

AACIP PLANNING

Alberta Association, Canadian Institute of Planners

# Journal

Summer 2009 | Issue 2



## Looking to our Past to Plan our Future

*including:*

- Facing the Past in our Planning
- Edmonton's Recent Heritage
- What Legacy do We Want to Leave 30 Years From Now?

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The *AACIP Planning Journal* offers opportunity for publication of original works that are both community-based and research oriented, and relevant to Alberta, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. Types of submissions include case studies, analysis of events and/or trends, profiles of notable planners, projects or programs, overviews of best practices and guidelines, book reviews or excerpts, and opinion pieces for our "Commentary" section.

The *AACIP Planning Journal* Committee is anxious to hear your feedback. Please submit any comments you may have about this issue to [aacip.planning.journal@gmail.com](mailto:aacip.planning.journal@gmail.com). Your comments, suggestions and feedback are critical for the *Journal's* continued improvement and for us to provide the best possible publication that meets the expectations of our readers.



## JOURNAL SUBMISSIONS

We are always looking for articles for future issues of the *Planning Journal*. Below are some examples of topic areas you may be interested in submitting an article for:

- sustainability initiatives
- member accomplishments
- member research
- community development projects
- urban design
- student experiences
- innovative ideas
- successes

and any other areas that would be of value to the planning community.

Watch for upcoming call for submissions. For more information, please contact the *AACIP Planning Journal* Committee at [aacip.planning.journal@gmail.com](mailto:aacip.planning.journal@gmail.com) or 780-644-4542.

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We would also like to thank all of the contributors to this *Journal*. Your willingness to share your knowledge is what makes the *Journal* great!

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# A Message from the President



As your new President I am pleased to write a few comments in the second edition of AACIP's Planning Journal for 2009. To the AACIP Planning Journal Committee I give a hearty 'thank you' to each of you for your individual and collective efforts and hard work in preparing and publishing this latest edition of the Journal. Your efforts show in the quality of the Journal.

To all members I would say that the Journal is but one visible aspect of the many components of our Association; an Association that is largely run by volunteers. Yes, we have two paid staff to administer many elements of our business. Vicki and MaryJane spend long hours looking after the needs of our Association and providing services to us. Their hard work makes our jobs much easier.

Along with the fine work of Vicki and MaryJane though is the hard work of your Associations' many volunteers. Scores of you on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis give your time, your skills, and your energy to make our Association 'hum'. I recognize that these efforts come in many forms. Some of you volunteer occasionally or for one-off activities or events, registering members at our many local events or writing articles for the Journal. Others of you are our 'hard core' volunteers who have for many years cheerfully accepted duties in our regular ongoing committees – Registration, Events, Conferences; toiling away at the household chores of our Association.

This is not to say that those who volunteer more are better than those who volunteer less. Every contribution is of value and is valued, however large or small. This is to say that our Association is the result of all your collective contributions.

Today our Association is larger, stronger, smarter, and more effective than ever before. The demand for the knowledge and skills of our members has never been greater. The broad recognition of the Association has never been higher. These results have been achieved through your collective thought, interest, hard work, and passion. Yes — passion. For it has been the passion of you, our volunteers, that has achieved these results.

And it is to all of you, our volunteers, that I wish to pay special tribute. To our many volunteers, wherever you may be, for whatever you have done or are doing for our Association, I say thank you very, very much.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. Buchanan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and a stylized "Buchanan".

GARY BUCHANAN ACP, MCIP

*President*

Alberta Association, Canadian Institute of Planners



# MAKING PROGRESS. SEEING POTENTIAL.

## Downtown redevelopment plan points Red Deer back to its river

*"We envision a vibrant,  
energized space where people  
can truly enjoy the best of  
both worlds—urban living  
in close proximity to nature."*

Mayor Morris Flewwelling

Alberta's third largest city plans to simultaneously celebrate its past and forge a new future by reconnecting its downtown to the river. Red Deer's *Greater Downtown Action Plan*, adopted by City Council in February 2009, creates a conceptual framework for converting former industrial areas into high-density mixed use urban districts. It also calls for new street and pedestrian connections to the riverfront, and a new pedestrian bridge linking park areas to the developed city centre. "We envision a vibrant, energized space where people can truly enjoy the best of both worlds — urban living in close proximity to nature," says Mayor Morris Flewwelling.

### Once-in-a-lifetime opportunity

Like many cities, Red Deer was once split by railway lines. After those were relocated outside the city, industrial uses that had clustered

Design Concept showing  
Greater Downtown Red Deer  
with a redeveloped mixed-  
use riverfront.

SOURCE: Calum Srigley, MVH  
Urban Planning and Design



along the lines began to relocate as well. “Our community realized that this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transform our downtown,” says Councillor Cindy Jefferies, who chairs the Greater Downtown Steering Committee.

In 2001, The City of Red Deer set a large scale transformation in motion by committing to move its own Civic Yards operations from their city centre location on the riverfront to a light industrial district further north. This spring, three City yard sites totalling 12.4 ha (31 acres) along the riverfront are being emptied and another half dozen private properties in the area are coming available for redevelopment.

Community leaders realized that if commercial and industrial uses are allowed to re-establish on the riverfront, it will be another generation before people have another opportunity to carve out more parks, public gathering, and living spaces on this prime space.

“This plan reflects the public’s desire to have an inviting downtown urban environment with vibrant life on our streets, inviting places for families and business and a connected downtown for all residents to enjoy” Jefferies says.

### Three districts hold the keys

Red Deer’s greater downtown is a large area, approximately 1.5 km in diameter, consisting of most of the river valley south of the river. It includes not only the traditional business core but attractive older residential neighbourhoods, significant parks and recreation spaces and, perhaps most significantly, some light industrial areas that are in transition.

The plan is titled *Progress and Potential*, reflecting the sense that much has been done in the greater downtown but there is much more that can be done. One of the challenges of the plan was to establish priority action areas for the diverse district.

Public input identified three priority zones within greater downtown: Historic Downtown, Riverlands, and a district tentatively known as Railyards (see map). The plan recommends developing the three as distinct but complementary districts.

Changes in Historic Downtown will be subtle, with the development of new public plazas, a new emphasis on retail laneways, and

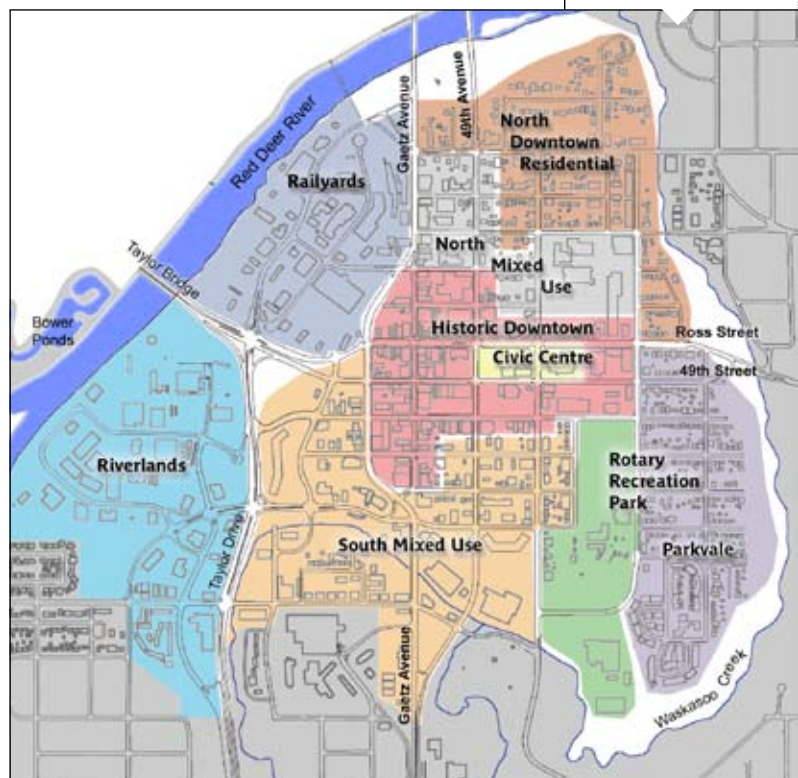
allowances for easier pedestrian and bicycle travel. Previous downtown plans have helped ensure that Red Deer’s civic centre didn’t experience the sharp decline of some urban centres; new office construction is underway, the City will be expanding its offices, considerable progress has been made with low cost housing, and higher end residential condos have sprung up.

The Riverlands district, west of Taylor Drive, and Railyards (tentative name) west of Gaetz Ave. and north of Ross St., are the two districts where the greatest change will occur. Both were formerly light industrial / commercial areas, with few public space amenities like parks and sidewalks, and both border Waskasoo Park on the river. Waskasoo, a linear park featuring 80 km of paved and shale trails, straddles the river from the QEII highway on the west end through to the north-east corner of the city and regularly tops lists of the city’s best assets. Reconnecting the greater downtown to this popular recreation and green space was a priority of the plan.

In the plan, Riverlands will become a riverfront residential and urban gathering district, featuring an expanded public market, restaurants, a hotel and possibly a convention centre. The concept plan shows a district with significant public spaces and numerous water features.

Neighbourhoods of Greater Downtown Red Deer, centered on the Historic Downtown.

SOURCE: John Hull Architect



The interest in water features was spurred by a proposal from the Red Deer Chamber of Commerce tourism committee. The business group proposed a San Antonio style development of canals, residential and retail in the district. Community response indicated that people were intrigued by the possibilities of water channels, fountains, ponds and other water features but less so by the wholesale redevelopment of the site with a canals network.

Railyards will become a high density residential district, with a blend of commercial, public service and retail spaces to support urban living. The preferred development style will be 'point and podium' residential, with active streetfront uses on the main floors of all buildings: townhomes, retail, restaurants and other urban services.

### Impressive public involvement

The plan was developed over a nine-month period in 2008, with participation from well over 500 citizens. Lead consultants for the plan were Grandview Consulting and John Hull Architect, assisted by Michael von Hausen and his design team from MVH Inc. of Burnaby BC. and Alberta based urban planner Ken Johnson.

Public involvement got a kickstart with an intensive "Greater Downtown Planning Week" in June. Using personal, professional and online networks (including Facebook invitations), the consulting team was successful in engaging hundreds of people in a week-long exploration of downtown planning ideas. The week started with a noon talk on "The Challenges of Downtowns: A World View" by planning educator Michael Geller of Simon Fraser University. The hall was packed and citizens, inspired by the international success stories, continued to participate actively through the week. Mayor Morris Flewwelling and all City Councillors were involved, demonstrating their commitment to the process.

Geller's talk was followed by a bus and walking tour of key sites in the greater downtown. Dozens of people experienced firsthand the limitations of missing infrastructure such as riverfront recreational trails that don't connect with downtown street networks and the popularity of a downtown children's water spray fountain.

*"Our community realized that this is once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transform our downtown."* Councillor Cindy Jefferies

Armed with inspiration and on-site observations, participants were then invited to a planning charrette led by the dynamic von Hausen design team. Later that same week, people were invited to drop in for informal coffee chats at the project office, where they could see rough concepts that were being developed and trade ideas with planners. The von Hausen team then gave a concepts presentation at week's end, when the ideas were still fresh and the energy high.

Later, writing in the Vancouver Sun, Michael Geller noted the community's high participation rates and its lack of interest-group conflict. The attitudes did not match those typically expected of free enterprise Albertans. "Local residents revealed a surprising level of interest in stormwater management, community gardens, energy conservation and sustainable planning," Geller wrote. "At one point I suggested to the Mayor that most Canadians would be shocked to hear this kind of talk from people in the middle of Alberta."

The keys to the high levels of public involvement were our consulting team's local connections, the variety of ways in which people could participate, and a clear openness to citizens' ideas.

### Moving forward

While the Alberta economy was still booming during the early months of the *Greater Downtown Action Plan* process, by the time the plan was completed and adopted it had become clear that the recession was upon us. "A recession is actually the perfect time to be putting these concepts in place," notes City Manager Craig Curtis. "We have an opportunity to get the planning right at a time when there are fewer development pressures."

As a long-range concept plan, *Progress and Potential* creates a vision for the preferred future of Red Deer's city centre. At the same time, it is innovative in recommending an implementation process that includes short-term pilot projects

to test elements like new 'complete street' configurations, which consider a broad range of street uses in addition to vehicle movement. Using pilot projects, complete street elements such as dedicated bike lanes can be tested in the short term using moveable planters and temporary signage before more significant infrastructure investments are made.

The intent of these elements of the plan is to make immediate but modest investments that maintain the positive momentum until economic recovery supports more significant investments. Following adoption of the plan, city administration moved quickly to bring forward ten specific initiatives for inclusion in 2009 City workplans. As a result, this year the City will initiate detailed area redevelopment plans for the major transformations in Riverlands and Railyards, conduct research on a new Public Market, and do design work on intersection improvements to increase connectivity between downtown and the river.

A key lesson of the Red Deer experience is that short, intensive, planning exercises can generate significant momentum and energy. Busy citizens will become actively engaged if they can sense excitement and opportunity. People with limited

personal time for civic participation rightly ask, 'Will this make a difference?' In Red Deer, the fact that they could see progress from the 2001 plan lent credibility to the 2008 update.

Other elements of the Red Deer approach that can be successfully applied elsewhere include the blend of local and out-of-town consultants and regular revisiting of a plan's progress. People like to see and hear the creative ideas of worldly 'experts' but also need to know that local advisors, who know the history and the significance of the community's spaces, are guiding the process.

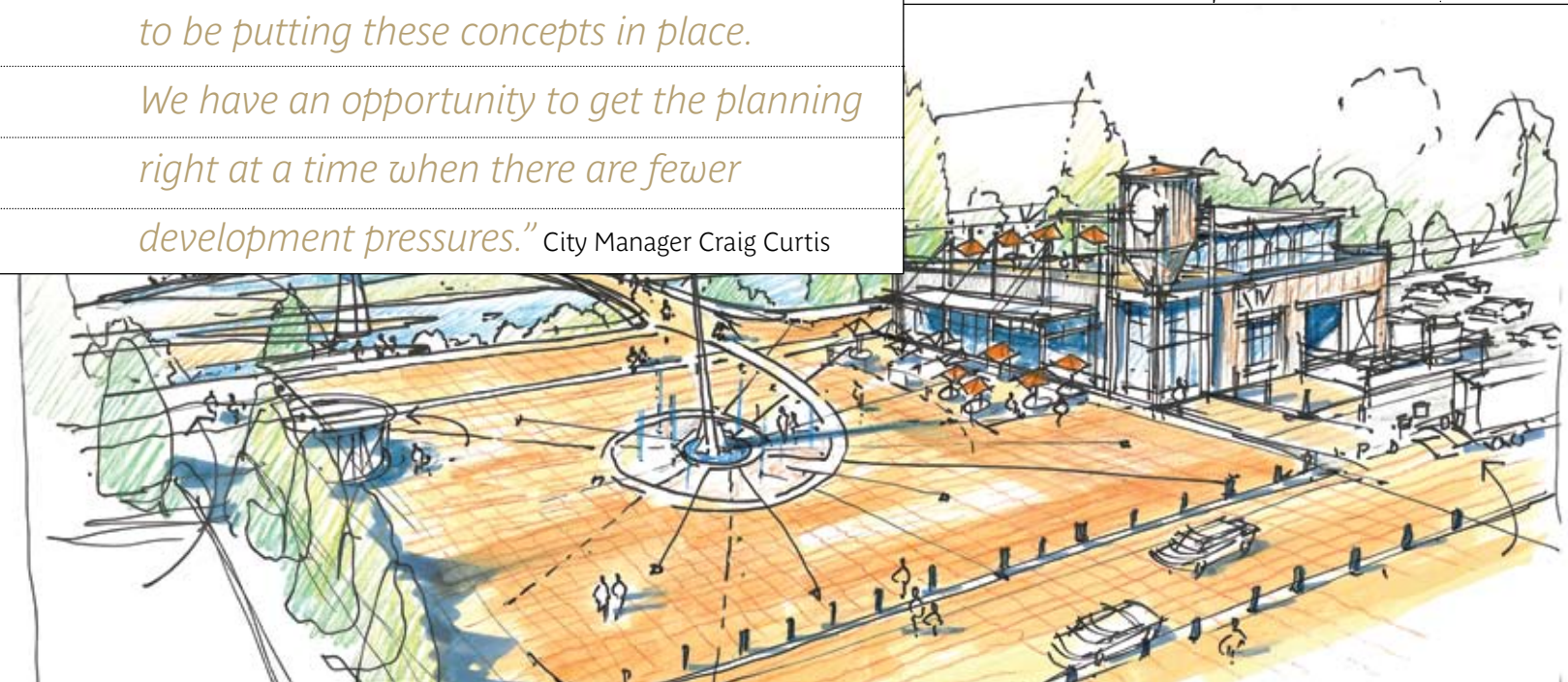
Widespread wariness about urban plans becoming fancy 'shelf art' that doesn't create real change can be countered by a commitment, early on, to a transparent public review and update of the plan a few years down the road. It would be interesting to see more urban plans have a built-in "update" timeline that specifies a vigorous re-engagement of the community to review progress — and potential. ■

**Lorne Daniel** is the Managing Partner of Grandview Consulting Inc., which partnered with John Hull Architect to lead the 2008 Greater Downtown Action Plan for The City of Red Deer. Lorne is a member of AACIP and a co-winner of Excellence Awards from CIP and AACIP for work on Red Deer's 2001 downtown plan.

Design Concept for the "Spirit of the River Plaza", which will link the urban elements of downtown with the river.

SOURCE: Calum Srigley, MVH Urban Planning and Design

*A recession is actually the perfect time to be putting these concepts in place. We have an opportunity to get the planning right at a time when there are fewer development pressures."* City Manager Craig Curtis







# PARTICIPATE, AND THEN PLAN

*I am taking a second look around now, asking questions about my street, my parks, and my community. I am thinking about the people who sat in boardrooms at City Hall and made decisions about my neighbourhood.*

SOURCE: Nalini Naidoo

Motherhood has taken me off my regular path. It has shuttled me into places in this community where I had never been and it has forced my interaction and participation with people and groups that I would not have imagined. It has made me uncomfortable, it has forced me to involve myself in new ways; and therefore motherhood, I allege, has made me a better planner.

In planning school, we are provided with a perspective on urbanism. We are taught what is good planning and what is poor planning. We are informed of proper building design and suitable public spaces. As we emerge from the academic world we take these lessons with us. As a consequence, we look at our communities from a view that may not be our own.

As we depart from University we are handed various 'hats' in life. We become soccer moms, hockey dads, dog walkers, joggers, cyclists, people who take transit and people who go for evening walks and snowshoe adventures. We become the participants. We need to use these 'hats' that life has given us when we make planning decisions. *Stop and picture yourself in what you are planning; from a permit application to a subdivision approval.*

I am taking a second look around now, asking questions about my street, my parks, and my community. I am thinking about the people who sat in boardrooms at City Hall and made decisions about my neighbourhood.

You quickly begin to wonder about the people designing neighbourhoods and public spaces.

Were any of these people walking a dog, pushing a stroller or playing street hockey with their kids? Who decided on the location of our community facilities? Who was speaking up at City Hall when the great ideas triumphed? Who believed in their ideas enough to ensure we will live in neighborhoods designed for people and not just buildings?

I now sit in those same boardrooms laying out subdivisions, parks and trails, and I realize, 20 years from today, someone will be speculating about the people who designed their community. As I prepare myself for my return to work after baby number two, *I remind myself of the service we provide, of the trust our community has in us and of the expectation that we will speak up, stand up, and deliver those neighbourhoods designed for people.*

My children have given me a very literal street view of the world. They have taught me the importance of traffic planning around schools, the importance of turning radii on residential streets, the need to accommodate street hockey games, 6 months of snow, as well as vehicles on roads. *I challenge you to get out of your car and walk around. Look at your community from the ground level.*

Motherhood alone does not improve your planning vision; it is participating and the willingness to participate in new circles that makes you better. In my personal experience,

one of the 'hats' I now wear is that of a parent. My participation in my community now includes a new circle. As planners we are taught the importance of consulting in order to gather information about a community. *Instead of consulting, try living, try attending, try involving, try engaging...yourself.*

I am ten years into my career and have collected many 'hats' along the way. I've seen my home town from the back of the snowmobile, a canoe, a bike, and many other vantage points. I've seen it through the eyes of a 5 year old and with the eyes of a mother and as a daughter. Each role has allowed me to participate in my community in a new way. And each engagement has, I contend, made me a much better planner.

When we become the participants rather than the planners, we realize the impact of our decisions and the necessity to think about planning from our own view. Cities look different when we live in them. Dreaming up communities from a desk, a computer screen or a digital air photo is an injustice to the legacy we leave behind.

I challenge you to participate, and then plan.■

**Nalini Naidoo** has lived in Yellowknife NWT for 34 years. She is the Manager of Planning & Lands at the City of Yellowknife and is just completing her second maternity leave. Nalini is married to Stephen Budgell and together they have two wonderful boys – Arjun (5 years) and Tarun (8 months), and one dog — Peanut.

SOURCE: Nalini Naidoo

*Instead of consulting, try living,  
try attending, try involving,  
try engaging...yourself.*



*Our professional drive for sustainable communities requires that we pay careful attention to our future, but also to our past.*

# FACING THE PAST IN OUR PLANNING

Our professional drive for sustainable communities requires that we pay careful attention not only to our future, but also to our past. Our shared histories are just as important as our visions and plans for the future. Yet, often planners and decision-makers spend relatively little time truly understanding what has happened in the past. This is especially true for our rural communities and landscapes.

Alberta's rural communities, especially those near natural amenities such as mountains or water bodies, are facing what could be the most significant landscape change since European settlement.<sup>1</sup> The complex histories of these landscapes can provide valuable information to improve future planning outcomes.

Striving towards a better knowledge of these landscape histories presents a host of potential benefits such as enabling planners to learn from past decisions<sup>2</sup>, monitoring aesthetic and ecological impacts<sup>3</sup>, generating greater respect for local sense of

place<sup>4</sup> and increasing appreciation for the dynamic nature of landscapes<sup>5</sup>. We also begin to think about not just what might suit the landscape today but how that landscape will evolve and adapt over time.

It was out of this need to enrich our understanding of landscape histories that I undertook a Masters Degree Project to explore the potential for historical landscape analysis in rural planning. My research involved two parts. Part one entailed a historical land use and land cover analysis for a 200km<sup>2</sup> case study site in a portion of the Municipal District of Foothills (M.D.) for the time period 1962 – 2000. Part two included interviewing planners, politicians and citizen representatives as to what role they saw for land use and land cover histories in the planning processes and decisions in the M.D. of Foothills. The exploratory nature of the findings and method of this research study offers direction to planners looking to incorporate landscape histories into their community planning efforts.

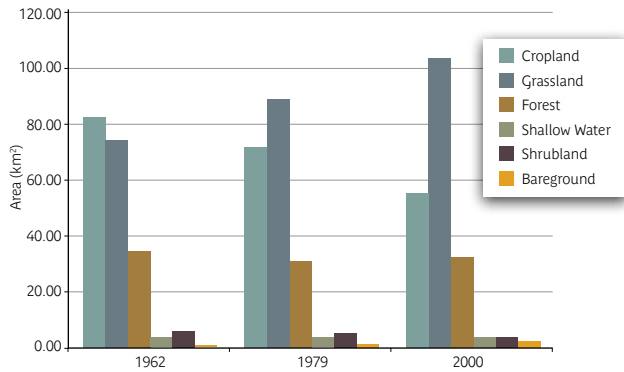
A west view from the north portion of the study site.

SOURCE: Jonathan Schmidt

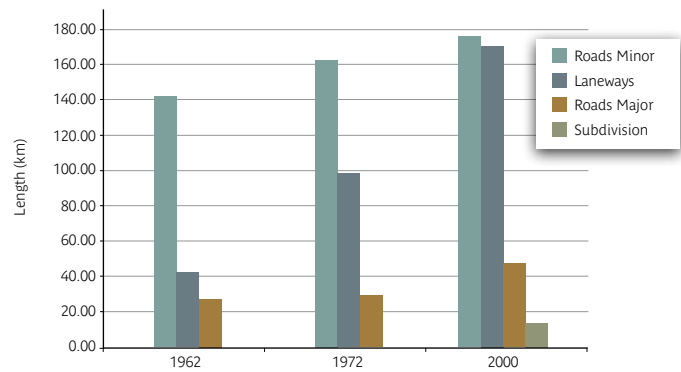
- 1 Vias, A. C. and J. I. Carruthers (2005). "Regional Development and Land Use Change in the Rocky Mountain West, 1982-1997." *Growth and Change* 36(2): 29.
- 2 Antrop, M. (2005). "Why landscapes of the past are important for the future." *Landscape and Urban Planning* 70: 22.
- 3 Riebsame, W. E., H. Gosnell, et al. (1996). "Land Use and Landscape Change in the Colorado Mountains I: Theory, Scale and Pattern." *Mountain Research and Development* 16(4): 15.
- 4 Sandford, R. W. (2007). "Sense of Place & Its Drivers: The Lifestyle Dynamics of Mountain Towns." Retrieved October 29, 2008, from <http://www.rwsandford.ca/SenseofPlaceGolden.html>.
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Land Cover Changes in the M.D. of Foothills Study Site 1962–2000



Linear Land Uses: M.D. of Foothills Study Site 1962–2000



SOURCE: Jonathan Schmidt

For part one, the detection of landscape change was done through aerial photography for the study site for the years 1962, 1979 and 2000. The results from the historical land cover and land use analysis showed a dynamic and changing landscape. Land use in the study site area began in 1962 as primarily agricultural, yet by 2000 the study site showed a significant amount of country residential use. The rise in country residential land use was one of the factors that resulted in substantial changes to the land cover in the study site. Land cover changes that occurred in the study site included a substantial 33% reduction in cropland, a 39% rise in grassland (mostly non-native), a 34% decrease in shrubland, and relative stability in forest and water land covers.

One of the most surprising results of land use change was the increase in the linear length of private laneways by 309% between 1962 and 2000. A private laneway was defined as a linear path, usually non-paved, going from a municipal road to a residential building. By the year 2000 private laneways almost equaled municipal minor roads in total linear length on the landscape. This dramatic increase may have numerous implications, such as fragmenting wildlife habitat, decreasing permeable surfaces, and changing local hydrology and run-off patterns. For planners

these results raise questions of whether or not this extensive use of land for transportation access is truly the most efficient and best use of the land and what alternatives may exist.

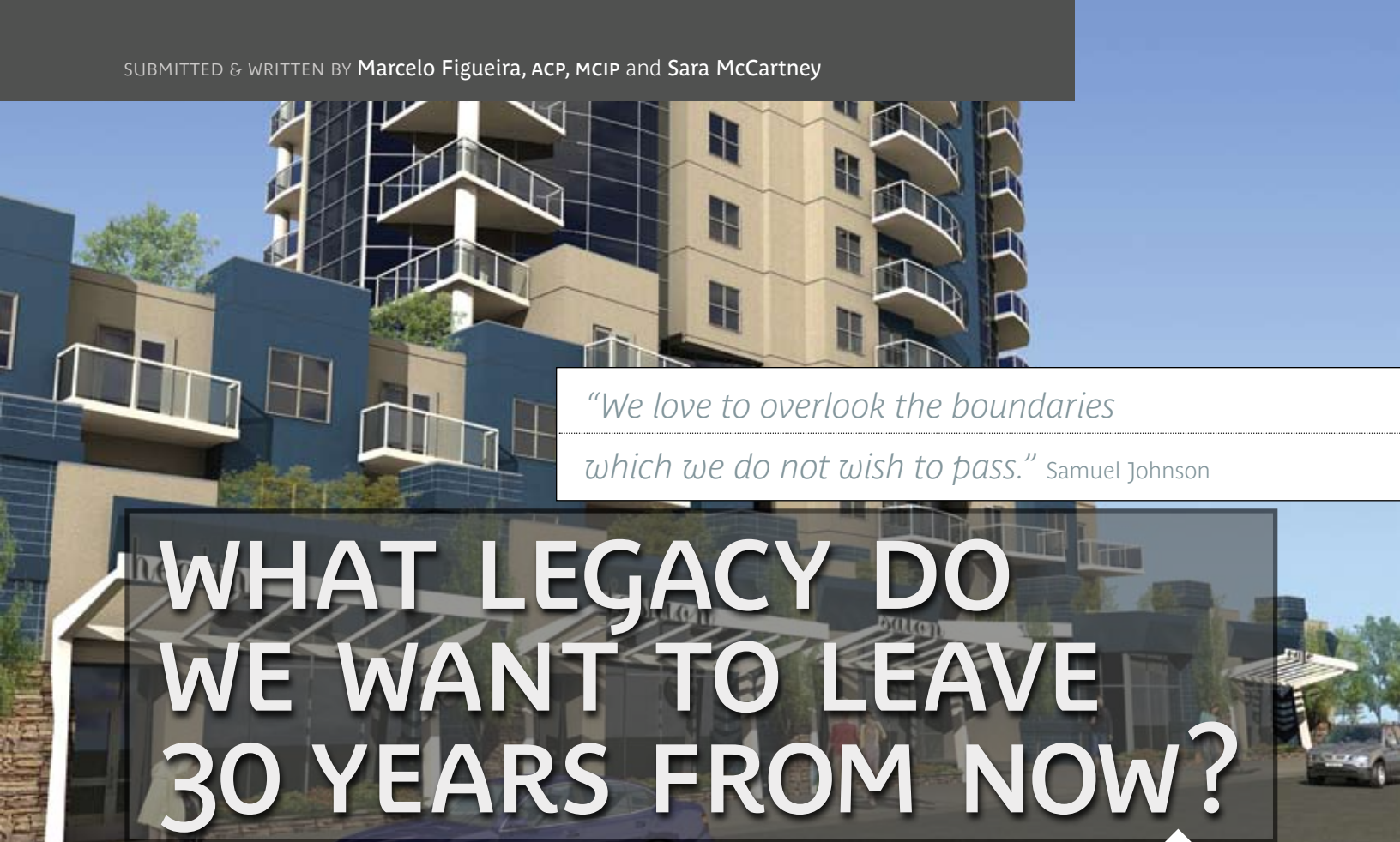
The historical landscape analysis was followed with interviews of local planners, politicians and citizen representatives. Interviewees revealed an interest for landscape histories to play a greater role in the decision-making and planning processes of municipalities in three potential ways: assisting in public consultation visioning for MDPs, IDPs, ASPs, etc.; monitoring cumulative effects and thresholds, especially for ecological components; and forecasting future growth scenarios.

Rural landscapes are an intricate mix of social, economic and ecological histories. All too often our understanding and knowledge about these landscapes is insufficient in the face of the difficult and often complex land planning decisions that are required. As planners we need to ensure that landscape histories are not forgotten in our rush to plan for the future. We need to understand the dynamic and changing nature of the landscapes we plan for. I challenge all of us, to learn more about the landscape histories in which we work and to use that knowledge and understanding to enhance the sustainability of our rural communities. ■

Whitetail Deer; the study area contains a high diversity of flora and fauna.  
SOURCE: Jonathan Schmidt



**Jonathan Schmidt** is a recent graduate from the University of Calgary's Faculty of Environmental Design. He now works for the Oldman River Regional Services Commission. This piece is an excerpt from his Masters Degree Project entitled 'Land Use Land Cover Change in the Public Planning Process' which won awards from both AACIP and CIP. If you would like a complete copy of the thesis please send an email to: [jr.schmidt@gmail.com](mailto:jr.schmidt@gmail.com).



*"We love to overlook the boundaries  
which we do not wish to pass." Samuel Johnson*

# WHAT LEGACY DO WE WANT TO LEAVE 30 YEARS FROM NOW?

I came to Edmonton in May, 2006 for a summer internship. The bus stopped at 104th Street and Jasper Avenue in Downtown, and I recall the hustle and bustle that was going on as the Oilers had won another game and were advancing to the Stanley Cup finals. The atmosphere created by the summer evening, traffic congestion, and people on the streets walking along High Level Bridge heading to Whyte Avenue immediately struck me with a vibrant sense of place that still fascinates me. While enjoying Edmonton's thriving arts and culture, I have been fortunate to be a part of several interdisciplinary teams that have conducted a variety of exciting redevelopment projects such as Strathearn Heights and Vision for the Corner. As part of this interdisciplinary work, I have seen many innovative design concepts, such as the Urbia Towers and the Raintree Tower that will act as catalysts for the City, jumpstarting new and innovative visions into reality, if Edmonton seizes opportunities for them to occur. These projects are innovative in their approach to high density redevelopment and exemplary in the application of smart growth, urban design principles, and the manifestation of spectacular architecture.

The envisioned density, height and scale of these infill projects are substantial departures from traditional forms of redevelopment in Edmonton. This departure requires planners and decision makers to look beyond the City's present approach to design, beyond the current planning patterns and values and, instead, look towards a vision that acknowledges the past but steps into the future, as experienced in the Raintree Tower. For these projects to be successful elements of a neighbourhood, the focus must be on understanding their impacts to turn them into agents of positive change. Similarly, as Edmonton welcomes newcomers from around the world, the integration and manifestation of these developments could be facilitated if zoning regulations welcome, rather than restrict, unanticipated forms of innovative design. Without readily available zoning we have been left with but one tool, direct control, which in Edmonton is called (DC2) Site Specific Direct Control Provision. This time consuming and challenging rezoning process aims to regulate development under the circumstances listed in Table 1 on the following page.

Regency — Pearl Tower  
SOURCE: Brinsmead  
Kennedy Architecture

TABLE 1

## DC2 according to Section 720 of the Edmonton Zoning Bylaw 12800

## General Purpose

The purpose of this Provision is to provide for direct control over a specific proposed development where any other Zone would be inappropriate or inadequate.

## Application

- A** The proposed development exceeds the development provisions of the closest equivalent conventional Zone;
- B** The proposed development requires specific/comprehensive regulations to ensure land use conflicts with neighbouring properties are minimized;
- C** The site for the proposed development has unique characteristics that require specific regulations; or
- D** The ongoing operation of the proposed development requires specific regulations.

The DC2 process should look beyond land use conflicts and site specific characteristics and consider opportunities to validate long-term City policies, provide the density that supports Transit Oriented Development planning, promote sustainable development, and to optimize access to community assets; goals developed for the Regency East mixed use project that are well beyond the capabilities of the present Zoning Bylaw. Nonetheless, innovative designs are often not in tune with the traditional incremental step-by-step approach planners often use to address change – their “comfort zone”. By moving away from planners’ comfort zone, innovative design may cause apprehension for planners supporting new forms of development. Discussions about these new developments, and their impacts, frequently include overlapping themes such as density, height and massing. Without readily available tools to evaluate innovative designs as per the DC2 criteria listed above, the evaluation has become limited to the perception and fear of impacts, which leads to discussions of trade-off and bargaining for neighbourhood improvements.

Looking at existing developments and their design patterns allows one to conclude that many of Edmonton’s zoning design models have exhausted their applicability to foster sustainable development, public art, affordable housing, green sustainable initiatives, etc, encouraging developers to seek the DC2 path to tailor better products. Similarly, Edmonton has seized DC2 applications as a way of mitigating neighbourhood distress caused by the underlying zoning itself, misinterpreting

perceptions of impact and neighbourhoods’ needs. Since innovative designs may provide Edmonton with a useful standard of comparison for future proposals, new planning tools are needed to evaluate their impacts.

However, the real challenge is to overcome fears that are translated into perceptions. Several *perceptions* have created barriers to innovative design, such as disincentive to future neighbourhood development, overwhelming height and massing, shadow impacts, and diminished views. Building height needs to be understood as a contributor to the overall appearance of a city which, if applied, as in the Urbia Towers, to create an urban landmark, may promote, rather than preclude, future neighbourhood development within its vicinity. To overcome the *perception* that the best massing relationship to existing developments is a matter of continuity has been a challenge. High-rises with podium bases that have strong horizontal elements can establish a “ceiling” for the street to counter the psychological effects of the upward perception of high-rise façades. Yet, the perception of shadows created by building height remains a controversial issue worth discussion. Designs such as the Pearl Tower, that have less building volume at the lowest levels and smaller floor plates on the upper levels create shadows as they grow up that have both less area and duration. The *perception* of diminished views is linked to the assets valued by Edmontonians, mainly the river valley. As the City grows and matures other assets and City’s landmarks, such as the Downtown area, may be valued equally by the community.



Urbia Tower

SOURCE: Brinismead  
Kennedy Architecture



Innovative projects are usually asked to contribute back to the public good by way of providing public amenities perceived to be proportional to the increased land value (bonus) received due to rezoning. Nevertheless, Edmonton's current rezoning system often fails to establish a tangible relationship to economics. Based on the experience of cities like Vancouver, our interdisciplinary team has drafted a Public Amenity Contribution Framework that may assist DC2 projects to address controversial themes such as public art, affordable housing, and green sustainable initiatives. For example, we believe that public art that becomes "owned and maintained by Condominium Associations", are not entirely public. Similarly, affordable housing conditions that need to conform to "any future Affordable Housing City policy" may turn development unfeasible, and that by undertaking an "equivalent" LEED™ program, copyrights of the Canadian Green Building Council are implicitly violated and the fundamental principal of impartial assessment is lost.

The City Vision for 2040 states that Edmonton will be a city of design - urban design, architectural design, environmental design, but current status quo disconnects from that vision. Vision for the Corner was a comprehensive DC2 project that successfully mingled rational planning, strong political agreements and commitments to compensate flexible DC2 regulations ensuring the desired

outcome to both the community and the City, but only because people realized that good design is not a given. Recently approved BuiltGreen™ Gold Panorama Tower took a different DC2 path which included continued design improvements and exhaustive negotiations to overcome adversarial positions in order to reach a successful outcome. However, both DC2 models are inadequate, for the former implies a lengthy process and the latter ties developers to rezoning standards that requires a high level of detail and may leave little room for future adjustments due to unpredicted conditions. These precedents and challenging perceptions imply there is a need to develop a clear DC2 framework within timelines that consider opportunities beyond a planner's comfort zone.

We have explored alternative tools to demystify perceptions such as the proposed Public Amenity Contribution Framework and new approaches to Sun Shadow and View Corridor Studies. After expending more than 900 days to approve an award winning project like Strathearn Heights, I cannot help but think our persistency is not only based on professional obligations but on our own *perceptions* of innovative design principals. The features of innovative designs, such as 360° architecture and human scale design, can offset impacts of their unique height in Edmonton's context by providing the appropriate scale of reference and sense of three-dimensional articulation. We would like to invite people to see things differently and consider what iconic design may add to Edmonton's amazing sense of place.■

Strathearn Master Plan  
SOURCE: Sturgess Architecture



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WORK EXPERIENCE: Since joining Armin A. Preiksaitis & Associates Ltd. in 2006, Marcelo has worked on a number of planning and development projects for urban and rural municipalities and private developers. His planning work at the firm includes project management, research and analysis, policy review, and preparation of statutory plans and direct control districts, with particular interest in mixed-use infill and transit-oriented projects designed to achieve sustainable, people-friendly community design and intensification of declining or under-utilized areas.

**Sara McCartney** Sara is in her second work term as an Assistant Planner at Armin A. Preiksaitis & Associates Ltd. She is a third year student in the Bachelor of Environmental Studies in Urban Planning (Dean's Roll) at the University of Waterloo. She conducts research, data collection and assists with consultation activities on a variety of urban and rural planning projects.

# EDMONTON'S RECENT HERITAGE

## Recent Heritage and the Modern Movement

The preservation of built heritage has become a worldwide practice over the past century with governments identifying important buildings that reflect local, regional or national history and culture. To ensure the protection of important buildings, governments at all levels have passed legislation to regulate the use and alteration of historic buildings.

Traditionally, built heritage has been venerated for its temporal value, yet, in recent years, heritage professionals and planners have begun to question whether age must always be the deciding factor in heritage designation. This is especially important in reference to recent heritage. Recent heritage refers to a building or structure that may not be valuable for its age but is valuable as part of local, regional or national heritage. In the same way as traditionally defined heritage, it may be valuable for its architectural, historical, cultural, or environmental value (refers to the location or site of a building). One example of recent heritage is the architecture of the Modern Movement. Many of these buildings

are only 40–50 years old and as such are often not considered “heritage” based on date of construction. Defining heritage solely by age puts these buildings at risk of demolition or redevelopment.

## Modern Heritage in Alberta

In many ways, Modern buildings in Alberta have everything working against them: they don't fit conventional perceptions of heritage as “old”; aesthetically they are often considered unappealing; and the rapid growth occurring in the province over the past number of years has threatened a great many of them with redevelopment or alteration. The Modern period in Alberta represents arguably the most significant period of growth in the history of the province. While the post WWII period represented a period of massive growth across Canada, it is particularly evident in Alberta. The famous oil strike in Leduc in 1947 transformed the economy dramatically. The period immediately after striking oil was a time of rapid and expansive growth, and much of the cultural evidence of this growth can be seen in the architecture of the time, which remains across the province.

Paramount Theatre,  
International style  
SOURCE: City of Edmonton, '06

## The Modern Historic Resource Survey and Inventory

Edmonton provides excellent architectural evidence of this mid-century boom period. In 2003, with another boom on the horizon, the City's Planning and Development department recognized that many of the buildings from this period were being threatened with demolition or alteration. Taking a proactive approach was important in assessing the Modern building stock in the city, so the Urban Design section undertook a survey of Early Modern buildings (1930–1959). The purpose of the survey and inventory was to identify those buildings that were the best examples of their time and add them to the Register and Inventory of Historic Resources in Edmonton.

The method of the initial survey was to examine all City of Edmonton building permits from the period of 1930–1959. A number of criteria were used to filter the permits such as assessing only permits valued over \$15,000 or those permits noting an architect. After an initial screening, this survey resulted in over 2000 buildings across the city. The next step was to assess all of these buildings and choose those that were the best examples of the various types of the Modern style as well as those with the highest level of integrity. The inventory resulted in 96 buildings identified as the best examples of the Modern style for their architectural, historical or cultural value.

In order to ensure a representative cross section of the building stock, houses, apartments, industrial, religious and commercial buildings were all included. The survey and inventory was finalized in the Winter of 2008 and an Open House was held in June 2008 to meet property owners and discuss the addition of these properties to the Register and Inventory of Historic Resources in Edmonton.

## Issues and Outcomes

The Modern Inventory Open House provided a broad spectrum of opinions regarding the heritage value of these buildings. Many property owners were surprised that their building was considered worthy of historic designation. Some noted that the buildings were unattractive or not old enough. There were some property owners who were excited about the opportunities that the Register and Inventory of Historic Resources in Edmonton could provide including incentive programs to restore and designate the property. Others were concerned about the implications of the Register of Historic Resources and felt that it would not be in their best interest to have the property recognized as historic.

The next few months were spent evaluating all responses received from property owners since the open house. There were conversations with property owners interested in designation as well as those who felt that their property should not be added to the list. Out of these responses it was discovered that some buildings had already been significantly altered, have development or demolition permits issued for them, or are in the rezoning process. These buildings provide good examples of the importance of acting early to avoid some of the development pressure. In the end, 85 out of the 96 proposed buildings were added to the Inventory.

The City of Edmonton has already had a number of successes in designating and restoring Modern era buildings, including the Imperial Bank Building (now the World Trade Centre) and the Blakey Residence. This inventory has also generated interest in designating more Modern buildings that belong to owners unaware of their heritage significance.

*Comprehensive analysis and forward thinking is integral in avoiding the heritage losses of Edmonton's past.*



The key issue that arose from this inventory is the importance of educating the public about the importance of recent heritage and why it must be protected today. However, the issue of education is a constant challenge in the heritage field and is not completely unique to Modern architecture. If there is no public support for the preservation of historic resources, the case is much more difficult to make. If the public does not think that Modern buildings are a valuable part of their heritage, how can we as planners justify investing in and protecting these properties? The justification comes in that conservation efforts should not only be focused on what people connect with today, but also what those people and others might see as valuable in another 20 to 30 years. If these buildings are not protected now, they may not survive another 30 years. Moreover, aesthetic value is not the only element of heritage value. Historic buildings are not important simply for being attractive but also for their historic and cultural associations.

Comprehensive analysis and forward thinking is integral in avoiding the heritage losses of Edmonton's past. In order to ensure the continued success of protecting recent heritage, including buildings such as the Bay Building (now Enterprise Square) and the Churchill Wire Building, a proactive and supportive approach must be taken in the face of challenges. If these important buildings from an incredibly significant period in Edmonton's history are not protected, they will remain at risk of alteration or demolition in the future. ■

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Oliver Building, Early Modern style

SOURCE: City of Edmonton, 2006

### What is the Register and Inventory of Historic Resources in Edmonton?

A list of buildings and structures that have been deemed historically and architecturally significant. The Register, includes buildings that are Designated Municipal Historic Resources and protected by Bylaw. The Inventory of Historic Resources, includes buildings that are identified as having heritage value, and are worthy of designation. The Register and Inventory are continually maintained, updated and reviewed.

### What is integrity?

In reference to heritage conservation, integrity refers to the original elements of the building. Buildings with high integrity generally have their original cladding, windows, architectural details, setting, mass, form and scale. As buildings are altered over time the integrity decreases.

### What is built heritage?

Built heritage refers to physical reminders of our past. Built heritage can include buildings, structures, monuments and landscapes.

### What is the Modern Style?

The Modern style originated in the early 20th Century in Europe with a school of architects practicing at the Bauhaus in Germany. The style gained true popularity in North America during WWII and in the post war period. The style was a reaction to the ornate and decorative styles (i.e. Gothic and Classical Revival) that came before it and was a dramatic departure from these. The Modern style is characterized by a lack of ornamentation, a sense of regularity in pattern, and the idea that 'form follows function.'

# Come Join Us in Fort McMurray October 18–20, 2009

Allow us to introduce ourselves,  
we are Jamie Doyle and Tara Steell and we are  
the Co-Chairs for this year's AACIP Conference  
being held in Fort McMurray, Alberta.

Since October of 2008, our committees have been busy pulling together everything from registration forms to hotel rooms to speaker question lists with the goal of hosting thought-provoking discussions, engaging speakers, and a chance to experience Fort McMurray first hand.

This conference presents one of our greatest opportunities to share and learn from each other as practicing professionals, as well as embrace new ideas and alternative perspectives. Our theme this year of making it work — making it last — making it home directly addresses the challenges that we face as planners in improving regulatory practices and public education, in sustaining the environment and natural resources, and in molding cities and towns into true communities that people will call home.

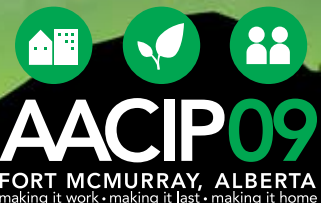
For this reason, it could not be more perfect that Fort McMurray — a city experiencing all of these challenges — should host this conference for the first time ever. A young town with an average age less than 32, Fort McMurray is the engine that drives the economy for much of the province and the country, and is at the forefront in implementing new planning concepts and development partnerships.

No other community offers the opportunity for professional development like Fort McMurray does. Home to the oil sands, the region has experienced unprecedented growth over the last decade. Visitors will not only see the challenges present in this abundant region, but also the rewards. This is a chance to see, learn, and understand about the massive industrial, residential, recreational, and commercial projects that are being developed in Wood Buffalo.

With the current economic situation around the globe, there has never been a more challenging time for planners. Challenge yourself and attend the AACIP Conference 2009. Registration, tentative program, and anything else you need to know about getting to Fort McMurray is available online at [www.aacip.com](http://www.aacip.com)

Look forward to seeing you this fall in Fort McMurray.

Sincerely,  
*Jamie Doyle & Tara Steell*



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