Mega-events and community obsolescence: redevelopment versus rehabilitation in Victoria Park East


Abstract

The expansion of the Stampede into the downtown core, the growth of the leisure industry, and its high revenue potential, especially to middle-class consumers, has begun to play a more important role in urban tourism has also become big business (Mullins 1991), not necessarily to experience the city itself, but rather to enjoy the created attractions. The shift away from the initiatives in urban growth and competition with other cities (Kearns and Philo 1993), and change popular urban images from anomic and ugly to playgrounds and pleasure.

Community leaders began to feel a sense of betrayal that the recent rehabilitation efforts were slipping away, and came to describe the Stampede as “like cancer ... it just keeps getting into you and keeps spreading.” (f.11) As one resident put it, “We were told we'd be left in peace. But we can't fight these people. They're too strong for us. I've spent thousands of dollars fixing up my little house. I can’t afford to move out of it. There’s nowhere else I can afford to go” (Calgary Sun, 18 December 1980). Homeowners who had upgraded their homes were particularly angry, and felt that the NIP had been a waste of taxpayers' money. Community leaders even wrote to the International Olympic Committee to ask them to tell the city to build the coliseum elsewhere (Calgary Sun, 18 December 1980). Other property owners saw the Coliseum decision as an opportunity to control of the community from further incursions. An additional consequence of Stampede intentions to expand was that, since power rested with the Stampede Board, and since their plans were truly in process and only released in segments, the community felt powerless and Stampede decisions were viewed as secretive. Thus a strong view of the Stampede as an antagonist developed.

Resume

This article attributes the degradation of the quartier urbain de Victoria Park East a Calgary aux visees expansionnistes du Stampede et a la planification de <<mega-events>> comme les Jeux olympiques de 1988 et l’Exposition universelle de 2005 (la candidature de Calgary n’a pas ete retenue dans le dernier cas). Les transformations du quartier sont aussi vues comme des consequences de changements demographiques lies a la confrontation entre les forces favorables a la protection du caracter residentiel du quartier et les forces qui souhaitent un redevelopment urbain a plus forte dense. Le cas illustre bien les changements succesifs de paradigme en planification urbaine durant les quatre dernieres decennies, soit celui de la renovation urbain dans les annees 60, celui de la preservation des quartiers dans les annees 70, celui de l’entrepreneuriat urbain dans les annees 80 et 90 et, enfin, les tendances recentes a la marchandisation des loisirs urbains.

The post-war deindustrialization of cities and the growth of suburban living and retailing (primarily through suburban malls and the creation of edge cities) profoundly challenged the existence of many central cities (Palen 1995). In some instances, the viability of the downtown core was severely threatened, while in other instances, the core served a day-time work force in office buildings who returned to the suburbs at the completion of the work day and left the core essentially vacant—with the exception of an underclass of transients or unemployed. On the other hand, when employment opportunities in the core remained strong for white collar workers, and as commuting became more time-consuming, a rediscovery of the advantages of central city living occurred through renovation or redevelopment (Broadway 1995; Bennett 1990). Older homes in the central city had the advantage of proximity to the core, and a process of population change through displacement of low income or working class residents by the new middle class, known as gentrification, has been well-documented (Ley 1996a; Smith and Williams 1986; Caulfield 1994; Smith 1996; Bailey and Robertson 1997).

Hand in hand with this urban restructuring has been the desire to revitalize the core, to rid it of obsolete industrial structures (Zukin 1989) and to ensure it is lively beyond normal office hours. The new middle-class population of the central city had money to spend and looked to the core to provide opportunities for conspicuous consumption. A key component of this “back to the city” movement (Laska and Spain 1980) then has been the role of the downtown in the provision of entertainment (Hannigan 1998). Revitalizing the downtown through a leisure or symbolic economy (Zukin 1995) was intended to spur economic development through new leisure industries, serve as a magnet for new initiatives in urban growth and competition with other cities (Kearns and Philo 1993), and change popular urban images from anomie and ugly to playgrounds and pleasure. Urban tourism has also become big business (Mullins 1991), not necessarily to experience the city itself, but rather to enjoy the created attractions. The shift away from the smokestacks of industrialism to palaces of entertainment illustrates a whole new purpose for the downtown core, to create what Ley (1996a) calls “the convivial city.”

While concert halls and museums have almost always represented upper class interests in the downtown area, and the marginalized have always found their own lesser pursuits in the downtown core, the growth of the leisure industry, and its high revenue potential, especially to middle-class consumers, has begun to play a more important role in
central city revitalization (e.g., Toronto Harbourfront, Winnipeg's The Forks, Montreal's Old Town and Vancouver's Granville Island. Arbitis and Kiernan 1989). Stadiums, for example, have often been e x p u s e d as pretexts for site-clearing of older areas, and are now more likely to be multi-event entertainment centers rather than just athletic venues. Skydome in Toronto is not just about sporting or other events hosted within the stadium, but includes a wide variety of other leisure pursuits (Kidd 1995), and bills itself as "the world's greatest entertainment centre." The CN Tower in Toronto is no longer just an elevation landmark to view the expanse of the city and its region, but has now been renovated to make it a major retail and entertainment destination, with a "Thrill Zone" in addition to the usual shopping/dining alternatives. A proposed entertainment complex in Toronto, known as Technodome, promises a blend of housing and a research park, anchored by a wide range of entertaining activities (Honey 1998). Cities now are increasingly evaluated by the popularity of their downtown leisure attractions.

The Urban Impact of Mega-Events

One of the neglected aspects of urban analysis has been the impact that mega-events have on host cities (Hiller 1999). Mega-events can be defined as high-profile, one-time events (e.g., Olympics, World's Fairs/Expos) of limited duration, that require fixed-date advance planning, massive expenditures and infrastructural improvements (Hall 1996). Cities actively bid to host such events as though owning the event was in itself a substantial achievement, justifying further enormous commitments of money, time and energy. In many ways, the mega-event is in itself an entertainment spectacle, drawing large crowds of both tourists and urban residents (Ley and Olds 1988), and in that sense is a prototype of the kind of urban transformation supporting leisure commodification.(f.1) But because the mega-event is of short duration, its benefits are somewhat limited, unless it underscores a more permanent transformation for leisure pursuits.(f.2) Thus, the construction of a new stadium in Atlanta for the 1996 Summer Olympics became a new stadium for the Atlanta Braves baseball team, and the former French Pavilion at Expo 67 has now become Casino Montreal. The spectacular Buckminster Fuller geodesic dome, which was the American Pavilion for Montreal's Expo, is now run by the Canadian government as Biosphere, hosting visitors on environmental themes. Over three million annual visitors come to the site of the 1976 Olympics in Montreal called Olympic Park, with one of the top attractions being the converted velodrome which is now a Biodome. Both the Olympic Saddledome in Calgary (1988 Olympics) and BC Place in Vancouver (Expo 86) are centres for a wide range of entertainment, and the Canadian Pavilion for Expo 86 is now a cruise ship terminal. Post-event usage then lies many mega-events to leisure commodification and the makeover of troubled inner cities to something more aesthetically acceptable to its new residents (Roche 1992).

To begin with mega-event structures, however, is to miss the point that the land on which they are placed had a prior function, which helps explain the land’s selection for redevelopment. Inner-city land is particularly vulnerable, given the age of existing structures and their changing uses (e.g., False Creek in Vancouver. Gutstein 1986). Victoria Park is one of Calgary’s first residential communities, but it is also the home of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede, which organizes the annual world-famous Calgary Stampede, drawing over one million leisure consumers. Stampede Park is also the location of the Olympic Saddledome, a key venue for the 1988 Winter Olympics, and now the home of the Calgary Flames NHL Hockey Club that also manages the stadium for multiple entertainment purposes. Furthermore, Victoria Park was chosen as the site for Expo 2001, a bid which failed in 1997. Victoria Park is also simply home to people who live in the community. The struggle between community objectives, urban leisure consumption trends, as understood by the Stampede Board, and mega-event objectives, have produced a saga of conflict and struggle over many years. The purpose of the research initially was to determine whether, and how, mega-event planning had any impact on the community. As the research progressed, it became clear that conceptions of the post-modern city and the commodification of historic regional themes, which could be marketed for their leisure and entertainment value, was an important intervening explanatory variable in understanding pressure on the community. The thrust of this paper then, is to attempt to describe and explain the evolution of this inner city community in the light of these tensions, and to show how mega-events are related to both urban restructuring and leisure commodification.

The Process of Obsolescence in Victoria Park

Victoria Park is an old community, adjacent to the downtown core. It traces its origins back to the founding of the City of Calgary because of its proximity to the fort (Fort Calgary) established to protect the settlement in 1887, and the railroad station, built by the Canadian Pacific Railway, which reached Calgary in 1883. By 1902, most of its residential structures had been built, and about 50% of its population were employed by the CPR. The decision of the CPR to move its shops to Ogden removed many of its railroaders, and even more significant was the advent of the streetcar in 1909, which made some suburbanization possible. But it is clear that 1905 to 1920 were the prime years of the community as a more middle-class neighbourhood (City of Calgary 1977). Some unique sandstone residences housed important people in the growing city, and churches and schools flourished along with a wide range of businesses.

Over time, the community began to change as the more prosperous moved far away from the core, and as at least some of the larger homes were converted from single family to rooming houses. At the northern edge of the community was the railroad tracks, which meant that warehouses, light industry and other commercial operations were typical there. Thus, if in its initial stages, proximity of residence to commerce and protection provided the community with stability, increase in size and scale of the city changed the role and status of Victoria Park. Consequently, juxtaposed to well-kept single family homes of residents who had strong roots in the community, a different population type developed of renters seeking low-cost accommodation: the latter had few roots in the community and used it as a "point of entry," particularly as immigrants/migrants/parolees, until more suitable permanent accommodation could be obtained. By 1971, Victoria Park (Victoria's eastern half) was 24.6% of its population were employed by the CPR. The decision of the CPR to move its shops to Ogden removed many of its railroaders, and even more significant was the advent of the streetcar in 1909, which made some suburbanization possible. But it is clear that 1905 to 1920 were the prime years of the community as a more middle-class neighbourhood (City of Calgary 1977). Some unique sandstone residences housed important people in the growing city, and churches and schools flourished along with a wide range of businesses.

The concept of neighborhood succession refers to the process by which the characteristics of dwelling inhabitants in a community change over time. The quality of the dwellings themselves may also change over time, and when structures move toward a state of disrepair, the result is deterioration. When neighborhood succession shifts to lower income residents and physical deterioration also takes place, what has occurred reflects "spatially concentrated disinvestment" (Mebelougb, Hock-Smit and Linneman 1996, 1781). In other words, the position taken here is that standard housing is the result of an active process of disinvestment in housing stock in particular, and in the local community in general. The decision to rehabilitate housing and thereby prolong the life of the existing community, or not to do so, is a conscious one in response to endogenous and exogenous factors. This shift in the relative decline in the attractiveness of a community to buyers and renters is likely to be caused by factors such as changes in demand (Baum-Snow 1987, 38). Something must lead a significant number of people to withdraw investment in maintenance or rehabilitation because they believe that something negative is about to happen to the neighborhood (e.g., a new highway, invasion by a new social group) (Mebelougb, Hock-Smit and Linneman 1996, 1784). Obsolescence may be caused by endogenous factors such as perceptions of style or structure of buildings, poor community facilities, inadequate stores or schools, or transportation or accessibility issues. Exogenous factors refer to decisions external to the community that impact the community based on the perception of better opportunities elsewhere in the urban field, where demand may be greater, and financial returns may be quicker and more secure. Decisions by financial institutions to withdraw mortgage funds from an entire neighborhood (known as redlining), or speculators outside the community deliberately under-maintaining property in order to maximize short-term profits through rent (known as milking), are two of the exogenous factors at work in the process of disinvestment.

Over the last 20 years, Victoria Park has come to be divided into two segments, Victoria Park East and Victoria Park West (see Figure 1). Victoria Park East is the focus of this study because it is the segment where locational obsolescence has occurred, largely due to exogenous factors. Perhaps the most critical bifurcating factor was the decision by the city to make MacLeod Trail the major southern transportation spine out of the downtown core, which included the rapid transit corridor. The community was already bounded by the railroad tracks to the north, the Elbow River to the East and Stampede Park to the south. The prospective eastern boundary of the Beltline development was thus bounded by the light rail transit rail line, a one-way, northbound traffic artery on MacLeod Trail, and a one-way southbound parallel to it on First Street, which served as a formidable barrier. Victoria Park West has received substantial investment, has a wide variety of multiple unit dwellings, and blends nicely with what is known as the Beltline and other parts of the central city. Its population has gown from 2,064 in 1968 to 2,957 in 1997, whereas Victoria Park East, on the other hand, which has more definite boundaries, has shown continuous population decline, from 3,139 in 1968 to 837 in 1997 (Table 1), and, until recently, has shown few signs of reinvestment. In fact, reports suggest that redlining has been practiced in the community for a considerable number of years and numerous properties are owned by absentee landlords. While the south transportation corridor decision were not specifically aimed at a considerable area, and had an indirect but real consequence for the community, what needs to be examined is how and why disinvestment contributed to neighborhood obsolescence, and to understand the struggle this issue raised both within, and for, the community.
Land Use Conflicts and Catalysts to Obsolescence

The fact that a major Olympic structure was built in Victoria Park East, and the fact that Expo 2005 was slated for the same area, suggests that an urban analysis of the impact of mega-events in this community is important. However, such a discussion must be supplemented by the fact that Stampede Park is at the southern end of the community.

Whereas mega-events are one-time events, the Stampede can be considered either a hallmark event, because it is a distinctive recurring (annual) event, or a festival, because it is a public-themed celebration (Getz 1997, 5-8). Over the last 20 years, but most explicitly since 1990, the Stampede has made it clear that its ambitions are to become a year-round entertainment centre, which would require significant expansion. In many ways, it is already such a centre with trade shows, athletic events, horse racing and concerts. However, it desires to attract the more casual leisure consumer and tourist with stores, restaurants and other forms of entertainment with a western frontier theme, and it must expand to do so. Thus an annual festival, two mega-event bids, and a desire to expand leisure and tourism opportunities, join together to have an enormous impact on a residential community, potentially acting as a catalyst to obsolescence.

The evolution of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede as an organization, and Stampede Park as a location, is in itself a reflection of the transformation which the city has undergone (Gray 1985). The Calgary Agricultural Society was formed in 1885 in order to organize the first agricultural exhibition in the region, and in 1889, 94 acres were purchased from the Dominion Government for $235, with the restriction that none of the land was to be divided into lots and sold (Allison, Lichkowski, Litzenberger and O’Reilly 1975). The exhibition grounds was named in honour of the ruling Queen Victoria and became known as Victoria Park. Over time, the residential community also took on this name. The first large fair, attracting over 89,000 visitors, was known as the Dominion Exhibition in 1908, and in 1923 the Exhibition combined with the Stampede to form the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede. In 1911, the city took over the debt and assumed ownership of the property, and a board of directors, including representation from city council, controls the operation of the entity. Through the years, the agricultural rationale for the annual Stampede has slowly receded, to the point that the display of agricultural products has become minor in comparison to the commodification of ranching into spectator events, such as the rodeo and chuckwagon races. While these activities give the Stampede its distinctive quality, most of the Stampede is marketed as an urban fair and tourist attraction. The continual upgrading of Stampede Park, and its location in the central city area, has enhanced the site as a location for multiple uses. However, the same location has also enhanced its significance for housing.

Table 1 -- Changes in Population and Housing Units in Victoria Park East Thirty Year Period, 1968-1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Housing Units</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>2593</td>
<td>546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>2560</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>2447</td>
<td>465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>2404</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>2225</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>2084</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>1823</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>1676</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>1649</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>1562</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 -- Changes in Population and Housing Units in Victoria Park East Thirty Year Period, 1968-1997

Population Housing Units

V.P. V.P. V.P. V.P.

East Stampede East Stampede

References

The strength of the residential community was initially very clear as the Victoria Park School was built in 1903, a hospital was located there, and other establishments like a bakery, newspaper and churches were also part of the neighbourhood. By World War I, it was noted that Victoria Park was "a pleasant residential area" with "a deep sense of community spirit" (Allison, Lichkowski, Litzenberger and O'Reilly 1975, 11). In 1902, all of the dwellings were single family residential, and by 1922, 88% of the dwellings were still single family residential (Axworthy 1979, 97). It was during the war years (1921) that the decision was first made to create temporary living quarters at the exhibition grounds for homeless men, and Axworthy has argued that this began the process of the stigmatization of the area. But Jamieson (1976, 8) has also pointed out that the construction of a new hospital elsewhere, and the reduction of the hospital in the community to a site for the treatment of contagious disease, had already reduced the amenity-value of the community. In addition, the switching/warehousing functions of the railroad contributed to a sense that the community was "on the wrong side of the tracks" (Jamieson 1976, 12). By the time the Depression and World War II had ended (1947), the number of unskilled workers living in the community had increased, the percentage of single family homes had dropped to 78%, some homes were being subdivided, and commercial activity had increased. In the succeeding years, Victoria Park increasingly attracted a rental population due to lower rents, families moving out to newer suburbs, and increasing single person households. Since the area was so close to the downtown core, an upzoning to R-5 multi-family housing occurred in the 1950s in anticipation of new development. Yet, development seldom occurred, and land values were surpassed by surrounding communities (Axworthy 1979, 131).

A Profile of a Community in Decline

Table 1 demonstrates that the decline of population in the area has been steady and definitive. Perhaps the most direct cause is the loss of housing units, which also declined from 1968-1997. The expansion of the Stampede to 14 Avenue led to the virtual disappearance of all housing in Victoria Park (Stampede) in 1979-1980, but the purchase of homes and their demolition, particularly by the Stampede Board noah of 14 Avenue, also created a "warzone effect" of scattered, empty lots. By 1997, Victoria Park East had less than one-third of the houses and population it had in 1968. Table 2 shows that by 1968, well over half of all housing units were converted from single family to multiple residential units, but by 1997, that category of housing units had declined severely from 810 units to 107, which by that time was about one-quarter of all housing units remaining. The decline in both housing units and population is graphically displayed in Figure 2. From 1968 to 1997, two-thirds of the population had left the area (Table 3), and the largest loss of population was among those living in converted multi-unit houses. The percentage of the population living in rental properties, however, still represented the overwhelming majority of community residents.

The likelihood of the redevelopment of the area is revealed in Table 4 which shows that only 8.6% of all occupied dwellings were owner-occupied by 1997 (or 91.4% were absentee owned) but that, when only single family homes are considered, there was a pocket (38.3%) of single family homes that were still owner-occupied. In 1968, the majority of all single family homes were owner-occupied, but that number had dropped to 36% by 1997. In both 1968 and 1997, Victoria Park East deviated quite significantly from the clear pattern of high home ownership elsewhere in the city. In both 1968 and 1997, over one-half of all households were single person households (Table 5), which again deviated greatly from Calgary's overall pattern, and the percentage of four-person family households was also much less.

In the 1990s, Victoria Park East also differed greatly from the population of the city at large on a whole range of indicators (Table 6). Its population was more male dominant, older, had fewer persons per household, more common law couples, lone parent families, single persons, and proportionately more persons widowed, separated or divorced. Fewer people were married or lived in single detached houses than other Calgarians. Fully 90% of the population were renters who paid a much lower rate of rent than elsewhere in the city. The median, individual income was considerably less than other city residents, and there were more people with a poorer education. The high level of transfer payments as a source of income is revealed by the fact that only 17.6% of Victoria Park East residents receive their income from employment (almost all of which is part-time), whereas the comparable figure for all Calgarians is 80.8%.

Table 2 -- Housing Units by Structure Type for VictoriaPark East

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1968</th>
<th>1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>V.P. East (%) V.P. Stampede Total (%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>V.P. East (%) V.P. Stampede Total (%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Single Family 220 (18.3) 70 290 (20.3)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Single Family 220 (18.3) 70 290 (20.3)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duplexes 19 (1.6) 11 30 (2.1)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Duplexes 19 (1.6) 11 30 (2.1)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Converted 687 (57.1) 123 810 (56.6)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Converted 687 (57.1) 123 810 (56.6)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apartments 249 (20.7) 16 265 (18.5)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Apartments 249 (20.7) 16 265 (18.5)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other 29 (2.4) 8 37 (2.6)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Other 29 (2.4) 8 37 (2.6)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Units 1204 270 1432</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total Units 1204 270 1432</strong></td>
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### Table 2: Housing Units by Structure Type for Victoria Park East 1968 and 1997 -- continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>V.P. East (%)</th>
<th>V.P. Stampede</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>78 (18.8)</td>
<td>7 (2.0)</td>
<td>85 (20.2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duplexes</td>
<td>2 (.5)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>2 (.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Converted</td>
<td>107 (25.8)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>107 (25.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td>194 (46.9)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>194 (46.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>33 (8.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>33 (7.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Units</strong></td>
<td>414</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled and computed from special run data supplied by the City of Calgary.

Note: Victoria Park is subdivided into four areas for census purposes: V.P. Southwest, V.P. West, V.P. East and V.P. Stampede. The latter two areas are the only ones included in this study.

### Table 3: Population by Structure Type for Victoria Park East 1968 and 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>V.P. East (%)</th>
<th>V.P. Stampede</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>756 (29.2)</td>
<td>234 (8.8)</td>
<td>990 (31.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duplexes</td>
<td>47 (1.8)</td>
<td>41 (1.4)</td>
<td>88 (2.8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Converted</td>
<td>138 (16.7)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>138 (16.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td>383 (14.8)</td>
<td>30 (1.0)</td>
<td>413 (13.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>101 (3.9)</td>
<td>29 (1.0)</td>
<td>130 (4.1)</td>
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<td><strong>Total Units</strong></td>
<td>2593</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>3139</td>
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### Table 3 -- Population by Structure Type for Victoria Park East 1968 and 1997 -- continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V.P. East (%)</th>
<th>V.P. Stampede</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>198 (24.0)</td>
<td>210 (25.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duplexes</td>
<td>4 (.5)</td>
<td>0 (.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Converted</td>
<td>1306 (50.4)</td>
<td>212 (48.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td>276 (33.5)</td>
<td>0 (33.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>209 (25.3)</td>
<td>0 (25.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Units 825 12 837

Source: Compiled and computed from special run data supplied by the City of Calgary.

Note: A "Converted Structure" refers to a home that originally was single family or duplex but which now contains more than one residential unit. "Other" refers to rooming houses which in many instances might also be categorized as converted.

### Table 4 -- Percentage of Dwellings Owner-Occupied for Victoria Park East and Calgary by Structure Type 1968 and 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V.P.</th>
<th>V.P.</th>
<th>V.P.</th>
<th>V.P.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Stampede</td>
<td>Calgary</td>
<td>East Stampede</td>
<td>Cal-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>71.6 63.8 86.6 38.3 71.4[*] 91.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Converted</td>
<td>15.3 4.5 30.7 2.1 0 24.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Occupied</td>
<td>23.1 30.4 59.0 8.6 71.4[*] 64.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled and computed from special run data supplied by the City of Calgary.
Note: [*] As noted in Table 1, a small part of V.P. Stampede is outside our boundary where only seven homes remain, five of which are owner occupied.

Table 5 -- Percentage of Households by Size, Victoria Park and Calgary 1968 and 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1968</th>
<th>1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 person household</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>44.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 person household</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 person household</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled and computed from special run data supplied by the City of Calgary

Table 6 -- Selected Comparisons for Victoria Park East and Calgary. 1991[*] and 1996[**]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>Calgary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td>[*] Male 64% 51%</td>
<td>[**] Female 35% 49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Age:</td>
<td>[*] 46.4 34.1 years</td>
<td>[**] 46.4 34.1 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Persons per Household:</td>
<td>[*] 1.6 2.7</td>
<td>[**] 1.6 2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common-Law Couples:</td>
<td>[*] 29% 9%</td>
<td>[**] 29% 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Parent Families:</td>
<td>[*] 36% 13%</td>
<td>[**] 36% 13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Single Persons: 47% 31%
Married Persons: 16% 53%
Widowed, Separated, Divorced: 38% 16%
Single Detached Houses: 18% 59%
Apartments: 77% 21%
Rented Dwellings: 90% 39%
Average Rent: $427.00 $640.00
Movers Over Previous 5 Years: 74% 59%
Non Official Language as Home Language: 25% 8%
Less Than Grade 9 Education: 18% 5%
Post-Secondary Without H.S. Certificate: 34% 22%
Median Individual Income: $10,694.00 $23,504.00
% of Income From Employment: 17.6% 80.8%
Public Transit To Work: 27% 13%
Walk to Work: 23% 5%

Source: Statistics Canada

Note: The boundaries for census tracts 155 and 156 are not identical to the City of Calgary designation for Victoria Park East, but are close. The changes in the boundary from the 1991 to the 1996 census mean that the areas are not exactly the same.

Much has been made of the fact that, in the past, Victoria Park was a staging area for immigrants, at least to some extent. While 25% of the current residents now use a non-official language as home language (the most typical being Spanish, Vietnamese and Gujarati), almost all of the residents are Canadian citizens, and the area is clearly not an ethnic ghetto. Perhaps the best descriptor of community residents is low income, unattached, predominantly male individuals who require inexpensive housing. In fact, the nature of the housing is such that damage deposits and long-term leases are seldom required. The lack of overwhelming, statistical evidence of greater mobility here than elsewhere in the city suggests that the area has become home to an urban underclass of persons with limited resources.

The Role of the Stampede in Neighbourhood Decline
How is it possible to explain why Victoria Park East, in particular, underwent a process of obsolescence, and did not share in the densification, redevelopment, rehabilitation or gentrification so typical of other central city communities? The answer is to be found in the presence of Stampede Park and the uncertainty which it caused for the community. It has already been noted that exogenous factors, such as the preference for suburban living, helped to create an occupant succession in which lower status residents became more common in the neighbourhood. Other factors emerged later in the 1960s and 1970s, such as the decision to create a rapid transit right-of-way as part of the south transportation corridor, which meant the demolition of houses on the western boundary of the community and sealed the area on its only remaining fourth side from the rest of the central city. These factors in urban restructuring created a distinctive Victoria Park East community. The Stampede Board, via the presence of Stampede Park, was an endogenous factor in the outcomes for the area, but as it consisted of persons external to the community and with no stake in the community as a place of residence, Board members were easily influenced by their own perceptions of urban blight and ultimately their own expansionist objectives.

In the mid-1960s, the Stampede announced its intention to develop a new race track and grandstand, which led to the consideration of some new sites for the Stampede, including Lincoln Park and Happy Valley--all a considerable distance from the city centre (City of Calgary 1971). However, in view of the fact that urban renewal was a pervasive planning theme at the time, the anticipation of structural clearance must have been present in the deliberation because city council approved expansion of the Stampede from 17 Avenue to 14 Avenue in 1968. A study aimed at application for urban renewal funding had already been considered in 1967 (City of Calgary 1967). What was particularly significant about the Stampede expansion decision, was that council granted the Stampede a maximum of $4 million to buy the necessary land, but with the understanding that no more than $400,000 was to be spent on property acquisition in any given year. While such a decision might have been financially prudent from the city’s fiscal point of view, it was an absolutely unsettling decision that greatly affected the community. Most important is that it crystallized the process of disinvestment. Mortgage or financial lenders, from this point on, became leery about providing any funds whatsoever for reinvesting in the community. Many, even at that time questioned whether 14 Avenue would be the final boundary, and whether further northward expansion would take place. Such confusion and uncertainty created even more instability in a community searching for stability. Existing homeowners were upset because it discouraged home maintenance, which resulted in even more deterioration, while the quality of their community and the value of their property declined (Calgary Herald, 19 February, 22 March 1968). Instead of property appreciation, which would normally be expected in an area so close to the downtown core, the opposite was occurring.

The expansion of the Stampede into the community was controversial enough, but the staggering of property acquisition was even worse.(f.5) In fact, regardless of the previous relationship between the community and the Stampede, this decision, more than any other, set in motion a perception that the Stampede Board was the enemy. The Stampede used its annual allotment of $400,000 and bought up property "as it became available"—a house here and a house there—which had the effect of "blockbusting," from other residents' perspective, and lowered the value of their property.(f.6) The Stampede of course was interested in increasing property "in the public interest" at low prices, and the council decision to allow expansion prevented counterbalancing market forces from operating. The Stampede could then wait until home owners finally sold to them.(f.7) From the perspective of the Community Association at the time, "The Stampede is using the taxpayers' money to move into the community and destroy it" (Albertan, 12 June 1970). While some homeowners settled for what they could get and relocated, others thought of their houses in terms of its use value rather than its exchange value (Logan and Molotch 1987) and tried to protect the community from further incursions. An additional consequence of Stampede intentions to expand was that, since power rested with the Stampede Board, and since their plans were truly in process and only released in segments, the community felt powerless and Stampede decisions were viewed as secretive. Thus a strong view of the Stampede as an antagonist developed.

Defending the Community: The Fight for Rehabilitation

The untruth which this decision created in the community also reflected on city decision-makers and had an impact on the City Planning Department, which published a document in 1971 (City of Calgary 1971) advocating the protection of Victoria Park as a residential neighbourhood. At that time, over three-quarters of the properties had absentee owners (Table 4) and most of the residents were renters, as many of the homes had been subdivided (Table 3) and usually occupied by people on low income or immigrants. The document even proposed further Stampede expansion to the south rather than to the north, the movement of rapid transit to the riverbank, and argued to ensure the future of the school, in an effort to preserve the residential community. This document was not approved by council, but it reveals the existence of a struggle between those who wanted to rehabilitate the community versus those who wanted to redevelop it.

Through the 1970s, it is clear that there was a vocal group of residents who thought it their task to fight hard for the community. It is also clear that the Planning Department was influenced by the change of thinking in urban planning at the national level that gave priority to urban rehabilitation rather than urban renewal (Carter 1991). The federal government had established two programs: the Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP) and the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP). The Victoria Park East Design Brief (City of Calgary 1977) became even more explicit than the 1971 document in arguing for the preservation of the community north of 14 Avenue. The Design Brief pointed out that, due to Stampede expansion, there was little market interest in the community and a negative attitude had been created, implying that the community had a short life-expectancy. To counteract these effects, the Design Brief advocated downzoning from R-5 to R-3 (from high density to medium density residential) and proposed affordable accommodation for low income households. While it was acknowledged that much of the housing was in need of repair, the report considered 90% of the housing to be "in the public interest" at low prices, and the council decision to allow expansion prevented counterbalancing market forces from operating. The Stampede could then wait until home owners finally sold to them.(f.7) From the perspective of the Community Association at the time, "The Stampede is using the taxpayers' money to move into the community and destroy it” (Albertan, 12 June 1970). While some homeowners settled for what they could get and relocated, others thought of their houses in terms of its use value rather than its exchange value (Logan and Molotch 1987) and tried to protect the community from further incursions. An additional consequence of Stampede intentions to expand was that, since power rested with the Stampede Board, and since their plans were truly in process and only released in segments, the community felt powerless and Stampede decisions were viewed as secretive. Thus a strong view of the Stampede as an antagonist developed.

A Divided Community: The Issues of Revitalization and Rezoning

The approval of this plan was not a smooth one and it is clear that the community was not deeply divided. One report indicated that the Victoria Park Community Association was a "a vocal group of residents who thought it their task to fight hard for the community." It is also clear that the Planning Department was influenced by the change of thinking in urban planning at the national level that gave priority to urban rehabilitation rather than urban renewal (Carter 1991). The federal government had established two programs: the Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP) and the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP). The Victoria Park East Design Brief (City of Calgary 1977) became even more explicit than the 1971 document in arguing for the preservation of the community north of 14 Avenue. The Design Brief pointed out that, due to Stampede expansion, there was little market interest in the community and a negative attitude had been created, implying that the community had a short life-expectancy. To counteract these effects, the Design Brief advocated downzoning from R-5 to R-3 (from high density to medium density residential) and proposed affordable accommodation for low income households. While it was acknowledged that much of the housing was in need of repair, the report considered 90% of the housing to be "in the public interest" at low prices, and the council decision to allow expansion prevented counterbalancing market forces from operating. The Stampede could then wait until home owners finally sold to them.(f.7) From the perspective of the Community Association at the time, "The Stampede is using the taxpayers' money to move into the community and destroy it” (Albertan, 12 June 1970). While some homeowners settled for what they could get and relocated, others thought of their houses in terms of its use value rather than its exchange value (Logan and Molotch 1987) and tried to protect the community from further incursions. An additional consequence of Stampede intentions to expand was that, since power rested with the Stampede Board, and since their plans were truly in process and only released in segments, the community felt powerless and Stampede decisions were viewed as secretive. Thus a strong view of the Stampede as an antagonist developed.

When the Planning Department responded to community pressures, and proposed that Victoria Park be designated as eligible for NIP and RRAP funding in 1976, city commissioners rejected the idea on the grounds that the community was too divided on the issue (CMHC required majority community support), and instead, money was allocated to other inner city areas such as Hillhurst-Sunnyside (Calgary Herald, 4 October 1976).(f.8) The response of the community was unequivocal—though it exposed the fault lines that have plagued the community ever since. It was reported that house-to-house canvassing discovered that 95 of 139 resident homeowners favoured the NIP designation and only six opposed it (Calgary Herald, 26 October 1976). A desire to remain in the neighbourhood was declared by 234 renters. However, only 26 of 134 absentee landlords supported the NIP. Most of the residents of the community (whether owners or renters) wanted to rehabilitate the community, while most of the non-resident owners were more interested in high-density redevelopment (Albertan, 16 March 1977). Thus, the issue was not just redevelopment versus rehabilitation, but also upzoning versus downzoning.

One of the consequences of downzoning was that it reduced the value of property. In some ways this played into the hands of the Stampede Board, which could then continue its purchasing program at depressed prices. Upzoning would have made the land much more costly; but lower land values also had the effect of antagonizing existing home owners—many of whom feared for their investment. Even after council had made its decision in favour of rehabilitation, 170 homeowners signed a petition opposing NIP because they felt trapped (Calgary Herald, 6 August 1977). While some homeowners wanted to stay, others wanted to leave immediately, while still others wanted to leave at some later date, but wanted to be sure of strong property value. In this way, homeowners became increasingly paranoid over exchange value which challenged the perspective of others concerned about use value. Absentee landlords clearly had different interests from resident homeowners, but even resident homeowners were split and had simultaneously conflicting interests. The lack of real estate purchases in the community, and the lack of new development in the area in contrast to other inner city communities, became of
But there was yet another way in which the community was split. There were those who preferred downzoning because they preferred single family houses and the family lifestyle that went with it (Calgary Herald, 15 November 1977). It was these people who felt some antagonism towards renters who, they presumed, had only a fleeting commitment to the community or whose lifestyle was not compatible with family living. Their motivation for rehabilitation was to rid the community of transients and single persons to ensure a safe family environment.(f.10) Yet to counter the petition by 170 homeowners opposed to the NIP, 358 residents signed a petition in support of the NIP, but of those 236 were renters (Calgary Herald, 16 March 1977). Therefore, in certain respects, renters became important allies of those wishing to rehabilitate the community. During these years, it appears that the Community Association involved renters to an extent not at all typical since then.

The role of the Community Association in supporting rehabilitation was clearest after a financial debacle, pertaining to an association activity debt, led to the election of a new board, with an apparent mandate of neighbourhood preservation (Calgary Herald, 6 August 1977). There was considerable animosity between the pre-redevelopment group and the Community Association during this time (Calgary Herald, 6 August 1977), and the President of the Association, who was an outspoken defender of the community, was apparently a renter (Calgary Herald, 7 March 1974). The Community Association played a key role in converting the area into an urban, economic development strategy in which Stampede Park would play a central role. This led to the search for another mega-event, Expo 2005, to consolidate that position.

The Olympics and Stampede Expansion

Between 1977 and 1980, $936,000 RRAP funds and $836,000 NIP funds were spent in the community. Improvements were made to the streets, sidewalks and general landscaping, in addition to rehabilitation of selected houses. There is little evidence that such improvements made a significant difference to the viability of the community or to property values, but it did provide some sense of hope to some residents that their community was worth saving and that a different outcome from redevelopment was obtainable.

The Olympics played a unique role in bringing about this change in Victoria Park. In the first place, the idea of starting construction on the coliseum was to demonstrate to the International Olympic Committee that the city could build the coliseum elsewhere (Calgary Sun, 18 December 1980). Homeowners who had upgraded their homes were particularly angry, and felt that the NIP had been a waste of taxpayers' money. Community leaders even wrote to the International Olympic Committee to ask them to tell the city to build the coliseum elsewhere (Calgary Sun, 18 December 1980). Other property owners saw the coliseum decision as an opportunity to reverse previous decisions. Some wanted the Stampede to expand southward to encourage redevelopment in Victoria Park. Another group collected 50 names on a petition agreeing to northward expansion with proper compensation. Perhaps the most significant development arising out of the coliseum proposal was that a Victoria Park Property Owners Association was formed in 1980 whose goal was to ensure owners got market value for their land, and to provide solidarity so that members did not get picked off one by one at low prices (Calgary Sun, 25 November 1980). In short, control of the Community Association could not be assumed, and property owners needed a vehicle to ensure its interests were protected. While the coliseum site decision was a council decision, the Stampede Board lobbied hard for their site, and the community residents quickly blamed them (Campbell 1984, 116). Instead of opposing the coliseum, the Property Owners Association supported it, with the condition that upzoning would occur and that there would be a moratorium on further Stampede expansion. Then in a complete reversal of their 1977 decision, council rezoned a six-block area RM-7 (high rise) to the applause of the Property Owners Association (Calgary Herald, 16 October 1981).

Community leaders began to feel a sense of betrayal that the recent rehabilitation efforts were slipping away, and came to describe the Stampede as "like cancer ... it just keeps getting into you and keeps spreading."(f.11) As one resident put it, "We were told we'd be left in peace. But we can't fight these people. They're too strong for us. I've spent thousands of dollars fixing up my little house. I can't afford to move out of it. There's nowhere else I can afford to go" (Calgary Sun, 18 December 1980). Homeowners who had upgraded their homes were particularly angry, and felt that the NIP had been a waste of taxpayers' money. Community leaders even wrote to the International Olympic Committee to ask them to tell the city to build the coliseum elsewhere (Calgary Sun, 18 December 1980). Property owners who saw the coliseum decision as an opportunity to reverse previous decisions. Some wanted the Stampede to expand southward to encourage redevelopment in Victoria Park. Another group collected 50 names on a petition agreeing to northward expansion with proper compensation. Perhaps the most significant development arising out of the coliseum proposal was that a Victoria Park Property Owners Association was formed in 1980 whose goal was to ensure owners got market value for their land, and to provide solidarity so that members did not get picked off one by one at low prices (Calgary Sun, 25 November 1980). In short, control of the Community Association could not be assumed, and property owners needed a vehicle to ensure its interests were protected. While the coliseum site decision was a council decision, the Stampede Board lobbied hard for their site, and the community residents quickly blamed them (Campbell 1984, 116). Instead of opposing the coliseum, the Property Owners Association supported it, with the condition that upzoning would occur and that there would be a moratorium on further Stampede expansion. Then in a complete reversal of their 1977 decision, council rezoned a six-block area RM-7 (high rise) to the applause of the Property Owners Association (Calgary Herald, 16 October 1981).

The Olympics played a unique role in bringing about this change in Victoria Park. In the first place, the idea of starting construction on the coliseum was to demonstrate to the International Olympic Committee, in advance of their final vote, that Calgary's bid should be taken seriously, and that having this major project underway was evidence of the city's ability to deliver the facilities required. The second, of urgency of the matter, for the greater good of the bid, meant that community consultation and Development Appeal Board hearings requested by citizen groups had to be set aside, and the provincial government used its powers to expedite an order-in-council to proceed with construction approvals (Campbell 1984, 118-19). Given the prestige and promise of hosting this mega-event, there was little time to reconsider previous planning decisions, and the Planning Department was forced to reverse its field on the future of the community (Calgary Herald, 6 November 1980). Third, the Olympic decision set in motion a new round of deliberations about the future of Victoria Park, including a Mayor's Task Force and a Community Planning Advisory Committee in 1981-82 (City of Calgary 1981), which resulted in a new Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) in 1984. Fourth, as noted above, this form of expansion of Stampede Park reaffirmed its new role as a year-round urban entertainment centre and was highly symbolic of the shift away from the more seasonal summer fair theme. Fifth, the Olympics represented the beginning of a new plan to use tourism as an urban, economic development strategy in which Stampede Park would play a central role. This led to the search for another mega-event, Expo 2005, to consolidate that position.

The Coliseum Preliminary Impact Study (City of Calgary 1980) had noted a reduction in the number of dwelling units and the number of residents in the community since 1977, and the picture that was painted was that of a community very much in transition, in terms of decline rather than revitalization. It was acknowledged that, should the Saddledome be constructed in Victoria Park, the demise of the community would be hastened. This changed mood became explicitly foundational to the 1984 ARP (City of Calgary 1984) which began with the goal of the General Municipal Plan that residential densities in the inner-city should be increased. The objective for Victoria Park then became high-density residential (RM-7), which implied creation of a new community, rather than preservation of the old community. Another key theme was specializations and entertainment. The Fourth Street as a spine and ceremonial route into the Stampede Park, with western theme building façades and wooden boardwalk. The area was to be connected to the downtown across the tracks through either an overpass or an underpass. The ARP explicitly encouraged the Stampede to realize its potential as a year-round entertainment facility and envisioned Victoria Park as "the front-door" to the Stampede. By this time, it had been awarded the Olympic bid and there was some anticipation that this would spur redevelopment of the community. The ARP provided the mechanism to do so, though it acknowledged that conditions may not yet be ripe for this transformation to occur. Some thought had been given to building some Olympic housing in the community, which could be transformed to social housing after the Olympics, but that never occurred.(f.12) In fact, the Olympics produced nothing more than some sprucing up of Fourth Street (renamed Olympic Way) to reduce some of the blight encountered by visitors. Instead of the Olympics helping to transform the area, it seems only to have prolonged the uncertainty for the area, at the same time that the Stampede increased its influence and shadow over the community.

Urban Entrepreneurialism and the Stampede as an Urban Entertainment Centre

The 1984 ARP acknowledged that one of the uncertainties for the community was that the intentions of the Stampede Board were not explicit. Apparently leaders told development applicants that their proposals first required the approval of the Stampede Board before mortgage money would be available, and uncertainties about Stampede plans discouraged new development. So, in 1991, the Stampede Board released its Horizon 2000 document (Calgary Exhibition and Stampede 1991) in which it stated its intention to expand Stampede Park northward to Tenth Avenue, to create a high profile tourist attraction to be known as Stampede Crossing. Encroaching further into Victoria Park was viewed as the preferable alternative because the number of residents was relatively small and declining (making a viable community impossible in their view), and the proposal rejected a role for residential development in the area at all. If anything, the existing population would be replaced by a new population ("a humane and understanding relocation and housing program" is needed, S2) that could afford residence in what was to become a more desirable community.
While city council agreed to the expansion of Stampede Park in principle, the issue debated at some length over the next two years was whether housing was to be part of the community in any significant way. (f.13) A Citizen’s Advisory Committee (City of Calgary 1992; Spirit of Stampede 1992), with the support of a consultant’s report (Clayton Research 1991), tended to stress the incompatibility of housing with a tourism/entertainment centre and the lack of market acceptance for housing uses in such a location. The assumption, primarily, was that affordable housing would be incompatible with the new intended use and that an upscale market may not find the area desirable. There was some recognition that pockets for housing might be found on the margins of the community, but a Minority Report (Bagley and Marshall 1992) made the case for preserving and encouraging inner-city housing opportunities (“taking the residential component out would be to take the heart out of the area,” 32). In short, under the leadership of the Stampede Board, for the first time, thinking had evolved away from Victoria Park as a residential community to tourism/entertainment redevelopment in which housing would play only a minor role.

At least since 1988, the Stampede Board had been purchasing land through a numbered company in the area which had held land for future interests without technically expanding (Cope 1991). But it did create a sense of fait accompli. The ensuing debate within the city focused on Victoria Park’s historic role in the provision of affordable housing near the downtown, its potential as a residential community in reducing urban sprawl and enhancing densification, and the attractiveness of the riverbank for housing development. This debate was never clearly resolved, though a revised ARP (City of Calgary 1994) was adopted in 1994 which still advocated residential/commercial mixed uses, but either explicitly allowing for Stampede uses (e.g., an expanded Roundup Centre trade show building) or allowing for land-use redesignation for other Stampede uses. Housing was still clearly part of the plan but provisions were in place for changes to occur.

The Expo 2005 bid fit nicely into the Stampede’s Horizon 2000 plan to clear the community of existing populations and structures so that expansion could take place in the name of preparing for a world class event. (f.14) This is not to say that housing would not have developed, but that Expo would have provided the stimulus and justification for taking action more boldly and with urgency. In the same year that the revised ARP was accepted (1994), active consideration was being given by the city to host the 2005 World Exposition. Calgary had the only body of contiguous suburan land (200 acres) and of sufficient size to host the Expo (City of Calgary 1995). The City Council was also concerned about the pressure the Expo would place on the community and the potential for losing the Expo to another city if the area was not developed. Therefore, the Expo was a possibility, there was virtually no reinvestment in the area, and the process of redlining, which had hurt the community for years, continued. It is notable that, at least since 1988, the Stampede Board, for the first time, thinking had evolved away from Victoria Park as a residential community to tourism/entertainment redevelopment in which housing would play only a minor role.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the transformation of the community from resident homeowners to renters, and from families to single adult male occupants as the majority of residents, is that the Community Association, with its very functional and attractive building on the riverbank, was no longer representing the interests of the dominant, resident population group. Leadership of the community association had historically always been in the hands of those who wanted to preserve and protect the community as a family environment which either needed to be preserved, recovered or strengthened. Immigrant families may have been poor, but they had upward mobility aspirations which made them acceptable to resident working class or middle-class families. However, as the number of unattached individuals, single parents, unemployed and underemployed persons increased, existing homeowners either aged or left, and the family nature of the community was eroded and replaced by marginal/illegal activities. The Community Association increasingly became allied with redevelopment and cleaning up the undesirable aspects of the community. Already in 1973, the bylaws of the Community Association had been amended to allow for non-resident membership, and by 1981, key members of the executive lived outside the community, although they had at one time lived in Victoria Park (Calgary Herald, 29 June 1981). By 1998, only about one-third of the current residents were tenants, they were not represented by any of the above groups. However, after a march to city council, they succeeded in getting a commitment that houses remaining in the area would be retained in a habitable manner and that relocation assistance would be provided when necessary.

Mega-events fit clearly into the repositioning which many cities feel is necessary in the new global economy (Cochrane, Peck and Tickell 1996). The study of Victoria Park East is significant because it shows how mega-events are high-profile means whereby cities can promote and market themselves in a form of urban entrepreneurialism (Kotler, Haider and Rein 1993; Hall 1996), not only to enhance inward investment, but also as a mechanism for redevelopment that supports the urban leisure economy.

Who Represents the Community?

Expo was envisioned as a catalyst for the transformation and revitalization of neighbourhoods around a river park currently undeveloped. It would have made use of existing infrastructural improvements such as rapid transit, supported the relocation of the rail marshalling yards, provided the opportunity to build the pedestrian link across the railroad track barrier between Victoria Park and East Village/downtown, supported creativity in post-event usage, but, above all, would have prompted comprehensive (as opposed to piecemeal) redevelopment of Victoria Park. That, of course, would have meant the displacement of the existing community. The fact that the bid was not successful meant that from at least 1994 to 1998, investment in the area remained virtually at a standstill. It was during roughly the same period that prostitution moved (or was moved) into the area with the acquiescence of authorities. Of the homeowners remaining, many were unhappy with the drug trade and panhandlers in the area, and were becoming increasingly restless for redevelopment to occur, voicing their concerns through the Community Association. Property values languished, and the Community Association allied itself with the Property Owners Association and the Victoria Crossing BRZ (which included Victoria Park West) to ensure that the community was safe and accessible to business patrons. In 1998, during the annual Stampede, an “historic agreement” was announced (Calgary Herald, 7 July 1998) between all of the above parties and the Stampede Board, supporting Stampede expansion to 12 Avenue. The irony was that since most of the residents were renters, they were not represented by any of the above groups. However, after a march to city council, they succeeded in getting a commitment that houses remaining in the area would be retained in a habitable manner and that relocation assistance would be provided when necessary.

In the long run, what was the impact of mega-events in shaping Victoria Park? In the first place, the Saddledome (Coliseum) decision played a direct role in changing the course away from rehabilitation. This is not to say that other pressures may not have also had that effect in the long run, but the Saddledome represented an immediate threat that changed the direction of previous decisions. While it is too simplistic to say that the “Dome” doomed the community all by itself, in the confuence of other factors, it changed the flow of community objectives more towards redevelopment. As one resident put it who saw the survival of the community at stake, “The Olympics go for a short period Of time, but the destruction of a community goes on forever” (Calgary Herald, 2 March 1981). Second, the mega-events created an air of expectancy that redevelopment was likely because the combination of urban blight and proximity to the core made the land potentially valuable. On the one hand, this encouraged speculation because current land values were low, and on the other hand, the mega-event represented a potential intrusion on normal market forces that prevented new development from proceeding. Thus, as long as the Expo was a possibility, there was virtually no investment in the area, and the process of redlining, which had hurt the community for years, continued. It is notable that, about a year after the Expo bid failed (1997), some reinvestment began to take place for the first time in a long time. However, the Stampede Board used a coming world congress (World Petroleum Congress) in 2000 as a reason for its own haste in obtaining approvals and expanding the Roundup Centre to 12 Avenue. (f.16) The announced plan in 1998 suggested that hotels, restaurants, retailing and other forms of entertainment would proceed as funds became available and land holdings were consolidated. The irony was that since most of the residents were renters, they were not represented by any of the above groups. However, after a march to city council, they succeeded in getting a commitment that houses remaining in the area would be retained in a habitable manner and that relocation assistance would be provided when necessary.

Conclusion

The analysis presented here provides an excellent illustration of the three regimes of urban governance beginning with urban renewal typical of the 1960s, the neighbourhood preservation themes of the 1970s, and the emphasis on urban entrepreneurialism of the 1980s and 1990s (Smith and Moore 1993; Carter 1991). The contradictions produced by a changing and divided community facing a powerful community/city institution, in which the planning department was caught in the middle, provides significant evidence of

how mega-events become mechanisms for community transformations. (f.18) The linkage of mega-events with commodified urban leisure is of specific importance in the analysis of Victoria Park because it shows how the role of entertainment is currently playing a major role in urban transformations. As Hannigan (1998) has noted, urban entertainment districts (UED's) are usually solipsistic in being at odds with the neighbouring area, whereby the middle-class make-over of the central city ignores existing marginalized social groups. The evidence provided here also contributes to the literature by demonstrating how the lack of efficacy, empowerment and control in a local community (Davies and Herbert 1993, 103) contributes to its decline, which leads to devastating internal splintering into competing interest groups.

The use of mega-events as a pretext for urban clearing and redevelopment is a well established phenomenon (e.g., Ruthier 1997). The evidence presented here has linked such redevelopment more clearly to leisure commodification in the central city. Using the linkage model developed to analyze the impact of mega-events (Hiller 1998), the pre-event stage for both the Olympics and Expo and the Stampede Board had both direct effects (forward linkages), and indirect side-effects (parallel linkages), on Victoria Park East as a community. The role of the Stampede as an expanding urban entertainment/tourism complex provided background linkages of urban ambitions for inner-city transformation and justification for the redevelopment of Victoria Park. The fit between mega-event needs and Stampede plans created the uncertainty that both retarded reinvestment in the community and ensured its continued role as a site for urban underclass activity. However, the failure of the Expo bid appears to have unleashed redevelopment forces, and as the community population shrinks, the ability of the Stampede to proceed with its own leisure commodification objectives becomes more likely. The process whereby the area has been made obsolete over a 30-year period, and the community reduced to one-quarter of its former strength, has eliminated the question of redevelopment or rehabilitation, and replaced it with the question of when it will occur rather than whether it will occur.

Notes

(f.1.) The appointment as President of Expo 86 of Michael Bartlett, who had had extensive experience with developing amusement theme parks, makes the link with entertainment clear (Ley and Olds 1988, 202).

(f.2.) The issue of permanent legacies has not always been present. Outside of a few classic structures, Expositions, in particular have often been throw-away events (Benedict 1983, 8).

(f.3.) Immigrants were more likely to live in the area in the post-war period but there is some evidence that, by 1971, immigrants had begun to shun the area in preference for other options (City of Calgary 1971, 10).

(f.4.) Demolition was largely to avoid public criticism about substandard housing when owners decided against reinvestment to improve the housing. Demolition also had the effect of clearing the land to show that the community was indeed unsustainable.

(f.5.) Residents were very angry about the “slow buying” policy of the Stampede Board and the low prices being offered. An ultimatum was issued to the Board to quicken its purchasing procedure and increase its offers “or else”, but the Board argued that it had no other options (Calgary Herald, 24 February 1969, 9 April 1969).

(f.6.) Mayor Sykes even accused the Stampede Board of blockbusting (Calgary Herald, 19 October 1973).

(f.7.) In response to accusations of blockbusting, the Stampede President at the time explained that “The Stampede has taken a passive role throughout and negotiates only with those owners who approach the Board ... in no way have we attempted to apply any pressure either directly or indirectly on any householder in Victoria Park” (Calgary Herald, 7 June 1972).

(f.8.) The role which the Planning Department played in the struggles over the future of Victoria Park are analyzed in Scott (1996). For a critical assessment of the failure of both planners and politicians to protect a working class community which became a “sacrificial totem” in the face of the corporate power of the Stampede Board, see Reid (1991, 1992).

(f.9.) It was noted that the R-S inducement that had been in place had only resulted in two apartment applications in the last five years, whereas the Beltline had received hundreds of permits for multi-family housing. Some homes around 14 Avenue had been for sale for two years and there was little interest among purchasers. (Calgary Herald, 3 December 1976).

(f.10.) For example, the community opposed the construction of a single men's hostel in the area in 1981 (Calgary Herald, 12 February 1981).

(f.11.) For a sense of the anger of the Community Association, see City of Calgary 1980, 51-4. Another way of considering the unease in the community was that of “broken dreams” in which different segments of the community had their own dreams which often differed (Morton 1985).

(f.12.) There are great difficulties building and financing housing for entry-level low income inhabitants which at the same time meet Olympic standards.

(f.13.) For a discussion of this recommendation presented to council, see City of Calgary Planning Commission, April 18, 1991.

(f.14.) Letters were sent by the city to all landowners, tenants, and business owners in May 1997 indicating that the Expo decision would be announced in September and that negotiations to buy property would begin in late 1997.

(f.15.) Axworthy (1979, 135) noted the high percentage of non-resident members of the Community Association already at the time of her study. The provision for nonresident membership at such a scale is unusual among Calgary community associations.

(f.16.) For a discussion of conferences as mega-events, see Hiller (1995).

(f.17.) The issue of mega-event displacement effects in the three Canadian cities of Vancouver (Expo 86), Calgary (Winter Olympics 88), and Toronto (bidding Summer Olympic City 96) is thoroughly discussed in Olds (1998).

(f.18.) Reid (1991, 1992) is highly critical of the planning apparatus for its failure to preserve the community because of what he calls “the battle of mythologies.” He argues that the community residents were the real tie with the community's history whereas the Stampede Board stood for an imaginary history romanticized from the past. This of course fits with the simulationist nature of urban entertainment districts discussed by Hannigan (1998).

References


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