Season 1
Episode 2: Shaping the world's cities

TRANSCRIPT

Sherri Privitera:
Welcome to Drawing People Together. The new podcast from Populous where we'll bring you insights, expertise, and ideas from the people at the forefront of global venue and event design.
I'm Sherri Privitera, Senior Principal at Populous, and I'm excited to be joining you for season one. Across six episodes, I'll be introducing you to my colleagues from around the globe who will lead deep dive discussions into the big issues and innovations that are shaping the design of large-scale venues and events, from stadia and arenas, to airports and convention centers, to the Super Bowl and the Olympic Games.

Paul Henry:
Hi, everyone. My name's Paul Henry, and it's great to be joining Sherri for another episode of Drawing People Together. At Populous, we're fortunate to see first-hand how drawing people together in our designs can transform a city and shape a society. When you have over 20 million people visit a venue and enjoy themselves, it makes a significant impact on the social and physical transformation of a place. So, in this episode, we'll journey around the world to look at pivotal city shaping projects in Populous' history. And joining us on this journey are three incredible guests who have worked on these projects, each developing a deep understanding of the perspective and opportunities across countries and across cultures as well.

So, joining from London, we have Tom Jones. Tom is a Senior Principal and Architect at Populous. Hi, Tom.

Tom Jones:
Hi, Paul. Thanks for inviting me to join the conversation.

Paul Henry:
Great to have you on board. And over in Sydney, we have Populous Principal and Architect, Belinda Goh. Thanks for joining us, Belinda.

Belinda Goh:
Thanks, Paul. It's really wonderful to be talking about this.

Paul Henry:

Thanks for coming on board. And calling in from Kansas city, we have John Shreve, Senior Principal and Senior Urban Planner at Populous. Hi, John.

John Shreve:

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening.

Paul Henry:

It's great to have everyone on board today. This should be an interesting conversation as we traverse the world to just explore some of the things about our projects. And it's interesting when our projects such as stadiums and arenas and sports parks come together, they are incredibly important pieces of social infrastructure. They act as a catalyst for urban redevelopment and regeneration. The more a project is weaved into the fabric of the city, the more it is valued and utilized, and ultimately, the more sustainable that it actually becomes. And that's thinking about sustainability in the broader sense of usability, as well as environment, as well as social.

And so, what I'd like to do is actually kick off with a series of questions on projects around the world, and I'm going to start with John. We're going to go back in time to think about Oriole Park at Camden Yards in Maryland. Completed in 1992, the baseball stadium was one of the first sports buildings to be truly knitted into the urban fabric of Baltimore, and it's a treasured Populous project.

So, John, can you tell us a little bit about the history of baseball, it's engagement with communities, and particularly, how Camden Yards set the scene?

John Shreve:

Well, the history of baseball and Camden Yards in four minutes, let's see what I can do. In fact, as it turns a graceful 30 years old, it almost demands its own podcast to really understand the people and the design. But nonetheless, it does make sense, I think, to place Camden Yards within a context of baseball in America. In simple terms, I might suggest that pre-war ballparks were really integrated tightly with their adjacent streets and blocks and buildings. Whereas postwar stadiums became this different breed of animal, of multipurpose, of baseball and football together. And to tip it off even better, they were usually surrounded by surface parking lots. So just, you know, really nice, beautiful places, actually not.

But in any case, back in Baltimore, Joe Spear actually studied a renovation scheme of the original ballpark, and then eventually, the owners and the city agreed to give him a green light to explore a modern version of a downtown urban baseball-only building. And that was really an important turning point because it unleashed a host of different design opportunities. But I think the author, Paul Goldberger, captured its urban design ethos pretty well when he described how the stadium and the city were intimately connected. He was talking about how it wove together an urban fabric that had been broken, aspiring to use baseball to heal the city, not run away from the city. Another author, George Will, called Camden Yards one of the three most important developments in the postwar era, saying it taught us to look backwards, which is fine, but I kind of like the idea of not so much looking backwards, but looking outwards.

For me, Camden Yards was a paradigm shift in which we started to change the focus from looking inward, almost like an introverted thing, looking at the field of play and

focused on the bowl to looking at more of an extroverted model, where we weren't afraid to break the perfect geometry of the seating bowl. We weren't afraid to break through in certain areas. We weren't afraid to say the concourse is a street or the whole place is about an ensemble of buildings, not a single monolithic building. So I think those were really critical changes that started to say, how can a building like this be much more intimately connected to the city.

Paul Henry:

John, it's really interesting when you think about this because many cities have then followed the Camden Yards model, haven't they, perhaps you could say a few things about that?

John Shreve:

Well, and you know, in some ways it's been a handcuff for us because whenever a lot of clients say, can you design a Camden Yards for us? They start to talk about bricks, brick buildings, and arches and steel, but, you know, once we steer them away from the stylistic conversation and think more about the strategic part of the conversation, it begins to become a conversation about not just making the big move where we put buildings everywhere, but in some cases, the lesson is where not to put a building, where to open up a view or a vista and how to start to think about how a building becomes much more integrated tightly with some of the adjacent, buildings and public spaces.

Paul Henry:

And John, that was a major shift to be able to think about the fact that you could open the venue up to the city itself and that it wasn't just about being enclosed and that it wasn't just about adding as much building as possible, as you say. Those spaces that aren't buildings often make the essence of a place don't they?

John Shreve:

Right, absolutely. One other thing I'll just mention, that I think is a trend worth tracking, and we've been tracking it quite a lot, is teams and organizations across the boards, baseball and otherwise are really starting to think about a development strategy where their revenue generation is geared much more to what happens outside the building than what happens just in the buildings.

Paul Henry:

And John, that kind of commercial benefit spreads way beyond the stadium, doesn't it. When you look at the impact on spending in downtown Baltimore, for instance, or visitation numbers. Can you just say a little bit about how that spreads out?

John Shreve:

Well, yeah. If you track it over time, you know, not unlike a lot of our other projects, you know, our buildings are big, they take a lot of land use, they take a lot of space and, quite frequently, where we end up are these, what I call, fringe sites. So, kind of in the downtown area, but in the less desirable area where there's been a lot of

disinvestment or just people not wanting to go there to begin with, and that was really the case in this part of Baltimore, where you know, there was just really no investment at all. But after the ballpark went in, I think some of the metrics showed that exponentially the hotel rooms increased, there was multiple retail restaurant establishments that came on board, new housing. And I think there's cases like that across the country, at least in the United States, as it relates to baseball projects. Coors Field in Denver is another good one, as well.

Paul Henry:

And I can think of some other examples around the world, John, that have learnt from that, even here in Brisbane, where I'm based, Suncorp Stadium here. The effort was as much in the design about the external spaces and those connections as it was for the actual intensity of inside the stadium itself. And as you've said, that sense of connection is arguably the most important thing we can do with this building type within a broader city context.

So, what I'd like to do now is just move across the world to London. It's interesting, when you think about these building types, the sense of passion or the emotional response we get from fans with this building type and the teams that they're connected with. And it's so interesting for how we can use that passion for really greater urban benefit. Tottenham Hotspur is a venue that's really taken that idea about passion and community engagement to a whole new level. Tottenham has been a treasured club for so many years, but it was also a region that was actually blighted by riots and social unrest. And it's interesting to look how the new stadium has actually brought that community together. So, Tom, tell us a little bit about Tottenham.

Tom Jones:

Thanks, Paul. Well, for those of you who don't know, Tottenham's actually a really poor part of London and it's a of interesting conversation about why a football club would invest so much money in regenerating a part of the city that really has struggled for investment for so many years. I think, you know, with what John was talking about Camden Yards, what Camden Yards said to us was that it's actually okay to invest in sports venues in the city. Whereas for many years, we'd seen sports venues being relocated out of the city. And Tottenham is a part of London where they'd had two riots in a generation and really had seen a lot of social unrest. And as you walk up the high street, you can visibly see how the location in Tottenham used to be quite grand with the Georgian terrace at the north, and then you look across the road and you see some really poor social housing, and you understand how that part of the city has struggled for many years. And Tottenham, as a club, has been on that site for over 120 years. And I think when they were weighing up their options for redevelopment, either relocating outside of the city or staying in its home place, I think it almost felt a responsibility to its community, to actually invest back into Tottenham and to build on all that history and heritage that they built up over so many decades. And I think, you know, having now seen that investment in the first phase, the stadium which is part of a wider, mixed use regeneration project, it's been amazing to see how that building is already starting to transform the high road on which it sits.

Paul Henry:

And Tom, that idea of taking a football stadium, in this case, and seeing how it can benefit the high street and the surrounding areas, and the communities are close by. These are residential areas as well but talk a little bit about that community engagement?

Tom Jones:

Yeah. Again, it's interesting. I think there was a view that a stadium wasn't a good neighbour. It wasn't a good place for people to be living around and needed to have spatial separation, but what's been interesting with projects that we've done, like the Emirates Stadium before it, and Tottenham Stadium now, is to see, actually, it is very easy for people to live, work and be located close to these venues and get some of the benefits that come out of the footfall that the stadium attracts. And, you know, there was sort of some concern about the stadium pulling away all of the economic benefits from the high road. But what we've seen is that the stadium has been doubled in capacity from its sort of 35,000 seats, now up to 63,000 seats. And what that does is it just brings an incredible footfall on a regular basis to the area and what we are finding, and the club are finding, and the local Council are finding is that all of the local businesses are benefiting. There's plenty of economic benefit, both for the shops and the bars and the restaurants on the high street, as well as for the stadium itself.

Paul Henry:

And Tom, that integration goes all the way through inside the stadium, doesn't it, with the diversified revenue streams throughout. It's interesting what you say about that integration of retail, residential, hotel and experiential components. Tottenham clearly has done that successfully.

Tom Jones:

Yes. I think the club realized that having a football match once every two weeks maybe, and just during the football season, isn't enough in terms of the business case for justifying the investment in the facility itself. So, both within the stadium, there was a desire to design and develop spaces that could be used for conferences, for lots of other uses outside of a match date, but also in terms of the wider mixed use master plan that we developed, we have a hotel, some housing, we have commercial space, the Tottenham Experience, which is a combination of the retail and the museum. And I think the club were very aware of the need to having facilities that would attract people to come 365 days a year, so that they could actually develop this, what they call, a destination in its own right. So, things like the skywalk on the roof and other sort of activities with the extreme sports hub that's planned to be built next to the hotel. These are all additional facilities that the club are looking to integrate into their wider master plan, so that it's got real sort of financial stability for the long term.

Paul Henry:

I think that the other thing that's interesting with Tottenham, Tom, is that idea about social aspiration. The surrounding area is so connected with the success of the club,

isn't it. Have you noticed or seen that idea about the entire area really lifting after the stadium was built?

Tom Jones:

Yes. I think there's a lot of pride in the football club in the local community. But I think that pride only goes so far. I think what is really making the difference is to see the employment opportunities that are coming out of the stadium, both in terms of some of the retail and other mixed use development parts of the project, but also just from the club's own foundation, which is invested in training and looking at really targeting underprivileged people in the local area and giving them opportunities through the stadium project, through the construction phase, but now it's operation as well. And I think once the local community sees the club is really making that effort, both in terms of the built form, but also in terms of the training opportunities that they're providing, that really does help to knit it into its local place.

Paul Henry:

It's interesting, isn't it, Tom. You can see that sense of engagement at all levels is so important to a successful venue. So the idea about social and urban transformation is more than just a single building. There are so many components of it as, as you say. If we want to drive change in urban regeneration and create that sense of place, it has to be authentic to the area. Tottenham clearly does that.

And I want to move over now to Allianz Field in Minnesota with John, which has really become the standard bearer for a new generation of Major League soccer venues. And I think it's a great example of designing for an authentic fan experience. So, John, how does Allianz Field resonate with the culture and the community of the twin cities?

John Shreve:

Well, strangely enough, there's many parallels to what Tom was just talking about with Tottenham, although a much smaller venue by scale. I think it has a lot of similarities in terms of how it resides in the metropolitan area and also how it relates to the neighbourhood itself, which is extremely diverse. So, from that standpoint, I think there's some interesting parallels to draw with Tottenham.

Paul Henry:

And, John, the idea that Allianz Field is the first piece of a much larger redevelopment to transform that connection between Minnesota and Saint Paul. So, what's made the stadium successful as the anchor within these public open spaces and the mixed use development?

John Shreve:

Well, you know, a lot of our projects and our clients don't have a site figured out. And so they come to us with a site selection process. And so, you know, we have a methodology that we all use and at the top of the list for going through that process is transportation and mobility. In other words, how do you get all these people to and from point A to point B. And so that was really one of the key advantages of the site

in Minnesota, was that it was right next to a transit line, it was right next to an interstate highway, and it had a natural urban grid system with arterials on all sides. So, the transportation was the first great asset. The second asset, really, about this site was that it had about 25 acres contiguously located to the stadium, which did open up that idea that we were just talking about in terms of creating other revenue generation opportunities outside the building. So, those two factors were really key in driving this whole idea of this is not just the building, but it's more of a district and urban neighbourhood that we were interested in trying to create.

Paul Henry:

John, that point about transport is so fundamental, isn't it, about the core linkages with it. And it makes me think, our project in Hong Kong at the moment, Kai Tak, has two major train stations right next to it. And really, the success of that is how do we bring people in from a broader area, and transport is the fundamental component of it. But also, I think, in parallel with Allianz and Tottenham, what's happening in Hong Kong is the idea that it's not just a stadium. It's a whole range of facilities from mixed use, from hotels to residential, to retail, to all of those components. In fact, in Hong Kong, they're building about 80,000 units within a hundred meter strip around the site. And so, in true Hong Kong fashion, there's fantastic density. And so the other reason for the Kai Tak Sports Park is to actually provide that social benefit. The community gardens, the community playgrounds, the open space as well, when you have such a dense city. But you're spot on, John, that idea about transport is so fundamental in all of our projects and as we look to the future with a sustainable set of developments, that idea about public transport becomes more important, doesn't it?

John Shreve:

Oh, yeah, absolutely. And I was going to just pick up on one thing you mentioned earlier, Paul, you mentioned this word, authenticity, which is a word that gets thrown around quite a lot. And I think that may be a whole separate podcast on that, but what it does get to is this idea of asking the question, authentic to whom? And, authentic to what time? But what goes hand in hand with that whole conversation is the fact that our projects, most all of our projects, are politically charged. Would you agree with that?

Paul Henry:

Oh, yeah. Our projects, they're social projects at the end of the day. And generally, in many cases, they're publicly funded. And so that's a political process, which brings with it a level of scrutiny, which is appropriate and right, because if the public purse is being spent on these buildings, you need to figure out how do we get maximum benefit from them, not just in the venue, but in the entire surrounding area. And I think this is always a really interesting part. Your comment then is very insightful. The idea of 'authentic' is as much about the process that it goes through and the level of engagement throughout the actual process itself.

John Shreve:

Well, and I would just add to that now that we're not just talking about single sports or convention venues, but we're talking about districts with many more layers, including housing, including retail, including other performance venues and commercial office buildings. Now it happens that political discussion just explodes.

And so literally that's what happened to us when we were going through this master planning process in Allianz Field in Minneapolis. We were going along what we thought was just fine, until what happened in May of last year. I don't know if you recall, but it was the George Floyd murder, which sparked protest across the city. In fact, two of the buildings on our site, next to the stadium, were burned as a result of that. So, when you talk about our projects being politically charged, that elevated, you know, that whole conversation to a whole other level. So what does that mean for us as designers? How do we respond to that? Well, we took a pause, took a step back and started to think and work with our client to say, how can our project be better suited towards some of the small and local businesses in the area? How can we make small kinds of interventions that start to respond and communicate this cultural diversity that is there? And so, we commissioned some artwork, for example, we were designing a playground, which is now the focus of an international student competition. So small things, as well as large things, I think, can go a long way in trying to make those, ties and those connections, socially and culturally.

Paul Henry:

And it's an interesting point, John, and I'll come back to Kai Tak in Hong Kong. It's also trying to line up with public policy, and in Hong Kong, the effort there was, how do we encourage more people to be involved in sport so that there's a health outcome? And so there was a public policy idea on that. So one of the things that we did there was all of the elite training facilities, we actually opened up and made them visible. So when young kids, they can kind of walk through and see their heroes training. So, there's a sense of aspiration to actually want to be involved in sport. And so I think what you've just said, the buildings have a much broader public position, both from a policy and a social point of view and can ultimately do good things. And that's what we are all clearly about is, how do we make them authentic in a way that really sticks at all levels of the process?

Now, Tom, I know you wanted to add to this.

Tom Jones:

Paul, I was just going to say from your comments earlier, what I think we're also seeing is the way in which these venues are becoming genuine public buildings being located in their cities. Civic pieces of architecture that get woven into the urban fabric. But what we've seen obviously during the pandemic in the last 18 months is that our buildings can also be really transformed for public use. So, the Principality Stadium in Cardiff, which is one of our older designs, converted into a hospital, you know, to help cover and cater for the huge demand for ward space. And the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, likewise, transforming into a vaccination center facilitating NHS local medical facilities during this past 18 months, as well. So, it's a really exciting move, I think, to sort of see the way in which sports buildings are no longer seen as standalone objects on the edge of the city. They're very much integrated into the public realm and a part of everyday life.

Paul Henry:

Thanks, guys. That's terrific.

I'd like to shift gears now slightly and think about how major events can shape a city and influence urban regeneration. So, since the year 2000, we've had the privilege of working on every Summer and Winter Olympic Games and Belinda, you worked on the Sydney Olympic Stadium for the 2000 Games and you're a Sydney local. The stadium and the Olympic Park in Sydney have provided a lasting legacy and helped regenerate an industrial area. How effective do you think events such as the Olympics are as a catalyst for urban regeneration?

Belinda Goh:

Yeah, I think that Olympics really provide the opportunity for, I suppose, any city and any country to really take that as an impetus to make change and to really drive change for the better and for the good. And, obviously, we see sport often is used as a vehicle to drive, you know, healthier outcomes, wellness, healthy communities. And I think that the world stage of the Olympics obviously offers this huge opportunity to not only create, sort of, a national movement behind hosting a Games, but also to really think about the ideals that that nation wants to hold true to their heart, and actually really fundamentally make moves that change the way that they, as a country, as a community and as a region, really start to inform the environments that their people live in and also really create places that they can thrive within. So, I feel like the Olympics is this huge opportunity to really harness power of change and change that can be for the better of everyone. So, those things in themselves, there's an opportunity to drive that around a timeline to absolutely plan it out, really think through what that opportunity is for the country and for the region and really also to set itself apart in really driving an enormous message to the world. So, I think the Olympics is definitely a great catalyst.

Paul Henry:

And it's interesting what we were just talking about before, you know, the interest and focus on a single team and then the kind of political overview on that in the area. When you go to the Olympics, it's the entire national interest and international interest on it. And that takes it to a different scale, doesn't it?

Belinda Goh:

Absolutely. And can be meaningful across a whole country as obviously as a host nation, you make considerations beyond the city itself. So, I think that can be so impactful in so many ways. Can be impactful around venues, but also communities about creating new housing stock for where an Olympic village goes. Thinking about transportation, thinking about infrastructure, thinking about social wellbeing, mental health, it goes so far. So, I think it really has a broad and all-encompassing reach around those things.

Paul Henry:

And the beauty about the Olympics is you can drive social transformation at a very broad level, as you've just mentioned. And that's such a powerful thing to actually see. I think, thinking about Sydney, how long does it take when we do an entire Olympic

Park for it to really transform into that seven day a week livable part of the city, and perhaps just talk a little bit about what are some of the key elements of that?

Belinda Goh:

I really think that the way that these places get shaped is around really considerations for the bigger, broader master plan to have this true flexibility to grow and to change and to shape into the future. So, often that really comes from really having, sort of, blue sky thinking at the outset of really considering a master plan and an urban design, but obviously building within that a real process to engage with the community around the real needs and requirements of that community as it grows and develops into the future. But also creating those places where people do want to gravitate towards, to actually want to live, to want to play, to live and work, to actually, you know, procreate the whole thing. I think it's actually really trying to embed and instill a real identity into a place that actually can connect with people and give meaning to people and drive, I suppose, effectively a way to grow a population and a density around sort of true pieces of social infrastructure that, you know, a Games can deliver. So, to me, it's like a framework that has flexibility, but also a framework that is well considered and is done in a way where there is a lot of outreach around engaging with the community and thinking to the future around what that place can become.

Paul Henry:

And it's interesting when you think to the future, the number one investment is actually transport within any city isn't it. And it was interesting in Sydney with the transport, it was obviously the first part to try and get the train into the heart of the site. And now, to this day, we're seeing the next level of that, which is the next level of train infrastructure in the area as well.

Belinda Goh:

Yeah, I think the transformation that has happened over the last 20 years of the actual area within Sydney itself, I think, you know, there was the placemaking done around the venues and the sort of very high-level pieces of infrastructure to deliver a Games. But beyond that, the framework is just growing and absolutely exploring the opportunities to grow communities both in and around the Olympic Park itself. And that is now driving, obviously, the further layering of more connectivity to the various sort of regional hubs within Sydney, through the Sydney Metro. So those things in itself is transforming the place further into another layer that maybe, may not have even been really envisaged at the beginning of the Olympic dream or aspiration for the master plan, but is now being realized through that real change and activation and engagement of people living in this part of Sydney. I mean, this part of Sydney was planned geographically in the center of the city where really there was no population at that point, it was an industrial wasteland. And now what you do have, or you are seeing is that there is, effectively, a growing increase of population sitting in and around the Olympic Park, which is quite amazing to have seen that transformation happen over the last 25 years.

Paul Henry:

Yeah, it is. It's an extraordinary thing, isn't it, when you can follow a project for over 20 years. And I think that's one of the other things, in all of our work, is the fact that these are long term projects. These are not short, sharp kind of things. These are embedded projects that evolve over time and you look at Sydney and Olympic Park, and clearly, it's evolved over time in a really positive way. Transport has a very big component of that as well. And when we were designing the Olympic Stadium, it was interesting, wasn't it, to think it was just one project in that whole kind of mix, even though it was the kind of primary focus of the Olympics, it was so much more than that, wasn't it?

Belinda Goh:

Absolutely, it was, Paul. And I think that really, you know, there were huge, I suppose, goals and ambitions around the Sydney Olympics. The Sydney Olympic Stadium was effectively seen as the first green stadium for the Olympic Games. And I think that, obviously, the aspirations started quite strong for the IOC to really start thinking about how to deliver these Games in a more sustainable way. And really that strong legacy that came from the Sydney Olympic Stadium really built an iconic piece of architecture, but it also really built a very strong legacy for what the future of the Olympics really is starting to look like and is becoming more and more every day, obviously, as we look towards Brisbane. You know, that is in itself is seen as a real change maker around it being positive towards climate change.

And I think that more and more we understand that these social pieces of infrastructure really provide those opportunities to, as we said before, really drive change for good. Change that means something to everyone who is part of a city, who is part of a movement, or is witnessing and understanding what the Olympic movement is about. So, I think that, you know, it was transformational as a building, obviously a huge Olympic stadium built. I think the single biggest purpose-built Olympic Stadium, then transformed, transformed in legacy for what was envisaged as the next series of event and sport modes that was required. And it continues as a venue to be considered again around other further changes, to consider roofs and further upgrades which, which we know are potentially still being discussed and on the cards.

Paul Henry:

So, what I want to do now is shift across the globe but stay on the major events and have a look at London and the London Olympics. As the cultural capital of the world, some would say London had plenty to showcase during the 2012 games, but actually, very little free space to do it. And, so the overlay, the temporary overlay of venues brought fans closer to the British landmarks. So, Tom, perhaps you can just tell us about how we managed that event overlay and really highlighted the city?

Tom Jones:

Now, it's a really interesting point. I think when any host city takes on the challenge of hosting an Olympic Games, of course, the first thing you need to do is do a careful analysis of your existing sporting infrastructure, then sort of identify what's going to be needed for the Games. And then after that, look at what the city is perhaps needing in terms of a long term legacy need. And then what that leaves you is the

gap that overlay can fill. So in London's case, we were lucky to have quite a few key venues like Wembley for hosting football, Wimbledon for hosting tennis. We knew we needed a new athletics stadium and we needed an Olympic swimming pool, so those were designed in as permanent assets in the Olympic Park master plan. But then there were lots of other sports, like beach volleyball, equestrian, which really didn't need permanent buildings in the city. And it was at that point, I think the real creativity in looking at how overlay could be used to host those events came into play. So you mentioned beach volleyball in Horse Guards Parade showcasing the sort of city behind it, the opportunity for Greenwich Park World Heritage site to host the equestrian events with the backdrop of the Queen's House and Canary Wharf in the distance, Lord's hosting the archery with the backdrop of the famous pavilion. So there was a real opportunity, I think for London, as with Sydney, to really sort of showcase itself to the world, showing some of the things that perhaps people knew already, but hopefully opening up new parts of the city to get people's imagination going and give them a fresh sense of what the city was all about.

Paul Henry:

And then Tom, if you focus on the London Olympic Park component, which was a major regeneration component of London, talk a little bit about some of the things that have made that successful and the key elements for it?

Tom Jones:

Well, again, I think you were mentioning earlier just how you need to take a long-term view of things, particularly when it comes to the impact in Olympic Park. The idea was that London is growing to the east and needed regeneration and funding to help drive that. And it was very difficult for the government to move that forward and what the Olympic Games and the awarding of the Olympic Games to London did was to fast track that regeneration of Stratford by 20 years, arguably, with the investment that came in. Some of the transport infrastructure had been put in place as a strategic shift of the city to the east, but the Olympics encouraged more of that. And the key, really, I think, for the success of the Queen Elizabeth Park, as it now is called, is that mixed use design of the master plan. So the Olympic Village located right inside the Olympic Park, which transformed into residential immediately after the Games, bringing footfall to the site and helping to sort of create that vibrancy in the area. The commercial Westfield development that is also located on the edge of the park, again, driving a lot of footfall into the park, but then the investment in cleaning what was an industrial wasteland, creating a new urban park, locating the sports venues within that. And that sort of combination is almost, I think, the magic mix that has come together to make this place work. And what's exciting is that the ideas that were thought about over the medium term, the 20-year development strategy, the new road infrastructure that was planned in place, the additional train and underground infrastructure. It's been really exciting to see that taking shape, but what's almost more exciting is to see the additional things that have come to pass since. So, universities opening on the site that were never anticipated in the original master plan, and now the Cultural Quarter, the Smithsonian, the Victorian Albert Museum. These sort of investments in even wider range of facilities that have really been attracted to the park because of the success of the base master plan.

I think, sometimes, we might get challenged to think that we've got to solve everything in the first iteration of the master plan. But really, the key thing is to get the fundamental networks in place, have the key building blocks and then allow space for that future expansion. And that's where in the planning of the London Olympic Park, there were four major venues that were designed as temporary venues: the water polo, basketball, the hockey venue, and when they were removed after the Games that basically left development sites that were then available for this future development. That ability for the site to breathe over a period of time and evolve as changing trends come into place is all underpinned by the core element of the sports facilities, the park, the commercial, and the residential.

Paul Henry:

And that idea about underpinning with the stadium at its core, with regular full house crowds of 60,000 people turning up there, as you said on Tottenham, provides a footfall, doesn't it?

Tom Jones:

Yeah. And, I think, also the importance of having multipurpose venues. So, in Tottenham's case, it isn't just football. It was the careful design to integrate NFL with the football, but also having the very quick transition into concerts and boxing. So in the last few weeks, we've seen Premier League football transform into NFL, transform into world heavyweight boxing, transform back into football, in a matter of a couple of weeks. And the London Stadium went through a similar transformation that Belinda was referencing for Sydney, where we had to look at how it could be a much more multipurpose venue after the Games. So again, it's hosted Rugby World Cup, it's hosted concerts, it's hosting Premier League football. And it's that sort of regularity of event with the footfall that you were talking about is what really makes these master plans work.

Paul Henry:

And we've seen that also, John, in terms of what you were saying with Allianz Field, that idea about sustainability of the venue with a range of events. It's kind of the linchpin then of the broader development that you can build out from in a way that connects.

What I'd like to do now is just fly back to Sydney and think about when we do these, what are considered large pieces of social infrastructure, how they interact and become authentic and how they interact with their surrounding areas is really critical to that sense of place. And ICC, the International Convention Center in Sydney is embedded right in the heart of the city. And it's been a city shaping project in many ways, transforming that Darling Harbor area and its surrounds. Belinda, given that the site sits within an existing urban fabric, how has it influenced and been influenced by the surrounding city scape?

Belinda Goh:

So, the ICC Sydney obviously was part of a large Darling Harbor transformation project. And that project was a sizeable chunk of the city, a part of the city that effectively had not so great public transport connections, had not so great urban

grain connections from east to west. So, there were a lot of challenges that existed within that part of the city to really embed it and ingrain it into a livable and habitable space of the city. And I feel that the project really offered an amazing opportunity to renew it. These projects don't come along that often, they're sort of once in a lifetime that you get to look at a place like this in the city to drive, effectively, change that would mean greater benefits for many users and for also bringing and integrating those places and events within the city.

So, the buildings themselves, in terms of ICC Sydney, were really trying to very closely relate to the components of the city, as you move from the Harbor back through into the parkland and into the city. And the elements of the three buildings, I suppose, really called upon those elements in the way that they responded to the landscape, but also with the way we responded to them in terms of their urban design and their connections with place and country. So, you know, the ICC convention center really linked strongly with the harbor and the reflective nature of the harbor. The exhibition building really took on and embraced the park, the parkland of Tumbalong Park, which was effectively reshaped and releveled so that it integrated into this new invigorated and activated event part of the city. And then the theater building then really integrated as a sort of strong element linked back to the city and the vibrancy of the city and Chinatown, which existed to the southern end of the site. So the buildings themselves tried to relate quite closely to the landscape, but to also the imagery and the ideas behind, really, how we felt this new urban regeneration would link and create great places for people to gather and to effectively become part of the event, whether you were inside or outside of the building.

Paul Henry:

Belinda, it's a really interesting project because, for instance, the exhibition building is a very big block of a building and the design approach with it was to be clever about servicing because they're highly operational buildings, but it really strikes me that these buildings are about the edge conditions that you actually consider around them and how people are interrelating.

Belinda Goh:

Yeah. So, I suppose that they're always seen as quite uncomfortable neighbors, as we've talked about. I mean, you know, John mentioned stadia and large buildings of these nature have always been seen as, you know, large, cumbersome and the alike. But I think the strong design move that was made within ICC Sydney to really solve that issue within the scale of the development blocks that were required to deliver the functional requirements for the building were really so cleverly mastered because we actually looked at ways to really break down the form, to scale down, effectively, the scale of a double stacked exhibition space and loading dock beneath was really then created as a kind of backdrop of terraced landscape that actually then folded and cascaded down to the park. It really disguised, I suppose, an operation that we don't want to actually convey and show people. But, actually, it really demonstrated the opportunity to really celebrate a whole series of other activities that happened in front of the buildings and connected back to the city, created great places and opportunities to look out and pick up views and vistas of the water and the city, and actually even the natural landscape terraced into the building itself. So, those things really effectively gelled the building, at a base level all the way through the site from

the north, all the way through to the south with a really strong language of picking up on this sort of escarpment edge of the city landscapes, and then really the valley traditional floor of what would have been a sort of green valley within the city landscape itself. So there were a lot of things done to really blend landscape back into building and to really also think about the place, and the history of the place, and replicating that in a new built form. It also offered opportunities to really think about how you do that. You break that form down in the east-west direction, which actually created new connections and elevated platforms of green spaces and bridges that actually looked over these new expanses of activated green spaces within the city. But I think that they in themselves provide this opportunity to really rethink how we think about these large buildings sitting in cities. That we are able, as designers, to come up with creative ways to really explore how those edges can be activated, can drive effectively a great urban outcome. New intervening spaces and casual spaces where events and gatherings can occur, but also really celebrate its location in the city and its great connectivity that we were creating through these new pedestrian connections, cycle connections, public transport at edges. It really has really shaped a new part of the city that is so livable and so walkable and people enjoy it. People love it.

Paul Henry:

It's a very sophisticated solution to a really challenging site, but done, as you say, in an authentic way. And I think the idea that we deal with very big buildings, but the idea of where people touch the buildings, the permeability and the human scale around the edges is such a critical part of that success. And, I think, on all of the projects we've spoken about today, you can see that idea in every particular case.

What I'd like to do now is actually move to another project that has some similar situations. So, in Milwaukee, in the US, John, I wanted to talk about Fiserv Forum and how it tells the story of the city inside and out, and how it actually has that connection from the home team and the local community and the precinct surrounding what is a big building and how it actually interacts and actually has a human scale with it.

John Shreve:

So, Fiserv Forum opened up about three years ago to widespread acclaim as this new, forward-looking NBA stadium for good reasons. But I think to appreciate it's full impact on the city with some of the issues you were talking about, Paul, you have to really rewind the clock about seven decades. And if you study the city of Milwaukee, you'll understand why, and the reason why is that just down the street from the new arena, was the old arena, which is called the MECCA Arena from the 1950s.That was the first home of the basketball team with only 12,000 seats, and it was cramped, it was crazy, it was loud, it was lacking all kinds of amenities that we like to include. But it also had the team's winningest percentage of 81%. So, there was a lot of positives about the old place.

Then along came Chris Carver in 1988 and built the brand-new home for the team right next door, directly right next to the old one. And that was called the Bradley Center. And again, it opened to great acclaim with accolades as being a great state of the art basketball venue. But the other side of that is kind of going back to this previous generation of buildings where its nickname locally was called the Fortress on

Fourth. And you can probably guess why, you know, it basically was inward focused, not a lot going on the outside. But the interesting twist is that in order build Fiserv Arena, we had to tear down the Bradley Center. So, we had to demolish Chris Carver's masterpiece from the 1980s. I don't think Chris necessarily shed too many tears over that because the new one is actually, I think, he's pretty happy with. On one hand it's smaller capacity, but on the other hand, gross square footage, it's larger with lots of great amenities. But it's really an interesting snapshot in time. There's a photograph that is an aerial bird's eye that shows these three arenas, right consecutively next to each other, the new one being in construction. It's a pretty fascinating commentary on how these buildings undergo dramatic transformational change, not only amongst themselves, but also within the wider context of the city. And so, I think, this last iteration of the new building really has broken new ground in terms of becoming a catalyst for a much wider urban redevelopment plan that otherwise was another one of these underserved fringe parts of the city that, you know, just wasn't seeing any investment at all.

Paul Henry:

And, as you say, that long history in the city informs every part of the solution itself, doesn't it? Because there are so many lives in a city over time with the different kind of buildings. To arrive now at the fantastic solution at Fiserv Forum, I think what you've done there is engage externally very strongly. Perhaps talk a little bit about that?

John Shreve:

Right, and maybe setting the stage for that. You know, earlier we were talking about public policy and the involvement of politicians. And so, you know what, this project would never have happened without the foresight of one of the most instrumental Mayors, John Norquist, back in the late 1990s, because what he did is he decided he wanted to change the city from being a solely car centric downtown to one that was more pedestrian oriented. So, there was a perfectly fine highway that went right through downtown. Everybody loved it, if you're in your cars or if you're a traffic engineer, but what Mayor Norquist did is came up with this radical proposal to tear the thing down, believe it or not. So it actually passed, he tore down the downtown freeway, which opened up 26 new acres of property which then we could build the new arena, along with the district next to it, which then opened up the opportunity to reconnect that part of the city back to the river, which then opened up the opportunity to connect the river back to the core of the city. So, it's a whole chain of events, series of domino effects, that was part and parcel of design visioning, you know, by us and our clients, but also by strong political leadership. So, I think that was something that was really important to note as well.

Paul Henry:

And it's interesting, by doing those moves, it's enabled you to engage externally in a really powerful way that would never have been possible without those brave moves of moving freeways and things like that. And so you're right, it does take some brave leadership and some brave community understanding to be able to unlock the potential for these projects and what they can actually do.

As our last project, I'd like to change scale completely and move to a much smaller scale project that really follows on from what John was just saying. On the New South Wales coast, we've got a small project in Woolgoolga, which is a community sports complex which is multipurpose. And it's designed to provide an inclusive environment, healthy community space for locals and visitors. Belinda, there was a few simple things in that project, which I think were very powerful in terms of engagement with the community. Perhaps you could talk about that?

Belinda Goh:

Yeah, the Woolgoolga sports project has been a wonderful project to work on. It's really allowed us to explore engagement at that fine level with the community. And this project has been a long awaited project from the local community. They've spent 10 years raising money and getting money grants together at local and state level. And I feel the community themselves are so behind this project, their engagement with us has been really, I suppose, phenomenal in terms of what it's brought to the design. So, you know, it was a long waited piece of social infrastructure. Our engagement has been with multiple groups and multiple stakeholders. We've also engaged with the First Nations people in the Gumbaynggirr people. And we've also really worked with the local sporting organizations. We've worked with performing arts, we've worked with the primary schools and the high schools, and also most importantly, one of the biggest Sikh communities in all of Australia to really deliver a building that can be multipurpose and multi-use.

Some of the great explorations have been around really understanding the place from a country perspective and really engaging with local artists that have actually embellished the building with beauty. And we've really understood the story of the land and what the land was used for from the First Nations people as a learning site, as a site where the young folk would come and learn how to make and shape tools, they would migrate their way down to the water through this site. And the really lovely thing about the project is the project itself is delivering engagement at every level within the community, in a learning way, in a way where the community are gathering, they're playing, they're competing, they're practicing, they're learning, they're performing and they're celebrating. So, the building itself embellishes so much meaning to those that are really going to use it. And I think that the other really lovely part of the process has been that they've built these strong connections, engaging with us and seeing the design develop through each of the design phases and really getting an opportunity to comment on where it's going.

Paul Henry:

And it's a really nice bookend for our conversation today because I wanted to go from the scale of city shaping, from the Olympic Parks through to the major sporting venues like Tottenham, right through to the smaller scale, which is Woolgoolga. And the idea that even simply drawing people together into a plaza space has such enormous social and physical power in the transformation of a city. And it's a great honor, I think for all of us, to have the opportunity to be involved in these projects and to see them over a long period of time evolve and have an impact on the city. It's fair to say, today, we've barely even scratched the surface of this conversation and we could go on for many hours because it is passionately interesting in terms of what it means to people's lives. But I would like to thank John, Belinda and Tom for joining us

today. And I'd also like to thank everyone who's listened in, and I hope you've had the opportunity to learn some things from our conversation. Thank you.