likely to come under pressure to be replaced by an even more up-to-date building.



Richardson International Airport, Main Terminal, Green, Blankstein and Russell, 1964 (*now being demolished*)



Air Traffic Control Tower, St. Andrew's Airport

Factories and Warehouses

As industrial production and delivery methods grew and changed in the mid-century, there was high demand for new buildings to house these functions. New “Industrial Parks” were laid out to house a range of industrial buildings, located at city perimeters where they would be served by truck rather than train. International Modernism lent itself particularly well to these buildings, allowing as it did vast, unbroken interior spaces. Such buildings could be visually dramatic: large expanses of what appears to be solid brick wall suspended precariously over a glass base must have seemed almost unbelievable to people used to the thick masonry walls of earlier industrial buildings. Elegant lettering and various colours and textures contributed to visual interest.

Even the most visually compelling of these buildings present a conservation challenge. They are usually located off the beaten path, in industrial zones rarely frequented by people looking for heritage architecture. They are often very large, and as the economy changes they may become redundant and are challenging to reuse. They are privately owned by for-profit companies that may have difficulty seeing their architectural value.



**Wall Street and Notre Dame Avenue,
Winnipeg**



1315 Notre Dame Avenue, Winnipeg



**Blackwoods Beverages, Winnipeg,
Waisman, Ross and Associates, 1957**



Atlas Graham Building, 1725 Sargent Avenue, Winnipeg

Red River Co-op Headquarters, 1960 Notre Dame Avenue, Winnipeg

Parks and Landscapes

Parks and cemeteries in the mid-century were very different from the lush parks of the Victorian and Edwardian period. Like Modernist buildings, Modernist parks were sleek and economical, depending on interesting materials, compelling spatial relationships, and restrained decoration in a few key places—for example, at the entrance—in place of the lush plantings and ornate pavilions that had characterized the earlier generation of parks.

As places of memory important to people whose loved ones are buried there, cemeteries are generally not sites at risk. Parks, however, may be threatened by infill. In addition, modernist landscaping—like many modernist buildings—is often dependent on regular maintenance to look good. Where there is no ornament or lavish planting to distract the eye, peeling paint or chipped concrete soon look down-at-heel.



Chapel Lawn Cemetery, Winnipeg



Rosh Pina Cemetery, Winnipeg



Memorial Park, Winnipeg (*under threat owing to maintenance issues*)



Metro Plaza, Osborne and Corydon, Winnipeg. Etienne Gaboury, 1966 (*historic photo; largely demolished*)



International Peace Garden, South of Boissevain



Monument, International Peace Garden



Peace Chapel, International Peace Garden