

**EVDS 663**

**Introduction to Public Policy  
Walking Tour**



**VICTORIA PARK**

**The Business Revitalization Zone & the Local  
Community**

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# VICTORIA PARK

## THE HISTORICAL LEGACY OF VICTORIA PARK

Calgary's history began once Fort Calgary was established by the North West Mounted Police (The F Troop) in 1875. The Canada Pacific Railway (CPR)<sup>1</sup> was connecting the East with Western Canada, crossing the Rocky Mountains through Rogers Pass, which meant rapid development in Calgary. Victoria Park was one of the first areas to benefit from the initial wave of investment. It has a hundred years of history and has managed to sustain the early mix of commercial, residential and retail land uses. CPR was a major player in the development of Calgary. It owned all of the land that is now Calgary's downtown core. It was the CPR that laid out the cities oldest neighborhoods including Victoria Park, Inglewood and Mount Royal. Some of Alberta's best hotels are also owned by the CPR, including The Palliser on 9th Avenue, Chateau Lake Louise, Banff Springs Hotel, The Kananaskis Lodge, Jasper Lodge.

## THE ENTREPRENEURIAL DAYS<sup>2</sup>

### **Model Milk (Victoria Restaurant) 308 – 17th Ave S.W.**

Rancher James Colpitts started the Model Milk Company in 1932 to market milk from his dairy farm in Springbank. The company moved to this newly constructed two story brick building in 1934, where they established a very modern milk processing plant complete with the first high temperature pasteurization system in Western Canada. Model Milk Company was the first milk company to use trucks for milk. In the 1960s, this was the largest producing dairy in the Province.

### **Rouleauville Square (Roolowville) 17th Avenue and I" Street S.W.**

Rouleauville was built in the late 1800s and was a French Catholic settlement. It was annexed by Calgary in 1907 and became Calgary's Mission District. With the increase of English speaking settlers the small French community began to adopt English in their school, parish and administration. The North section was mainly Protestant, The Southern part was generally Catholic.

### **St. Mary's Cathedral 219-18th Avenue S.W.**

The parish was established in 1883, near Bragg Creek, as Notre Dame de la Paix. In 1889 a grand sandstone church was built on this site. Money for construction was raised through donations. At this time the Catholic parish was rapidly becoming anglicized and its name was changed from Notre Dame de la Paix to St Mary's. In the summer of 1955 the sandstone church was demolished and replaced with this cathedral designed by Maxwell Bates, a native Calgarian renowned for his work as an artist.

### **Cushing Houses (Voodoo Computer Studio) 101-13th Avenue S.W.**

The two houses owned by members of the Cushing Family. W.H. Cushing came to Calgary in 1883. In January 1885 he started Cushing Brothers Ltd., the Greatest Window & Door manufacturing company in Western Canada. The factory implemented the most advanced machinery available and prided itself on efficiency. The factory was a huge boost to Calgary's economy; in 1910 the payroll was \$117,000.00.

### **CIBC, 1201 1st S.W.**

When the Canadian Bank of Commerce began to establish banking in the West, they would build portable banks in Vancouver and ship them to the prairie provinces.

This bank was one of the first prominent banks they built in the prairies, with residences for the manager and some of the bank employees on the top floor. Each floor has different styles representing different uses.

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<sup>1</sup> The CPR also got into the oil and gas business by starting Canadian Pacific Oil and Gas company in 1958, which in 1971 and became Canada's largest petroleum company at the time.

<sup>2</sup> The historic overview incorporates materials from A Day in the Park. Historical Photographic Archive, Victoria Crossing BRZ, 1999. Walking tour notes, draft, Victoria Crossing BRZ, 2000.

### **Pryce Jones (The Manhattan) 1117-1st S.W.**

The Pryce Jones department store was the Canadian branch of the first mail order company established in England in the 1850s. The store opened on Valentines day, 1911. It featured street level display windows, glass showcases, mirrored pillars, solid oak counters and a Royal Welsh Tea Room. Since the Pryce Jones closed its doors it has been renovated to house residents in 1924, and later became the Income Tax Department. Finally in the 1990's it was renovated as condominium lofts and is now called "Manhattan".

### **TransAlta, 110-12th Avenue S.W.**

This is the site where the Cushing Brother Company had its manufacturing plant. Today it is the TrausAfta building, formerly Calgary Power. Its founding father was W. Max Aitken. Max first set foot in Calgary as a 19-year-old law student, bent on studying with his friend and mentor Bennett. While working at the firm Max took notice of a new bowling alley being built across the street. Max borrowed \$250 from the Union Bank of Canada and with a partner went into business sharing die roles of pin boy and cashier. Selling the business at a profit he moved to Edmonton. He eventually became a leader in Canadian financial circles, was a minister in wartime Britain, and owned one of the world's largest daily newspapers. He entered the House of Commons and eventually the House of Lords, where he got his new name of Lord Beaverbrook. Max came back and with his friend R.B. Bennet found the Calgary Power Company in 1907. In 1981 Calgary Power moved here and changed its name to Trans Alta Utilities Corporation.

### **Chinatown, 1st Street S.W.**

The Chinese first came to the city with the construction of the CPR. Following the completion of the line in 1886, many settled permanently in Calgary. The Chinese formed partnerships and established several grocery stores, restaurants and market gardens. The original Chinatown was where the Calgary tower stands today. A Chinese mission was opened in by Thomas Underwood, with rooms for English language instruction and religious services. In 1910, the Canadian Northern Railway laid a branch line into Calgary. The line would go right next to Chinatown. The line boosted property values in the area and many Chinese were forced to move because they rented living and business space that was being sold by the owners. They purchased land at 2d Avenue and Center Street and the present Chinatown was born.



a variety of non-profit organizations.

### **The YWCA, 223 – 12th Avenue S.W.**

It was very hard for single women in Calgary to find accommodation or work. Many renters felt women were too "high maintenance", while men were easy renters. In 1907 four of Calgary's most influential women raised \$1500 to rent a small house three blocks up as a women's residence. The house quickly became too small, so they managed to raise \$23,000 towards the purchase of six lots and to construct a building. The new building was opened in 1911 and was filled immediately. It provided housing to 60 women and served an average of 260 meals per day for transients and borders. This Y is the oldest purpose built social service facility in the city. Today the building houses a

### **The Warehouse District, 10<sup>th</sup> Ave South**

The warehouse District originally stretched along 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> Avenues from 6<sup>th</sup> street East to 8<sup>th</sup> street west. The proximity to rail tracts was critical and there was an ever-growing demand for warehousing, storage and distribution facilities. Calgary in 1905 was a major gateway. The city had a population of 25,000 and 105 warehouses for dry goods, groceries, tobacco, clothing, furniture and building supplies.

### **Imperial Tobacco Warehouse 220 – 11th Ave. S.E**

Constructed in 1922, the warehouse was used as a tobacco manufacturing facility from 1929 - 1961. Imperial Tobacco, a national company, constructed the building. Later, the site became Bondar's furniture store and was converted to housing. 7 years ago, the building was worth \$1,000,000. Today its value is \$10,000,000.

## **DECLINE AND RESURGENCE**



### **The Business Revitalization Zone**

The Business Revitalization Zone (BRZ) is a self-help program by which business people can jointly raise and administer funds to improve and promote their business. It is established through a bylaw by city council based on support from the business community, and receives financing through a special levy added to business assessments within the BRZ. The bylaw defines the physical boundaries of the BRZ, identifies its purpose and creates a board of directors to administer the program. The BRZ's role can include beautifying and maintaining public property, or marketing and promoting the area.

Alderman Jon Lord, who was the first elected chairman of the Federation of BRZs, says the groups play a major role in community enhancement. "You give them a few dollars to solve problems and they create magic," he adds. "I think they're an absolutely incredible tool to revitalize a community". In Calgary, there are nine existing BRZs - International Avenue (17th Avenue S.E.), Inglewood, the Calgary Downtown Association, Bowness, Uptown 17 (17th Avenue S.W), Fourth Street S.W, Marda Loop, Kensington and Victoria Crossing. Another area, Connaught, is currently looking into starting its own BRZ. It up to the owners to initiate the BRZ - they pay the cost, while property owners and the city share in the benefits - and elect a board of directors to determine how to spend the money. The ultimate goal is to generate more business and, in turn, increase revenue. There are 45 or more BRZs across the province. "They've been very active revitalizing some towns and communities all across the province - a big success story."<sup>3</sup>

### **Booming business**

Victoria Park has an atmosphere of excitement these days with the steady arrival of new businesses and residents bringing back life to a once shabby and economically depressed community. Revitalization has long been a dream for this inner-city neighbourhood, which has been on the verge of discovery for years, and now it's taking off. "It has been just an amazing month - a lot of positive interest,," says Eileen Stan, manager of the Victoria Crossing Business Revitalization Zone (BRZ). The biggest boost was the announcement that Smed bought the Pilkington Building on 11th Avenue S.E. in the Warehouse District, and is renovating and restoring it for Critical Mass, a Web site design company that will bring more than 200 employees.

Darrell Moir, the chief operating officer of Critical Mass, says the building was the perfect fit for the company, with open space, high ceilings, natural light and a lot of character, and Smed is designing it to suit the high-tech company's specific needs while preserving the historic integrity as much as possible. That's not to say that it was an easy decision to relocate to the area, which has suffered from a bad rap due to problems with

<sup>3</sup> The Future is Now in Victoria Park, Maurine McNamee, FFWD, vol.5 #29.

prostitution, drug use and crime. "We honestly believe that that whole area is going to flip around," Moir says, adding that people are starting to give it a chance."

Several new businesses have already moved to the area - Desperados Steakhouse and Sport Saloon opened last week down the road from the Stampede grounds, a large English-style pub is planned at the corner of Macleod Trail and 11th Avenue, three new restaurants have opened, Indian Motorcycle is taking over an old garage. Street S.W. O'Connor's Mens West is moving into the former Volvo dealership, two software companies are opening offices in the Warehouse District, and the Louise Block has attracted some trendy retail tenants.



The flurry of activity is a credit to the Victoria Crossing BRZ, which formed in 1996-97 and has put a lot of effort into improving the area and attracting new businesses and customers. The problems in this area are not unique to any other community in the inner-city," says Stan. "It's got too rich a history to be saddled with that, and the residential and business potential is so high."

The BRZ covers a large and diverse section of the city - from 2nd Street SW to 6th Street S.E. (excluding the Stampede Park), and from the 9th Avenue South railroad tracks on the north side to 17th Avenue South (and farther in one section) on the south side.

It encompasses businesses ranging from the established strip of nightclubs and eateries on 1st Street S.W to the unique Warehouse District, where development only started to occur recently.

Revitalizing Victoria Park means bringing back life to the community and more importantly, bringing investment. It is a great opportunity and a challenge.

## THE CHALLENGES<sup>4</sup>

### Demographic characteristics

| Total Population                                            |               |         |         |         |         |                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------------|
|                                                             | 1995          | 1996    | 1997    | 1998    | 1999    | % Change 1995-99 |
| <b>Victoria Park</b>                                        | 4,431         | 5,217   | 5,441   | 5,616   | 5,687   | 28.3%            |
| <b>Calgary</b>                                              | 749,073       | 767,059 | 790,498 | 819,127 | 842,388 | +12.5%           |
| <i>Source: City of Calgary, Civic Census, 1998 and 1999</i> |               |         |         |         |         |                  |
| Age Distribution, 1996                                      |               |         |         |         |         |                  |
|                                                             | Victoria Park |         | Calgary |         |         |                  |
|                                                             | Number        | Percent | Number  | Percent |         |                  |
| <b>0-4</b>                                                  | 175           | 3.8     | 51,912  | 6.2     |         |                  |
| <b>5-14</b>                                                 | 215           | 4.7     | 114,995 | 13.7    |         |                  |
| <b>15-19</b>                                                | 185           | 4.0     | 55,165  | 6.5     |         |                  |
| <b>20-24</b>                                                | 545           | 11.8    | 63,959  | 7.6     |         |                  |
| <b>25-34</b>                                                | 1,300         | 28.2    | 145,113 | 17.2    |         |                  |

<sup>4</sup> This section draws on Community Profile - Victoria Park, City of Calgary, Community Strategies Policy & Planning, September 2000.

|              |       |       |         |      |
|--------------|-------|-------|---------|------|
| <b>35-44</b> | 870   | 18.9  | 167,494 | 19.9 |
| <b>45-54</b> | 505   | 11.0  | 111,336 | 13.2 |
| <b>55-64</b> | 270   | 5.9   | 57,336  | 6.8  |
| <b>65-74</b> | 305   | 6.6   | 45,911  | 5.5  |
| <b>75+</b>   | 210   | 4.6   | 29,163  | 3.5  |
| <b>Total</b> | 4,610 | 100.0 | 842,388 | 100  |

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1996

| <b>Population Mobility</b> |                        |                                   |                |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|
|                            | <b>Persons Aged 1+</b> | <b>Persons Who Moved, 1995-96</b> |                |
|                            |                        | <b>Number</b>                     | <b>Percent</b> |
| <b>Victoria Park</b>       | 4,585                  | 2,230                             | 48.6           |
| <b>Calgary</b>             | 752,210                | 155,385                           | 20.7           |

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1996

## Economic profile

| <b>Median Household Income <sup>1</sup></b> |             |             |                 |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
|                                             | <b>1990</b> | <b>1995</b> | <b>% Change</b> |
| <b>Victoria Park</b>                        | \$18,040    | \$21,006    | +16.4%          |
| <b>Calgary</b>                              | \$49,744    | \$45,777    | -8.0%           |

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1996

1990 income has been adjusted to 1995 dollars.

| <b>Persons in Low Income Households <sup>2</sup></b> |               |                |               |                |                 |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
|                                                      | <b>1991</b>   |                | <b>1996</b>   |                | <b>% Change</b> |
|                                                      | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percent</b> | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percent</b> |                 |
| <b>Victoria Park</b>                                 | 2,365         | 51.7           | 2,350         | 53.5           | -0.6%           |
| <b>Calgary</b>                                       | 124,465       | 17.8           | 156,375       | 20.6           | +25.6%          |

| <b>Unemployment and Labour Force Participation Rates <sup>3</sup></b> |             |             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                                                       | <b>1991</b> | <b>1996</b> |
| <b>Total Population Aged 15-24 in the Labour Force</b>                | 735         | 650         |
| <b>Participation Rate</b>                                             | 73.0%       | 88.4%       |
| <b>Number Who Are Unemployed</b>                                      | 115         | 45          |
| <b>Unemployment Rate - Victoria Park</b>                              | 15.5%       | 6.9%        |
| <b>Unemployment Rate - Calgary</b>                                    | 12.3%       | 12.5%       |
| <b>Total Population Aged 25+ in the Labour Force</b>                  | 2,250       | 2,415       |
| <b>Participation Rate</b>                                             | 67.7%       | 69.3%       |
| <b>Number Who Are Unemployed</b>                                      | 350         | 255         |
| <b>Unemployment Rate - Victoria Park</b>                              | 15.6%       | 10.6%       |
| <b>Unemployment Rate - Calgary</b>                                    | 7.2%        | 5.6%        |

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1996



## Social profile

| Total Persons in Private Households<br>by Living Arrangements, 1996 <sup>4</sup> |               |         |         |         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------|---------|---------|
|                                                                                  | Victoria Park |         | Calgary |         |
|                                                                                  | Number        | Percent | Number  | Percent |
| <b>Total Persons in Private Households</b>                                       | 4,400         | 100.0   | 761,020 | 100.0   |
| - Total Family Persons                                                           | 1,885         | 42.8    | 624,315 | 82.0    |
| - Total Non-Family Persons                                                       | 2,510         | 57.0    | 136,705 | 18.0    |
| <b>Total Non-Family Persons</b>                                                  | 2,510         | 100.0   | 136,705 | 100.0   |
| - Living With Relatives                                                          | 160           | 6.4     | 23,515  | 17.2    |
| - Living With Non-Relatives                                                      | 720           | 28.7    | 44,585  | 32.6    |
| - Living Alone                                                                   | 1,625         | 64.7    | 68,605  | 50.2    |
| Population 15 Years and Over by Marital Status, 1996                             |               |         |         |         |
|                                                                                  | Victoria Park |         | Calgary |         |
|                                                                                  | Number        | Percent | Number  | Percent |
| <b>Total Population Aged 15+</b>                                                 | 4,215         | 100.0   | 600,130 | 100.0   |
| <b>Never Married</b>                                                             | 2,320         | 55.0    | 192,630 | 32.1    |
| <b>Married</b>                                                                   | 840           | 19.9    | 314,525 | 52.4    |
| <b>Separated</b>                                                                 | 225           | 5.3     | 18,520  | 3.1     |
| <b>Divorced</b>                                                                  | 590           | 14.0    | 49,500  | 8.2     |
| <b>Widowed</b>                                                                   | 245           | 5.8     | 24,950  | 4.2     |
| <i>Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1996</i>                         |               |         |         |         |

| Families that are Headed by a Lone Parent |      |      |          |
|-------------------------------------------|------|------|----------|
|                                           | 1991 | 1996 | % Change |
| Total Families With Children              | 390  | 355  | -9.0%    |
| Number Headed by a Lone Parent            | 175  | 100  | -42.9%   |
| Percent Headed by a Lone Parent           | 44.9 | 28.2 | na       |

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1996

### Social Isolation

|                                                    | Victoria Park |         | Calgary |         |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------|---------|---------|
|                                                    | Number        | Percent | Number  | Percent |
| Persons Living Alone, 1996                         | 1,625         | 36.9    | 68,605  | 9.0     |
| Seniors Living Alone, 1996                         | 395           | 78.2    | 18,055  | 28.3    |
| Persons Who Speak Neither English nor French, 1996 | 120           | 2.6     | 15,090  | 2.0     |

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1996

### Ethnic profile

| Immigrant Population |         |         |         |         |          |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|
|                      | 1991    |         | 1996    |         | % Change |
|                      | Number  | Percent | Number  | Percent |          |
| Victoria Park        | 1,600   | 33.8    | 1,570   | 34.1    | -1.9%    |
| Calgary              | 147,210 | 20.9    | 165,295 | 21.7    | +12.3%   |

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1996

| Immigrant Population by Place of Birth, 1996 |               |         |         |         |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------|---------|---------|---------|
|                                              | Victoria Park |         | Calgary |         |
|                                              | Number        | Percent | Number  | Percent |
| Total Immigrant Population                   | 1,570         | 34.1    | 165,295 | 21.7    |
| United States                                | 45            | 2.9     | 8,835   | 5.3     |
| Central and South America                    | 180           | 11.5    | 7,445   | 4.5     |
| Caribbean and Bermuda                        | 30            | 1.9     | 4,760   | 2.9     |
| Europe                                       | 655           | 41.7    | 66,375  | 40.2    |
| Africa                                       | 75            | 4.8     | 8,915   | 5.4     |
| Asia                                         | 590           | 37.6    | 66,210  | 40.1    |
| Oceania and Other                            | 0             | 0.0     | 2,750   | 1.7     |

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1996

| Immigrant Population by Year of Immigration, 1996 |               |         |         |         |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------|---------|---------|
|                                                   | Victoria Park |         | Calgary |         |
|                                                   | Number        | Percent | Number  | Percent |
| Total Immigrant Population                        | 1,570         | 34.1    | 165,295 | 21.7    |
| Before 1961                                       | 160           | 10.2    | 26,690  | 16.1    |
| 1961-1970                                         | 125           | 8.0     | 21,030  | 12.7    |



|                  |     |      |        |      |
|------------------|-----|------|--------|------|
| <b>1971-1980</b> | 190 | 12.1 | 41,555 | 25.1 |
| <b>1981-1990</b> | 395 | 25.2 | 42,655 | 25.8 |
| <b>1991-1996</b> | 700 | 44.6 | 33,365 | 20.2 |

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1996

| <b>Visible Minority Population, 1996<sup>5</sup></b> |                      |  |                |  |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--|----------------|--|
|                                                      | <b>Victoria Park</b> |  | <b>Calgary</b> |  |
| <b>Number</b>                                        | 1,005                |  | 126,045        |  |
| <b>Percent</b>                                       | 21.8                 |  | 18.7           |  |
| <b>Aboriginal Population, 1996<sup>6</sup></b>       |                      |  |                |  |
| <b>Number</b>                                        | 165                  |  | 14,500         |  |
| <b>Percent</b>                                       | 3.6                  |  | 1.9            |  |

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1996



**Housing**

| <b>Total Occupied Dwellings by Tenure, 1996</b> |                      |                |                |                |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                                                 | <b>Victoria Park</b> |                | <b>Calgary</b> |                |
|                                                 | <b>Number</b>        | <b>Percent</b> | <b>Number</b>  | <b>Percent</b> |
| <b>Total Occupied Private Dwellings</b>         | 2,695                | 100.0          | 288,320        | 100.0          |
| <b>Owned</b>                                    | 270                  | 10.0           | 185,515        | 64.3           |
| <b>Rented</b>                                   | 2,425                | 90.0           | 102,805        | 35.7           |

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1996

| <b>Total Occupied Dwellings by Structure Type, 1996</b> |                      |                |                |                |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                                                         | <b>Victoria Park</b> |                | <b>Calgary</b> |                |
|                                                         | <b>Number</b>        | <b>Percent</b> | <b>Number</b>  | <b>Percent</b> |
| <b>Total Occupied Private Dwellings</b>                 | 2,695                | 100.0          | 288,320        | 100.0          |
| <b>Single Detached</b>                                  | 140                  | 5.2            | 166,190        | 57.6           |
| <b>Semi-Detached</b>                                    | 15                   | 0.6            | 18,565         | 6.4            |
| <b>Row House</b>                                        | 10                   | 0.4            | 26,540         | 9.2            |
| <b>Apartment, Detached Duplex</b>                       | 2,510                | 93.1           | 75,085         | 26.0           |
| <b>Other</b>                                            | 20                   | 0.7            | 1,940          | 0.7            |

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1996

| <b>Occupied Private Dwellings Requiring Major Repair</b> |             |             |                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------|
|                                                          | <b>1991</b> | <b>1996</b> | <b>%<br/>Change</b> |
| <b>Total Occupied Private Dwellings</b>                  | 2,800       | 2,695       | -3.8%               |
| <b>Number Requiring Major Repair</b>                     | 360         | 235         | -34.7%              |
| <b>Percent Requiring Major Repair</b>                    | 12.9        | 8.7         | na                  |

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1996

For more information about the housing situation in Calgary, refer to the Policy & Planning Division's [Housing Report](#).