

Post-Secondary on the Prairies:

Planning Implications of the Emergence of the City Centre Satellite Campus

This article explores the emerging presence of post-secondary institutions within city centres across Canada’s three prairie provinces - Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba. In this article we provide a description of the relationship between the university and its respective city centre, highlighting completed and proposed developments. Through a content analysis, we outline the motivations driving this trend and conclude the discussion with potential implications for planning practice.

Introduction

Post-secondary institutions provide a physical setting for an exchange of knowledge, innovative and cutting-edge research, and late-night study sessions. While the emergence of online education offers an alternate approach to learning, these experiences have traditionally transpired on university campuses; where lecture halls, libraries, residences, student centres, and ancillary buildings are clustered. While many of Canada’s post-secondary campuses are embedded into the urban fabric of their respective city centres, other institutions operate from more peripheral locations. This is characteristic of most university campuses located in Canada’s three prairie provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba). However, over the last decade, universities here have established a more significant presence in the city centre. The subsequent discussion highlights the emergence of city centre satellite campuses of six post-secondary institutions across Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Prairie Universities and the City Centre

The origins of this article emerged through our own observations of an increased presence of satellite campuses in a number of city centres, Alberta (n=5); Saskatchewan (n=2); and Manitoba (n=3). We sought to better understand the prevalence of this trend across all ten universities in Canada’s three prairie provinces. To understand the relationship between universities and the city centre, we completed a content analysis of campus master plans as well as complementary material (i.e. university websites, press releases, news articles) for each of the ten cases. A content analysis places a document (plan) as the unit of analysis and uses a predetermined coding system to assess the presence or absence of particular content - in order to generate meaning. Through this analysis, three distinct themes emerged to better explain this relationship. As presented in Table 1, the cases are categorized as follows:

TABLE 1 Case examples of Universities and the City Centre in Canada's Prairie Provinces



Relationship between University Campus and City Centre	Cases
University with main campus located in the city centre	MacEwan University (Alberta) Brandon University (Manitoba) University of Winnipeg (Manitoba)
University with main campus located outside of the city centre but with an established or plans to establish a satellite campus in the city centre	University of Calgary (Alberta) University of Alberta (Alberta) University of Lethbridge (Alberta) University of Regina (Saskatchewan) University of Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan) University of Manitoba (Manitoba)
University with main campus located outside of the city centre, and no established or plans to establish a satellite campus in the city centre	Mount Royal University (Alberta)

Amongst our cases, MacEwan University, Brandon University, and the University of Winnipeg are distinctly urban with their main campuses embedded within the downtowns of their respective cities. As these institutions expand, their presence will continue to reshape the built form of the city centre.

Mount Royal University, located in Calgary, is the lone case without a presence in the city centre and with no plans to establish a satellite campus. Instead, all growth is focused at its campus in the city's southwest.

The remaining cases (University of Calgary, University of Alberta, University of Lethbridge, University of Regina, University of Saskatchewan and University of Manitoba) are the focus of the following discussion. These institutions, over the last decade, have established or set plans in motion to develop a more notable physical presence in the city centre. A more detailed description of their respective developments is presented in Table 2:

TABLE 2 Description of City Centre Satellite Campuses

 Location  Distance from Main Campus to City Centre






University	Description of City Centre Satellite Campus (date established)
University of Calgary  Calgary, AB	Downtown Campus (2010) The adaptive-reuse of a six-storey medical office building allowed for a more significant presence of the University in downtown Calgary. The campus provides graduate and executive level programming through the School of Public Policy, Haskayne School of Business, and Continuing Education. Additionally, the campus houses the University's Alumni Association.  10 km
	City Building Design Lab (2019) A partnership between the University of Calgary and Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC), a subsidiary of the City of Calgary, reactivated the Castell Building, previously the main branch of the Calgary Public Library. This agreement, under the terms of a 5-year lease, provides a downtown location for the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape and has been rebranded as the City Building Design Lab (CBDL). ¹ The CBDL, Downtown Campus, and main campus in the Northwest are all strategically connected on one line of the city's light-rail-transit network.  10 km

TABLE 2 Description of City Centre Satellite Campuses (continued)

 Location  Distance from Main Campus to City Centre

University	Description of City Centre Satellite Campus (date established)
<p>University of Alberta</p>  <p>Edmonton, AB</p>	<p>Enterprise Square (2008) Originally built in 1939, what is now known as Enterprise Square, was originally a Hudson Bay department store in downtown Edmonton. The restoration and rebranding of the historic building as Enterprise Square injected new life into a space that sat largely vacant for more than a decade. This campus now serves as a hub of activity for research, learning and partnership building through the Office of Advancement, Alberta School of Business - Executive Education, Alumni Relations, Faculty of Extension, and Tec Edmonton.²  3 km</p> <hr/> <p>Calgary Centre (2009) The Calgary Centre campus offers classrooms, meeting rooms, and office space, primarily for the operations of University Relations, Office of Advancement, and the Faculty of Agricultural Life and Environmental Sciences.³ While not located at the Calgary Centre campus, an extension of the University of Alberta's Faculty of Rehabilitation operates from the (aforementioned) University of Calgary's Downtown Campus.  296 km</p>
<p>University of Lethbridge</p>  <p>Lethbridge, AB</p>	<p>Dr. Foster James Penny Building (2013) The former Capital Furniture Building in downtown Lethbridge was donated to the University in 2012 by Jim and Hazel Penny (the parents of late son Foster). The space is largely occupied by the Faculty of Fine Arts as well as an art gallery, meeting rooms, Alumni Relations, the University call centre, and a gift and ticket store.⁴  5 km</p> <hr/> <p>Calgary Campus (1996) Operating out of Bow Valley College in downtown Calgary, the Calgary Campus offers a range of educational programs primarily in the fields of business, and health sciences.  212 km</p>
<p>University of Saskatchewan</p>  <p>Saskatoon, SK</p>	<p>John Deere Plow Co. Building (TBD) Currently vacant, the University of Saskatchewan intends to restore the John Deere Plow Co. building. Designated as a heritage asset the building was donated to the University by the City in 2010. The University intends to restore the building to house a new School of Architecture and Visual Arts.⁵  2.3 km</p> <hr/> <p>Prince Albert Campus (2020) Located in the former Forestry Centre in Downtown Prince Albert, when completed this satellite campus will house multiple educational programs which are currently scattered and operating in buildings throughout the city.  141 km</p>
<p>University of Regina</p>  <p>Regina, SK</p>	<p>College Avenue Campus Renewal (2018 - ongoing) The restoration of the College Avenue Campus (CAC) ensures the longevity of the University's original and historic campus. The project includes restoration of the College Building, Tower Building, Darke Hall, and the Conservatory façade. Additionally, new structures were added to the east and west ends of the College Building. While restoration of Darke Hall is ongoing, the University's Centre for Continuing Education, Lifelong learning Centre, the Conservatory of Performing Arts, and the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy have operated from the CAC since it reopened in 2018.⁶  4.6 km</p>
<p>University of Manitoba</p>  <p>Winnipeg, MB</p>	<p>Bannatyne Campus (2014 - Ongoing) The original buildings of the University of Manitoba's central campus (Bannatyne Campus) date back to 1883, however, 2014 marked a significant milestone with the release of the Bannatyne Campus Master Plan, the first initiative aimed at coordinating future growth and development. Today, the campus houses a range of programs including Dentistry, Medical Rehabilitation, Pathology, Pharmacy, Medical Services, and Basic Medical Sciences. The Master Plan envisions an intensification of the campus to increase educational space, as well as to offer other facilities including student residences and child care.⁷  11 km</p>

The University of Manitoba's Bannatyne Campus Master Plan proposes additional educational facilities, an improved public realm, and increased student housing options.

SOURCE: University of Manitoba. "Bannatyne Campus Master Plan". (2014). Accessed August 14, 2019. http://umanitoba.ca/admin/campus_planning_office/media/140514_Bannatyne_Master_Plan_for_web.pdf. Reprinted with Permission.



Institutional Motivation for a City Centre Campus

While motivations for an established presence within the city centre varies across each institution, the content analysis exposed the following key themes:

Meet student expectations and offer new student experiences

- The proposed School of Architecture and Visual Arts at the University of Saskatchewan would be the first architecture program offered in the province. This would offer new educational opportunities within the province and allow aspiring architects to remain in Saskatchewan.
- The University of Saskatchewan's purchase and renovation of the former Forestry Centre in downtown Prince Albert provides an opportunity to consolidate educational programs and more significantly, increase opportunities for post-secondary education for indigenous and northern communities.
- The University of Calgary's Downtown Campus was established in response to student demands for experiential learning, with a focus on community service learning which benefits from a closer physical connection to organizations located downtown.
- The University of Regina's College Avenue Campus Renewal is intended to foster better linkages between "Town and Gown" in part to meet the needs and expectations of students.

- The University of Manitoba's plan to develop housing at the Bannatyne Campus is a response to student demands for opportunities to be able to live near the central campus.
- The extension of the University of Alberta's Faculty of Rehabilitation in downtown Calgary was developed to increase access to graduate programs in Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy in Southern Alberta.

Increase connections/synergies between the institution and the broader community

- The Dr. Foster James Penny building in downtown Lethbridge provides a flexible space for events intended to engage the broader community, as well as space dedicated for community use. Additionally, the University of Lethbridge's alumni relations office operates from the building, providing a central location to engage with alumni.
- The University of Manitoba's Bannatyne Campus has emerged as a hub for health sciences and provides much needed medical services to the surrounding community. Future growth on campus is to occur in a manner which not only provides space and amenities for staff and students, but also to engage residents in adjacent neighbourhoods. Additionally, development is framed through an objective to enhance the exchange of ideas, opportunities and engagement with the broader community.
- The University of Regina's College Avenue Campus

provides a new home for the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy. Strategically, the location overlooks the Saskatchewan Legislative Building with the intent to foster better synergies with the Government of Saskatchewan.

- The reuse and rebranding of the historic Hudson Bay department store as Enterprise Square was developed to provide a central hub for the University of Alberta to foster stronger connections with the downtown business, arts and cultural community.
- The University of Alberta Calgary Centre opened to serve as a gateway to the university, with a broader mandate to connect with the “20,000+ alumni, prospective students, donors, other U of A partners, supporters and community groups in Calgary.”⁸
- The University of Calgary’s Downtown Campus developed in part to provide “a window for the downtown communities into the University of Calgary” and a window “for students to look on the downtown communities.” The relocation of the Alumni Office to the Downtown Campus was a strategic move to better connect with alumni working in the city centre.⁹

Expanded research opportunities

- The University of Calgary’s CBDL establishes an innovative research hub that explores topical issues related to city-building in downtown Calgary. The central location allows the university to engage with the broader community in a more inclusive discourse and research program about the future of Calgary.

Preserve the institution’s history

- The University of Regina’s historic College Avenue Campus is an important component of the University’s legacy and tradition. Restoring the campus preserves the tangible and intangible history of the institution, ensuring the campus plays a prominent role in years to come.

Motivations to establish a university presence in the city centre can be grouped into two major themes: a desire to meet student demands and offer new student experiences, and to foster better connections with other groups in the community. Additionally, motivations of the University of Calgary include a desire to expand research opportunities, while motivations of the University of Regina include preserving the institution’s history.



The Dr. Foster James Penny building in downtown Lethbridge provides a central space for the University of Lethbridge to engage with the broader community.

SOURCE: Fabio Coppola. (2019)



The \$60M College Avenue Campus Renewal will maintain the legacy of the University of Regina’s historic campus located on the edge of downtown Regina.

SOURCE: Rylan Graham. (2019)

Implications for Planning Practice

What are the planning implications from the emergence of the city centre satellite campus? While not the primary objective of any institution, through the content analysis it is evident that the presence of these satellite campuses is anticipated to aid in facilitating downtown revitalization.

Concerted efforts of planners to facilitate downtown revitalization has been a constant of planning practice for decades. Today’s planners would likely find common ground with their predecessors when speaking about the challenges of and efforts towards core area revitalization. It has been a perpetual challenge, across Canada’s urban hierarchy, to restore the vibrancy, activity, and role of the city centre typically attributed to the pre-WWII period. While facilitating the seemingly elusive yet important goal of downtown revitalization is a complex issue that requires a multi-pronged approach, the introduction of a post-secondary institution may be a notable component of any strategy.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Calgary Staff, DH. "University of Calgary Strikes Deal to takeover old central library". Accessed August 14, 2019. <http://dailyhive.com/calgary/university-calgary-moving-old-central-library>
- ² University of Alberta. "Enterprise Square". Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.ualberta.ca/community-relations/enterprise-square>
- ³ University of Alberta. "Calgary Centre". Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.ualberta.ca/calgary-centre>
- ⁴ Kenney, Trevor. "A love of learning remembered". (University of Lethbridge). Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.uleth.ca/unews/article/love-learning-remembered#.XVbhqhKIuk>
- ⁵ CBC News. "Design students share ideas for proposed U of S architecture school". Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/design-students-share-ideas-proposed-u-of-s-architecture-school-1.3986382>
- ⁶ Eneas, Bryan. "University of Regina's College Avenue Campus officially reopens". (CBC). Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/university-regina-college-campus-reopens-1.4852222>
- ⁷ University of Manitoba. "Bannatyne Campus Master Plan". (2014). Accessed August 14, 2019. http://umanitoba.ca/admin/campus_planning_office/media/140514_Bannatyne_Master_Plan_for_web.pdf
- ⁸ University of Alberta. "Calgary Centre". Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.ualberta.ca/calgary-centre>
- ⁹ University of Calgary. "Downtown Campus". Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.ucalgary.ca/downtown/about-us/our-story>
- ¹⁰ Filion, Pierre, Heidi Hoernig, Trudi Bunting, and Gary Sands. "The successful few: Healthy downtowns of small metropolitan regions." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 70, no. 3 (2004): 328-343.
- ¹¹ Garvin, Alexander. "Organizations That Are Changing Downtown." In *The Heart of the City*, pp. 95-129. Island Press, Washington, DC, 2019.



The University of Calgary's Downtown Campus (above) and CBDL (top right) bookend the west and east ends of Calgary's downtown. The Downtown Campus, established in 2010 and the CBDL in 2019, increase the presence of students, staff and faculty in Calgary's downtown.
SOURCE: Fabio Coppola. (2019)



Final Thoughts

While we opted to focus our discussion on universities located in Canada's prairie provinces, we note that the findings here fit within a broader trend: Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia, Laurentian University, Lakehead University, Brock University, University of Windsor, Wilfred Laurier University and the University of Waterloo, to name only a handful, have all in recent years established a presence in downtowns across Canada. This practice is likely to continue with plans having progressed for satellite campuses of York University and Ryerson University in downtown Markham and Brampton respectively - although a withdrawal of provincial funding for both projects presents some uncertainty of their future.

The emergence of a satellite campus in the city centre is perhaps not entirely surprising, as the centralization and intensification of uses has become a common policy objective for municipalities throughout Canada. While the expanded presence in the city centre is driven by the motivations of the institution, planners may view universities as a key ally in revitalization efforts.

Specifically, institutions can contribute to revitalization efforts by restoring and injecting new life into vacant buildings or spurring redevelopment on empty and underutilized parcels. The presence of institutional space undoubtedly increases the critical mass of downtown patrons which helps contribute to increased vibrancy and economic activity within the area. While the findings across each of the case studies indicates that to date the city centre campus has been limited to a building or a block, it may be the initial step in what could be continued expansion. While it is unlikely that universities will relocate the entirety of their campus to the city centre, it might be an optimal location for some programs, faculties, offices or facilities. What may be only a limited presence today could expand to include added educational space, complemented with student housing, recreational facilities, and on campus food services and retail. Additionally, we might anticipate that a growing city centre campus would entice developers to develop commercial and residential nearby to capitalize on the interests of a growing population. Collectively these actions contribute to developing a more vibrant and diversified city centre. While universities are not necessarily a panacea to neighbourhood decline, previous research indicates their presence has a positive impact on the success of a downtown¹⁰. Moreover, that relative to other downtown patrons, students are more likely to rent apartments, shop, and patronize bars and restaurants¹¹.

Rylan Graham PHD, RPP, MCIP is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Westman Centre for Real Estate Studies, and a Sessional Instructor in the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at the University of Calgary. Rylan's current research interests centre around anchor institutions and downtown revitalization. He can be reached at rylan.graham@ucalgary.ca.

Fabio Coppola, MPLAN is a graduate of the University of Calgary's School of Architecture, Planning, and Landscape program and is a Planner with Invistec Consulting Ltd in Edmonton, Alberta. Fabio's professional interests include community planning, urban design, real-estate land acquisition, as well as research. He can be reached at fabio.coppola@invistec.ca.

About the Authors