

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Historic Districts and Their Role as Sustainable Regenerators of Downtown City Life

by

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Abstract

HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND THEIR ROLE AS SUSTAINABLE REGENERATORS OF DOWNTOWN CITY LIFE

Historic Districts within city centres have a role in downtown revitalization that is often underestimated. Historic districts appear to have attributes that cannot be copied by other forms of development, and these attributes are conducive to generating unique active uses that in turn generate social activity. This document examines this topic. The study is focused on mid-sized cities of Canada and the United States. It commences with an examination the forces at play in the dynamics of the city and the city centre, including the sociological dynamics, as they relate to the health of the city centre.

As experience of place is particularly relevant to historic districts, the study explores this topic in depth. Particular components of experience of place that relate to historic districts that are explored in this document are identity, aesthetic values, and the experience of the sense of history that historic districts convey. Other values explored are the organic nature of historic districts, human scale, and pedestrian orientation that typify historic districts, and the role of these values in the experience of place.

The role of renovated historic districts in regenerating downtown city life is the focus of the study, including their capacity to keep people downtown outside of weekday working hours, counteracting the flight to the suburbs after work that typifies downtowns that have lost their vitality, as well as their capacity to attract visitors to downtown, both from the city, and visitors to the city.

This study also explores the processes involved in successfully dealing with historic districts including the participants and their roles, particularly the role of the municipality. Finally, the sustainability of renovated historic districts is explored.

To exemplify the practical issues involved in the renovation of historic districts, and the impact that historic districts can have as regenerators of downtown city life, Calgary's Stephen Avenue historic district is used as an example.

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Definition of Terms Used

Central Business District: The business district in the central core area of the city typified by a concentration retail and office buildings together with hotels and other business uses. It is within what is now conventionally referred to as “Downtown”.

City Centre: The term “City Centre” is used throughout the thesis interchangeably with the term “Downtown”. However, the word “Downtown” is often used to mean only the Central Business District and the use of the word “City Centre” avoids this confusion. It should be noted that the term “City Centre” is used in European cities for what would be referred to as the “Downtown” in Canadian and U. S. cities. However, European cities typically differ by virtue of the fact that European cities have generally had a dispersal and integration of business and residential throughout their cities, compared to Canadian and U. S. cities where the Downtown was initially the location of the business functions of the city. Thus the term “City Centre” in the European Context is generally a larger area than what is strictly the Downtown referred to in the Canada and United States context, but there are distinct differences in the morphology of older European cities and the cities of Canada and the U. S.

Downtown: The original core business area of the city, a term used in Canada and the United States. It came into use to differentiate the business area from the upper end residential area that evolved in early New York, called “uptown”, north of the business district, and the terminology was generally adopted throughout Canada and the United States regardless of its geographical relation to the upper end residential districts. Downtowns originally included residential within their boundaries and this terminology as used today in Canada and the United States includes both the Central Business District and the high density residential areas located in the vicinity of the Central Business District.

Inner City: This term refers to the larger central area of the city that encompasses the Downtown and the residential areas surrounding it. The term developed a negative connotation in the early postwar years due to the flight of the middle and upper classes to the suburbs and the slum conditions that characterized many inner city residential areas, and thus was often used in reference to the slum areas. European cities experienced a reverse phenomenon with the inner city being maintained as the location of mid to high-end residences and the suburbs being where the slums were generally found. Although this negative connotation still applies to some cities in Canada and the United States, it is losing this connotation, and Inner City is an appropriate term to describe the larger central area of the city that encompasses the Downtown and residential areas surrounding it.

Census Metropolitan Area (CMA)

Terminology used in Canada defined by Statistics Canada as follows: “A census metropolitan area (CMA) is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a large urban area (known as the **urban core**). The census population count of the urban core is at least 100,000 to form a census metropolitan area. To be included in the CMA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the central urban area, as measured by commuting flows derived from census place of work data.”

Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)

Terminology used in the United States in a similar context, but subject more refined definitions by the Office of Management and Budget. This is due to the fact that some metropolitan areas with very large populations have more than one urban core area.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study relates to historic districts that are found in city centres, and the role that such historic districts can have in downtown revitalization as regenerators of downtown city life. It is focused on mid-sized cities in Canada and the United States where historic districts may comprise a distinct entity and have particular relevance.

The subject is a complex one involving the dynamics of the city centre in relation to the forces at play in the growth of the city; urban sociological dynamics; understanding the factors that contribute to the experience of place and how these relate to historic districts; the processes involved in successfully dealing with historic districts; and finally, relating these topics to the role that historic districts can play in downtown revitalization as regenerators of downtown city life. Each of these subjects is dealt with in detail in this study, and Calgary's historic district is used as a case study to illustrate both its role in downtown revitalization and the processes involved.

1.2 Background and Problem Statement

Over the course of time downtowns in Canada and the United States have suffered from the weakening caused by the impact of suburbanization of residences and businesses and the results of planning to accommodate automobile traffic in downtowns, amongst other factors. The downtowns of many American cities, often having experienced the more acute problems of inner-city crime and racial tensions, appear to have fared worse in the past half century than the cities of Canada. To quote a 2005 research brief by Christopher Leinberger, published by the Brookings Institute, "With the exception of Manhattan and the downtowns of Boston, Chicago and San Francisco, nearly every downtown in the country went into severe decline, virtually becoming 'clinically dead', to the point that

market rents and sales prices could not warrant new construction and redevelopment, except for some construction during the office boom of the 1980's".¹

Notwithstanding the decline referred to by Leinberger, the downtowns of a number of cities in Canada and the United States have had various degrees of revival starting in the 1990's, and the lessons learned are very instructive as to the process whereby these revivals have occurred. The revival of downtowns is generally described by Leinberger as having resulted from initiatives that have re-created "walkable urbanity" in downtowns. Another study by Cy Paumier entitled *Creating a Vibrant City Center: Urban Design and Regeneration Principles*² cites the achievement of two characteristics, namely "a diverse market" and "a high quality place". Paumier defines a diverse market as a concentration of complementary uses that generate pedestrian activity and a lively social environment that, in turn, sustains the mix of uses. A high quality place is defined as a visually appealing, comfortable, and secure physical environment that creates confidence, commitment, and investment in the community over the long term.

"Walkable urbanity", or alternatively "a diverse market" and "a high quality place", describe the end conditions, but the processes to achieve these conditions against the various dynamic forces at play in cities is by no means a simple one – Leinberger in fact describes a twelve step process spanning fifteen to twenty years to reach this goal. These characteristics, however, are characteristics that a restored historic district can potentially offer, as well as other characteristics that lead to sustainability over the long term.

It appears that historic districts within city centres have often been underestimated as especially valuable resources in the revitalization process, and in many cases such

¹ Leinberger, Christopher B. *Turning Around Downtown: Twelve Steps to Revitalization*. (The Brookings Institute, Washington: Research Brief, March 2005), 4.

² Paumier, Cy. *Creating a Vibrant City Center: Urban Design and Regeneration Principles*. Washington: Urban Land Institute, 2004.

resources have been destroyed or neglected as the result of governmental action or inaction. As well, buildings in historic districts are typically privately owned, not public property, so that dealing with these resources by civic authorities is more complex than dealing with public property such as streets, parks and squares.

The problem therefore is twofold: first, to understand the value and role that historic districts can play in the revitalization of the downtown in the context of the various dynamic forces at play, and secondly, to understand the mechanisms to unleash and maximize this value, and as well as sustain it.

1.3 Purpose of Thesis

The purpose of the thesis is to explore and identify the unique characteristics of historic districts and the impacts that the reinvigorations of historic districts in city centres can potentially have in the reinvigoration of the downtown. The study is focused on mid-sized cities in Canada and the United States. Every city is unique and has its particular history, built urban form and dynamics, economic base, social characteristics, and civic, ownership and development players. The historic districts that remain intact in each city similarly are unique in nature, and their location in relation to the central business district, which will have an impact on their contribution, varies from city to city. Any study of historic districts and the dynamics that relate to them is thus very qualitative in nature. It is therefore difficult to provide generalizations on the impact that the reinvigoration of a particular historic district has or will have on the downtown, but nevertheless it is possible to examine the particular characteristics that historic districts offer, and examine how the reinvigoration of historic districts can contribute to the reinvigoration of the downtown. This is the purpose of this thesis.

1.4 Hypothesis

The general hypothesis of this thesis is that *reinvigorated historic districts in city centres have the capacity to generate new urban life, and can play a very important role in reinvigorating the downtown, as well as offer sustainability over the long term.* It is

contended that reinvigorated historic districts have the capacity to provide the conditions described by Leinberger and Paumier, although the reinvigoration process is complex due to the fact that the buildings are typically privately owned, usually with piecemeal ownership, making the process of reinvigoration more complex than direct initiatives of public authorities. Since buildings within historic districts are typically in private hands, the study includes the examination of what factors are instrumental in encouraging and achieving successful results in the renovation of historic districts.

1.5 Subsidiary Questions

In examining the capability of reinvigorated historic districts to generate new urban life and play a significant role in the reinvigoration of downtowns, one must take into account the various dynamics and forces at play. One macro factor is the overall dynamics of the city in terms of the competition of suburban alternatives to the downtown, and how a renovated historic district fares in relation to these competitive forces. A second macro factor is the sociological dynamics of the city, and how the renovated historic district relates to these sociological dynamics. The micro factor that has particular relevance is the nature and strength of the experience of place that the renovated historic district can offer, and whether this experience of place is sustainable, and contributes to the sustainability of the downtown, in light of the macro forces at play. Finally, there is the question of how an historic district should be dealt with to achieve success and sustainability.

In relation to these subjects, the following questions are proposed:

1. *Can a renovated historic district, when brought back to life in an appropriate manner, achieve vitality against the dynamics of suburban alternatives.*
2. *How do the changing sociological dynamics of cities relate to the vitality of the renovated historic district?*

3. *Is the experience of place to be found in the renovated historic district unique and capable of regenerating urban life, and, if so, what factors are involved?*
4. *Is the vitality of the renovated historic district sustainable, and how does it contribute to the vitality and sustainability of the downtown over the long term?*
5. *What factors are involved in achieving success in dealing with historic districts?*

1.6 Need for the Study

Although civic officials and urban planners generally recognize that historic districts have some level of intrinsic value, this study is intended to more fully explore these values and identify the potential impact that the restoration of historic districts can have on the downtown, the processes that may be involved, and provide an understanding that can be applied to particular cases. Part of this understanding is the identification of the conditions and actions that assist or hinder achieving the impacts.

The study should be of value to civic officials and organizations, planners, and private stakeholders, that is, property owners of both properties in the historic district and stakeholders that may be impacted by reinvigoration initiatives, as well as academic research in this area of planning and environmental study.

1.7 Background of Author

My interest in historic districts stems from an involvement, as a developer, in the adaptive re-use of buildings of many types over the course of several decades, and a fascination with historic buildings. My involvement in historic buildings has included the renovation and adaptive re-use of historic buildings in Montreal dating back to the 1970's and 1980's, and more recently the renovation and adaptive re-use of historic buildings in the city centre of Calgary, Alberta over the past decade. The experience from this work has provided me with many observations and insights, and a keen interest in studying, identifying and understanding the particular characteristics and potential of what I

consider to be an important, sustainable resource found in most cities, namely the historic district.

1.8 Approach and Organization of the Study

The study is organized under the following chapters: The Dynamics of the City Centre and the City; Urban Sociological Dynamics; The Experience of Place; The Value and Role of Historic Districts in Revitalizing the City Centre; Calgary: A Case Study; and Conclusions.

Chapter Two, The Dynamics of the City Centre and the City, reviews the forces at play in the continuous competition between the suburbs and the city centre. It commences with a historical review of the evolution and periods of decline that occurred in city centres in Canada and the United States, and the fundamental reasons for the decline, in order to provide an understanding of the varying dynamics that have affected our city centres. The discussion then focuses on the current and potential future forces at play that impact the vitality of city centres.

Chapter Three, Urban Sociological Dynamics, examines the sociological aspects at play in the city that have relevance to the health of the city centre. This provides a perspective in which the potential role of historic districts in the reinvigoration of the city centre can be examined.

Chapter Four, The Experience of Place, is an in-depth examination of place from an experiential perspective, and what contributes to a positive experience of place, in order to provide a full understanding of this subject as it directly relates to the value of historic districts. The examination includes a discussion of organic development, which typifies how historic districts were formed, and the unique characteristics derived from organic development.

Chapter Five, *The Value and Role of Historic Districts in Revitalizing the City Centre*, commences with a discussion of approaches and factors involved in the revitalization of city centres. Next is a review and discussion of the unique attributes of historic districts, examining the experiential and sociological values offered by the revitalized historic district. Following this is a discussion of appropriate intervention in historic districts and the processes and players involved. The sustainable nature of renovated historic districts is discussed, including the factors involved in achieving this sustainability. The discussion then focuses on the potential rejuvenating effect that historic districts can have on the city centre. Finally, the root issues involved in the reinvigoration of the city centre are discussed.

Chapter Six, *Calgary, A Case Study*, examines in detail the Stephen Avenue historic district in the context of the dynamics of Calgary, and its impact on the rejuvenation of the city centre. The review traces the historical city dynamics against the dynamics of Stephen Avenue, the efforts to revive Stephen Avenue, and the ultimate impact on the city centre. Although unique to Calgary, it exemplifies the dynamics, processes and potential outcomes of the renovation of historic districts.

Chapter Seven, *Conclusions and Recommendations*, summarizes the important observations and conclusions that are derived from the study. The discussion relates the Calgary case study to the overall topic, illustrating and the potential that historic districts can offer in the reinvigoration of the city centre, and the sustainability that historic districts can offer. It discusses observations of the processes involved, the obstacles, as well as the initiatives instrumental in achieving success.

CHAPTER TWO: THE DYNAMICS OF THE CITY CENTRE AND THE CITY

2.1 Introduction

The overall purpose of this study is to explore and identify the unique characteristics of historic districts and the impacts that the reinvigoration of historic districts located in city centres can have in downtown revitalization as regenerators of city life. This subject cannot be isolated from the various dynamics of the forces at play both in the city centre itself and in the overall city. This chapter will explore these dynamics.

One might be led to believe that the struggle for relevance and sustainability of many city centres in Canada and the United States, against the strength of the suburban forces at play, is a somewhat recent phenomenon that evolved in the last half century. It is not. It is a phenomenon that has been in play for a very long time. To gain a full understanding of this struggle, and the dynamics at play, it is useful to trace historically the evolution and the periods of decline that occurred in most city centres, and the fundamental reasons why this occurred. This provides an understanding of the many trial and error efforts used in the past, which is useful in understanding the dynamic nature of the forces at play, and the limitations of various public processes. In addition, it provides an understanding of the morphological development of cities and the city centre, which is relevant to our overall subject matter. A large part of this chapter is devoted to a historical overview up to today's conditions.

As a starting point, the next section will summarize why healthy cities simply continue to grow, and why growth is virtually unstoppable. Following this is a comprehensive review of the evolution and decline of city centres against suburbanization and suburban competition, and the evolving dynamics are reviewed and analyzed. In the context of the growing city, there are various forces at work that affect the vitality of the city centre, in many ways a continuous “tug of war” between the city centre and the suburbs in which city centres strive to retain relevance against the forces of suburbanization. The final section proposes the conditions that are important to the vitality of the city centre in the face of these ever-evolving suburban alternatives.

Since many cities have defined political borders that are much smaller than the built up area, reference to cities in the discussion will generally mean the built-up metropolitan area (the Census Metropolitan Area or “CMA” in Canada, or Metropolitan Statistical Area or “MSA” in the United States). Reference to city centre refers to what is commonly known as the central business district including, as well, any residential area or “inner ring” immediately adjacent, and walkable, to the central business district.

2.2 The Growth of Cities

Although not all cities grow, and some have been declining for reasons explained by Mario Polese in his book *The Wealth & Poverty of Regions*³, particularly in the Canada / U.S. “dry interior” agricultural areas, given a healthy economy and a healthy base of industry and commerce, most cities appear to grow almost continuously. Cities grow and develop simply as a result of economic forces at play, causing a demand for both new people, and new space of all types. Jane Jacobs provided an excellent précis on the process in her 1970 book, *The Economy of Cities*⁴. She related the growth of a city to a process which commenced with the city growing to the point that it generated exports, which then resulted in adding new work to the work needed to satisfy the demand for products by the city itself. As a result of the growing exports, a demand is then developed for imports, such as components and equipment, to accommodate needs and requirements of producers for the production of these exports. Ultimately, because of the demand for these imports, new industries are created in the city to replace the imports. These new industries in turn provide a new ability to develop other types of exports, and the process repeats. The process also develops a need for capital, resulting in the formation of firms, or branches of firms, devoted to satisfying that need. It can be seen that the increasing diversity has a multiplier effect, and results in continuous growth in a healthy city, except

³ Polese, Mario. *The Wealth & Poverty of Regions: Why Cities Matter*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) 181-186, 208-209.

⁴ Jacobs, Jane. *The Economy of Cities*. (New York: Random House Vintage, 1970)

when interrupted by a major cause such as recession, depression, or wartime, or when the city is focused on one industry whose processes or products become obsolete or the industry is replaced in other locations.

The whole process described above results in an increasing demand for jobs, and an ever-expanding requirement for space to accommodate commerce and industry, housing for the workforce, and then additional stores and services directed to satisfying the needs and demands of these new workers, again adding further employment. Growth of the city and its population also generates demand for space to accommodate other supporting needs and demands such as schools, hospitals, facilities and housing for the disadvantaged, recreational facilities, parks and public spaces, cultural facilities, sports facilities, exhibition and trade facilities, religious facilities, and so on. All of these additional services again increase the workforce, resulting in another multiplier effect. This, in summary, is why healthy cities continue to grow, and growth is unstoppable. It is not because people simply move to cities; it is because employment opportunities (including self-employment and entrepreneurship) are created which attract people.

Jacobs's description in her 1970 book, however, related to our prior period when manufacturing represented a predominant part of the economy, whereas in the current era, technology, globalization, and outsourcing has shifted our outputs . Our outputs today have shifted towards both hard and soft technology products; management, marketing and distribution, where physical production may be elsewhere; and the creative industries, as documented by Richard Florida in his book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*.⁵ However, it can be seen that Jacob's analysis of how the economy of cities evolves is still applicable, but the nature of the products or outputs have been changing.

⁵ Florida, Richard. *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. (New York: Basic Books, 2002.)

Virtually all municipal governments of cities in Canada and the United States look at economic growth as a positive force and need, and therefore actively promote their particular cities to interests that provide economic growth. This is typically done through an economic development authority or similar type body. Few appear to contest the idea of growth, only some of its negative results such as sprawl.

2.3 The Historical Evolution of the Central Business District

2.3.1 Historical Function of City Centres

In a 2001 book, “*Downtown: Its Rise and Fall, 1880 to 1950*”⁶, Robert M. Fogelson provides an exceptionally well researched account of the evolution and eventual decline of traditional downtowns in American cities up to 1950. The discussions below which refer to this period are largely drawn from Fogelson’s book. Reference is also made to “*Offices in the Sky*”⁷, a 1959 book commissioned by The National Association of Building Owners and Managers, by Schultz and Simmons, which traces the history of office buildings in cities in America over a similar period. The book was published when suburbanization of office buildings was minimal. The evolution and changes which occurred in Canadian cities during this period were similar in most respects to their American counterparts.

In the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the city centre in the cities of Canada and the U.S. was *the* business centre serving the entire city. It contained the shops, retail stores, department stores, restaurants, entertainment, cultural facilities, offices, hotels, city hall, courts, government agencies, public buildings, post and telegraph offices, warehouses, and manufacturing (except for heavy industries and noxious industries). It also included housing, which, in very large cities like New York, included tenement buildings. In New York, as the city grew, the more exclusive housing

⁶ Fogelson, Robert M. *Downtown: Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

⁷ Schultz, Earle and Walter Simmons. *Offices in the Sky*. (Indianapolis: Bobb-Merrill, 1959).

relocated and grew further north of the core, and the business district became referred to as “downtown”, with the new residential area to the north now referred to as “uptown”. Ultimately, the central business core became referred to as “downtown” in virtually all major cities of U.S. and Canada regardless of whether or not the exclusive residential area was to the north.

During the rapid growth period that occurred in the latter part of the nineteenth century, cities spread out to provide housing for the influx of people, and the first single family suburbs appeared for the “middle class” as well as the “upper class”. The introduction of public transportation in the form of street railways was the major driver of this trend, and suburbs grew to such an extent that, by the end of the nineteenth century, the downtowns of American cities represented only a tiny fraction of the total land area of most cities, with most of the people living in the suburbs. The street railways were at first horse-drawn, and subsequently electrically powered (i.e., the “streetcar”). As transit needs grew, street railways were then, in some larger metropolises, supplemented by rapid transit, first by elevated railways (“Els”) in New York and Chicago in the late nineteenth century, and finally, subway systems, starting with Boston in 1898, and later on New York and Philadelphia. People moved out of the downtowns for the more attractive suburban single family home, and the resident population in the downtowns decreased. “The emergence of downtown was a vital part of the transformation of the American metropolis, a transformation that was over in most big cities by the late nineteenth century and would be over in most small ones by the early twentieth. At its core was the strict separation of businesses and residences, a high concentration of businesses downtown and a wide dispersal of residences elsewhere”⁸. The experience of Canadian cities was similar to that of American cities. European cities, however, with the exception of London, did not experience the same concentration of business in the “centre city” that was experienced in America due to their much earlier historical evolution in which businesses and residences had traditionally been mixed throughout

⁸ Fogelson, 20.

their more compact cities. On the European continent, the terminology “city centre” is used for the central part of the city⁹. According to noted city historian Joel Kotkin, “downtowns” are in fact an American invention¹⁰.

At the time, no-one really questioned the idea of the downtown as being the sole business core of the city. Communication, transactions, and trade between businesses and services were facilitated by being congregated near each other. Retailers similarly clustered, on the assumption that collectively they would attract more customers (a correct assumption that much later led to the birth of the suburban shopping center). The street railways facilitated the access of the residential population to downtown. A publication at the time, “The New York Real Estate Record and Builder’s Guide” observed that “the railways accelerated the centripetal tendencies of businesses as well as the centrifugal tendencies of residences”, a statement which reflected the conventional wisdom of the era.¹¹

2.3.2 *The Changing Downtown*

The focus on concentration of business in the downtown and separation of business from residences was further propelled with the advent of the “skyscraper”, a word that came into use in the 1880’s with the appearance of office buildings of ten to twelve floors in height in Chicago and New York¹². Skyscrapers for offices replaced lower density tenement and residential buildings on downtown sites, and allowed further concentration and density in the downtowns, but congestion became a major problem in the downtowns of all of the larger cities. During business hours, downtown streets were congested, and

⁹ Fogelson, 8-12.

¹⁰ “When the lights aren’t bright”, *The Economist*, March 3, 2007, 39.

¹¹ Fogelson, 21-24.

¹² Schultz & Simmons, 22.

sidewalks teemed with people¹³. Historic photographs of downtowns at the turn of the century amply illustrate this.

Although most larger cities embarked on a push for rapid transit to relieve the increasingly slow travel and severe crowding of street railways, and improve accessibility to and from the downtown, the enormous costs of rapid transit systems resulted in a failure to build rapid transit systems in most cities, and by the 1930s and 1940s, the slow transit to and from the downtowns of most cities became crippling. With the advent of the automobile, highways leading to downtown, combined with parking lots downtown, were one form of relief. However, people began to rethink the conventional wisdom of the downtown being the sole business center of the city, and began to think in terms of dispersed business districts, which would essentially compete with downtown – a rivalry between business districts which could be looked at as similar to a rivalry between cities.¹⁴ This was the beginning of the evolving trends which were to change the character of downtowns and change the face of cities.

Another trend was occurring with the growth in the number of skyscrapers, particularly as they grew taller. The downtowns of cities started to spread out beyond their original boundaries. With accelerating demand for office space, the office components of downtowns were growing at a rapid rate, and individual office buildings, as they grew taller, could house a great many people. Office developers were finding that they were able to capture tenants in new buildings outside of the traditional downtown perimeter. No longer was it necessary for offices to be within a compact area, and office developers started building outside of the compact core area, essentially enlarging the downtown, as well as causing shifts in the location of the “center of gravity” of downtowns, and shifts of the boundaries.

¹³ Fogelson, 16-18

¹⁴ Fogelson, 110-111.

From the original structures of ten to twelve stories which initially appeared in the late nineteenth century, engineering advances demonstrated that steel frame skyscrapers could be built to almost any height, the principal constraint being the economics of the loss of floor space to elevators as the building became higher. Following the lead of virtually all European cities which had strict height limitation ordinances, a great number of cities tried to curb the trend to higher buildings by imposing height limitations, arguing that the high-rise buildings would cause traffic congestion and various other problems. This was essentially a fight against change and the perceived negative impact that new skyscrapers would have on the traditional downtown, particularly as more and more were being built outside its perimeter. Many cities were able to pass zoning ordinances limiting building heights based on various formulas, but by the mid-1920's, loosening of these restrictions occurred in most cities. Thus, in the period up to the Great Depression, and particularly in the twenties, in larger cities, both Canadian and American, a great number of these higher office skyscrapers were built, but, to the detriment of the original downtown, they were generally built outside the perimeter of the traditional downtown.¹⁵

In the same period prior to the Great Depression, a similar situation with department stores was being evidenced in the larger cities. Department stores, which were huge stores permitting "one-stop" shopping for all your needs, realized that they could, similar to offices, locate outside of the perimeter of the traditional downtown. Not only was their draw sufficient to be outside of the core area, but, by locating outside, they could make it more attractive to the customer by avoiding the access and congestion problems found in the downtown core. Although traditionally they had located close to each other, it was now realized that they did not need to be beside each other. Thus new department stores started locating outside of the traditional core, and in certain cities such as New York and Toronto, some department stores had more than one location in the central part of the city. This trend was a further assault on the traditional idea of downtown, with another

¹⁵ Fogelson, 112-182

segment of downtown uses realizing that it could be successful outside of the boundaries of the defined downtown.

2.3.3 The Central Business District and the Changing Dynamics

According to the research of Fogelson, over the course of time what was universally referred to as “downtown” in the United States and Canada, became referred to as the “central business district” by the 1930’s in United States, and somewhat later on in Canada. The reason for this was that alternative business districts had evolved in cities, so that the downtown was no longer the only business district, but the central one as distinct from other business districts, and retaining its prominence as the main and most important business district of the city. This term reflected a growing awareness of “the deep conflicts between the periphery and the center (as well as within the center)”.¹⁶

With the continuous growth of demand for additional office space in the cities, particularly in cities housing head offices such as New York, the central business district still remained relatively compact, even in the great boom of the twenties, due the advent of skyscrapers that allowed space expansion that was largely vertical rather than horizontal. The same phenomenon existed with hotels, public buildings, and even department stores, all of which were being built. However, this great expansion resulted in such an increase in the number of people traveling to and from the central business district each day in most cities that the numbers were becoming enormous. One estimate was that, by the late 1920’s, between one-half and two thirds of the [adult] population of large cities traveled to and from downtown each day.¹⁷

In the period leading up to the late 1920’s, the residential population in the Central Business District’s of most cities shrank, and even almost disappeared in some cities, as residences were replaced with commercial uses and new buildings, as well as public

¹⁶ Fogelson, 186.

¹⁷ Fogelson, 187-189.

improvements, and the new white collar population opted to live in the suburbs. The residential exodus from the central business district was not the only one.

Industry, both manufacturing and warehousing, was dispersing from the central business district as the result of the advantages brought about by automobiles and trucks, improved telephone systems, and, in the suburbs, cheaper land, cheaper taxes, room for expansion, easier accessibility, access to highways, waterways and rail, and the availability of nearby labour. This dispersal of industry has been continuous. Many cities had multi-storey manufacturing and warehouse buildings in the city centre, which ultimately were abandoned by industry in favour of single floor buildings with high ceilings, permitting highly efficient materials handling, in addition to the other advantages described above.

Cultural institutions in many large cities now found it more desirable to locate new buildings outside of the central business district, although more likely to a location “uptown” or not too distant from the central business district. The crowded and noisy downtown was a less conducive environment for the cultural institution than could be found outside of the downtown perimeter, and the cost of land for expansion or building a new cultural institution was becoming prohibitive in the downtown. Additionally, new cultural institutions desired to set themselves apart, both by location, and by having distinct freestanding structures, which was hard to achieve in the downtown.¹⁸

Many other types of enterprises, while not necessarily relocating from the central business district, were also realizing the profitability of opening new outlets in secondary business districts, being closer to the residential population, their customers. This included bank branches, retail stores, and eventually, by the late 1920’s, the evolving chain retail stores whose number in the United States had grown to nearly 1,500 chains by the late 1920’s from only two in the 1880’s. The success and competition of the chain

¹⁸ Fogelson, 195-197.

retail stores led to several department stores establishing satellite stores, reasoning that, in the word of Wanamaker's president, "it was time for the store to go to its customer rather than try to force them to come to us".¹⁹ The same thinking occurred with movie theatres, resulting in outlets in the secondary business districts. Although nowhere comparable in size to the theatres in the central business district, these new outlets were nevertheless greater in number by the late 1920's.

A most significant part of this decentralization trend was the idea that offices could be located in the secondary business districts, a radical change in thinking. Those that still valued being clustered in the central business district included financial institutions, insurance companies, accountants, law firms, and initially, head offices, particularly those offices types that valued the efficiency of transacting business, and the benefit of face to face contact. However, with improved communications, the "back office" component of offices of large firms could be located in a secondary business district, at much cheaper rents, and with added convenience to workers. As well, many professionals such as engineers, architects, doctors, dentists, and small law firms ultimately saw no pressing requirement to locate in the central business district, and also started locating in the outlying districts. The proportion was not large, however, and in 1957 suburban office space represented less than 5% of the central area space, and even in the 1959 book on offices by Shultz and Simmons, they contended that the central business district still had overwhelming advantages and "there is no portent of any general exodus"²⁰.

Thus, following the lead of suburbanization, by the late 1920's there was a shift in thinking from the downtown being the sole business and activity core, to the concept that various forms of business and activity also were suitable and desirable outside of downtown and even in the suburbs. Perhaps the root cause of this was the difficulty for people to comfortably and efficiently get into and out of the central business district,

¹⁹ Fogelson, 199.

²⁰ Schultz & Simmons, 230, 317.

combined with the congestion, noise, and brisk pace of the downtown, compared to easy access and more comfortable environment of the outlying business districts. The central business district was still growing, but it was not matching the pace of population growth due to jobs shifting to secondary business districts and suburban industry. The central business district was still, however, the primary location of nightlife in most larger cities, including restaurants, theatres, cabarets, movie theatres, dance halls and nightclubs.

2.3.4 The Influence of Planning for the Automobile

In 1925, Le Corbusier, who was to become perhaps the most influential person in urban planning during the next three decades, complained about the crowdedness and inefficiency of the city stating that “They are inefficient: they wear out the body, they frustrate the mind. The increasing disorder in towns is offensive: their decay damages our self esteem and injures our dignity.”²¹ Referring to the automobiles now invading city streets, he wrote, although in reference to European cities, “you go out and the moment you are out of the door, with no transition, you are confronted with death: the cars racing past”.²² This thinking led to Le Corbusier’s grand plans, the Ville Contemporaine in 1922, the subsequent Ville Voisin plan for Paris in 1925, and the Ville Radieuse in 1931. In these plans, automobile traffic was separated from pedestrian traffic, and arterial traffic was further separated, the street being described as a “traffic machine”. The object was to permit optimum traffic flow and eliminate congestion from intersecting traffic.

Le Corbusier’s influence through Congress Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM) was considerable, and led cities, particularly in North America, to focus on planning for the automobile rather than the pedestrian. The automobile oriented planning ultimately led to the construction of expressways and means to ease getting into and out

²¹ Conrads, Ulrich, ed. *Programs and Manifestos on 20th Century Architecture*. 1964. Trans. (Reprint, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 89

²² *Ibid*, 90.

of downtowns, which in turn facilitated the suburbanization of our cities. Ultimately this suburbanization created a centrifugal force that promoted the dispersion of the components that had comprised the core of downtowns, namely retail, offices, and other services. Even today, urban planning in most cities of the United States and Canada continues to have a large focus on the accommodation of the automobile. The impact of this is illustrated in the sections following.

2.4 Early Decline of the Central Business District

The Great Depression of the 1930's and the subsequent World War Two brought a halt to development, and became a period of redefinition of the central business district versus the suburbs, a period in which the central business district in most cities lost ground. The core places of employment in the central business districts of larger cities, namely office buildings, were hit extremely hard by the Depression, causing very high vacancies and falling rents. As a result, office buildings became uneconomic, and many were torn down and replaced with "taxpayers", a term that referred to parking lots and one or two storey garages. In a similar fashion, hotels became uneconomic, most of them winding up in the hands of creditors, and, as with office buildings, many were demolished and replaced with the so called taxpayers. Other buildings such as theatres were also demolished and replaced with taxpayers, and taxpayers proliferated in central business districts, impacting the appearance of downtowns.

Department stores were similarly affected, declining substantially in sales. Overall, the significant aspect of the depression was that the daytime population of central business districts went into severe decline, with recovery only occurring during World War Two. Night-time population similarly declined, as movie house and restaurant business dried up. What happened overall was that, during this period, a structural shift occurred. The outlying business districts had gained in relevance, and subsequently led the post-war recovery, leaving the central business district behind in growth. With the decline in property values in central business districts, and the increase in demand in the outlying business districts, new development in central business districts to replace what had been

demolished did not occur, leaving the downtown working population base of cities in a weakened condition, and affecting, in turn, retail, restaurant and entertainment business in central business districts.²³

The decline in appeal of the central business district compared to the suburbs was in large part attributable to the chronic and unsolved problems of accessibility and traffic congestion. Accessibility, since the 1920's, now meant accessibility by cars, as the use of mass transit had declined substantially with the introduction of the automobile. Despite many efforts to improve mass transit, mass transit compared to the automobile was now unsatisfactory to most people in almost all American cities except New York.

Automobiles were now in abundance. Even in 1930 there was one automobile for every five [adult] persons in the United States, and nearly one in two [adult] persons in Los Angeles.²⁴ Similar conditions existed in Canada, with the exception of Montreal which benefited from a very dense population like New York.

With this new reality, the automobile, the focus on solving the problem of accessibility to the central business district then shifted to the building of "freeways" or high speed limited access roadways leading to the central business district. Some were built in the late 1930's and early 1940's, but as a result of the Depression and World War Two, few planned freeways were built until the late 1940's and early 1950's when freeways were now being built, or in the works, in most cities. Travel to the central business district by automobile, however, was coupled with another problem. Automobiles meant a requirement for parking spaces, a requirement that didn't exist with mass transit. Parking was inadequate to meet growing demand even in the 1940's, and freeways, generating more cars into the central business district, were bound to exacerbate this problem. Parking garages were now being built in large numbers, but they were not keeping up with demand, meaning that the problem of finding parking spaces became a chronic

²³ Fogelson, 219-227.

²⁴ Fogelson, 251.

problem, discouraging people from traveling to the central business district. The end result was, to a significant degree, opposite to the objective of building freeways in the first place. They encouraged decentralization, rather than curbing it. People “were not going downtown because they did not want to – not because they were unable to”²⁵.

2.5 The Decline of the Inner City

The use of the automobile, and the accelerating use enabled by the freeways, had another impact on the central business district as well as the inner city. Freeways, which in many cases were elevated, cut through both neighbourhoods and central business districts, bisecting them and often ruining properties which were adjacent or close by, diminishing both their value and use. They scarred the face of downtowns. In addition, central business districts became more and more devoted to traffic and parking, and less and less to trade. The character of central business districts had changed.

This was not the only problem. The middle and upper income classes had continuously been moving out of the inner city to the suburbs, leaving behind the lower classes, or leaving the demographic that contributed least to the economy of the central business district. In addition to the growing fact that the classes that moved to the suburbs were increasingly not shopping downtown, what remained in the areas that they left became less and less attractive for even the middle class to remain or move into. An “inner ring”, typically characterized by blight, was developing around the central business district in most cities. The American inner city began to be felt unsafe by the middle and upper classes, due to the perceived incidence of crime, as well as racial tensions, although in Canadian cities, this latter problem was never acute.

Programs of slum clearance then began in earnest in many of the larger cities, in an effort to improve the living conditions in the inner city, with low cost housing replacing slums.

²⁵ Fogelson, 315.

These efforts in many cases exacerbated the problems. Ultimately, inner city initiatives gravitated to “urban renewal”, directed at replacing inner city areas with housing for the middle class. None of these efforts in the late 1940’s to the 1950’s and 1960’s, however, were sufficient to arrest the continuing decline of the inner city.

A very significant factor affecting the inner ring of many American cities was the large migration, following World War II, of African Americans out of the south to other cities, particularly in the northeast and north-central states, with settlement primarily in the inner ring. This propelled what was then called the “white flight” to the suburbs, the result of not only racial prejudice, but the prevalence of crime caused by poverty, low education levels, and unemployment in the inner city. The incidence of crime in the inner city not only deterred whites from remaining in the inner city, but affected the appeal of the central business district. Fortunately, by the 1990’s, inner city crime had abated in most American cities, and racial prejudice eased as African Americans gained respect in the American society, shedding their prior stereotypical image. As a result, “whites” began to return to the inner city of many large cities in the United States.²⁶

2.6 The Evolution of Suburban Shopping and its Impacts

Suburban business districts were first developed to provide local stores, offices, and services for the surrounding suburban population. Over the course of time many had evolved to major business districts containing not just local services, but chain stores and, in some larger cities, department stores. With the construction of freeways and major roads improving accessibility, a new type of development was introduced, the regional shopping centre, the first one being Crenshaw Center built in Los Angeles in 1947. The regional shopping centre concept consisted of a major shopping centre, accessible from an adjacent highway or major road, and was later defined by International Council of Shopping Centers as being 500,000 square feet or more in size. It typically contained 100

²⁶ Gottdiener, Mark and Leslie Budd. *Key Concepts in Urban Studies*. (London: Sage Publications, 2005) 334-335, 149, 179-182.

or more stores, and was anchored by at least one department store. The shopping centre was surrounded by sufficient parking to ensure that all visitors had a place to park. It was intended to provide a one-stop place to shop for all your needs, and provide a multiple of stores in a number of categories, particularly in clothing, to allow comparison shopping. Although regional shopping centres were initially unenclosed, by the late 1950's virtually all regional shopping centres were enclosed, and later, as well, many smaller community centres, providing a weather-protected environment.

Over the course of time new regional shopping centres became larger and larger in size, and often contained as many as three or four department stores. Chain stores flourished in these shopping centres, and new retail chains were continuously introduced to meet perceived consumer tastes and needs. Regional shopping centres also provided other services such as restaurants and eating places, particularly in the new concept, the "food court", being a collection of fast food units surrounding a seating area. Theatres also appeared in many regional shopping centres, benefiting from the abundant parking.

The regional shopping centre was in direct competition with the department stores and retail stores located in the central business district. It was more accessible to suburban residents, except during weekdays for those working downtown. However, in the early postwar period, a large percentage of women did not work outside of their homes, and the convenience of the suburban shopping centre had a comparative advantage over traveling downtown. For those that worked downtown, there was limited time to shop downtown since they were at work most of the time on weekdays. The weekend and evening was the more convenient time to shop, and the regional shopping centre became the choice for a growing number of people as regional shopping centres were developed. In fact, the majority of shoppers have traditionally been women. Many jurisdictions initially restricted the ability for stores to open evenings and Sundays, but as these restrictions disappeared, the suburban shopping centre gained the advantage of being open additional evening and weekend hours, whereas downtown shopping in most jurisdictions retained restricted hours due to the absence of customers during those extended hours. Thus the

regional shopping centre became a serious threat to the vitality of a traditional core function of downtown, shopping.

Regional shopping centres continued to be developed in all major cities, and grew larger in numbers until the 1980's, when saturation began to occur. During this period of regional shopping centre growth, many cities, particularly smaller ones, lost downtown department stores, as department stores found the suburban shopping centre locations profitable and the locations in the centre city either unprofitable, or a poorer use of capital, resulting in decisions to close. The retail component in the downtowns of many cities, particularly smaller ones, was in serious decline.

From the mid-1980's, a noticeable decline in the amount of time persons spent in regional shopping centers was being observed in both Canada and the United States. This was the result of the new reality that a large proportion of married women, the traditional "shoppers", now worked, and leisure time for shopping was becoming in shorter supply. In the evolving suburban demographic, people were now more in a hurry, and parents were tied up more with activities particularly relating to their children, and willing to allocate less time shopping. Recognizing this, astute retailers focused on a concept called the "big box" store. Big box stores were large stores, ranging in size from 25,000 square feet to 50,000 square feet or more, many of which were conceived with the idea of taking a particular product component of the traditional department store, and creating a store devoted solely to this component. Components to which individual big box stores were devoted to included furniture, appliances, toys, books, hardware and tools (combining them with building materials and home improvement), house wares and bedding, stationery and office supplies, craft supplies, discounted fashion, and other categories of merchandise. The idea of the big box stores was to provide a freestanding unit to which one could drive directly, park in front of, and do your shopping. The impact of these stores was to weaken department stores in general. The more immediate impact, however, was to further weaken the large department stores found in central business districts, most of which were forced to close departments related to the categories of

merchandise adopted by the big box stores, as well as curtail delivery services that had been available because of some of those departments (and also due to the fact a large proportion of women were no longer to be found at home to receive deliveries).

The next evolution of the big box concept was the suburban “power centre”, a collection of big box stores in a campus-like environment, allowing a quick trip to one easily accessible location for almost any shopping need, typically in combination with “outlet stores”. Outlet stores are larger outlets of the retail chains, offering easy drive-to access and typically offering both the full lines found in their shopping centre stores as well as heavily discounted “remainders” comprising “prior style” and “end of season” merchandize. The power centre adds competitive strength to the big box and outlet stores through clustering.

The enclosed regional shopping centre has been impacted by the popularity of big box stores and power centres, and very few new regional shopping centres have been constructed in Canada and the United States since the mid 1980’s when the combination of changing lifestyles and saturation sharply curtailed development. In addition, many of their traditional anchors, department stores, have closed in recent years due to both the competition from big box stores and the merchandising and management agility of new retail chains.

Suburban shopping has of course included other forms such as strip malls and community shopping centres, catering more to “necessities” shopping, compared to the “leisure shopping” that the regional shopping centres originally provided. Other forms of shopping have been the discount and outlet malls that originated before the power centres, and new forms of this type of centre have evolved such as those of the Mills Corp., being massive complexes of outlet and discount stores typically located on large “greenfield” sites (previously undeveloped land, typically farmland) well outside of larger cities. These latter forms provide further direct competition to downtown shopping,

as merchandise is priced considerably lower than found in traditional retail stores through a mix of outlet-type stores.

Capitalizing on what had been missing in the suburban malls and power centres - the casual retail experience - the more recent form of retail development has been the “lifestyle centre”, comprising “open air” collections of retail stores, together with restaurants and cultural / entertainment outlets, in forms resembling a “main street”, often combined with residential and offices. The design of this type of development emulates some of the characteristics of the traditional downtown, and typically includes attractive design elements such as fountains, eye-catching street furniture, and public squares. It usually contains from 200,000 to 500,000 square feet of retail space, and is typically located near inner higher-income districts of cities. A representative example is City Place, opened in West Palm Beach in 2000, which enjoyed instant success. From 2002 to 2008 there were some 180 of these types of centres built and some 100 in the planning stages in the U.S.²⁷. Most of those completed are also enjoying considerable success. A 2007 article in *The Economist*, discussing San Jose’s failure in attempts to revive shopping in its downtown, cites the success of Santana Row, just three miles distance from downtown, calling it a “fake downtown, with ample parking and no homeless people”, underlining the advantages of this type of development compared to the conditions then found in the downtown²⁸, although according to Joel Kotkin, San Jose is a “late 20th century growth city” that never had a strong central core²⁹. A significant part of this security advantage is the private ownership, management and control of the entire entity, including its streets, compared to the public ownership of public areas and piecemeal ownership of private lands found in downtowns.

²⁷ Study by Crandall Aramula, PC, Presented to International Downtown Association conference, 2008.

²⁸“ When the lights aren’t bright”, *The Economist*, March 3, 2007, 39.

²⁹ Kotkin, Joel. *The Next Hundred Million: America in 2050*. (New York: The Penguin Press, 2010), 42.

Concurrently with the growing presence of new lifestyle centre developments, the growing market share of power centres has impacted department stores in regional shopping centres, and many department stores, the traditional “anchors” that generated traffic in the regional shopping centres, have closed since the late 1990’s. The owners of regional shopping centres, observing the success of lifestyle centre developments, began copying the development concept by “tacking on” similar styled open air retail, restaurant and entertainment complexes, often on the footprint left by the vacated department store. These lifestyle centres have bolstered the competitive advantages of the shopping centres by adding components that had typically been found in downtowns and creating a “downtown” or “main street” environment, with lots of free parking. Even some power centers are now including “lifestyle” centre add-ons, again in an effort to provide the “downtown-type” experience, but with the advantages of privately controlled space. Lifestyle centres have been slower to evolve in Canada due to the perception that the open air concept is not compatible with Canada’s cold winters. However, the success of power centres, which are open air, has convinced developers that this is a fallacy, and the development of town centres and lifestyle centres is gaining momentum in Canada. Thus suburban retail continues to evolve by mimicking and improving upon the downtown’s traditional appeal in privately controlled venues.

The extent of the suburbanization of shopping is substantial, and downtown shopping is now only a very minor portion of overall shopping in most cities. The 2008 Crandall Arambula presentation previously cited estimates that downtown shopping “trips” represent only 2% of overall shopping trips in the United States compared to 55% represented by big box centres, 27% by malls, 9% by internet, and 7% by lifestyle centres, illustrating the evolution that has occurred³⁰. These percentages of course are skewed by the suburbanized population of larger metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles and rapid growth metropolitan areas such as Dallas, Houston, Atlanta and Phoenix where

³⁰ Crandall Arambula, 2008.

shopping in the original downtowns has lost relevance in relation to their large suburbanized metropolitan areas.

2.7 Shift of Office Demand to Suburban Venues

The overall decline in the attractiveness of the central business district led to another trend, the movement of corporate offices out of downtown. In New York City, the home of a great many corporate headquarters, the trend started in the 1950's with the relocation of General Foods to White Plains. Over the course of the next twenty-five years, several dozen major corporate headquarters moved out of New York's central business district to suburban locations, including some to locations in other parts of the country. William H. Whyte studied these corporate moves in the 1980's, and suggested that many of the moves had negative results on the corporations themselves. Frequently, the motive for the move appeared to be relocation of offices close to the chief executive's residence, but rationalized as addressing the problems of being located in New York's central business district. Whyte suggested that this massive relocation trend in New York was stopping as companies began to realize that the trade-offs often resulted in lower productivity and loss of advantages that a location in Manhattan, the core of an international city, provided.³¹ Although he assessed the disadvantages of suburban headquarter campuses, he overlooked the attractiveness to other forms of office users. A trend was clearly occurring for offices to locate in suburban locations, except for particular enterprises that benefit from being in the central business district.

The suburbanization of offices, while first related to relocations, has been largely a location shift to the suburbs of the demand for new space. Certain office types, however, do value the ability to congregate, and the interaction and benefits that the central business district offers. This applies to banks and the financial and securities sectors, and their supporting law offices and services. It applies, as well, to certain other types such as head offices or corporate offices of specific industries. Examples are mining, and oil and

³¹ Whyte, William H. *Rediscovering the Center*. (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 284-297.

gas companies, being heavily transaction based and needing the contacts and interaction of others in the industry, and the interaction of supporting legal and financial offices and services. However, a growing trend started in the 1980's in which many banks, insurance companies, head offices, and other large space occupiers remained in the central business district, but transferred their "back-office" functions to suburban locations where, not only rents were cheaper, but there were good local pools of workers, typically available at lower wages in the suburbs.

Apart from specific types of office users that valued a downtown location, numerous office user categories came to conclude there was little need to be in the central business district, and consequently located in the suburbs to avoid the traffic problems, costs, and unfavourable environments found in many central business districts. The primary advantages of the suburban locations have been the availability of an abundance of parking, usually free, and the accessibility and convenience for employees and visitors. Many service-type offices have no real advantage to be in the central business district, an example being engineering firms, which, as large space occupiers, often require shorter term project space, and benefit from the lower rents and flexibility that the suburbs can provide. As a consequence of this trend, the central business districts in a great many cities have experienced little or no growth in office demand, the growth occurring in the suburbs.

Suburban office growth has taken a number of forms. Offices are found along freeways and traffic corridors, often in clusters, or in "office parks", a concept started in the 1950s in which low to medium-rise corporate office buildings, and, more recently high-rise office buildings, competing architecturally, are sited on a large tract of land in a campus-like manner. An early example of this was Don Mills in suburban Toronto, and a more recent example is the cluster of primarily technology firms in York Mills, also in suburban Toronto.

An important phenomenon that evolved in the larger cities is the appearance of “edge cities” described by Joel Garreau in his 1991 book, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier*.³² Edge cities are relatively dense clusters of, not only office buildings, but also retail and various other services. Garreau defined an “edge city” as a cluster containing a minimum of five million square feet of office space plus at least six hundred thousand square feet of retail space, essentially a destination with the principal components of a downtown – offices, shopping, including department stores and specialty boutiques, restaurants and entertainment. And typically having been developed on what was previously most likely rural, residential, or vacant land in the 1960’s. Garreau listed some thirty six metropolitan areas in Canada and U.S. containing edge cities, with some 200 developed or emerging edge cities in total. As of 1991, Los Angeles had the largest number of developed or emerging edge cities, at 26, followed by New York at 20. Garreau also demonstrated that most metropolitan areas with edge cities have a larger quantity of office space in the suburbs than in the downtown. A good example is Toronto. It had four edge cities and five emerging edge cities in 1991. In 1991 it had 51.7 million square feet of suburban office space compared 45.7 million square feet downtown.³³ More recently, Toronto’s quantity of downtown office space was little changed, but only represented about 30% of the total office space in the metropolitan area.³⁴

Edge cities were conceived by private developers and focused on creating environments that, as the primary user target, appeal to offices users. Important to the concept is the other major component, the shopping complex. The retail component typically receives its viability from the location, accessibility, and a large regional draw from a white collar demographic, but bolstered by the office component. Edge cities attempt to offer what can be found in central business districts, but avoiding the problems of downtown,

³² Garreau, Joel. *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier*. 1991. (Reprint, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1992).

³³ Garreau, 425-438.

³⁴ Source: CB Richard Ellis.

particularly the problems of accessibility and parking. Most edge cities have relied almost entirely on automobile access, although some, such as Toronto's North York edge city, combined this with subway access, and many newer edge cities have access to light rapid transit. Edge cities have been an evolving phenomenon, more and more replicating the traditional uses and services found in central business districts, as well as adding other services that appeal to the various demographic strata of the district in which they are located.³⁵

The edge city is essentially a mini-downtown in a new form. The advantages it offers not only satisfies general demand for office space in the market, but provides a strong incentive for demand to shift from downtown to its suburban location. It permits an office user the ability to locate in the suburbs and at the same time enjoy many of the services available in the downtown, as well as avoid the traffic congestion and loss of time coupled with traveling to and from downtown by car. This form also provides the advantage of a more safe and secure environment, since the complex has the control and security provided by private ownership.

The tremendous growth in demand for suburban office space has been propelled by the shift in jobs from manufacturing to white collar. At the time of Garreau's 1991 book, the percentage of the workforce employed in manufacturing had dropped from 50% in the early 1950's to 18%. The shift to white collar jobs, in combination with general population and economic growth, created an enormous need for office space, and edge cities were evolving as a preferential choice as they were developed. In addition, during this period, the percentage of women in the workforce grew dramatically. Edge cities were particularly appealing to working women living in the suburbs, reinforcing this shift.³⁶

³⁵ Garreau, 42-47.

Garreau's studies and observations on suburbanization and edge cities were made early in the period of the "destruction of distance" by technology described by Joel Kotkin in his 2005 book, *The City*. "The ability to process and transmit information globally, and across great expanses, undermines many traditional advantages enjoyed by established centers... Improvements in telecommunications promise to further flatten economic space in the future, with choice jobs able to shift to exurbs and even small cities". Kotkin points out that in 1969 only 11% of America's largest companies had headquarters in the suburbs, but by the mid-1990's, the percentage was about 50%. It is noticeable that this shift has not only been occurring with corporate headquarters, but also with the services and the entrepreneurial sectors. This includes the financial and securities sector, often still having head offices in New York, or, in Canada, Toronto, but with dispersed operations, and thus jobs and space, in both suburbs and smaller cities. Although this has resulted in the siphoning of growth in this sector from the traditional financial centres of New York and Toronto, fortunately it has often resulted in decision-making branches, as well as new firms in this sector, in central business districts of smaller cities that act as regional financial centres³⁷.

Thus with the "destruction of distance" and "flattening of space", this new reality has created a "footloose" demand for office space that will go where its needs are best met for doing business and attracting and retaining employees. Although the trend has largely favoured the suburbs, in reality it is a competition of advantages, and the central business district needs to exhibit advantages in order to compete.

2.8 The Trend to Mixed Use

The forms of the lifestyle centres discussed under the section on retail, and the edge cities discussed under the section on offices, are now converging and evolving into a trend to a new form of suburban mixed use complexes that combine the retail / restaurant / entertainment components and the "open air" street-front format of the lifestyle centre,

³⁶ Garreau, 30-34.

with residential, offices and hotels. The original lifestyle centres had the elements of a main street, and, as complexes catering to a nearby higher income market area, successfully served their market, and typically also drew from far beyond. The edge cities that had evolved were successful as a form of mixed use. They combined the elements of the traditional shopping centre with offices and other elements, but, however, lacked the appeal of the new “open air” lifestyle centres. The contemporary form of new mixed use projects combines the elements of the “open air” lifestyle centres with residential, offices, and often hotels. Many of the newer mixed use projects are located at or near new light rapid transit stops, as cities develop new transit systems. This new form is perhaps the most rapidly evolving form of commercial development in suburban locations, offering characteristics more truly like the original form of downtowns, having street-front formats with retail and restaurants on the ground floor, and residential or office uses above, often combined with medium to high density residential, office, and hotel uses on sites surrounding the principal “main street” component of the development. In some larger developments the street-front retail / restaurant format is carried throughout the project. The mixed use complex is more complex to build and finance, takes longer than traditional “formula” developments, and often combines two or more builders developing particular components. For example, one developer may take the overall lead as developer, but bring in a residential developer to build the residential components, and a hotel developer for the hotel component.

In many cities, particularly in the U.S., traditional strip centres and smaller regional centres have suffered from declining viability and a considerable number are now considered obsolete. The sites of many of these centres (conventionally called “greyfield” sites), often combined with adjacent lands, are being converted to major mixed use complexes. Additionally, both brownfield sites such as former industrial areas, and suburban greenfield sites are being developed for mixed use complexes throughout both Canada and the U.S. The main characteristic of the contemporary mixed use complexes is

³⁷ Joel Kotkin. *The City: A Global History*. (New York: The Modern Library, 2005), 149-151.

that they are “open air”, and could be described as essentially a “microcosm” of the traditional downtown. In the development community they are believed to be a sustainable form of development, unlike many of the earlier forms of suburban development, due to both the interaction of the various components, and the “walkable” nature and sense of community that they provide. The considerable popularity and success of these centres is propelling this form of development.

2.9 The Continuing Drama of the City Centre versus the Suburbs

It can be seen from the foregoing discussions that there has been an almost continuous competition or “tug-of-war” between the city centre and the suburbs in which city centres strive to retain relevance against suburban forms of development as cities in Canada and the United States have grown and “suburbanized” components beyond the residential sector. This drama continues, with the suburbs replacing the city centre for new offices, places of employment, retail, restaurants, and other uses. With static or declining offices and other types of uses to attract employment in the city centre, the city centre then lacks vitality, in turn reducing its viability for retail stores, restaurants, entertainment, and other uses, and this lack of vitality lessens the attractiveness of the city centre as a place to work, visit or live. The end result is a suburbanized city with a city centre suffering from a reducing need or incentive for people to go there or live there or nearby. According to Joel Kotkin, in his recent book *The Next Hundred Million: America in 2050*, some U.S. cities such as Los Angeles, San Jose, and Phoenix developed without a thriving downtown, and these cities are likely to continue to evolve without a large dense core or a dominant economic, cultural, and political centre. These downtowns are missing what Kotkin describes as “sacred space”, a place with a hold on the collective memory of a large part of the population.³⁸

As part of the chronology of cities, of the original sources of employment in the city centre, most light industrial uses are long gone because of the numerous advantages that

³⁸ Kotkin, Joel. *The Next Hundred Million*, 41-42.

the suburbs offer. With industrial uses gone, the principal source of employment in the city centre has been offices. City centres typically contain the city hall, and offices for municipal and government agencies and functions, forming at least a core quantity of office employment, or, in the case of capital cities of states or provinces, a larger component of these uses. The main component of employment in most cities, however, has been office space for business and professional uses. As discussed, in the last several decades suburban venues have been able to attract the lion's share of growth in this sector in most cities that experienced high growth due to the growth of suburban venues including office parks, edge cities, and, more recently, other forms of mixed use complexes. Smaller cities have had varying degrees of office suburbanization, depending on the nature of their economies and other factors peculiar to the particular city. Fundamental to this trend has been the ability of the suburban venues to offer comparative and competitive advantages over the city centre, including accessibility, lower cost, and a controlled and often perceptually better environment than found in the city centre. In order for the city centre to compete for offices, accessibility is a major issue, as is the environment offered by the city centre. It also needs to be recognized that being in the city centre typically equates to higher cost, and with the "footloose" nature of a large number of office types, and the "flattening of distance" from technology, the city centre cannot be expected to attract all types of office users.

Retail uses by their very nature receive their viability primarily from the spending power generated by employment. Thus the links of place of employment and place of residence to the location / accessibility of retail outlets now statistically strongly favours suburban venues. Although downtown was the traditional location of department stores and retail stores, it can be readily seen that a comparatively weakened employment and resident base in the city centre creates a weakened competitive position. As a result of this condition, many mid-tier and smaller cities that suffered a decline in office use or even office growth in the centre city have lost their downtown department stores, with retail venues in the city centre experiencing sales levels well below their suburban

counterparts, resulting in an inability to attract new retail stores. In many such cities, retail occupancy downtown has drifted to secondary and service uses.

Various attempts have been made in many mid-sized to smaller cities to introduce new retail complexes into their city centres, with varying degrees of success, and in many cases, particularly in smaller cities, complete failure. The difficulty in many instances has been the attempt to mimic suburban shopping centres in their tenant mix. With the same retail chains found in suburban centres there is little incentive to travel to the downtown complex rather than its suburban counterpart with free parking and easier accessibility, leaving the downtown stores relying solely on downtown workers doing only some of their shopping during weekday business hours. This weakness in turn hampers the ability to attract new retail tenants. Additionally, enclosed downtown shopping centres of this nature do little to add vitality to the street, weakening the traditional appeal of the streets. It should be recognized that shopping could be split into two components, “chore shopping” for the hurried consumer, now being catered to by the suburban big box stores and power centres, and “pleasure shopping”, the traditional form of shopping. Pleasure shopping was the traditional form of shopping in the city centre, but it now has new competition from the rising numbers of lifestyle centres and mixed use projects being developed in many cities. For retail to flourish in the downtown, differentiation from its suburban counterparts is assistive or needed to overcome the comparative disadvantages.

Restaurants and drinking establishments are also important to the viability of the city centre. In a healthy city centre, restaurants have a steady weekday lunch trade, and evening trade caters to the business people and workers from the offices, nearby residents, hotels, and, if of sufficient calibre, from people travelling to downtown to dine. This differentiates them from the typical suburban restaurants that often have a weak lunch trade on weekdays (except in food courts), unless there are sufficient nearby businesses, and are more oriented to families. Unique non-chain restaurants, particularly those with outdoor patios, are very important to the vitality of the city centre, and greatly assistive in differentiating the downtown from the suburbs. They do, however, need the

nearby offices to flourish. Drinking establishments such as pubs, bars, and nightclubs are also traditional to downtowns, and add nightlife and vitality. They also rely to a significant degree on offices, hotels, and nearby residents as a basic source of business.

Entertainment and cultural venues are also an important source of vitality for the city centre by virtue of activity they generate outside of office hours on evenings and weekends. The movie theatre industry, unfortunately, has largely shifted its focus to suburban venues except in larger cities, and has closed most of the traditional one or two-screen large theatres in city centres, sometimes converting them to multi-screen theatres, but, in many cities, not replacing them. The large multi-screen format benefits from the abundant parking available in suburban venues such as power centres, shopping centres and even office parks, and parking, land values, and accessibility in the centre city limits their presence. Although the large movie theatres are lost to the suburbs in many cities, such cities often retain art cinemas, typically conversions from traditional movie theatres, and the city centre remains the predominant location for performing arts theatres, although performing arts theatres are now being found in suburban venues. Similarly, in most cities, the majority of public art galleries and museums are typically still located in the city centres, although many lifestyle centres include an “arts” component. These various venues in the inner city contribute to activity, particularly evening activity, adding nightlife and culture, as well as enhancing the viability of restaurants. They are also assistive in attracting residents to the inner city.

An important driver in the vitality of the city centre is the residential population within it or with easy access to it. The suburbanization trend resulted in many city centres and the inner ring being left with a population with lower income demographics, one that does not contribute significantly to the viability of businesses in the city centre. Attracting residential development that caters to a contributing demographic is important for the viability of the city centre. Many cities have suffered from the movement of middle and upper income people out of the inner city to the suburbs due to social problems including inner city crime and homelessness. By dealing with these and other environmental

problems in earnest, a number of cities have been able to re-attract middle to upper income people back to the inner city, New York's and Portland's success in this process being exemplary. Other sociological conditions are contributing to a revival, notably the growing "creative class" and changing demographics that favours "walkable urbanity", to be discussed in the next chapter.

Tourism is a further contributor to the vitality of the city centre. Tourists spend money in restaurants, retail stores, and entertainment and cultural venues, and contribute to their viability. Hotels receive their viability from visitors, and the components of visitors are business, leisure travel, and meetings and conventions. Businesses located in the central business district typically are responsible for the core component of weekday hotel occupancy in the city centre, so that the quantity and nature of offices in the city centre is the principal determinant of the number of visitors, which in turn largely determines how many hotel rooms exist. Attracting leisure travelers to city centres is related to what the city centre has to offer, and the quality of its environment. Meeting and convention business relates to several factors. These are the quality and size of the convention and meeting facilities, the size limiting the size of conventions that can be attracted; the number of available hotel rooms in the vicinity of the convention and meeting facilities, which in turn relates to the business generated by offices; and, as with leisure travelers, the attractiveness of the environment for the visitors including stores, restaurants, and things to do, as well as the absence of the undesirable conditions of homelessness, crime, and lack of "busyness" or vitality.

In summary, the vitality of the city centre stems principally from three complementary sources: employment in the city centre; activities and environmental conditions in the city centre that provide an incentive for people, both local and visitors to the city, to go there; and an adequate base of people living there or close to it to contribute to its viability. The combination of a sufficient employment base and attractive activities and environmental conditions in the city centre will, in turn, provide an incentive for people to live there or within reasonable proximity of the city centre. Although requiring a longer time frame to

achieve if these components are deficient, providing attractive activities and environmental conditions will provide an incentive for people to live there and thus spawn a sufficient employment base for offices and other uses. Not to be overlooked, accessibility is an important factor in attracting employment to the city centre.

Components of accessibility include road access by car, parking availability and costs, and comfortable public transit such as LRT (light rapid transit), or subways or commuter train service in larger cities, as well as the quantity of inner city dwellers that can easily travel to the city centre on foot, bicycle, cab, transit or car.

2.10 Other Components of the Dynamics of the City and City Centre

This chapter discussed the dynamics of the city centre, tracing the historical evolution of cities and city centres in Canada and the U.S. to provide an understanding of the forces at play that relate to the health of city centres. Sociological factors, including demographic trends, also have bearing on the dynamics of cities and the city centre. The next chapter will discuss sociological dynamics as they relate to cities and city centres, an understanding of which extends the discussion in this chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: URBAN SOCIOLOGICAL DYNAMICS

3.1 Introduction

In relation to the purpose of this study - to explore and identify the unique characteristics of historic districts and the impacts that the reinvigoration of historic districts located in city centres can have in downtown revitalization as regenerators of city life - urban sociological dynamics are an important consideration since reinvigoration relates to vitality, or social activity.

Cities in Canada and the U.S. have evolved considerably, from a sociological perspective, over the last century, and continue to evolve today. The last chapter traced the suburbanization and the general decline of city centres from what they once were, and the dynamics of city centres in this context. This chapter will deal with the sociological aspects of cities in this perspective to provide an overview of the changing dynamics that have a relationship to the health of the city centre.

The significant decline in the health of city centres during the depression era was followed by a static condition during World War II, and a post war period which ultimately led to further decline in a great many city centres. As discussed in the previous chapter, many factors have played a role in this transition. A leading factor was the growth of suburban alternatives to the city centre as the business and commercial centre of the city, commencing in earnest in the second half of the last century. Sociological and demographic influences have also played a role in the changing dynamics of cities, including the changing demographics of families and households, with women becoming a large part of the workforce, and the transition to a dominant white collar economy requiring a more educated workforce as new technologies evolved. Sociological dynamics play a role not only in the overall aspects of cities, but a specific and important

role in the dynamics of the city centre. This chapter will discuss the component of urban dynamics, and the influence they have in the dynamics of city centres.

3.2 The Changing Sociology of Cities

3.2.1 The Decline of the Res Publica

In a 1938 paper, Louis Wirth, a member of what was known as the “Chicago School” of sociologists, attempted to compare urban life at the time to what had been the characteristics of a more dominant rural and small town society only one generation earlier. He described urban society as characterized by secondary rather than primary relationships, which, although they may be face to face, “are nevertheless impersonal, superficial, transitory, and segmental...immunizing themselves against the personal claims and expectations of others”. To quote Wirth, “Our acquaintances tend to stand in a relationship of utility to us in the sense that the role which each one plays in our life is overwhelmingly regarded as a means for the achievement of our own ends. Whereas the individual gains, on the one hand, a certain degree of emancipation or freedom from the personal and emotional controls of intimate groups, he loses, on the other hand, the spontaneous self-expression, the morale, and the sense of participation that comes with living in an integrated society.” Wirth described this as the “social void” which he believed characterized the society of cities at the time in the United States, although it must be borne in mind his observations were written during the depression period and they reflected his observations in large cities. Wirth concludes, however, that “It is largely through the activities of voluntary groups, be their objectives economic, political, educational, religious, recreational, or cultural, that the urbanite expresses and develops his personality, acquires status, and is able to carry the round of activities that constitutes his life career”.³⁹

³⁹Louis Wirth, *Urbanism as a Way of Life*, in *Classic Essays on the Culture of Cities*, ed. Richard Sennett (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1969), 153, 162.

The “social void” that Wirth described in 1938 foreshadowed the observations of Richard Sennett, in his 1977 book, *The Fall of Public Man*, which describes how people’s participation in *res publica*, or public life, was in a state of decay. Sennett defines “*res publica*” as “those bonds of association and mutual commitment which exist between people who are not tied together by ties of family or intimate association: it is the bond of a crowd, of a ‘people’, of a polity, rather than family or friends”. In the societies of American cities, Sennett suggested that, at the time, public life had little meaning, and “manners and ritual interchanges with strangers are looked on at best as formal and dry, at worst as phoney. The stranger himself is a threatening figure, and few people take pleasure in a world of strangers, the cosmopolitan city”.⁴⁰

The result of this loss of *res publica*, according to Sennett, meant a loss in the stimulation of interface with strangers and people of other ethnicities and parts of society, with the public domain becoming meaningless. This in turn resulted in a loss of appreciation of the public sphere and public places, and fostered the design of buildings that isolated themselves from public space; public space now serving more for merely movement rather than a place of social intercourse. Sennett observed that the automobile had provided man with “an ease of motion unknown to any prior civilization ... we take unrestricted motion of the individual as an absolute right. The private motorcar is the logical instrument of exercising this right and the effect on public space, especially the space of the urban street, becomes meaningless or even maddening unless it can be subordinated to free movement. The technology of modern motion replaces being in the street with a desire to erase the constraints of geography.”⁴¹

The disconnect between buildings and the public sphere, and the attitude that the purpose of streets and sidewalks was solely for movement, was certainly the thinking of the time when Sennett made these observations, reflecting the attitudes of civic officials,

⁴⁰ Sennett, Richard, *The Fall of Public Man*. 1977 (Reprint, New York: Norton, 1992), 3,4.

⁴¹ Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 1977, 14.

architects and builders. One can observe numerous examples of cities in which downtowns were built up with high rise office buildings in this period, with little relationship to the streets, streets and sidewalks serving solely as means of movement and access. In many cities high-rise office towers were often spread out over an un-walkable distance, resulting in streets with little life. A particularly notable example is downtown Los Angeles, with its post-war high-rise office towers having no meaningful relationship to the street except for automobile access, the sidewalks along blank walls or lifeless plazas isolating the office lobbies, the streets and sidewalks having no other purpose than movement.

Well before Sennett's 1977 book, in 1961 Jane Jacobs, a layperson, published her classic *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*⁴². The book decried the conventional planning practices that had evolved from Modernist planning ideals, and the negative impact that these practices were having on the public life of streets. Jacobs pointed out that the street was vital to the health of a city, and not simply a corridor for transportation and the movement of people. Although much of her discussion in the book was related to the inner city neighbourhood areas of New York and other large cities, her observations have general applicability to city centres. Jacobs analysed real conditions and suggested practical solutions. Unfortunately, her solutions did not become part of the planning and development thinking until much later, led by studies of William H. White, after many cities like Los Angeles were built up in the post-war period.

Active street life, to Jane Jacobs, was synonymous with city vitality. The street was the important forum of social contact in the city, Jacobs observing that "the casual public sidewalk life of cities ties directly into other types of public life". Based on her observations of street life which had the benefit of shops and residential adjacency, she noted the value of the numerous casual contacts one has on the urban street, which

⁴² Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. 1961. (Reprint, New York: Random House Vintage, 1992).

develop “a feeling for the public identity of people and a web of public respect and trust”, or essentially the *res publica* described by Sennett. Jacobs noted that what had particular value in the urban environment was the ability that one has to maintain one’s privacy, and regulate one’s degree of contact, with no private commitment.⁴³

The other aspect of the active urban street, according to Jacobs, was the relationship between activity and safety. “A well used city street is apt to be a safe street. A deserted city street is apt to be unsafe”. Again basing her observations on urban streets with shops and residential adjacency, she observed that safety, and the feeling of safety, was enhanced by “eyes on the street” from people in adjacent shops or occupancies, and by virtue of an adequate volume of other people using the street on a continuous basis. The conditions needed to achieve this, according to Jacobs, were a mix of uses that draw people, particularly uses such as stores, public places, and enterprises that are used both day and night such as restaurants and bars. These activities not only generate use of the sidewalks, but the presence of people attracts other people. The active street has not only its users, but also people who derive pleasure from simply watching other people. In fact an active street typically has “self-appointed public characters” who frequent the street and talk to many people, according to Jacob’s observations.⁴⁴

Jacobs observed that a diversity of uses was the key component to generating activity on streets, and was required to ensure use not just at certain times of day, but on a more continuous basis. Of particular importance was the presence of more than one primary use to ensure that people use the street on different schedules and for different purposes. In the city, the major component of the downtown weekday population is from offices or places of work, which can provide a healthy midday street population. Street level retail, window displays, plazas and outdoor public spaces, restaurants, food and drink,

⁴³ Jacobs, 56-59

⁴⁴ Jacobs, 43, 36-37, 68.

entertainment, art, and the presence of street life are all part of the mix that provides life to the street and spreads it out over the day, evening and weekend. Jacobs also cites the contribution to diversity of older buildings, which, because of lower rents, add variety by permitting various lower economic uses in the city; and short blocks, which result in more corners and thus introduce more users from intersecting streets.⁴⁵

Another important aspect of street vitality is a dense concentration of people, so that street use is concentrated. For a diversity of use to have impact, it is important that “the people using the streets at different times actually use the *same* streets”, and, “the people using the same streets at differing times must include, among them, people who use the same facilities”. To quote Jacob, “people gathered in concentrations of city size and density can be considered a positive good, in the faith that they are desirable because they are the source of immense vitality, and because they do represent, in small geographic compass, a great and exuberant richness of differences and possibilities, many of these differences unique and unpredictable and all the more valuable because they are”.⁴⁶

Unfortunately, Jacobs’ observations went largely unheeded by city planners and developers until William H. Whyte published his observations, which had many similarities to those of Jacobs. Whyte, a renowned sociologist, studied the sociological activities of people in urban streets and public places publishing *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*⁴⁷ in 1980, and culminating in his more exhaustive book, *City: Rediscovering the Center*, published in 1988.⁴⁸ His research method was direct observation, particularly through time-lapse photography, providing him with real observations and data on the behaviour of people in public places. His initial studies were

⁴⁵ Jacobs, 144, 150-151, 163, 178-186.

⁴⁶ Jacobs, 163, 220-221.

⁴⁷ Whyte, William. *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. (Washington: The Conservation Foundation, 1980).

⁴⁸ Whyte, William. *City: Rediscovering the Center*. (New York: Doubleday, 1988).

primarily conducted in New York, but he subsequently extended his studies to other cities, including smaller cities in the United States and Canada, as well as cities in Europe. The findings of Whyte resulted in many changes in planning philosophy, as well as changes in city bylaws in New York.

Whyte's primary observation was that people, in general, are stimulated by busy places, and enjoy being on busy streets as well as busy public places. Conversely, echoing Jacob's observations, streets or public places that are not busy are, in general, not attractive to people, and have the impact of discouraging use. Simply put, people attract people, and lack of people discourages use. Too few people on the streets, often the result of conditions such as empty space, particularly blank walls or parking lots, was, to Whyte, a root problem in city centers, particularly those of smaller cities. Whyte concluded that concentration of buildings and uses at the center is important, echoing Jacob's observations. From Whyte's studies of pedestrian flows on streets, Whyte concluded that if pedestrian flows on the street at the center of the city are less than one thousand people per hour at midday, the city centre has lost its vitality and is no longer sustainable.⁴⁹

The activities of people on the street include interchanges between people, window shopping, people watching, strolling, and sitting. These activities, in general, are pleasurable activities for people, and are enhanced by sunshine or natural light outside, warmth, and the idea of getting some "fresh air" (where it may or may not exist), or just getting outside. Interestingly, Whyte found that conversations and interchanges between people were not only more prevalent on busy streets, but occurred most frequently on the busiest parts of streets, particularly at corners, and in the center of pedestrian traffic. It is logical that with a larger pedestrian flow, there is more likelihood of a chance meeting with someone a person knows. Whyte attributes the reason that people typically carry on

⁴⁹ Whyte 1988, 6.

conversations in the middle of pedestrian flows, is that it makes it more comfortable for them “to break off, to switch, to continue”.⁵⁰

An important observation of Whyte from his studies was that behaviour on streets in different cities is similar. Comparing large cities, he found that behaviour in Tokyo was similar to New York. Comparing large cities to small cities, the only real difference he observed was pace. In large cities, people walk faster than in small cities. Because the pace is not as brisk in smaller cities, and sidewalks are not as crowded, sidewalks are less subject to being blocked by people conversing in the middle of the sidewalk. “People are not as aggressive and pushy since there is not much to be pushy about”.⁵¹

Another aspect of the social life of city streets is what Whyte describes as “street life” and the various types of “street people” to be found on city streets. These include “regulars” such as policemen, postmen, sanitation men, store owners, and the like. Street life also includes “irregulars” such as handbill passers, pushcart food vendors, merchandize vendors, messengers, entertainers; “odd types” with their peculiarities and fantasies; and the underlife such as panhandlers, prostitutes, criminal types, and drug dealers.⁵² With respect to underlife, however, Whyte’s reference was to underlife on busy streets. Underlife on streets that are not busy, particularly residential streets in the inner city, has clearly been responsible for the flight of middle and upper income persons from many inner cities.

3.2.2 *The Neutralized City and Ghettoization*

In his 1990 book, *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities*, Sennett delved further into the causes and results of the loss of *res publica* or public life. The massive suburbanization in the “baby-boom” post-war years created enclaves of

⁵⁰ Whyte 1988, 9.

⁵¹ Whyte 1988, 23-24.

⁵² White 1988, 25-55.

families of similar demographics. These suburban enclaves prevented exposure to strangers and persons of other cultures and ethnicities, and Sennett suggests that, in this era, there was a fear of exposure, exposure more likely connoting a possibility of being hurt rather than stimulated. This separation carried into other spheres such as the suburban shopping centre and office buildings. Sennett describes the result as the “neutralized city” containing bland, neutralizing spaces, spaces which remove the threat of social contact.⁵³

A significant factor in the evolution of the suburban culture has been the belief that one’s character is moulded early in life, and thus parents considered it important to protect their children from “destructive outside influences”.⁵⁴ What has been lost, however, is described by Sennett as follows: “the idea that people grow only by the process of encountering the unknown. Things and persons which are strange may upset familiar ideas and received truths; unfamiliar terrain serves a positive function in the life of a human being. The function it serves is to accustom the human being to take risks. Love of the ghetto, especially the middle class ghetto, denies the person a chance to enrich his perceptions, his experience, and learn the most valuable of all human lessons, the ability to call the established conditions of life into question.”⁵⁵ This of course is what Sennett means by the neutralized city, a city of enclaves or ghettos.

The formation of the “city of ghettos” described by Sennett in his 1990 book occurs through a natural process according to Thomas C. Schelling, an economist who received a Nobel Prize for his work in this area, and is outlined in his book “Micromotives and Macrobehaviour”⁵⁶, published in 1978. According to Schelling the evolution of the “city

⁵³ Sennett, Richard. *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities*. (New York: Norton, 1990), xii.

⁵⁴ Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye*, 1990, 30.

⁵⁵ Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 1977, 295.

⁵⁶ Schelling, Thomas C. *Micromotives and Macrobehaviour*. (New York: Norton & Company, 1978).

of ghettos” in the modern city, where there are many choices of where to live, is more or less a natural process, one which occurs on its own through human behaviour. Schelling applied what has become known as game theory to systems of human behaviour. Systems of human behaviour are the combined actions of persons responding to their surroundings, and being unaware, or not caring, how his or her actions combine with the actions of others to produce unanticipated results. With respect to clustering in the form of homogeneous groups, or “ghettos”, Schelling demonstrates mathematically that if one ethnic or demographic group is content to locate within a neighbourhood containing another ethnic or demographic group, but not content if the ratio of the other group is too high, ultimately, regardless of the initial ratio in the neighbourhood between the two groups, the neighbourhood will gravitate to being occupied entirely, or almost entirely, by one or the other group. Residential neighbourhoods within a city, and particularly suburban subdivisions of similar housing types, as a consequence tend to “ghettoize” through this natural process of human behaviour, according to Schelling.

According to Sennett the result of this “ghettoization”, which Sennett described as “retribalization”, is a distortion of the understanding of the values the city provides. To quote Sennett, “The city is an instrument of impersonal life, the mold in which diversity and complexity of persons, interests, and tastes become available as social experience. The fear of impersonality is breaking that mold... It is the very fear of impersonal life, the very value put upon intimate contact, which makes the notion of a civilized existence, in which people are comfortable with diversity of experience, and indeed nourishment in it, a possibility only for the rich and well-bred”.⁵⁷ It is from this process that the *res publica*, of vital importance to the health of the city centre, went into serious decline.

One can see how the “neutralized” sociological conditions discussed above resulted in “neutralized” suburban enclaves, with suburban shopping centres and office buildings

⁵⁷ Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 1977, 339.

insulated from other social groups, particularly those social groups found in the downtowns of cities. In turn, this removed interest in participation in life on the streets and public places in the downtowns of cities.

3.2.3 *The Information Age and Rise of the Creative Class*

Sennett noted in 1977 that the rich and well-bred were largely what was left as true urbane city dwellers.⁵⁸ Another noted sociologist, Lyn Lofland, building on the works of Jacobs, Whyte and Sennett, also examined the social life of public space in her 1998 book *The Public Realm: Exploring the City's Quintessential Social Territory*, with a particular focus on the failure of the public realm in many modern American cities to foster cosmopolitanism, or public life. She attributed this in large part to the post-war development of suburban enclaves and planning for the automobile, with much of the public space in downtowns of American cities now built in a manner that does not foster public life. She concluded that there was “little hope for the future of a robust public realm”, even in the face of the emerging “electronic age”, suggesting that the electronic age would introduce a further form of segregation of people from the public realm⁵⁹. However, neither Sennett nor Lofland anticipated or accounted for the transformations that were occurring in this new “electronic age”.

The most significant transition in this new age, as it relates to city life and “urbanity”, is described by Richard Florida in his 2002 book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*⁶⁰, and expanded on in his subsequent 2005 book, *Cities and the Creative Class*⁶¹. Noting that many cities were rapidly growing as centers of high technology industries, Florida

⁵⁸ Sennett 1977, 339-340.

⁵⁹ Lofland, Lyn. *The Public Realm: Exploring the City's Quintessential Social Territory*. (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1998), 248-249.

⁶⁰ Florida, Richard. *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

⁶¹ Florida, Richard. *Cities and the Creative Class*. (New York: Routledge, 2005).

studied the relationship of this growth to the presence of what he named the “Creative Class”.

The Creative Class was defined by Florida as a distinct economic class, consisting of persons in fields of work that require creativity. Occupations included in his definition are computer and mathematical; architectural and engineering; life, physical and social science; education, training and library; arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media; management; business and financial; legal; healthcare practitioners and technical; and high-end sales and sales management. The Creative Class is distinguished from the Working Class (construction and extraction; installation, maintenance, and repair; production; and transportation and material moving), the Service Class (health care support; food preparation and food service; building and grounds cleaning and maintenance; personal care and service; low end sales and related; office and administrative; community and social service; protective service) and Agriculture (farming, fishing and forestry). As of 1999 these categories represented 30.1% (Creative Class), 26.1% (Working Class), 43.4% (Service Class), and 0.4% (Agriculture), respectively, of the U.S. working population.⁶²

Through Florida’s very extensive studies, he found that there was a direct correlation between the presence and growth of high technology industries and the presence and growth of this Creative Class. This Creative Class, by 1999, had grown to represent 30.1% of the workforce of the United States, compared to 25.4% in 1991, illustrating the significant growth trend of this class. Similar results were found for Canadian cities in subsequent studies undertaken in conjunction with University of Toronto. The relevance of this Creative Class is that creativity is now recognized as the decisive source of competitive advantage, according to Florida.⁶³

⁶² Florida 2002, 327-332.

⁶³ Florida 2002, 7.

This new and expanding Creative Class did not fit the societal mould that had been described by Sennett, but in fact had more urbane characteristics. Members of the Creative Class were relatively footloose, and appeared to be locating in places its members deemed to offer a superior lifestyle. Creative industries, in turn, were attracted to these places as a result of the presence of the Creative Class, a self-reinforcing condition. The Creative Class was being attracted to places that were tolerant, diverse, and open to creativity, that is, where creative people of all types wanted to live. Florida believed that a part of this phenomenon was the exposure that the Creative Class had to a diverse range of persons, first in educational institutions, and then within their field of work, and the realization that creative people are of every ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, colour, and social characteristic. Creative people preferred to be amongst other creative people. Places that appeared to discriminate, and have set societal characteristics, had little appeal to the Creative Class. These propositions were borne out in Florida's extensive studies.

The Creative Class differs from the general societal characteristics that preceded its rise. The creative ethos generates an attraction to places that are centers of creativity and values creativity, individuality, difference, and merit. Unlike the close associations found in prior society, creative people generally seek a lifestyle characterized by loose and multiple ties, are more quasi-autonomous, and value places that provide an opportunity to create their own identities.⁶⁴ Florida also noted that this creative class valued a more flexible working environment, more suffused with "soft" control and autonomy, which he termed the "no-collar workplace".⁶⁵ In addition, since creative work is more intense, requiring periods of concentration, with the need, as well, to relax, the use of time has shifted from the fixed work schedules of the past, and intensified.

⁶⁴ Florida 2002, 7-8.

⁶⁵ Florida 2002, 13.

The working environment and social structure of this Creative Class is diametrically opposite to that which typified the 1950's workplace and social structure described by William H. Whyte in his classic 1956 book, *The Organization Man*.⁶⁶ The social structure typified in *The Organization Man* embraced exclusiveness, closeness, and stability, an environment that would be deemed restricting and invasive to the Creative Class. The Creative Class instead values diversity and openness, and seeks organizations and social environments that allow anyone to fit in and advance and does not discriminate against "outsiders", its members recognizing that creative talent defies classification based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference or appearance. They also seek community involvement to cultivate their interests, values and identities, according to Florida.⁶⁷ In particular, members of the Creative Class are attracted to locations that exhibit diversity and openness.

Florida developed indices such as the Bohemian Index (the proportion of artistically creative people), The Gay Index (the proportion of gay people), and the Melting Pot Index (the proportion of foreign born people), and showed the correlation of these indices with the presence of the Creative Class. Of the three indexes, Florida singled out the Gay Index as particularly important as a leading indicator, with the presence of gays to "be thought of as *canaries* to the creative economy...a strong signal of a diverse, progressive environment".⁶⁸

The most interesting aspect of the Creative Class as it relates to the city, according to Florida's studies, is that the Creative Class seeks an experiential life, "a creative life packed full of intense, high-quality, multidimensional experiences.... They crave creative stimulation but not escape". Outdoor recreational and lifestyle amenities were

⁶⁶ Whyte, William H. *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956).

⁶⁷ Florida 2002, 76, 96.

⁶⁸ Florida 2005, 131.

important.⁶⁹ But in particular, they are attracted to indigenous street-level culture found in vibrant cities. Florida points out that, through the influence of the Creative Class, the experiential lifestyle is becoming, in general, more and more prevalent in our society. Florida describes street-level culture appealing to the Creative Class as including “coffee shops, restaurants and bars, some of which offer performances along with food and drink; art galleries; bookstores and other stores; small to mid-sized theatres for film or live performances or both; and various hybrid spaces – like a bookstore / tearoom/ little theatre or gallery / studio / live music space... The scene may spill out onto sidewalks, with dining tables, musicians, vendors, panhandlers, performers and plenty of passersby at all hours of the day and night.”⁷⁰ These in fact are all activities that might be found in a vibrant downtown. The street scene appeals to the Creative Class because it is stimulating. It presents a mix of people of all sorts, and offers opportunities for meeting and informal conversations, or simply people watching - and it can be tapped into at any time of day or night.

Florida’s studies of the Creative Class relates to perhaps the most significant segment of society, one that continues to increase. The Working Class segment, on the other hand, continues to decline due to advancements in productivity-enhancing technology and the outsourcing of manufactured products to other countries, such as China, that are able to produce products at lower cost. The Creative Class does not necessarily shed attitudes that prevailed in the past, such as the desire of young families for the single family home in the suburbs to raise children. However, the Creative Class brings a whole new attitude and social structure that is favourable to the health of the city centre. In fact, in many cities high technology companies have been locating in or near the city centre, for the specific reason that that is where members, particularly younger members, of the Creative Class wish to live and congregate, and thus attracting and retaining these employees is facilitated by being within walking distance of where they live and congregate. A good

⁶⁹ Florida 2005, 71.

⁷⁰ Florida 2002, 183.

example is Seattle. Despite the fact that Microsoft is located at some distance from the city centre, almost a third of Seattle's high tech jobs are now located in the city centre and adjacent areas.⁷¹

Thus the Creative Class is breaking with what Sennett called the "tyrannies of intimacy" and the "love of the ghetto", which were, to Sennett, the root causes of the destruction of the res publica, and thus the loss of appreciation of the values that once provided the city centre with its vitality. Fortunately, the Creative Class is breaking this mould and providing renewed appreciation of these values, one that is gaining strength and influencing civic action with respect to city centres.

3.2.4 The Influence of the Internet and New Forms of Communication

How is communication technology itself affecting lifestyles and social structures? In particular, how are the internet, cell phones, instant messaging, electronic social networking sites, and other advances in communication and technologies impacting lifestyles? The cell phone and instant messaging facilitate an ease of communication at any time and from any place, thus fostering greatly increased communication between persons, primarily known persons such as family, friends, associates, and business or social contacts. The internet and electronic media, however, adds another dimension, that is, communication with not only known persons, but strangers. In a 2004 paper entitled *The Internet and Everyday Life*⁷², Barry Wellman and Bernie Hogan of the University of Toronto discuss this subject. Their conclusions are summarized below, together with the findings of a subsequent study authored by Wellman and others⁷³, as well as more recent evolutions.

⁷¹ Florida 2002, 288-289.

⁷² Wellman, Barry and Bernie Hogan, *The Internet and Everyday Life* (Toronto: University of Toronto (online), 2004).

⁷³ Boase, Jeffrey, John B. Horrigan, Barry Wellman, and Lee Rainie. *The Strength of Internet Ties* (Washington: www.pewinternet.org Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2006).

The internet, apart from its considerable usefulness as a “virtual place” where information on almost anything can be found, provides an additional medium for everyday communication and social intercourse, supplanting, rather than replacing, in-person conversation, the telephone or cell phone, and written forms of communication. It adds another dimension to communication, “atemporality”, that is, the ability for persons to communicate on their own time, and thus provides greater individual autonomy in communication. One can send an e-mail at any time of day or night, and, alternatively, one can access received e-mail communication at any time, with Blackberry and instant messaging devices allowing access from any location. The overall impact of this, according to the 2004 Wellman and Hogan paper, is described as the “efficiency model”. The Efficiency Model suggests that rather than decreasing the overall time available to the individual for other activities, people are enabled to use their time more effectively, allowing them to get more communication and information out of their day. The subsequent study entitled *The Strength of Internet Ties* confirmed that the internet had not reduced in-person or telephone contact, or any other form of social activity – it replaced only time spent on sleeping and TV watching.⁷⁴ The internet has allowed people to multitask, combining e-mail, instant messaging, and mobile phone use with other activities.

The social impact, according to Wellman and Hogan, has been the formation and growth of interpersonal and inter-organizational social networks that bring people closer together rather than pull people apart. “The more people meet in-person or by telephone, the more they use the internet to communicate”. In addition, “internet users are more likely to read newspapers, discuss important matters with their spouses and close friends, form neighbourhood associations, vote and participate in sociable offline activities”. Thus the internet fosters greater communication. It promotes a better informed society, as well as

⁷⁴ Boase et al 2006, 22.

provides a medium for the production and dissemination of ideas. It also aids in the formation of connected groups, with the ability of simultaneous communication. Wellman and Hogan suggest the internet is generating a movement to “networked individualism”, that is, a societal turn away from traditional close-knit groups such as households, neighbourhoods, kinship groups, workgroups and organizations to personal social networks, which they describe as “multiple, partial communities” that supply sociability, support, information, and a sense of belonging. This Networked Individualism invites demand for collaborative communication and information sharing, creating feedback loops.

The Strength of Internet Ties study examined, through surveys, the questions of whether the internet was a positive enabling force that expanded relationships, socially and geographically, or, conversely, the internet was a negative force, alienating people from what might have been richer, more authentic, relationships; or, put more succinctly, whether the internet helps build social capital. The study confirmed the positive nature of Networked Individualism. Networked Individualism did not result in the abandonment of relatives, neighbours, friends, and workmates, but in essence it expanded relationships. “Research is showing that the internet is not destroying relationships or causing people to be anti-social. To the contrary, the internet is enabling people to maintain existing ties, often to strengthen them, and at times forge new ties”.⁷⁵ In fact, in earlier studies, Wellman demonstrated that the shift from solitary communities to social networks began before the internet, but the internet has enabled an acceleration of this change. “It has made it easy for people to connect without living nearby and without knowing each other well. It has probably increased the variety of the kinds of people who are network members. Where once communication was confined to neighbours (usually similar in ethnicity and social status), it is now more diversified, bridging multiple social worlds”.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Boase et al 2006, 3.

⁷⁶ Boase et al 2006, 42.

The Strength of Internet Ties was based on detailed surveys of the U.S. populace. In a subsequent book entitled *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*⁷⁷, authors Tapscott and Williams delved further into the rapid growth of various internet mediums for social networking and mass collaboration. In particular, the authors note the presence of the “net generation”, being those under twenty-eight (as of 2007) who grew up with computers. This segment of the population was estimated at 30% of the population in the United States, with similar numbers in Canada, and growing year by year. They are full participants in the social networks described by Wellman and Hogan. The continuing introduction and rapid growth of social networking mediums such as “MySpace”, “Facebook” and “Twitter” is in fact greatly expanding social networking and the ease of formation of social networks of persons with common interests, breaking demographic barriers such as ethnicities, cultures, religions, social status, economic status, and age status, barriers that might have otherwise been exclusionary. In fact, a report in *The Economist* describes the “network effect” of how such social networks grow, that is each additional user adds his or her network to the media, causing exponential growth. The currently most popular social network site, Facebook, rising from its foundation in 2004, as of October 2009 had some 430 million members worldwide. In addition, “Connect” buttons allow members of one’s network to access activities of their members such as what they have been reading or viewing, further growing the “network effect” and social aspects of communication and social relationships.⁷⁸

It can be seen that Networked Individualism fosters communication with other societal groups without the necessity of face-to-face contact and “fear of exposure” which characterized the “neutralized city” that Sennett described, and thus allows the discovery of the commonalities, differences in views, and merits of others, without barriers. The res

⁷⁷ Tapscott, Don and Anthony D. Williams. *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*. (New York: Penguin Group, 2006).

⁷⁸ *Special Report on Social Networking*, *The Economist*, January 30, 2010, 3-20.

publica described by Sennett is derived from “those bonds of association and mutual commitment which exist between people who are not tied together by ties of family and intimate association”. It can be seen that Networked Individualism, although not the common bond described by Sennett, but rather individualized bonds, is a movement in a positive direction, helping to break down the root causes of the neutralized city and loss of res publica. Although Networked Individualism describes individualized bonds, it is to be observed that, particularly in the Net Generation (and rapidly spreading to older age groups), common bonds are being forged through electronic mediums in topics such as social responsibility and sustainability.

From the foregoing studies one may conclude that, enabled with both a greatly expanded capacity for communication, as well as the greatly increased ease to obtain information, our society is becoming more interconnected, and knowledgeable of not just things, but of the value of others, and the stimulation provided by this interface. The evolving information and electronic age appears to be a positive social force rather than a negative one, helping to reverse the disintegration of the public life. Although electronic social networking itself is not face-to-face, it has the effect of breaking down barriers and enriching perceptions. It is noteworthy that the “Networked Individualism” that is spreading through the use of the internet and its offshoots, and being particularly adopted by the Net Generation, has characteristics in common with Florida’s description of the Creative Class. Networked Individualism fosters communication with other societal groups and ethnicities, a leading characteristic of the Creative Class. Supporting this, recent surveys showed that 60% of American teens had friends of different ethnic backgrounds, 95% of those aged 18 to 29 approved of interracial dating, and 57% had dated someone of another race or ethnic group⁷⁹.

Florida pointed out that through the influence of the Creative Class the desire for an experiential lifestyle was becoming more prevalent in our society, leading to a desire to

⁷⁹ Kotkin, 2010, 24.

participate in the stimulation of street-level culture. Similarly, one would expect that, with the growth of social networking through internet media, particularly by the Net Generation, this would also lead to an attraction to the stimulation provided by the street-level culture, without the “fear of exposure” described by Sennett. In fact the characteristics of the Creative Class and the Net Generation appear to becoming assimilated by other components of society, transforming perceptions and helping to “de-neutralize” the “neutralized city” that Sennett decried. Networked Individualism might, to a certain extent, be described as a form of “virtual res publica”, as common bonds appear to be forming through this medium. Comparing the telephone conversation to the experience of an actual face to face conversation, or comparing virtual social intercourse provided by Networked Individualism to actual social intercourse, and the more valuable and stimulating experience the latter provides, would suggest that Networked Individualism will foster the actual, it being noted that the Creative Class are clear participants in the actual. All of these trends augur well for the rediscovery of street life and the social interface it provides.

3.3 Demographic Trends and Their Influence

In his 2008 book *The Option of Urbanism: Investing in a New American Dream*⁸⁰, Christopher Leinberger outlines demographic trends that are expected to have major influence on lifestyles being sought, and where people want to live. According to Leinberger, in 1960 nearly half of all households in the U. S. included children living at home. This fell to one-third in 2000 and is projected to decline to twenty-eight percent in 2025, with households with school age children an even lower percentage. Thus the trend is towards a large proportion of households consisting of empty nesters, “never nesters”, and singles, with the percentage of singles households expected to match the percentage of households with children by 2025. Similar trends appear to be occurring in Canada. What is significant about this is that persons in households without children are becoming

⁸⁰ Leinberger, Christopher B. *The Option of Urbanism: Investing in a New American Dream*. (Washington: Island Press, 2008).

disenchanted with “drivable-suburbia”, that is, suburban communities in which virtually every errand or activity outside of the household requires the use of the car, and annoyed at the growing traffic congestion in most cities as the suburbs continue to expand. Many persons in these categories of households have become aware of another option. They now appear to be seeking “walkable urbanity”, the kind of walkable urbanity described by Leinberger in his research brief on turning around downtown⁸¹. That is, they see the enhanced lifestyle available in walkable communities where one can walk to coffee shops, restaurants, retail and other services, one where they can enjoy the type of social interface and life on the street described by Jane Jacobs in her 1961 book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Leinberger estimates that somewhere between thirty and fifty percent of this segment would opt for walkable urbanity, given the opportunity. Thus it is evident that some of the conditions sought by the Creative Class and the Net Generation are now being sought by a growing segment of society. Although options for this lifestyle are becoming available in suburban mixed use developments, this lifestyle is available in downtowns as downtowns are revitalized. The healthy city centre is a mixed use entity, and walkable urbanity in the city centre encourages inner city living, avoiding the problems of traffic congestion in commuting to and from the city centre by automobile. In fact, research by Nobel Prize winning economist Daniel Kahneman found that commuting to and from work was the least enjoyable, if not the single least enjoyable, of all human activities⁸².

Although in many cities the suburban form may be favoured due to factors such as place of work, the suburban form of walkable urbanity can still be characterized as “neutralized” to a certain degree compared to downtown. Noting this difference, a recent book entitled *Retire Downtown: The Lifestyle Destination for Active Retirees and Empty*

⁸¹ Leinberger, Christopher B. *Turning Around Downtown: Twelve Steps to Revitalization*. (Washington: The Brookings Institute Research Brief, March 2005).

⁸² Richard Florida, “The days of urban sprawl are over – but not for the reasons you think”. *Toronto Globe and Mail*, July 12, 2008.

*Nesters*⁸³ promotes the idea of living downtown in particular cities that have downtowns with renewed vitality. The author, Kyle Ezell, calls these retirees “Ruppies”, meaning “retired urban people”, and the book surveys places to visit and things to do for an active lifestyle in some twenty American cities, with brief summaries of other American and Canadian cities. The social distinction of downtowns is, of course, the interface with all sorts of people from every demographic, ethnicity, and social strata, its “un-neutralized” character. The book suggest even another component of society will find favour with revitalized downtowns, the “Ruppies”. However, Kotkin contends that this movement is favoured only by a small portion this group⁸⁴, although even a small portion is very significant in relation to the rapidly increasing numbers of retirees as the baby boom generation retires.

3.4 Evolving Trends

The postwar period in which massive suburbanization occurred, with the loss of vitality in the city centres of most cities, produced what Sennett described as the “neutralized city”. The nature of suburban developments described in Chapter Two contributed greatly to this “neutralization”. Sennett’s “res publica”, consisting of “bonds of association and mutual commitment of ... a crowd, of a people, of a polity, rather than family or friends”, lost particularly in our post-war period, appears to be undergoing a revival in new forms, and current social dynamics appear to augur well for its revival. The loss of res publica with respect to our downtowns to a large degree had been fostered by a combination of the failure of cities to address and effectively deal with social problems that were occurring in downtowns, unenlightened and inappropriate planning and development in city centres, and the growth of suburban developments which rendered city centres uncompetitive on many fronts. The “American Dream” of the suburban single family home described by Leinberger, with its negative consequences - “drivable suburbia” and

⁸³ Ezell, Kyle. *Retire Downtown: The Lifestyle Destination for Active Retirees and Empty Nesters*. (Kansas City: Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2006).

⁸⁴ Kotkin, 2010, 17.

traffic congestion, has perhaps passed its zenith as an ideal in its present form. Societal changes, particularly fostered by the Creative Class, the Net Generation, and the role of technology and new forms of social networking, are giving rise to a changing sociology, suggesting conditions that are very assistive in the revival of city centres from a sociological perspective.

However, it is to be realized that the suburbs are here to stay, and the increasing proportion of persons that work in the creative and service fields will also mean that the suburbs are likely to see a considerable rework in their form, particularly in terms of new suburbs, to provide the conditions that they seek. Richard Florida, in his recent book *The Great Reset*, describes how the severe recession that commenced in 2008 resulted in a significant drop in suburban home values, in some areas such as the Sunbelt of the United States as much as 50%, with resultant foreclosures and ownership abandonment. According to Florida, the places that now thrive are “those with the highest velocity of ideas, the highest density of talented and creative people, and highest rate of metabolism”, which he points out is not what we might think of in describing suburbia. Florida proposes that a “Great Reset” is in the process of occurring. He suggests that there is “no black-or-white, city versus suburbs, winner-takes-all battle. Cities and suburbs alike are part of this new spatial fix.” Part of this new spatial fix is the redevelopment of older suburbs into denser, mixed-use communities. “60 percent of Americans surveyed in 2005 said they want to live in walkable communities with shops, restaurants, movie theatres, schools, and churches nearby.”⁸⁵ This suggests that the suburban mixed-use complexes described in Section 2.8 are likely to gain increasing favour in the future, providing the suburban alternative to the characteristics of a vibrant downtown. It is of note that Florida suggests both will have their place in the future.

⁸⁵ Florida, Richard. *The Great Reset: How New Ways of Living and Working Drive Post-Crash Prosperity*. (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2010), 46, 144, 161.

Joel Kotkin takes a somewhat contrasting view to Leinberger. In his recent book, he contends that the “American Dream” of the single family home, at least for those over thirty five, and particularly immigrants and households with children, will continue as a dominant aspiration of the U.S. population. To counteract the dissatisfaction of “drivable suburbia”, he foresees new forms of suburbia as suburbia expands, or develops in new areas, consisting of “archipelagos of villages”. These “villages” will be walkable communities with town centres that have shops and community facilities. This, he suggests, will be spurred on by a significant portion of the population that will work from home, at least part of the time, supported by the advances of electronic communication. Kotkin expects that the dominant form of these “villages” will be single family homes rather than the mixed used complexes being built today where the prevailing form of housing is apartments and condominiums.⁸⁶

The suburbs are continuously dynamic, and represent where most people now live in most cities of Canada and the United States. However, it must be realized that overriding each of the alternative possible forms of the suburbs, are the realities of economic feasibility for both developers and the business occupants of space. Retail, in its present forms, has gravitated to clusters of retailer chains ranging from the regional mall to the power centres, and more recently the “lifestyle centres”. Even the lifestyle centres cater to only a limited high density residential population that is walkable to them, whereas most visitors must travel to these centres by car. Movie theatres have gravitated to major multi-screen complexes, with lots of parking, serving regional populations. Places of work have clustered, ranging from downtowns to edge cities to suburban office campuses. The more recent experience suggests that face to face interaction of people is valued in the workplace, meaning that working from home may not become a very significant trend. Thus the number of single family homes that can be walkable to these facilities is limited in today’s urban economics.

⁸⁶ Kotkin, 2010, 70-103, 232-235.

Downtowns, on the other hand, have a relatively compact geographic. Healthy downtowns, combined with inner city residential, trend to enclaves of density, although, in most cities, except for some of the largest ones, they represent a proportionately small physical area of today's suburbanized cities. They will not appeal to all as the place to live, particularly for families with children. In most instances, but not all, they can be revived and see new vitality, and become sustainable over the long term. On the other hand, the suburbs are continuously taking on new forms to accommodate the growing city, and will continue to provide alternatives that will compete with the city centre, so that the city centre must achieve a strong footing for sustainability.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE EXPERIENCE OF PLACE

4.1 Introduction

In relation to the purpose of this study – to explore and identify the unique characteristics of historic districts and the impact that the reinvigoration of historic districts located in city centres can have in downtown revitalization as regenerators of city life – the discussion started with two macro components that relate to the vitality of city centres, namely the overall dynamics of the city and the city centre, and the sociological dynamics that have a bearing on it. This chapter will discuss the micro component that relates to vitality and thus reinvigoration, namely, the experience of place, and the factors and conditions that influence it. “Experience of place” has particular relevance to historic districts and the potential influence historic districts may have on the vitality of city centres.

Understanding experience of place is a complex undertaking since no two places are identical in characteristics, each place having an individuality of its complex of characteristics and relationships with its surroundings. Understanding the nature of experience of place provides a foundation for understanding how experience of place contributes to the vitality of city centres, and historic districts in particular. In this context, the emphasis of the discussion relates to “public space or place”, that is, places that are available to the general public to visit and experience, whether publicly or privately owned or controlled.

“Sense of place” is a term that is often used to identify places that appear to almost universally generate memorable experiences and identity. Although many places will offer some sense of place through usage, the term is generally used in reference to particular places that provide strong experiences. The characteristics and conditions that provide these strong experiences are not easily identifiable or definable. Christian Norberg-Schulz uses another term, “genius loci” or “spirit of place” in his discussions of

architecture⁸⁷. The latter term represents the experiential feeling, or perhaps an essence, which a place seems to evoke, but generally in the same context as “sense of place”.

There are many aspects of the experience of place, and this chapter endeavours to identify the important aspects and components. Ultimately, a bundle of conditions is typically at work in a particular place, and it is the holistic nature of this bundle which contributes to a strong experience of place or sense of place.

The discussion commences with an examination of perception and understanding, which is the foundation on which experience of place is to be understood. Following this is a discussion of the relationships of place and experience, the dimensions of place and experience, and the role of meaning, memory and identity. The next sections examine the various aspects of experience of place that provide positive content or emotion to the experience of place. As historic districts are characterized by organic development, which in turn encapsulates many positive contributors to the experience of place, a section explores the unique characteristics of organic development as they relate to the previously discussed aspects of experience of place, as well as the differentiation between organic development and development in the modern era. Historic districts also provide a “sense of history”, and this sense of history is discussed in the next section. Finally, the holistic nature of the experience of place summarizes the discussion of experience of place.

Chapter Five following this chapter relates historic districts to the discussions of the dynamics of city centres, sociological dynamics, and the experience of place.

⁸⁷ Norberg-Schultz, Christian. *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. (New York: Rizzoli, 1984).

4.2 Perception and Understanding

4.2.1 Introduction

It is apparent that four of the five senses play a part in our experience of place. We are alert to stimuli to each of the senses of sight, hearing, touch, and smell. The visual is our dominant sense, and in fact visual information will override inconsistent information provided by the other senses in our perception. It will also provide perceptions related to other senses. For example, visual information may indicate tactile qualities such as smoothness or roughness, or hard and soft. Not to be overlooked, however, is the influence of sound in our experience of place. Our environment is both visual and audible, and the audible can have an influence on mood, social behaviour, orientation, and even our aesthetic experience. Smell is also a component of our external environment, and, when distinguishable, smell can influence our experience, often characterized by pleasant and uplifting, or unpleasant.

The question arises, however, do individuals perceive and react to places differently, and as a consequence differ in their experiences of, and in, place? If this were the case, would it not then be most difficult to generalize on the various aspects of the experience of place? Unfortunately, this is the case due to the individuality of our focus, and of our perceptual awareness and understanding resulting from differences in prior experiences and learning, but there are sufficient commonalities generated by experience and learning that generalities are possible, but, of course, never entirely universal.

4.2.2 Development of Perception and Understanding through Experience, Reasoning, and Anticipation

William Lam, in a detailed examination of perception in relation to our visual environment, refers to our activity needs, and our biological information needs for safety and security, sustenance, and stimulation. Through our perception, we constantly monitor

our environment for information provided by our senses, primarily visual, seeking to satisfy these activity and biological information needs⁸⁸.

Studies have shown that even at an early infant stage, we learn to reason with respect to the environment, and, through reasoning, when some important dimension for apprehending the world in a coherent way is missing or imperceptible, an infant is capable of reconstructing the missing information based on available sensory information and information retrieved from memory. Thus, starting from the infant stage, we develop a capability of mentally evoking conceptions of the parts of the environment we cannot see or can no longer see.⁸⁹ This deductive and predictive reasoning provides us with expectations from sensory information, data, and stimuli.

Past experience and learning then provides us with a base of information and models of the world around us. Our deductive and predictive reasoning allows us to extrapolate from this base of knowledge and models. When actual experience varies from what is anticipated, our base of knowledge is amended and enlarged, and our expectations altered by this new information. Returning to Lam's activity and biological information needs, it can be seen that we monitor information and stimuli provided by our senses and, through deductive and predictive reasoning, interpret its meaning, providing us with a means to anticipate the extent and nature to which our needs will be satisfied or, alternatively, our needs will be frustrated.

To use a simple example, one may learn early in life through direct experience that a street devoid of people may not be safe. This learning may have occurred from an experience of a personal incident which happened on an empty street, with no one around

⁸⁸ Lam, William M.C. *Perception and Lighting as Formgivers for Architecture*. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1977), 17-34.

⁸⁹ Streri, Arlett, "Infant Cognition" in Houde, Olivier, ed., et al. *Dictionary of Cognitive Science: Neuroscience, Psychology, Artificial Intelligence, Linguistics, and Philosophy*, ed. Olivier Houde et al (New York: Psychology Press, 2004) 158-161.

to help or deter the offender. Thus, on entering an empty street, our expectation projects the possibility of such an experience, providing us with a feeling of unease in the empty street, particularly in the type of location where the incident occurred. However, if a similar experience also occurs on a street with other people in it, but dimly lit, our model of potentially unsafe streets is enlarged to include dimly lit streets. Another example, this one illustrating the impact of brands, would be the image and anticipation of experience of a Starbucks coffee shop. The environment in the Starbucks coffee shop is found to be characterized by energy, lots of people who appear occupied and having an enjoyable experience, and a bright and cheerful atmosphere. If on visiting another coffee shop without the Starbucks banner, but expecting the experience to be similar, one finds that the experience is not the same, this advances the perception and model that Starbucks offers the experience to the exclusion of other coffee shops thus, of course, advancing their brand image.

4.2.3 Development of Perception and Understanding through Interaction

Our perception and models of the world around us is an aggregative process, starting from our early learning as a child, and accumulating as one continues to experience and learn. Although direct experience is primary, an important part of our base of knowledge and models, and therefore anticipation of experience, is derived through interaction with third parties. This interaction provides a source of both original learning as well as the validation or amendment of our perceptions generated by experience. Donald Davidson, in his collection of essays published in his book *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective*⁹⁰, discusses a concept that he calls “triangulation”. Davidson argues that, in seeking validation of our perception of an object (place being an object), there is a triangle in some form. Two corners of the triangle are the object and the person (the observer). The validation may arise from a triangle consisting of the object, oneself with one’s perception of the characteristics of the object, and another person, with whom one seeks to reconcile his or her perception in comparison to that person’s perception. This

⁹⁰ Davidson, Donald. *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).

reconciliation, in the case of object, person, and third person(s) would typically involve the use of language to communicate.

The triangulation process can be more readily understood by looking at how a child learns as it learns words in relation to objects. It first involves the reconciliation of what the child attempts to say to name an object with that of the parent. As learning progresses, words identifying the qualities or features of objects are also reconciled with those of the parent, and become a vocabulary for identification as well as reasoning and thought. At the stage of full articulation, the growing person reconciles perceptions of objects and experiences with those of others, again in this triangular fashion, with language as the primary means of communication and thought. In the earlier stages of this validation process, the common other is the parent or teacher who advances perceptions to the learner. The learner absorbs, but also reconciles what the learner believes he or she observes or experiences with what the learner is told or reads, and either validates or amends such beliefs. Language becomes the primary means of interaction and thought in this process. As one advances, the third corner most often consists of members of the “community” that one associates with.

Considerable change is occurring, however, in the spoken and written part of the triangle in today’s forms of triangulation through electronic communication, as discussed in Chapter Three. Electronic communication is now becoming an increasingly dominant means of the communication aspect of triangulation through e-mail, cell phone, text messaging, blogs, and electronic social networking, both with known persons and anonymous others. Instant information on just about everything is available electronically from sites such as Google and Wikipedia, and, although newspapers appear to be in a declining role, news media is readily viewable electronically. Wikis, a form of web software that permits on-line collaboration, as used in Wikipedia, allows users to add and edit content on-line, giving users the ability to accept, update, or amend information and

opinion in real-time. Wikis are creating a rapidly expanding new form of mass validation, input, and collaboration, explained in *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything* by Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams⁹¹.

Going back to how we monitor and interpret information relating to our activity and biological needs, one can see that triangulation influences and potentially amends and enlarges one's expectations of the experience that can be anticipated from a place. Triangulation not only enlarges and amends our knowledge and models of the world around us, but influences our actions and experiences.

In summary, our understanding and perception and models of the world are not simply derived from our direct personal experiences, but they are validated, amended and enlarged through triangulation. The process is interpersonal, involving the triangle composed of the shared environment, the person, and others, both directly, and through other forms of communication. Thus the scope and anticipation of our experience of place can be seen as something one develops over time not simply through one's direct experiences, but also through a triangular process of interactive learning, and interactive validation or amendment of our models of the environment and the experiences to be anticipated from it. In an earlier era our conceptions were very much influenced by the community in which one lived, one's culture, and one's location in the world. In today's world, both the "communities" with whom one associates and the types of interactive influences have dramatically enlarged, influencing our perceptions.

Triangulation thus is the primary means through which we develop commonalities with others in our experience of place, rather than differentiated experiences of place.

⁹¹ Tapscott, Don and Anthony D. Williams. *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*. (New York: Penguin Group: 2006).

4.2.4 Focus and Attention

Focus and attention influence our perception and experience of place, particularly with respect to our visual sense. For example, we may be in a particular place and focus on the beauty of the architectural details of a particular building, or, in the alternative, we may be focused on a desire to reach another destination and consequently pay no attention to the building except to the extent that it helps make a more legible path to the destination. Similarly, we may look at a glass storefront and see only the reflection in the glass, or alternatively specifically observe the merchandise inside through the window. Thus, our attention and focus are, in this respect, voluntary, and our perceptual experience may differ with our attention or focus. With respect to our voluntary attention, we appear to be able to focus only on one holistic image at a time. However, we appear to be always alert to other stimuli that may draw our attention involuntarily.

In William Lam's discussion of perception, he distinguishes between our voluntary attention or focus for our activity information needs and our involuntary attention for our biological information needs. Perception is an active, information-seeking process in which the brain actively sorts, classifies, and interprets the incoming flow of raw sensory data, reacting to the information relevant to current needs, and storing other information typically without the conscious attention of the perceiver. Voluntary attention is directed to elements of the physical environment that provide information or stimulation in relation to our conscious and voluntary activities and needs. From our base of knowledge and models resulting from experience and triangulation, we derive expectations that influence the direction of attention. Our involuntary attention monitors information related to our biological information needs. These include information needs for safety and security, including legibility and orientation; and sustenance, being our physical, intellectual and emotional well-being; and stimulation. These latter needs are required by everyone, everywhere, and every when, according to Lam, regardless of our immediate

state of activity. When there is no specific activity to occupy our attention, the monitoring of our biological information needs becomes our conscious activity.⁹²

In our monitoring of the environment for our activity and biological information needs, we are alert to information and stimuli that may satisfy these needs, but may find these information needs frustrated by stimuli attracting our attention. When stimuli trigger our involuntary attention but lack information, are ambiguous, or are distracting, we are likely to find these conditions frustrating or annoying. Similarly, when information necessary to our needs is unavailable, distorted, confused or overpowered, we are likely to find these conditions discomfoting and dissatisfying. On the other hand, stimuli that trigger our involuntary attention such as conditions that contrast with the context or are unexpected may prove to be satisfying and positive. Lam contends that we evaluate the environment according to how well it is structured, organized and able to satisfy our needs for visual information. Our experience of place is affected by its ability to satisfy our activity and biological information needs.⁹³

4.2.5 The Creative Dimension of Perception and Understanding

There is another dimension of learning and perception that goes beyond logical thought as influenced by experience and triangulation. Lam's biological information needs include needs for safety and security, including legibility and orientation; sustenance, being our physical, intellectual and emotional well-being; and stimulation. It can be seen that each of these needs relate in some fashion to a quest for understanding and order. Confusion or lack of order is uncomfortable to us, and we therefore constantly search for understanding and order in our environment.

⁹² Lam, William M.C. *Perception and Lighting as Formgivers for Architecture*. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1977), 17- 18

⁹³ Lam, 5, 17-70.

It appears that the human brain is characterized by a “left brain”, which provides our analytical and logical thinking and our “right brain”, which provides our creative thinking. The creative side, working in tandem with the logical side, is very much a part of synthesising information in this quest for understanding and order. Quoting from R. Blakeslee’s *The Right Brain*, in Peter F. Smith’s *The Dynamics of Delight: Architecture and Aesthetics*, “As the language specialist the left brain thinks only in words; it excels at the kind of one-step-at-a-time logical sequences that are the basis of language. Because the right brain thinks in images, it has a tremendous advantage for recognizing and manipulating complex visual patterns.” Thus “the left brain deals in parts whilst the right considers wholes”, according to Smith, and the right brain, the seat of intuition and inspiration, can not only “absorb elements of a problem which may or may not have been consciously conceived”, but may undergo an “unconscious incubation” of a problem resulting in its resolution. The quest for understanding and order is a fundamental biological need, according to Smith.⁹⁴

It can be seen that this process is what is involved in the synthesis of information to recognize such things as patterns in the environment. Our mental models of the environment are often formed through this abstract synthesis process involving our creative side, giving us models exhibiting order and understanding. These mental models are of course holistic models, not simply models of the physical environment. The holistic models encompass what our visual and other senses have detected, which includes the physical environment and the people and activities within them. These holistic models are the basis of aesthetic experience, as discussed in a later section.

4.3 Relationships

4.3.1 Experience and Place

As physical beings in a physical world, our conscious experiences occur in places. Thus our conception of experience involves place and conversely our conception of place

⁹⁴ Smith, Peter F. *The Dynamics of Delight: Architecture and Aesthetics*. (London: Routledge, 2003), 8-10.

involves experience. As a consequence, an understanding of place involves an appreciation of the context of experience, and an understanding of experience involves an appreciation of the context of place.

The role of *place* in experience of course has various degrees of importance in individual situations, and similarly, the role of *experience* in place has various degrees of importance in individual situations. One could separate the two in importance by referring to an “experience in place” and an “experience of place”, although place is in each situation the context for conscious experience. Referring to “experience in place”, the particular experience is the primary focus, with place being ancillary or secondary, whereas “experience of place” refers to experience which is evoked or generated by place. Nevertheless, it can be seen that there is always a combination of the two. For example, the “experience in place” of a memorable meal in a restaurant may be generated by the great food and service, but the experience and memorability will include the external environment, that is, the place where it occurred. Similarly, the experience of a physical attack will not simply include the fear or terror and the image of the attacker, but will be place based. Alternatively, stepping into a beautiful garden may evoke a strong “experience of place” by virtue of the beauty of the place, but the experience will also include the “experience in place”, perhaps relating to whom you were with, the physical aspect of walking through the garden, and other aspects of experience.

It can be seen, therefore, that conscious experience always includes both “experience in place” and “experience of place”, with each of place and experience having varying degrees of importance to the situation. The understanding of the experience of place, to which this chapter is directed, thus entails a holistic entity of “experience in place” and “experience of place”.

4.3.2 Dimensions of Place and Experience

In examining the characteristics of place, one can see that a particular place is always within a larger place, and a particular place, a building for example, will house smaller individual components within it. J. E. Malpas, in *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*⁹⁵, refers to this as “nesting”. Thus a building is nested in its surroundings, and individual rooms of the building are nested within a building. As well, places also intersect with or are juxtaposed with other places.

Each place then, has interdependent elements and characteristics arising from the larger nest within which is contained, its intersection with other places, and the elements and characteristics nested within it. Place therefore has considerable complexity, and comprises a complex unity. It can be thought of as a structure within which experience is possible, or, alternatively, a place which is experienced. From either point of view, place and experience are inseparable.

In *The Experiential Landscape*⁹⁶ Kevin Thwaites and Ian Simkins explore the dimensions of space and place by breaking down the external environment into four spatial dimensions, each of which may be apparent to a greater or lesser degree in a given environment. These dimensions are *centre, direction, transition, and area*. These four dimensions were derived by Thwaites & Simkins from studying fundamental experiences. Fundamental experiences suggest that, through usage, people develop a sense of orientation, they come to identify and attach significance to particular locations, and they become aware of an overall sense of containment and coordination by which they can identify their neighbourhood, districts, and an overall area. It is acknowledged that these senses will vary on an individual basis related to usage and other factors, but

⁹⁵ Malpas, J.E. *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 34.

⁹⁶ Kevin Thwaites and Ian Simkins. *The Experiential Landscape: An Approach to People, Place and Space*. (London: Routledge, 2007)

the underlying concept is the distinguishing attributes of these physical dimensions. In describing the experiential environment from these perspectives, “centre” is a subjectively significant location engendering a sense of here-ness and proximity. From an experiential perspective, a centre is characterized by attachment of significance. “Direction” is a subjectively significant continuity engendering a sense of there-ness and future possibility and provides orientation. “Transition” is a subjectively significant point or area of change engendering a sense of transformation in mood, atmosphere, or function and is characterized by the experience of change. And “area” is a subjectively significant realm engendering a sense of coherence and containment providing neighbourhood awareness. It can be seen that we generally view the environment from these perspectives, and the authors contend that this forms a logical basis for the study of an urban environment.⁹⁷ It can be seen that, when we are unable to discern the environment from a smaller to large dimension, the environment is likely to be confusing, and perhaps uncomfortable, diminishing the “sense of place”.

These descriptions, however, relate to how we perceive or visualize the environment, which, although an important means of understanding the physical environment, provides only a framework for perception of the overall physical setting in which social activity occurs. There is also the temporal dimension. Temporal dimensions also involve nesting, as individual experiences are nested in experiences over time.

4.4 Meaning, Memory, and Identity

4.4.1 Personal Meaning, Memory and Identity

Understanding, as discussed in the previous sections, is developed through direct experience, triangulation, and through the synthesis of visual and sensual information and stimuli that the place presents. Meaning with respect to place, as a positive relationship, can be developed through positive emotional experience connected with place, frequent use and familiarity, and levels of understanding that generate stimulation and pleasure.

⁹⁷ Thwaites & Simkins, 53-78.

Although we perceive that others may share similar meaning and memory with respect to a particular place, specific meaning and memory with respect to place is personal to the individual, although it may be altered through triangulation. Personal identity and place identity have an interwoven relationship, since our experiences occur in places and the defining of our personal identity relates to usage of and activities in places, which then form part of our memory.

Tim Ingold, in *The Perception of the Environment*, looks at the environment as places that humans shape and “dwell in”⁹⁸. At the basic level of housing, humans shape their environment in ways they anticipate will meet their needs and satisfy their desires. Although few of us, today, build our own housing, but rather occupy housing built by others, we nevertheless choose housing that we contemplate will best meet our needs (within our level of affordability), and then typically personalize our home environment and develop a relationship with it. Through this “dwelling process”, we develop an attachment or meaning to the place on a personal level. This meaning or “connectedness” can sometimes be very strong, even to the extent that, in the sale of a home, people often seek a buyer who will appreciate and respect the changes and improvements they have made, thus not destroying the meaning that has been instilled into the home through its personalization.

Ingold views the “dwelling perspective” as extending to the overall environment that one inhabits or “dwells in” – not just the home, but the neighbourhood and the places that one frequents or uses. Particularly strong attachment may relate the house in which one grew up, one’s hometown or neighbourhood, and previous places where one lived or frequently visited, or even visited and “dwelled in” only once. Connectedness and thus meaning arises from one’s positive experiences, and the images in connection with such experiences that lodge in one’s memory. Such images are usually holistic images that

⁹⁸ Ingold, Tim. *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in livelihood, dwelling and skill*. (London: Routledge, 2000), 172-208.

include both place and people and activities within place, often strengthened through the inclusion of those that shared the experience with you. In fact, revisiting such places can induce strong feelings of fondness and connection if the place has not changed, or, alternatively, if changed or the buildings that comprised it gone, or activity that activated it missing, feelings of disappointment.

One should realize, of course, that the “dwelling experience” and thus meaning is deficient in much of today’s automobile oriented suburban environments, where the automobile is needed for virtually everything. Other than the home that one inhabits, “dwelling” in such cases often relates only to fragmentary experiences in isolated unconnected places, providing limited opportunity for the “hurried” members of suburbia to experience attachment and meaning to places, perhaps relieved only by getaways or vacations to other places.

It can be seen that connectedness or meaning with respect to place generates memory, and that memory encapsulates meaning. This encapsulated meaning relates to place identity as well as personal identity, since we connect our personal identity to our connection with places and our experiences within them, including our connections with the community of others that share such places. Thus place identity has an interwoven relationship with personal identity. Our “dwelling experience” is not static but occurs over time, and, although we may have various static images, our memories of it are holistic and narrative in nature. These memories help us construct our personal identities. Our personal identities are essentially how we see ourselves as individuals in relation to society as a whole, whether in the place that we inhabit or in a larger context.

The role of narrative in constructing personal identity is best explained by Suzanne Langer in *Feeling and Form*. She describes the concept of narrative by comparing memory in real life and narrative in literary works. In literature, narrative is the organizing device, tying together related elements, as well as fragmentary and capricious events, into a self-contained whole. Narrative memory in real life is similarly constructed.

In real life, Langer submits that it is through memory, and our search for meaning, that we are able to organize the experiences of the past into a whole with meaning.⁹⁹ Thus narrative memory, or autobiographical memory, can be thought of as our means of constructing our personal identity, and how it has been shaped, by reconstructing in our minds the memories of past experiences, places, and events into a logical form. The concept of narrative is something one learns early in life, typically in a parent – child relationship. Parent – child conversations relating to the parent’s (or others’) past convey to the child the parent’s (or others’) identity through narratives of the past, and the child gradually learns to construct and use narratives in conversations with others. Narratives ultimately become a prime form of social intercourse with others, and narratives become a means of defining one’s identity.¹⁰⁰

Alasdair MacIntyre expands on the concept of narrative in his book, *After Virtue*. He argues that, as we mature, we search for and seek to develop a *telos*, that is, a purpose or meaning for our life. In Greek ethics “telos”, for humans, means “a good life”. MacIntyre suggests that we mentally “write” our narrative history by relating memories of our intention-based actions to our telos. In constructing our narratives, these actions are viewed in both a causal and temporal perspective, and ordered in terms of their causal efficacy. As actions occur in settings, we also relate our memories of these actions to their role in the history of these settings.¹⁰¹ Paul Ricoeur similarly explored the relationship of the mental narrative constructed from our memories to “narrative identity” in his book, *Oneself as Another*. Ricoeur similarly proposes that narrative identity, of ourselves, and how we view others of good character, arises through the narrativization of the good life, providing permanence in time of character, and that of self-constancy.

⁹⁹ Langer, Susanne. *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from “Philosophy as a New Key”*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1953).

¹⁰⁰ Eakin, Paul John, “Autobiography, Identity and Fictions of Memory”, in *Memory Brain, and Belief*, eds. Daniel L. Schacter and Elaine Scarry, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 295-297.

¹⁰¹ MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. 2nd Ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

Ricoeur describes the “good life” as “the nebulous of ideals and dreams of achievements with regard to which a life is held to be more or less fulfilled or unfulfilled”. Ricoeur contends that through our mental narratives, we strive to construct a unity and consistency in order to provide meaning to our lives, and fit together the parts. We integrate the thoughts, memories and experiences of our life over time in a manner which reflects consistency and rationality, in order to give ourselves identity.¹⁰² Although the universality of this individual search for a “telos” is perhaps questionable, there is little doubt, however, that narrative memory is the instrument used in defining our personal identity, whether or not it relates to a “telos” in the Greek meaning of the word, or the “good life” as described by Ricoeur. The importance of narrative memory, therefore, is its connection with identity.

Daniel Schacter, a leading researcher and authority on memory, along with Elaine Scarry, as editors, in their introduction in *Memory, Brain, and Belief*, emphasize the central role that memory plays in our everyday lives. “Without memory, our awareness would be confined to an eternal present and our lives would be virtually devoid of meaning.” The essays in *Memory, Brain and Belief* by various research authorities illustrate the constructive nature of how remembering is influenced by current beliefs, that is, memories of the past are often distorted to fit with current beliefs, just as memories of the past may help construct current beliefs. They support the proposition that narrative memory attempts to construct an “extended self” over time. In so doing, our narrative memory may exclude events that do not fit or contradict the narrative, and rearrange things to make them logical. Recent research on memory, however, has demonstrated that we construct our memories to fit our current identity, and the “extended self” is largely a fiction. As discussed in a previous section, our mental models of the world are constantly changing, and thus our vision of our extended self remaining the same would be difficult to fit within our changing perceptions. Paul John Eakin, in *Memory Brain, and Belief*,

¹⁰² Ricoeur, Paul. *Oneself as Another (Soi-meme comme un autre, 1990)*. Kathleen Blamey, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 170 - 179.

points out that “because the body changes and consciousness alters, the recovery of the past – autobiography’s project – is, in a deep psychological and neurological sense, impossible... If the self is continuously evolving, becoming “different”, then memory’s task is to allow for the possibility of identity, of being the “same”, that would otherwise be lacking. Thus memory’s fallibility, its proclivity for revisionist history, may prove, paradoxically, to be redemptive.”¹⁰³

It can be seen that, in the conduct of one’s life, choice is the key element that creates narrative. Today’s society in the western world is more and more governed by freedom of choice, unlike earlier eras when the ability to choose had many limitations. We choose what we do, the places that we inhabit, where we go, and freely make choices in all aspects of our lives. In *Transformations: Identity Construction in Contemporary Culture*¹⁰⁴, Grant McCracken submits that in the current global world, and our exposure to all forms of culture without boundaries, the unlimited freedom of choice available in Western Society results not simply in a specific individual identity, but the exploration and adoption of many identities by individuals. This “expansionary individualism” in effect expands our narrative identity, and thus choices that we may make. It is through acting on choice that we discover and then select what is meaningful to us. In this context, our narrative identity becomes more complex, and, as a result, understanding and meaning of places is enlarged, enlarging the possibilities of place identity, but at the same time, strengthening place identities that converge with these identities.

¹⁰³ Schacter, Daniel L. and Elaine Scarry, eds. *Memory, Brain, and Belief*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 1-9, 293.

¹⁰⁴ McCracken, Grant. *Transformations: Identity Construction in Contemporary Culture*. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2008), summarized 305-306.

In summary, the development of meaning and the development of both individual and place identity is a progressive process in which memory is an integral part. Mental narrative helps construct this development. Mental narrative is formed from memory, but is constructed to fit with what we see as our personal identity. In relation to place, it can be seen that both our memory and our mental narratives help us to visualize and anticipate the experiences that places will offer, and the discovery and selection of places that have meaning to us, leading to place identity at a personal level.

4.4.2 *Collective Meaning, Memory, and Identity*

The previous section examined meaning, memory, and identity as they relate to the individual. This section will examine collective meaning, memory, and identity, that is, meaning, memory, and identity that is shared by members of a community.

Watson and Bentley examine the concept of collective identity in their book *Identity by Design*¹⁰⁵. They refer to “cultural landscapes” as places that have developed meanings through the process of use and inhabiting, giving rise to human identities on a collective basis. Place identity is then the set of meanings associated with such landscapes that a group of people draw on in the construction of their own personal identities. Collective identity has similar characteristics to personal identity, since it is derived through narratives that occurred in cultural landscapes that have sufficient commonalities to generate collective meanings, memories and identities within a community.

Looking back to an earlier era when communities were relatively static and people knew and associated with others in their community, “cultural landscapes” developed through common patterns of human use and common sensory or social associations with particular places. For example, the “downtown” where everyone went to shop and had chance meetings was at one time an important part of the cultural landscape of towns and

¹⁰⁵ Watson, Georgia Butina and Ian Bentley. *Identity by Design*. (Oxford, U.K.:Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007), 1-14.

cities. Such components of the cultural landscape played a strong role in shaping identities, both personal and collective social identities.

Collective meaning of this nature often strongly exists in areas inhabited by specific ethnic groups. Most cities have neighbourhoods and districts that have been personalized by specific ethnic groups, and this personalization is visible and identifiable. It often exhibits itself through the exterior elements of homes, as well as identifiable elements and symbols on shops, eateries or other venues specific to the particular group. Thus identity and connectedness to the neighbourhood or district will exist for the particular group, giving meaning in a fashion similar to individual meaning with respect to one's home. The neighbourhood or district, or cultural landscape, has a strong meaning to the specific group, and creates a sense of place evident, as well, to the outsider.

Except in the latter ethnic communities, in today's cities, however, most people are likely to know only a small portion of the persons in the area in which one lives, let alone the city. Watson and Bentley's research has found that when users talk about a place's identity, they not only think of the meaning that a place has in terms of their own identity, but also imagine a "community" of others sharing this meaning. As discussed in the previous chapter on sociological dynamics, the forms of "communities" of the past are being replaced with multiple, partial communities that supply sociability, support, information, and a sense of belonging. McCracken describes the present trend as "expansionary individualism", in which people assume multiple identities. Watson and Bentley propose the existence of "multiple imagined communities", being essentially the nature of such communities, but extended by our minds as larger groups than the number of members that we may actually know. Our identity depends on such "imagined" communities as being real. An important element of this identity is the approval of our choices by such communities. We desire membership in communities that will always approve our choices in order to validate our sense of identity and belonging, and multiple imagined communities achieve this, according to Watson and Bentley.

In relation to place, Watson and Bentley compare the shallow and fleeting “imagined communities” based on clothing or music, with those that are anchored by cultural landscapes, particularly public places that have permanence. Imagined communities that are anchored in public places to which all potential community members have access provide a basis for imagined communities of the deepest kind.

The Creative Class discussed in the previous chapter is a larger “imagined” community, but obviously having many sub-sets. A characteristic of the Creative Class is that its members generally value diversity and seek an experiential lifestyle. Its members also value being amongst other members of the larger Creative Class community. As discussed, the Creative Class is particularly attracted to “cultural landscapes” consisting of public places and places with active street-level culture, which Richard Florida described as ranging from coffee shops and restaurants to art galleries and bookstores. As well, demographic changes discussed in the previous chapter suggest a significant component of the “empty-nester” and “never-nester” population are seeking cultural landscapes characterized by “walkable urbanity”. Walkable urbanity describes communities in which one can walk to stores, restaurants and public places, with street-level activity. This trend is a slow but accelerating transformation as such places become available to the population. These places have place-identity that relates to collective identity of these groups of “imagined communities”, and provide collective identity. The use of active public places such as public squares and particular streets where people congregate are of course not confined to just these particular groups - they provide collective meaning to many other “imagined communities”.

Like individual identity, collective identity is similarly constructed through narrative memories, but in this case, the collective narrative memories of real or “imagined” communities. Collective narrative memory is similar in nature to individual narrative memory, but in this form represents the collective memories of a community related to a particular place or cultural landscape. Analogous to individual narrative memory, collective narrative memory is typically related to finding meaning in the inhabiting and

use of a place or cultural landscape. A principal difference between individual narrative memory and collective narrative memory is that collective narrative memory relates to narratives of the community held as general “experiential relationships” of the community.

Maurice Halbwachs, a noted sociologist, perhaps described the construction of collective memory best, as follows: “the greatest number of our memories come back to us when our parents, friends, or other persons recall them to us. ... Yet it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories. If we enumerate the number of recollections during one day that we have evoked upon the occasion of our direct and indirect relations with other people, we will see that, most frequently, we appeal to our memory only in order to answer questions which others have asked us, or we suppose that they could have asked us. We note, moreover, that in order to answer them, we place ourselves in their perspective and we consider ourselves as being part of the same group or groups as they. ... Most of the time, when I remember, it is others who spur me on; their memory comes to the aid of mine and mine relies on theirs. There is nothing mysterious about recall of memories in these cases at least. ... for they are recalled to me externally, and the groups of which I am part at any time give me the means to reconstruct them, upon condition, to be sure, that I turn toward them and adopt, at least for the moment, their way of thinking. ... It is in this sense that there exists a collective memory and social frameworks for memory; it is to the degree that our individual thought places itself in these frameworks and participates in this memory that it is capable of the act of recollection. ... One may say that the individual remembers by placing himself in the perspective of the group, but one may also affirm that the memory of the group realizes and manifests itself in individual memories.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. Trans. Lewis A. Coser. (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992), 38, 40.

Jon Anderson, in “Understanding Cultural Geography: Places and Traces” describes collective memory, or cultural memory as he prefers to call it, in terms of “traces” of human activity left in places. In his use of the word “culture”, he describes culture as the “constituted amalgam of human activity – *culture is what humans do*. In this light, culture can include a range, perhaps and endless range, of things. It includes aspects of society, politics and the economy. ... Culture can then be seen as encompassing a wide spectrum of human life, it is not a separate entity from society, politics or the economy, but influences (and is influenced by) them all.” From this perspective, “places come by their meanings and identities as a result of the complex intersection of culture and context that occur within that specific location.” In reference to “traces”, Anderson goes on to say that “places are constituted by imbrolios of traces. Traces are marks, residues or remnants left in place by cultural life. Traces are most commonly considered as material in nature (material traces may include ‘things’ such as buildings, signs, statues, graffiti, i.e. discernable marks on physical surroundings), but they can also be non-material (non-material traces might include, for example, activities, events, performances or emotions). We can therefore see visible traces in places, but we can also sense them in other ways (we can hear them, smell them, even taste them or feel them), as well as being able to think on them, reflect on them, and perhaps – in our more sentimental moments – reminisce about them. Traces can therefore be durable in places both in a material sense (they have longevity due to their solidity and substance as things), but they may also last due to their non-material substance (they may leave indelible marks on our memory or mind). As traces are constantly produced they continually influence the meanings and identities of places.”¹⁰⁷

It can be seen that traces, as described by Anderson, generate collective meaning and identity of place. Traces are not static but are constantly in production, and also in transition as new traces react with existing or older ones to change the meaning and

¹⁰⁷ Anderson, Jon. *Understanding Cultural Geography: Places and Traces*. (Oxon, England: Routledge, 2010), 3-5

identity of the location, and therefore, Anderson suggests that places should be understood as ongoing compositions of traces. However, even though these changes occur over time, collective memory is built from the traces of the past that have been inscribed on places, particularly places that have retained physical traces of the past.¹⁰⁸

In relation to collective memory, it needs to be recognized that collective memory as described will, in today's society, relate to the particular communities or imagined communities that have "dwelled in" or used the particular place, and, unlike the stable communities that were found in an earlier era, these communities may represent only specific segments of the local population.

4.5 The Emotional Experience of Place

4.5.1 Introduction

The previous sections discussed the conceptual aspects of experience of place. People obviously prefer places in which they have positive experiences and stimulation, and prefer to be in these places rather than places in which they have negative experiences or in which they experience no stimulation. Places in which we have positive experiences and stimulation can be described as providing an emotional context and offer memorability.

William Lam described stimulation as one of our biological needs. Stimulation, whether it consists of a pleasurable experience engendered by a social setting, or a cognitive stimulation engendered by a revision of cognitive expectations such as, for example, surprise or discovery, is an emotional experience. An example of a largely passive experience might be a situation where one's focus is directed to finding one's way from one place to another, and the particular place is only observed in relation to its legibility as part of the path to the other place. Thus the experience of place in this instance is

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 5, 176-177.

passive, with one's attention directed only to how it forms part of the path, and has little emotional content except perhaps for a feeling of comfort. The converse, however, is discomfort and unease when such a landmark is not found and one has the unease of potentially being lost. Thus even though the experience described above is relatively passive, it has a degree of emotional content.

The degree of emotion involved in our experience of place is a variable, and is individual, but certain places will generally stimulate the senses and evoke emotions, positive or negative. The principal concern in this discussion is experience of place that evokes positive emotions. Such positive emotions may include quite a variety of feelings, which might be described as levels of pleasure. These emotions include feelings of comfort; meaning; delight; happiness; escape through diversion from the routine or respite from the ordinary; connectedness; pride and sense of ownership; intellectual discovery; aesthetic pleasure; or feelings that are restorative, uplifting or fulfilling. In relation to place, many such instances of positive emotions can simply be summed up by the words "it makes you feel good to be there". Negative emotions with respect to place such as feelings of unease or discomfort, danger, confusion, disorientation, or boredom from lack of stimulation, on the other hand, would prompt avoidance.

In Lam's discussion of perception, he refers to the "affective component of perception", that is, how each stimulus affects our emotional or evaluative responses to such stimulus. This relates to our expectations derived from our base of knowledge and models derived from direct experience or learning through triangulation. Our attention is drawn to environmental conditions that appear to fit our models of a pleasurable environment, evoking positive emotional responses. If the environment confirms our expectation, our model is strengthened. If not, our model is amended and similar environmental conditions may be avoided or not attract our attention.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Lam, 34-35.

It is, of course, not simply the physical place that engenders the positive emotions, but the “dwelling in” or use and activity of place with a shared community of others. As discussed in the section on identity, we seek places that our “imagined communities” also “dwell in”, and are imagined to have a similar experience. It can be seen that physical place that has the right characteristics will attract people, including our imagined communities, and the presence of such people and our imagined communities contributes to the experience available in the place. By comparison, a physical place that has no attractive features, or negative features, will not likely attract people in the first place. Thus people and our imagined communities will be missing, and the place is therefore unlikely to engender positive emotions or stimulation.

4.5.2 The Contributing Components

The next sections will discuss the components of experience of place that contribute to a positive experience of place, recognizing, however, that experience of place is ultimately a holistic experience involving combinations of components. As well, particular components may foster the development of other contributors to positive experience. For example, a particular environment may foster the development of uses that generate social activity, in turn adding to the vitality and pleasurable nature of a place.

The discussion commences with the basic elements in sections on Sense, Legibility and Orientation, and The Sensuous Element. This is followed by a detailed examination of Aesthetic Pleasure. Following this are sections on Sense of Fit and the Appropriate; External Relationships and Scale; and Human Scale. The next sections on Organic Development, and Sense of History, particularly relate to historic districts. A final section is a summary discussion of the Holistic Experience of Place.

4.6 Sense, Legibility and Orientation

In *A Theory of Good City Form*, Kevin Lynch proposes “sense” as one of the essential qualities needed for a good settlement. He described this as “the clarity with which it can be perceived and identified, and the ease with which its elements can be linked with other

events and places in a coherent mental representation of time and space and that representation can be connected with nonspatial concepts and values. This is the join between the form of the environment and the human processes of perception and cognition.” Lynch relates “sense” to place identity, that is, the degree to which a place is distinct from other places, or has a character of its own and thus becomes a peg on which to hang personal memories, feelings and values. Sense also relates to how we see that place as fitting within the larger environment and gives us a sense of legibility, orientation and structure. Through this the experiential dimensions have clarity. Lack of clarity results in confusion and frustrates, to a larger or lesser degree, our ability to visualize our experiential environment and develop meaning.¹¹⁰

Thwaites & Simkins’ experiential dimensions “centre, direction, transition, and area”, discussed in the Section “Dimensions of Place and Experience”, is an attempt to describe the way in which we perceive an overall environment. It is essentially a characterization of Lynch’s “sense” into four physical components or dimensions. They apply these terms particularly as they relate to everyday experiences since it is through everyday experiences that places gain familiarity and meaning. In the context of a neighbourhood, one can see how readily each of these dimensions relates and may have particular relevance. However, unlike the older cities of Europe, in many city centres of cities in Canada and the U.S., not only are these dimensions often amorphous and obscure, but individual experiences are typically limited to daytime use of a particular office location during weekdays, with limited exposure to other parts of the centre city. In fact, in some cities the experiential dimensions of centre, direction, and transition may be vague to most people, with area, being office area, the principal dimension that is discernable.

In relation to “office area”, due to the evolution of city centres as described in Chapter Two, most city centres in Canada and the U.S. contain office districts occupying a large area, and, except for particular large cities, these office areas often are largely devoid of

¹¹⁰ Lynch, Kevin. *A Theory of Good City Form*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), 131-150.

other uses, with distinct centres often lacking. Such office districts are unable to support viable street-front restaurants and shops due to the 9 to 5 weekday syndrome, as people vacate the office district outside of working hours. With office structures not physically designed to support street-front use due to setbacks, varying ground floor elevations, non-continuous frontages, and other unsupportive conditions, it is unrealistic to expect most street-front uses to be viable. In city centres of this nature, distinct “centres”, particularly centres supporting mixed use, are critical to their revival and health. Thwaites and Simkins describe the experiential dimensions of “centres” as places where there is an attachment of significance through such means as social imageability through functional use, goals and motivation, physical features, and social meanings; restorative dimensions such as being away, extent, fascination, and compatibility; or social interaction and territoriality.¹¹¹ The extent to which such centres are legible and proximate to the source of users enhances the extent of their use and thus viability.

4.7 The Sensuous Element

Sensuous experience, that is, experiences of our senses, influences our “experience of place” and “experience in place”, and should not be overlooked as a component in our experience of place. Although the visual is usually the predominant sense that we are aware of in the experience of our environment, our other senses of hearing, touch and smell influence how we discern our environment, and influence our experience of place in a complementary manner.

The degree of light in our environment, whether by natural light or artificial lighting, influences our ability to discern our environment, and thus affects mood or comfort, as well as our aesthetic experience. Sunshine or sunlight has particular relevance in this respect. Although direct sunlight in very hot climates may result in an uncomfortable experience, and direct sunlight within buildings can produce uncomfortable conditions if improperly controlled, sunlight can generally be thought of as providing positive

¹¹¹ Thwaites & Simkins, 49, 66.

sensuous experience. The warmth and uplifting sensuous experience of sunshine is often a significant attractor to specific public places, particularly the public square with outdoor cafes and restaurants, whereas such public places shaded by tall buildings have less appeal. Within buildings, sunlight can significantly enhance the experience of an interior space. William Lam's sequel to *Perception and Lighting as Formgivers to Architecture* entitled *Sunlighting as Formgiver for Architecture* explores sunlight in relation to the design of buildings. Sunlight is delightful and satisfies our biological need for orientation and security by providing a clearer visual environment. Within buildings, with proper design, sunlight provides visual comfort, and also satisfies our activity needs. Sunlight also enhances aesthetic pleasure in that it provides sharper images, and enhances our ability to see three dimensional details of the built environment through highlight and shadows.¹¹²

Not to be overlooked is the audible environment. The environment has audible characteristics that may vary from relaxing, such as the sound of the seashore or the sounds of birds in a park, or pleasing such as outdoor music, to annoying such as traffic noise and horns. However, the important aspect of the audible environment is it is integral to the social environment and the act of "dwelling" in our environment, as discussed by Ingold. The activity of people and the interactivity with people is a key component of our experience of the environment, and this experience encompasses both the visual and the audible.¹¹³ The din of people generates a feeling of "energy" and contributes to our attraction to places, although the reverse may also be the case.

Another sensuous component of the larger environment is smell. Smell can provide a pleasurable experience, such as the smell of salt sea air or smells emanating from a bakery, or can be unpleasant and a detractor, such as the smell of exhaust fumes from buses and automobiles, particularly when combined with excessive traffic noise.

¹¹² Lam, William M. C. *Sunlighting as Formgiver for Architecture*. (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1986), 9-27.

The experience of place is thus influenced by the sensuous environment, and places that provide a positive sensuous experience are attractors. Places that we associate with negative sensuous experiences deter and prompt avoidance.

4.8 Aesthetic Pleasure

4.8.1 The Nature of Aesthetic Pleasure

Aesthetic pleasure is essentially an intellectual pleasure, requiring an act of attention and the active participation of the observer. Roger Scruton, in his 1979 book *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, describes aesthetic experience in relation to architecture as a pleasurable experience dependent on, and affected by, the process of thought and reflection. The pleasure is derived from achieving an understanding of the subject, and, whether a building or an ensemble of buildings and spaces, an understanding or feeling of its significance and character. Although knowledge derived from aesthetic education may add meaning to the understanding, aesthetic understanding is a practical matter, according to Scruton, not derived from theoretical knowledge, but rather in the organization of perception and feeling.¹¹⁴

Referring to Lam's studies of perception and our biological information needs, one of these basic needs is stimulation. He notes how the mind, from a constant flow of stimuli, synthesises information to achieve complete perceptions and holistic interpretations of this information. In classifying information, our perception allows us to comprehend multiple objects simultaneously when all are clearly related and form a single message or gestalt, as our mind attempts to extract information out of apparent chaos or complexity. Ambiguous information, or information not readily classifiable, causes stimulation and an

¹¹³ Ingold, 199.

¹¹⁴ Scruton, Roger. *The Aesthetics of Architecture*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 72, 94, 112, 204-205.

effort to synthesize it, and discomfort until a holistic perception can be achieved. Closure, through seeing its holistic meaning, is essentially what results in the aesthetic pleasure.¹¹⁵

Peter F. Smith, in *The Dynamics of Delight: Architecture and Aesthetics*, compares aesthetic pleasure to pleasure derived by a scientist or mathematician in solving a problem. Quoting Poincare, in the experience of solving a problem the mathematician essentially experiences an aesthetic pleasure in “the feeling of mathematical beauty, of the harmony of numbers and forms, of geometric elegance”. According to Smith, in the case of architecture and built form, the problem to be solved is dissonance, that is, an apparent lack of consonance through seeming inconsistencies or complexities in form. Aesthetic pleasure is derived through the resolution of consonance and dissidence in the thought process. This resolution is essentially seeing the wholeness of the built form through the inconsistencies of consonance and dissidence, or complexity giving away to orderliness.¹¹⁶

4.8.2 Aesthetic Understanding of the Built Environment

Roger Scruton contended that “aesthetic understanding, in the sense of the imaginative contemplation of an object for its own sake, is an important part of everyday life”¹¹⁷. Smith has a similar view, and contends that a basic human characteristic is the need for a regular diet of aesthetic nourishment, and that our appetite for aesthetic nourishment is “hard-wired”. This appetite and nourishment can take many forms, based on our individuality. In relation to the built environment, in which we all are immersed, aesthetic nourishment is generally achieved through a process of recognizing “complexity giving away to orderliness” in Smith’s view. Clash is an essential ingredient, and the resolution of clash is what delivers the aesthetic reward or pleasure. Aesthetic understanding results

¹¹⁵ Lam, 40-41

¹¹⁶ Smith, Peter. *The Dynamics of Delight: Architecture and Aesthetics*. (London: Routledge, 2003), 10.

¹¹⁷ Scruton, 239

from “the discovery of constancies or ‘stability patterns’ out of apparent chaos or randomness, or discovery of connections between disparate data to create significant patterns of information, patterns that form stable constants or stability zones”, according to Smith. It is essentially seeing new truths or new patterns of orderliness arising out of the complexity of what appears to be random information. Put another way, aesthetic perception involves changing frames of reference in order to see the hidden logic and orderliness behind what at first may seem random and strange.¹¹⁸

The first level of aesthetic perception involves the accumulation of mental models of the physical environment through cumulative experience, learning and triangulation, providing us with a base of mental models. It is against this base that the new and unfamiliar is compared. As the built environment is individual to its location and thus never identical, our built environment offers the new and unfamiliar as we visit new places, and this new and unfamiliar is compared to our existing base of mental models. The new building or built environment may be generally recognizable as falling within the same mnemotype, but, as it is never identical, the model will be adjusted for novel elements, that is, to achieve an incremental reclassification. Thus there is a continuous readjustment of our models to achieve an even better fit between expectations and reality. Smith explains that this process is not merely reactive but proactive, and surprise is essential to the process. New forms not fitting any existing mnemotype will emerge, resulting in a new model. Such models may cause discomfort or displeasure until such time as an aesthetic sensibility can be discerned out of what might appear to be a chaotic form, or a form that appears to clash with the existing environment. When an aesthetic sensibility can be discerned, there is a mental reward.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Smith, 10-12

¹¹⁹ Smith, 14-19.

Aesthetic understanding encompasses both the holistic entity, but also includes understanding of models of the individual parts of the built form of our environment, or forms that comprise parts of the whole. Forms can relate to styles, or simply particular physical features of the built environment. Certain forms appeal to us, and we search for reasons why they appeal to us or “feel right” according to Roger Scruton. In finding reasons why this is so, we endow them with meaning. Endowed with meaning, the forms have added significance in our “repertory of forms” that are part of our mental models.¹²⁰

4.8.3 Aspects of Aesthetic Pleasure arising from the Built Environment

Smith’s *The Dynamics of Delight: Architecture and Aesthetics* provides an exceptionally comprehensive study of the various aspects of the built environment that may generate aesthetic pleasure. The thesis that aesthetic pleasure arises from apprehending the orderliness of the totality emerging from the complexity of the bits, or the resolution of consonance and dissonance, is fundamental to Smith’s discussion. The discussion below is largely based on Smith’s analyses.

4.8.3.1 Harmony

Smith argues that harmony is a misunderstood aspect of aesthetic understanding and pleasure. A form that is purely symmetrical with no elements of complexity or dissidence does not, in itself, arouse aesthetic pleasure, according to Smith. It does not contain the “critical minimum of complexity to be resolved”. Aesthetic reward only follows after a degree of effort to identify a pattern. Thus purely symmetrical forms, without complexity, do not in themselves arouse aesthetic pleasure, although aesthetic pleasure may arise from the complexity of the juxtaposition of such forms in the environment.

Juxtaposition with the surrounding environment is also an important aspect of harmony, whether or not the forms in themselves have complexity. For example, the Parthenon

¹²⁰ Scruton, 202-203.

produces aesthetic pleasure in itself, but its juxtaposition with the landscape and the sky is what provides a good deal of its aesthetic pleasure. Similarly, the curved crescents in Bath, England are again symmetrical forms with complexity, although repetitive in detail and, in themselves generate a level of aesthetic pleasure. In addition, their juxtaposition with a facing park provides an enhanced level of complexity and evokes a search for images of how life might have been on the adjacent streets and parks at the time they were built and occupied. In both cases there is harmony with their environment.

The idea of harmony, then, is not based on symmetrical forms, but rather, complexity out of which a unity, or harmony, can be discerned. It is “order over complexity”.¹²¹

4.8.3.2 Pattern Recognition

The nature of aesthetic pleasure experienced in the built environment of cities, towns, and districts is more complex than in individual buildings. Generally, even when one architectural style predominates, there is variation in individual buildings, sometimes considerable. Seeing a pattern out of this complexity provides aesthetic pleasure, and the more complex or difficult it is to see a pattern or unity out the complexity, the greater the pleasure this closure provides, according to Smith.

Smith suggests that there are three levels of intervention in the environment: submergence, rhyme and fracture. Submergence is “where the new blends seamlessly into the existing without causing a ripple of adrenalin”. That is, the buildings are similar without sufficient variation to cause any stimulation in searching for a pattern.

Rhyme, on the other hand, can be called “likeness with a difference”. Smith’s example of rhyme is found in the buildings along the canals of Amsterdam. They have individual variations in heights and the elevations of windows, but they exhibit patterns that are

¹²¹ Smith, 20-24.

recognizable. The most recognizable pattern is that the buildings have narrow frontages and are all attached. On closer examination it becomes evident that the buildings have similar styles of windows and have accentuated and dominant roof features on their facades, although differing. Generally, historic districts have vernacular or particular forms of architecture and recognizable patterns, even though individual buildings have variations, often significant ones. Discovering the patterns that exhibit themselves within the complexity of forms provides aesthetic pleasure.

4.8.3.3 Proportion, Balance and Unity

Smith, as well as many other writers as far back as Vitruvius, contends that we have an innate sense of proportion. This sense is a “binary” sense in that we mentally compare particular elements to other elements, and our attention is drawn on a binary basis to whether the elements have a satisfactory proportion, weight or balance. “Reassembling” these elements to see unified and balanced whole is the process that provides aesthetic pleasure. Smith contends that the greatest satisfaction is when there is a “tensile equilibrium”, that is, a closeness to disequilibrium which causes us to use more effort to see the wholeness of the building or environment.¹²²

4.8.3.4 Fracture, Contradiction, and Metaphor

Fracture is where a building disrupts the pattern of the district. Fracture does not necessarily occur when the building does not copy the style of the district, as a new building may not copy the style of the street but still harmonize through patterns that imitate the style of the district. Fracture in itself may be intrusive and offend.

Fracture and contradiction characterize “iconic” architecture, a prevailing trend today particularly with buildings devoted to the performing or visual arts. In many cases, there is no prevailing pattern of the street or district that provides an aesthetic sense, so the iconic building is a relief in a monotonous environment, or to an environment without

¹²² Smith, 71-75

any particular appeal. Fracture can then alleviate boredom and be exciting, as in the example of the Pompidou Center. Another example, Frank Gehry's Walt Disney Concert Hall's placement in downtown Los Angeles adds visual excitement to an otherwise unexciting environment of high-rise buildings with poor relationships to the street. The building is essentially an "urban sculpture" and in itself exhibits a sense of wholeness.¹²³

Robert Venturi, in *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, explored in some detail the aesthetics of complexity and contradiction found in modern buildings of his day. He states as part of his manifesto "I am for messy vitality over obvious unity ... I am for richness of meaning rather than clarity of meaning ... a valid architecture evokes many levels of meaning and combinations of focus: its space and its elements become readable and workable in several ways at once... But an architecture of complexity and contradiction has a special obligation toward the whole: its truth must be in its totality or its implication of totality. It must embody the difficult unity of inclusion rather than the easy unity of exclusion. More is not less." Departing from the simplicity and "purity" that had embodied the modern movement, Venturi embraced complexity and contradiction, realizing that the resolution of the "tension" created by those elements provided aesthetic reward. His particular point is that architecture involves complexity, and the "less is more" philosophy of the modern movement removes many of the complex elements involved in the experience and use of buildings. Complexity deals with all of the aspects and contradictions that relate to built space, and the resolution of this complexity into a unified whole provides a fuller experience. Seeing the unity in the complexity and contradiction provides the aesthetic experience described by Smith.¹²⁴

Less complex forms of fracture and contradiction are particular elements in the environment that immediately attract our attention. For example, bright primary colours,

¹²³ Smith, 35-60.

¹²⁴ Venturi, Robert. *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*. (New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1966, 2nd ed. 1977), 16.

glitter and reflections that otherwise contradict the setting will stand out and attract our attention. When we can discern the logic of their place in the setting, they provide aesthetic pleasure.¹²⁵

Metaphor can provide another form of aesthetic experience. Metaphor is exemplified by the Sydney Opera House, and similarly by the Vancouver Convention Centre, where, in each case, the form, against the sea, is a metaphor of sails. Metaphor, as opposed to simile, requires the observer to unravel the connection, and making the connection provides the aesthetic reward.¹²⁶

4.8.3.5 Aesthetic Experience in the Larger Environment

In the larger environment of cities, our experience relates to not just individual buildings, but the built environment comprising collections of buildings, including the streets and public spaces on which they are situated. As we walk or travel within or through a district, there is an added element, namely the serial nature of our experience over time. What we see and experience changes with movement, and the experience has the added richness and complexity of variety, the juxtaposition of the various components, and chance observations based on where we are. We anticipate as we move through a district, and the variety of what we observe can provide a far greater complexity than what might be experienced in a single building. The observation of individual buildings can be enriched not only by observing buildings within the context of the other buildings around them, but by observing them from different viewpoints. This binary aspect of seeing the same building as related to others from different viewpoints adds complexity. Often there is a particular viewpoint where one can best visualize the wholeness of the composition. The process of seeing wholeness in the collection of buildings and built form provides

¹²⁵ Lam, William M. C. *Sunlighting as Formgiver for Architecture*. (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1986), vii – 27, 52-61.

¹²⁶ Smith, 122-128.

aesthetic pleasure, one that is very particularly rewarding due to the complexity involved.¹²⁷

Alternatively, skylines provide images of cities, and provide an aesthetic experience that is memorable in the sense that they depict or symbolize the city from a distance. Skylines are like a trademark in this respect, according to David Leatherbarrow in his discussion on this topic in a recent book entitled “Skyplane”. They invite apprehension and appreciation, and reassert the town’s unity¹²⁸.

4.8.3.6 Symbolism

Symbolism plays a distinct role in our experience of place. Religious buildings such as cathedrals are full of symbolism in their design, providing a richness of aesthetic experience as we uncover the symbolism of the elements.

Many forms of symbolism, are, however, losing significance in today’s society. What remains relevant are the particular streets and squares in which people congregate. Smith observes that these spaces are symbolic of citizenship, and people congregate there to “signify their civic allegiance and cement their bond with fellow inhabitants”.¹²⁹ Such places provide an aesthetic experience through the visual connectedness with people and place, that is, somehow seeing the “wholeness” of the place through this affirmation and the resultant pride of the place.

4.9 Sense of Fit and the Appropriate

As discussed, through direct experience and triangulation we make comparisons and attempt to classify information into mental models. Comparisons with our mental models

¹²⁷ Smith, 161-172

¹²⁸ Francis-Jones, Richard et al, eds. *Skyplane*. (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2009), 25-35.

¹²⁹ Smith, 165.

of our environment are a fundamental aspect of experience. Our mental repertoire of models includes what appears appropriate to us, or has a sense of fit.

The quest for the appropriate appears to be a general trait of the human race. In *The Aesthetics of Architecture* Roger Scruton contends that we universally seek and develop a sense of what fits and is appropriate in our built environment, and, generally, the idea that particular forms that have beauty, a sense of fit, or appropriateness leads us to believe that others should feel the same. To Scruton, “it is inconceivable that there should be rational beings from whom the aesthetic impulse is wholly absent”. On a personal level this is exemplified within the confines of our homes, where we select, arrange and re-arrange furniture and objects in a manner that they seem to fit best and appear appropriate, and one would expect others to share this belief or at least acknowledge one’s taste. This personal level of tastes and sense of appropriateness and fit is influenced by a more individualized level of experience and triangulation, whereas in the larger and more permanent aspects of the built environment one has little ability to alter the environment. In this larger context, environments that endure and forms that are repeated and have gained a visual validity are the basis of our positive mental models. This sense of visual validity, according to Scruton, is the result of practical matters and provides satisfaction through understanding. When we are able to adduce reasons why particular forms or conditions in our environment fit and are appropriate, we endow such forms with meaning.¹³⁰

It can be seen that the process of triangulation as described previously plays a large part in the development of one’s sense of fit and the appropriate. Triangulation fosters and develops an interest in making comparisons and thus developing an affinity for the appropriate. Through triangulation, we affirm or amend our conceptions of appropriateness and fit, giving rise to a consciousness of a sense of fit and

¹³⁰ Scruton, 132-133, 202, 239.

appropriateness in our built environment. We pay attention to the aesthetics of the world around us, how things fit, what appears to be appropriate and fitting, and what appears to be out of place. The intense complexity of the environment and its components requires attention and thought to decipher and synthesize visual information, and classify it as pleasing or inappropriate and uncomfortable.

One would question the extent to which the conceptions of appropriateness or sense of fit related to specific forms would be universal amongst people, since there are a wide variety of tastes, for example, in such things as clothing and items of personal use. Furthermore, to what extent do conceptions of appropriateness and sense of fit vary amongst different cultures and societies since, as in the example of clothing, there is great variation amongst the various cultures and societies of the world? Applied to the physical world of buildings and the urban environment, to what extent is there universality in people's conceptions of appropriateness and sense of fit?

Looking at specific periods in history, such as the Greek, Roman, and Renaissance periods of classical architecture and urban form, or indigenous vernacular architecture found in various societies, there would appear to have been universalities of sense of fit in the architecture and urban form in the particular societies, as buildings and forms historically followed specific styles peculiar to those cultures and societies. The elements of buildings that had been built to historical and vernacular forms found in different parts of the world appear to universally convey an intrinsic sense of fit to visitors, regardless of the visitors' origins. This would suggest that there is, in fact, considerable universality of peoples' perceptions of sense of fit, even on a cross-cultural basis.

Christopher Alexander's works, from his earliest book in 1964, *Notes on the Synthesis of Form*¹³¹ through to his latest *Nature of Order* series of four volumes published in 2002 to

¹³¹ Alexander, Christopher. *Notes on the Synthesis of Form*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).

2005¹³² deal with the thesis of order and sense of fit. Like Scruton, Alexander argues that we universally develop an innate quest for a sense of fit, and that we are attracted to constructions, patterns, and physical forms that exhibit “order”, or a sense of fit and appropriateness. He contends that such forms have a “feel good” quality, whereas patterns and forms that are inappropriate are generally devoid of this “feel good” quality and are likely to produce a negative emotional effect. Alexander’s thinking achieved prominence in his two intermediate books, *A Pattern Language*¹³³ and *The Timeless Way of Building*¹³⁴ published in 1977 and 1979, respectively. Although there are some aspects of Alexander’s observations and explanations that are controversial, particularly in his later works, the general theme of his work can be seen to have considerable validity, as demonstrated through the many examples throughout Alexander’s writings.

Alexander’s first book, *Notes on the Synthesis of Form*, essentially sets the framework for his later works. His thesis was that, in design, one achieves fit or harmony within context by identifying elements of dissonance between the proposed form and its context, and eliminating the elements of dissonance. This is, in fact, the process in which the built world was created historically, prior to the modern era, producing the sense of fit or harmony evident in many historic towns and cities.

In *A Pattern Language: Towns. Buildings. Construction* Alexander (and co-authors) identified some 253 physical patterns that are appropriate and “feel good” to people. Of these patterns, 84 are considered “invariant” or essential to a well-formed environment, the remainder being not essential but exhibiting a sense of fit. In each case, Alexander

¹³² Alexander, Christopher. *The Nature of Order: An Essay on the Art of Building and the Nature of the Universe, Book One: the Phenomenon of Life* (Berkeley: The Center for Environmental Structure, 2002); *Book Two: The Process of Creating Life* (2002); *Book Three: A Vision of the Living World* (Ibid, 2005); *Book Four: The Luminous Ground* (2004).

¹³³ Alexander, Christopher, Sara Ishikawa and Murray Silverstein. *A Pattern Language: Towns. Buildings. Construction*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

¹³⁴ Alexander, Christopher. *The Timeless Way of Building*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

shows how the particular pattern can be beneficially connected with other patterns. These identified patterns, pictorially illustrated, are backed up with detailed explanations as to why they feel right or feel appropriate, and it is difficult to refute most of his examples when one relates them to personal experience, or considers the explanations of why they are appropriate or feel appropriate.

“Light on two sides of every room”¹³⁵ is an example of a pattern, identified as invariant by Alexander, which feels more pleasant and friendly than a room with light on only one side of the room, which one avoids if given a choice between the two. Alexander explains that light on only one side, [unless overcome by uniform lighting such as found in office buildings, or other means] produces glare, a dark exterior wall below the window, a darker area at the opposite side of the room, and even a reduced ability to discern body language. Another pattern, this one not an invariant one, is “staircase as a stage”. Alexander suggests treating the main staircase as a “room”, proposing that the main stair should be in a key position, central and visible, and built in a way so that people coming down the stairs become part of the action in the room while they are on the stairs. This provides connection with people in the room, compared to isolation in an enclosed staircase.¹³⁶ One can see from such examples that when we adduce reasons why particular forms or conditions have a sense of fit and appropriateness, we endow these forms with meaning.

Alexander’s patterns in *A Pattern Language* mainly consist of physical patterns of towns, environments and buildings with which almost everyone can identify. This classic book illustrates the concept of sense of fit, and why we relate to a sense of fit. What is most significant about this work are the detailed explanations that demonstrate the logic of the sense of fit or appropriateness of the various forms, thus providing a logic for

¹³⁵ Alexander et al. *A Pattern Language*, 746-751

¹³⁶ Ibid, 637-640

understanding why various physical forms of places and buildings feel appropriate and have a sense of fit.

It can be seen that various forms and patterns become a part of our mental models of our environment, and play a significant role in our perceptual experience. Patterns are a perceptible form of order and trigger expectations of completeness and consistency, and completeness and consistency are satisfying, according to Lam in his discussions on perception. Conversely, ambiguity and lack of discernable patterns or sense of fit may provoke discomfort. When one encounters the unfamiliar, one's awareness is heightened until the new element can be classified. If a discernable pattern, order or meaning does not emerge, there is discomfort or avoidance.¹³⁷ Thus a sense of fit and appropriateness, particularly as derived from discernable patterns and order, provoke satisfaction and a positive emotional response.

4.10 External Relationships and Scale

Considerable urban building development that has occurred in the last half century can be characterized as exhibiting “un-relatedness”. Numerous individual buildings, particularly large scale ones, have been developed in our cities with little or no relationship to their surroundings, being entities unto themselves, frequently leaving the adjacent public area lifeless. Such types include high-rise buildings, particularly office buildings, with varying setbacks from the street, often creating windswept plazas or unused open areas, and scales that are often greatly out of proportion to their neighbours. Exacerbating this problem in many cities, particularly mid-sized or smaller cities, is high-rise office development that is sparsely scattered throughout downtowns with large gaps between, often resulting from demolition for parking lots. As well, many downtown projects, including both high-rise office buildings and internalized shopping complexes, have been developed with block-long facades at street level that are monolithic, bland, blank, or uninteresting. These various types of development disrespect the social nature of streets.

¹³⁷ Lam, 32-33, 40-41.

They essentially exhibit “un-relatedness” or lack sense of fit in relation to their surroundings and the public domain. They discourage activity and life on the adjacent streets. This does not mean to say, however, that sense of fit in relation to surroundings and streets cannot be achieved in the development of high-rise buildings. Manhattan has districts of high rise buildings at very high density, but with streets full of life, Fifth Avenue being a notable example.

Scale that is out of proportion with its surroundings and has a lack of relatedness is not confined to buildings, but also found in the public domain, often created unwittingly by municipal authorities. Examples include public parks and plazas, particularly ones with a modernistic design, that have vast expanses of “nothingness”, lacking in physical features that provide human connection, too large to create conditions where one feels comfortable, and too large to relate to neighbouring venues and users that could generate activity. Panu Lehtovuori, in *Experience and Conflict: The Production of Urban Space* provides a good description of these conditions in public spaces being produced in urban environments. “Even largely benevolent efforts towards ‘urban renaissance’ and planning that ostensibly cherishes the European model of the dense city and lively urban space tend to produce artificial and bleak images of public space, stage-sets for imagined use and exclusionary ‘outdoor rooms’. The emphasis is on ‘design space’, and the public space creation fails to tap complex and emerging social and cultural potentials.” Lehtovuori goes on to suggest that “Urban planning has forgotten the social space of the city, the lived and experienced city. It is pathologically stuck in the visually biased representations.”¹³⁸

However, lack of fit can occur even when a park or plaza is located where there should be relationships, is of suitable scale, and the nearby population densities are there. Bryant Park in New York is a prime example of a park that did not appear to work, yet it had

¹³⁸ Lehtovuori, Panu. *Experience and Conflict: The Production of Urban Space*. (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 2, 213.

nearby venues containing large numbers of people close by. But it was largely unused and the types of persons using it discouraged others. As pointed out by William H. Whyte in 1980, Bryant Park lacked relatedness and sense of fit simply because it had physical barriers preventing visual connectedness¹³⁹. A number of physical changes primarily involving removing barriers were all that was necessary to subsequently provide it with a sense of fit and bring it to life.

Streets in the downtowns of many cities in Canada and the U.S. similarly lack relatedness to the urban environment. The cause has generally been the result of traffic-oriented planning, providing for rush-hour traffic volumes rather than pedestrian needs. Such streets are typically excessively wide and allow only one-way traffic, feeling more like “highways” than streets designed for use by pedestrians. Combined with high-rise buildings that also lack relatedness, the condition is uncomfortable for pedestrians, not conducive to social activity on them, and such streets become single purpose “movement” corridors for the movement of pedestrians and automobiles.

The forms of development described above can be seen as impersonal, out of scale or lacking in relatedness. The public realm of such settings does not foster positive experiences.

4.11 Human Scale

“Human scale” refers to the smaller scale to which people can readily relate and understand. A house is human scale, as one can relate to its various elements readily. Similarly, buildings with few stories feel more personal as one can more readily understand and relate to what goes on in the building and comprehend the elements and “fine grained” features of the building.

¹³⁹ Whyte, William H. *The Social Life of Small Urban Places*. (Washington: The Conservation Foundation, 1980), 26.

The patterns described in Alexander's *A Pattern Language* are mostly human scale patterns. In relation to residential buildings, one of his notable patterns is "Four Story Limit" for residential buildings. He explained that "high-rise living takes people away from the ground and away from the casual, everyday society that occurs on the sidewalks and streets... It leaves them alone in their apartments... At three or four stories, one can still walk comfortably down to the street, and from a window you can feel part of the street scene: you can see details in the street – the people, their faces, foliage, shops".¹⁴⁰ One can observe the validity of this pattern by comparing the level of street activity in dense older districts of cities containing low-rise or "human scale" residential buildings, compared to districts of high rise buildings in the same cities. A good example is the "east end" of Montreal, built up with low rise but dense attached "cold flats" and apartments, where there is considerably more street life than in its high-rise apartment districts, and "social life" on the street is very active. The low-rise buildings foster personal contact and a friendlier, less impersonal, atmosphere than found in districts or precincts of high-rise buildings, confirming Alexander's arguments.

Jane Jacobs, commenting on the social life on sidewalks in the dense but generally "human scale" districts of cities, had similar observations with respect to mixed-use streets in her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. In her discussion of how mixed use generates street life, an underlying principle she proposed is "the need of cities for a most intricate and close-grained diversity of uses that give each other constant mutual support, both economically and socially"¹⁴¹. Intricate and close-grained can be equated to "human scale".

In the public domain, a street that is too wide to provide any connectedness between people on the opposite side is missing social relatedness, whereas a street that is sufficiently narrow for one to easily catch the attention of someone on the opposite side,

¹⁴⁰ Alexander et al. *A Pattern Language*, 116-118.

and potentially make contact, is more human scale. With any degree of traffic, the wide street feels more like a traffic artery, with the traffic corridor acting as a visual barrier, whereas the narrow street promotes social interaction and friendliness.

Human scale environments provide conditions and relationships that are clear, more personal, and unambiguous. As pointed out by Lam, unresolved ambiguity feels uncomfortable and unfriendly, whereas an environment in which those things we want to or need to see are clearly visible, structured, and organized makes us feel at ease, and is comfortable and reassuring.¹⁴²

Another discussion that can be related to “human scale” is a 2005 study, by Sergio Porta and John Renne, of the conditions that provide sustainability in the streetscape, discussed in Thwaites & Simkins *Experiential Landscape*. The study was an attempt to define the characteristics that generate social sustainability in urban streets, based on a study of streets in Australia that have, over time, proven to have social sustainability. They derived some seven positive indicators related to sustainability, as follows: sky exposure, which indicates the street’s ability to encapsulate the pedestrian; façade continuity, which contributes to a sense of enclosure and definition; softness (transparency and transitional space such as windows and visually accessible space), being elements that can make a street or environment feel safe and welcoming; social width or the breadth of the street as it effects human interaction across the traffic area, which measures social width by taking into account the severance effect that traffic lanes and other features place on human interaction from one curb to another; visual complexity, which describes the degree to which the street has visual tapestry; number of buildings, which indicates the scale of the street in relation to the potential for human activity; and “sedibility”, or the measure of the number of seating opportunities visible. The eighth measurement included in the

¹⁴¹ Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. (1961, reprint, New York: Random House, Vintage, 1985), 55-73.

¹⁴² Lam, 5, 22-26, 29-33, 38.

study was the detractors that deter street life such as blank walls, aggressive automobile facilities, and rejecting objects. In reviewing positive indicators one by one, they each in fact largely relate to “human scale”. Thwaites and Simkins describe the positive indicators as exhibiting a “friction” that slows down the pace of movement by offering a range of ways to become psychologically engaged. Through the study, one could conclude that human scale not only contributes to street life and sociability, but sustainability over time.¹⁴³

In summary, a human scale environment is a positive environment for social activity. Although many factors will determine an environment’s use and effectiveness for social activity, the element of human scale is of considerable value in the generation of street life and social interaction, as well as sustainability over time.

4.12 Organic Development

4.12.1 Organic Development Defined

Organic development is development that occurs “organically” over time. The organic analogy refers to the organic process that occurs in nature. To a certain extent, in development that is described as “organic”, representing the process of humans creating a built environment over time, “organic” is not simply an analogy, but represents a natural process extended to the actions of humans in relation to their environment.

Organic development can best be described as a process under which, in the development of each new component of the built environment, the builder of the new building or component is influenced by the environment existing at the time, and seeks to build what fits with this environment, achieving a sense of fit. It presupposes that the builder of the new component has a conscious relationship with what existed at the time and endeavours to achieve a harmonious “whole” through building what fits with the surroundings, including the adjacent and surrounding buildings, adjacent and surrounding

¹⁴³ Thwaites & Simkins, 123-124.

public spaces and configurations, landscape and topography, and the natural environment. As discussed under the heading “Sense of Fit and the Appropriate”, a quest for a “sense of fit” is a natural human trait, and thus organic development is a manifestation of this trait. Organic development is, by definition, “piecemeal” development, under which, through the construction, or sometimes “repair” (including modification and replacement), of individual buildings and components, the urban environment evolves over time. Through this process, it trends towards a harmonious whole.

4.12.2 The Organic Process

Using the example of how flora grows in the natural environment, the organic process in nature determines that the type of flora that grows in a particular place fits and is suited to the particular environmental conditions of that place, otherwise it will either die or, through the natural process of survival and selection, evolve to a new sub-species that fits. Conversely, when flora is exposed to an environment to which it is suited, it will flourish there. Thus, the natural process results in a fit between the type of flora and the environment.

Comparing organic development to the example of the organic process in nature, individual buildings would represent the flora, and the existing built up area would represent and reflect the particular environmental conditions. In the organic development process, building types and uses that fit the environment flourish, whereas those that do not are not likely to be found. What is built caters to demand or need. But in each individual component, the builder seeks a sense of fit with the existing built environment. Contradicting the built environment not only would weaken the appeal of the individual building, but would also weaken the whole. As a result, the individual builder is motivated to seek a sense of fit with the environment in the development of the new building. The harmonious whole resulting in achieving this sense of fit strengthens both the appeal of the individual building, and the whole environment. Strengthening the

whole environment benefits the individual building by making its location more attractive and valuable.

Since what occurs in organic development appears to be random, as in nature, chaos theory can be used to describe the process. In nature, chaos or randomness exists, but this randomness is “randomness with direction”, as discussed by Peter F. Smith in *The Dynamics of Delight: Architecture and Aesthetics*. Randomness is underpinned by laws, and the holistic systems of nature are subject to positive feedback from an infinite number of influences. That is, nature is a web of competition and feedback loops, but out of this apparent chaos, patterns and order evolve. Relating how patterns form in nature to organic development, there is randomness related to the actions of many persons, and, as in nature, these actions are subject to positive feedback and numerous influences. Ultimately, discernable patterns and a sense of wholeness evolve in organic development, as in nature, according to Smith. In the development of cities, towns and districts that have developed organically, patterns are discernable even though there may be significant variation in individual buildings.¹⁴⁴

“Epigenesis”, a natural biological process, can be used to describe the process of organic development, according to Smith. Epigenesis describes the process governing the development of an organism, in which the organism has pre-programming but interacts with and is influenced by its environment. Relating this to development, Smith contends that, through epigenesis, development is the outcome of certain underlying rules plus specific sensitivity to the environment. He observes that “every town and city is a unique ‘species’ in the sense that its accumulation of buildings and spaces constitutes the epigenetic program for that place. What exists sets the fundamental rules for the way the new development should respond to its context. ...Epigenesis is a developmental principle

¹⁴⁴ Smith, 28-33.

so it means that the new buildings do not merely echo the existing milieu but add something new and dynamic to the situation”.¹⁴⁵

It can be seen that, in the historical organic development of many cities and historic districts, specific “epigenesis” rules often include forms or styles of buildings and, although each building has individuality and degrees of dissimilarity, the buildings collectively follow such rules as to create a sense of wholeness. The epigenesis analogy can be used to describe why the characteristics of historic districts in various cities of Canada and the United States are unique to each city, with considerable variation in the physical features and aspects of historic districts from city to city, having each been formed by the unique underlying “program” of that city. The program peculiar to a specific city will have been influenced by a variety of factors, very much interrelated, such as an underlying legal layout or grid for streets and lots that may have pre-existed development, as influenced by topography and natural conditions; the cultural origin of the people, particularly the craftsmen and builders; the nature and types of economic activity and industry that has developed in the city; the modes of transportation and regional trading relationships; the natural landscape including topography and rivers or bodies of water; the climate; and the local materials available for construction. The characteristic of the epigenesis nature of organic development relates to the complexity of this form of the development, out of which one can discern an “order”, a “wholeness”, an holistic entity. Discerning this order, wholeness, or holistic entity is the fundamental aspect of the aesthetic experience or aesthetic pleasure, according to Smith, that is, we experience aesthetic pleasure by discerning these characteristics out of complexity or what seems to be apparent disorder. Seeing the “order” or “wholeness” can also be related to Roger Scruton’s apt description of aesthetic understanding – “to feel an inward resonance of ... a way of life” or to “feel its relation to the workings of the moral life”¹⁴⁶.

¹⁴⁵ Smith, 49-50.

¹⁴⁶ Scruton, 205.

4.12.3 Organic Development in the Built Environment

A primary characteristic of organic development in the formation of the older European cities, as well as the historic districts of cities in Canada and the United States, was the dense but human scale built form. In many of our cities, particularly our younger cities, only historic districts remain as the true remnants of organic development. The important characteristic of organic development is the multiple actors, being individual owners and builders, which resulted in the complexity of the built form. These individual actors were driven by visions of “what is needed, and what fits”, resulting not just in complexity, but a sense of wholeness that characterizes organically built form.

Christopher Alexander’s body of work relates very much to the organic process. His overall thesis relates to achieving “wholeness” in each component of built form by achieving a sense of fit for each component. This process is essentially the organic process, a piecemeal process in the nature of organic development. While organic development is piecemeal development by multiple actors, Alexander proposes that the same results, which he calls “organic order”, can be achieved by a group of persons building piece by piece, examining the result of each piece before proceeding with the next. Each next piece is designed to achieve a sense of fit with the preceding entity, thereby adding to the “wholeness” of the built form. Alexander’s (and co-authors) 1975 book, *The Oregon Experiment*, a sequel to *The Timeless Way of Building* and *A Pattern Language*, set out what he considered the process of achieving organic order in a situation in which the development is controlled by one group, in this case using The University of Oregon as the example. Christopher Alexander’s (and co-authors) 1987 work, *A New Theory of Urban Design*¹⁴⁷ explored the process further through an experimental design process, demonstrating the achievement of organic order through a process similar to organic development, but also by one group rather than multiple actors. The underlying theme of Alexander’s extensive four volumes entitled *The Nature of*

¹⁴⁷ Alexander, Christopher et al. *A New Theory of Urban Design*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

*Order*¹⁴⁸ is that the organic process, whether by multiple actors or one group achieving “organic order”, is the process that achieves “wholeness” in built form. His work, however, has not achieved much recognition in the architectural community as it contradicts the development processes of today.

Perhaps the turning point in history that led away from the organic development process started following the advent of a new building form, the “skyscraper” of the late 1800’s. This led to builders constructing buildings large enough, economically, to be successful entities unto themselves without the need or sympathy to relate to or fit with the neighbouring environment. Commencing with the high-rise office “skyscrapers”, and then through the modernist period, urban development largely drifted away from “organic development”, with larger buildings generally designed as entities unto themselves, independent of their surroundings. Sympathy to their immediate surroundings was no longer a key determinant in their design, and often their surroundings were looked at as fleeting, or inferior. Contributing to this was the advent of large development firms, replacing the individual players that existed in the past, as well as the advent of zoning that separated uses and imposed ill-considered rules that impaired the natural process. Even more important, however, was the dramatic suburbanization described in Chapter 2, combined with the construction of major road systems for vehicles, which led to multiple forces competing with the traditional downtown, altering the composition of our cities.

In today’s world, players in the development of our cities are large-scale, and forms of development are large-scale as well. In *Recombinant Urbanism* David Shane provides an insightful description of the nature of development found in today’s urban areas. “With hindsight, we can see that the Post-structuralists and Deconstructuralists were right to describe the city as a chaotic situation of competing systems. We can also see that this chaotic situation has an emergent logic on its own, produced noncentrally by actors designing systems across vast territories without regard for each other’s decisions, each

¹⁴⁸ Alexander, *Nature of Order* series, *ibid.*

adding their own system as a new layer to the existing topography, historic structures, and landscapes. The result is a tangle of actors and systems in a spaghetti system of flows and private motives, interacting with each other through complex feedback mechanisms wherever their paths cross. Each actor follows their own logic, creating a life-world that is a mixture of the usual urban concerns: land and property, trade and market share, social and political position. Each actor forms their own hybrid priorities and sets goals in the face of competing actors, contesting for territory. A city of multiple actors connected by a spaghetti tangle of relationship produces only local order, and no obvious mechanism of overall coordination. One urban actor might control a particular special environment while another manipulates flows between patches; they might (or might not) talk to each other.¹⁴⁹”

One can see that, in a way, Shane’s description is to some degree a description of an organic development process at a macro scale. In fact, another author, Michael Batty, in *Cities and Complexity: Understanding Cities with Cellular Automata, Agent-Based Models, and Fractals*¹⁵⁰, explores in great detail using mathematical modelling, how the development process of today’s cities, at the macro scale, can be described as bottom-up organic processes. He describes how a myriad of processes and elements combine into an organic whole through examining how local or fixed “cells” (locations, particularly locations of activity) interact with “mobile cells”, being the agents responsible for development. Batty defines the key drivers of change as randomness, historical accident, the physical determinism of what is feasible or possible, the advantages posed by the natural world in providing resources and landscapes for the city, and critical comparative economic advantage. These drivers of change are influenced by “bottom up” positive feedback, and the resultant processes of development are capable of being modelled in

¹⁴⁹ David Graham Shane. *Recombinant Urbanism: Conceptual Modeling in Architecture, Urban Design, and City Theory*. (West Sussex, England: John Wiley & Sons, 2005), 305-306

¹⁵⁰ Michael Batty. *Cities and Complexity: Understanding Cities with Cellular Automata, Agent-Based Models, and Fractals*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005).

the same manner as organic systems. Thus one could describe development in today's cities as organic in nature, but at a macro scale. It bears, however, little resemblance to historic organic development as previously described, which is intricate, human scale, and generally results in a timeless landscape. Its nature, as described by Batty, is macro scale, fleeting, and subject to constant change, and thus not within a conventional definition of organic development.

It is likely safe to say that organic development is largely gone from the development process, at least in relation to city centers, and the "wholeness" that one can experience from organic development is now largely relegated to historic districts in most cities in Canada and the United States. That is not to say that pleasurable experience of place is absent in relation to streets and districts, as more and more developments today are large scale mixed-use projects which encompass streets and squares, and have designs that promote a positive pedestrian experience. These fully planned developments cannot, however, match the complexity and thus appeal of active historic districts formed through organic development as found in European cities.

4.13 Sense of History

Historic buildings and districts, particularly if restored or still intact and actively used, have a special form of innate appeal. The universality of this innate appeal is illustrated by the fact that the appeal is cross-cultural. Persons from one culture and location will not only experience this appeal with historic buildings and districts in their own culture and origin, but also with historic buildings and districts in other cultures and locations in the world. In fact, a significant portion of tourism travel is related to the experience provided by historic buildings and districts in places and countries other than one's own. Historic buildings and districts provoke a sense of wonder and curiosity. What was life and society like when the buildings were built? What led to their construction? Why are they still standing? These are questions that come to mind.

Authors such as Peter Smith, in *The Dynamics of Delight*, Roger Scruton, in *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, and Andrew Light and Jonathan Smith, in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, treat the experience of historic buildings and districts as a form of, or in the nature of, aesthetic pleasure. Smith, who submits that aesthetic nourishment is a fundamental human need, summarizes his arguments with "... the aesthetic spark is generated across the gap between order and complexity, between the known and the unknown, the here and there, the deep past and the present, and the now and then. Scenes that encapsulate these fundamental yet connected opposites make an emotional impact that is impervious to the erosion of time."¹⁵¹ Not only does observing the gap between "the deep past and the present and the now and then" provide pleasure in seeing the continuity and visible evidence of the passage of time, but we seek to understand it, and we experience enhanced pleasure in reaching levels of understanding.

Scruton, in *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, perhaps provides the best description of the experience of "sense of history". He describes historic buildings and districts as being full of meaning, meaning that is created partly by the detailed correspondence between the visible form and the "moral significance" of that form. We feel their significance and meaning. More significant than the meaning found in various forms in a built environment is the meaning found in the total ensemble. We feel "an inward resonance of an idea or way of life", and endeavour to feel and see the world as the people who built it once saw and felt. We feel the relationship of the built form to "the workings of moral life". As levels of meaning are grasped, we have an elevated experience.¹⁵²

It follows that the level of experience from this feeling of a sense of history will vary in degree according to the perceptual focus and sympathy of the observer. As we gain more understanding, more meaning results and our experience is enhanced. Historical information that is provided to us can aid this understanding. The Alhambra Palace and

¹⁵¹ Smith, 210

¹⁵² Scruton, 204-205

the Taj Mahal are examples of places that provide universal appeal and the feeling of a sense of history. The experience of the “sense of history” these places convey is greatly enhanced when coupled with information on what led to these buildings, the “workings of moral life” that occurred in their construction and use, and the meaning embodied in their various components and details.

Light and Smith in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* compare experiencing historic districts (a “landscape”), to experiencing art. They make the case that the full appreciation of art, as a composition, requires an articulate knowledge of the history that produced the work of art. In a similar fashion, the full appreciation of a landscape composition such as a historic district requires a full understanding of its history. Thus the level of appreciation and hence pleasure in the experience of a historic district is related to learning and appreciating its history. Furthermore, to the local citizenry, this appreciation provides a particular or enhanced level of meaning as a result of the collective identity and sense of pride provided. The question arises, however, how does the contemporary use of the historic building or district, which may not be the same as its original use, influence the experience? Allen Carlson, in a section in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, contends that even if the current use might appear to some as an abuse of an historic building, this present part of its history does not diminish aesthetic appreciation and experience.¹⁵³ However, it can be seen that restoration that uncovers and exposes historic fabric makes visible the historic nature of the building, and, in connection with contemporary use, enhances the connection with the past.

Another question related to historic buildings and districts is the question of how repeated use and exposure to them affects the experience. Does repeated exposure diminish or alternatively enhance the experience? Smith responds to this question by comparing continued exposure to the repeated listening of great works of classical music. He argues

¹⁵³ Light, Andrew and Jonathan M. Smith. *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), xi – xv, 92-105.

that repeated exposure enhances rather than diminishes the experience, and that the more places engage with the emotions, the more resilient they are to erosion by habituation.¹⁵⁴ Historic districts are very complex “compositions”. Through repeated exposure, one notices particular elements exhibiting the past, and feels the sense of history. As one uncovers new elements and aspects, the composition gains meaning and the experience is enhanced.

Kevin Lynch, in his book *What Time Is This Place*, suggests that the important aspect of historic buildings is that they provide a feeling of the continuity of the present with the past, and exhibit the passage of time. Against the newer, they become more relevant to the local citizenry. They heighten the contrast and complexity of the city, and make visible the process of change. Without continued use, however, unless the buildings or district have exceptional aesthetic or symbolic significance, the “sense of history” is diminished.¹⁵⁵ Looking at this dimension, many historic districts have had more than one life between their original construction and the present, sometimes many. For example, many historic districts formed original main streets before automobiles were in use, and had a considerable mixture of uses such as store types long gone, restaurants, offices and hotels. Over the years there may have been several iterations of uses in the buildings, and many of the more recent prior uses might have been within the living memory of local citizens. Thus the “passage of time” through continuous use and re-use adds another dimension to the history, and the continuity through the iterations of uses adds meaning and depth.

Tim Ingold, in *The Perception of the Environment*, expands on the concept of “temporality” in relation to the environment by relating the “dwelling perspective” to the passage of time. From this standpoint, the landscape we inhabit is “constituted as an

¹⁵⁴ Smith, 209 – 210

¹⁵⁵ Lynch, Kevin. *What Time Is This Place*. 1972. (Reprint Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

enduring record of – and testimony to – the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and, in so doing, have left there something of themselves”. He suggests the “landscape” that we dwell in should be viewed as a “taskscape” of activity and interactivity. It is social in nature and is temporal, and “pregnant with the past”. From this perspective Ingold proposes that “meaning is there to be discovered in the landscape, if only we know how to attend to it. Every feature, then, is a potential clue, a key to meaning rather than a vehicle for carrying it. The discovery procedure, wherein objects in the landscape become clues to meaning, is what distinguishes the perspective of dwelling... the process of dwelling is fundamentally temporal.”¹⁵⁶ It can be seen that from Ingold’s dwelling perspective, much of today’s landscapes are fleeting in nature, whereas historic districts may be “pregnant with the past”, but this characteristic is somewhat latent unless the district continues as a “taskscape” of activity and interactivity.

Meaning and continued use are fundamental to collective identity, and collective identity generates a sense of civic pride. Civic pride is something that people have a strong desire to convey in some fashion. Civic pride helps generate not only a desire to visit the place to which it relates, but generates a noticeable spirit of friendliness, a welcoming attitude, which other visitors to the place, tourists in particular, find pleasure in. It provides the visitor or tourist with an impression of energy, a positive impression of the local residents, adding to the experience and memorability to the place.

An exploration of collective identity in relation to historic districts is found in Judith Morley’s dissertation entitled *Making History: Historic Preservation and the Creation of Western Civic Identity*. She investigated historic districts in three Western U.S. cities (Albuquerque, Denver, and Seattle) and found that the restored historic districts in those cities had a major impact in defining the city’s identity, and in fact created civic identity. In each case, the city had no prior apparent identity. In connection with those cities, civic officials even went beyond what was known about the districts and “invented traditions

¹⁵⁶ Ingold, 189-208.

to define, commodify, and disseminate a civic identity”. These particular districts inspired citizens to visit and participate in the life of these districts, and enhanced the tourist appeal of the city.¹⁵⁷

In a subsequent essay in *Giving Preservation a History*, Judith Morley chronicles the development of the Larimer Square historic district in Denver and details how the developer promoted the history of the district, using propaganda to invent a tradition for it. A passage in her essay is as follows: “Heritage differs from history in that it celebrates only those aspects of history agreed upon and valued by a group, leaving out any problematic information. Thus heritage is nostalgic, re-creating the past as a time of innocence and consensus. Heritage is mythic, using symbols rather than facts to convey historical meaning. Historian David Lowenthal compares heritage to religious faith. People have no real proof that the events occurred, but accept them based on a feeling that they must be true.”¹⁵⁸ In this sense heritage differs from actual history, and “sense of history” might more properly relate to “heritage” with respect to the collective identity of a community.

It can be seen that “sense of history” from the perspective of the collective meaning, memory and identity of a community can be related to “traces” of human activity left in places, as described by Jon Anderson, discussed in Section 4.4.2 Traces are both material, that is the buildings and places themselves, and non-material, being past activities, events, performances or emotions, relating to both a collective past within living memory, and an imagined past or heritage.

¹⁵⁷ Morley, Judith Mattivi. *Making History: Historic Preservation and the Creation of Western Civic Identity*. (PhD Diss., University of New Mexico, 2002).

¹⁵⁸ Judith M. Morley, “Making History: Historic Preservation and Civic Identity in Denver”, in *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States*, ed. Max Page and Randall Mason (New York: Routledge, 2004), 283-309.

One might question, however, how does this collective meaning or sense of pride relate to those members of the community that have come from elsewhere? We have seen that we appear to experience “sense of history” in other places and cultures, and that this experience is similarly enhanced when we learn more of the history of those historic places, meaning that the sense of history exhibited in a community’s historic district is not restricted to local citizens. In the case of a person that moved to the community from elsewhere, I suggest that collective meaning or sense of pride relates to the extent to which the individual has adopted the community as his or her home, and asserts this membership. And in today’s world, a large proportion of the population of the cities of Canada and the United States have arrived from elsewhere, but nevertheless “adopt” these cities as their home. In fact, it should be remembered that even those native to a particular community were not alive when its historic district was formed, and did not witness or partake in the history, but only, perhaps, in the more recent “traces”.

4.14 The Holistic Experience of Place

4.14.1 Introduction

The previous sections discussed the various aspects and components of the experience of place, commencing with a discussion of perception and understanding, followed by a discussion of meaning, memory and identity and the emotional experience of place. This provided a basis for understanding the nature of experience, leading to a discussion of various components that contribute to our positive experience of place, namely sense, legibility and orientation; the sensuous element; aesthetic pleasure; sense of fit and the appropriate; external relationships and scale; human scale; and sense of history. The discussion also included the nature of organic development in relation to how it relates to the experience of place. The experience of place is, of course, holistic in nature and involves the contribution not only of combinations of these various components in varying levels of importance, but also the social element, as discussed in Chapter 3 and in this chapter under the section on Meaning, Memory and Identity. The next section will deal with the mode of experience and discuss further the social component of the experience of place.

4.14.2 The Mode of Experience and the Social Component

Our fundamental mode for experiencing place is “on foot”, and the experience of place as discussed in this chapter is generally based on how we experience place on “on foot” or in a pedestrian mode. Today, however, a significant aspect of the lives of a large proportion of people in Canada and the United States, particularly in the suburban setting, involves the use of automobiles, resulting in sporadic experiences “on foot” at different separated places - the home, the workplace, the shopping centre, and other disconnected places. The experience of place from automobiles or other forms of transportation is a disconnected experience combining the experience within the mode of transportation with a disconnected experience of the outside world, the latter being reduced to visual experiences that do not encapsulate the holistic nature of experience of place. Not only is the experience of place through its complexity at the fine grain of walking lost, but the social component of the experience of place is disconnected from place, that is, the place outside.

The simple act of walking through the environment of cities, and in particular some of the central areas of cities, exposes us to a wide range of sights and sounds, stimuli that engage our attention and feed a basic biological need for stimulation. Stimulation is enhanced when we encounter the unfamiliar or new sights through this activity, or when the added element of people and the social aspect is combined into the experience. As discussed earlier, provided we are able to classify or understand the unfamiliar elements such stimulation provides a form of pleasure through reaching an understanding. On the other hand, when the environment remains ambiguous to us, or our biological needs for a sense of safety and orientation are not satisfied, our experience may be uncomfortable or unpleasant. Of course quite a few of our younger cities have destroyed a lot of the visual complexity of the past in their city centres, and replaced this with buildings that are largely devoid of human scale connection, and were not designed in a manner that promotes social activity on the street.

Walking within a city or district in many cities can indeed provide an intense complexity of information. Cities with complexity, variety, and the personalization of places provided by individuals, particularly as found in historic cities, offer the prospect of pleasurable experience through the simple act of walking and observing, as evidenced by the tourist activity such places attract. Parts of this experience are the aesthetic experience, and the social aspect of interface with other people, but a major part is simply experiencing the considerable variety of what cannot be found elsewhere, and “people watching”, that is, observing people on the streets and in public places.

An interesting book by Edmund White, *The Flaneur: A Stroll through the Paradoxes of Paris*, focuses on the extremely rich variety of what might be found by strolling through the districts of Paris, and the pleasures of experiencing this variety. The translation of “flaneur” is loiterer or stroller. White quotes Baudelaire in 19th century Paris, which at that time likely had a richer composition of complexity and activity than today - “For the perfect *flaneur*, for the passionate observer, it’s an immense pleasure to take up residence in multiplicity, in whatever is seething, moving, evanescent and infinite: you’re not at home but you feel at home everywhere; you see everyone, you’re at the centre of everything yet you remain hidden from everybody – these are just a few of the minor pleasures of those independent, passionate impartial minds whom language can only awkwardly define. The observer is a prince who, wearing a disguise, takes pleasure everywhere ... The amateur of life enters into the crowd as into an immense reservoir of electricity.”¹⁵⁹ Many dense European cities maintain considerable street life and “electricity”, and the general characteristics described by Beaudelaire.

A notable aspect of the “flaneur” experience is the experience of “otherness”. Hajer and Reijndorp, in their book “*In Search of New Public Domain*” recognized this component as an important part of the experience of public places. They describe public domain as

¹⁵⁹ White, Edmund. *The Flaneur: A Stroll through the Paradoxes of Paris*. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2001), 36-37.

places characterized by heterogeneous groups of people, where there is a shared use of public space. This encourages a “shift of perspective: through the experience of otherness one’s casual view of reality gets some competition from other views and lifestyles”.¹⁶⁰ This form of experience can be stimulating and pleasurable, but it is a precondition that this experience is not coupled with a feeling of insecurity or unease as may occur where public space is occupied by persons that appear to be a threat to one’s safety, or interfering with one’s “personal space”. In our cities containing “homogeneous” suburban enclaves of cultural groupings, however, such interface often generates stress and avoidance rather than stimulation, although, as discussed in Chapter 3, sociological dynamics in cities are rapidly changing with the rise of the creative classes and others who value this interface.

Thwaites and Simkins note that places are often temporally dynamic, that is, there is a continuous flux through time as they change, develop, and evolve according to what happens there, and the meanings and associations that people project there. Amos Rapoport, a pioneer in the fields of Urban Morphology and Environment-Behaviour Studies, examined the importance of human involvement and complexity in the environment in *Human Aspects of Urban Form*. Environments that exhibit signs of individual human involvement, personalization, and complexity have meaning for the local residents, and the visible evidence of this congruence is not only an important part of the experience for local residents, but a significant aspect of the tourist experience. In addition, the periodic changes over time as the result of human activity add to the appeal and meaning to the place.¹⁶¹ In a subsequent volume, *History and Precedent in Environmental Design*, Rapoport concludes from detailed studies of pedestrian environments that complexity has two important aspects: ambiguity, in the sense of

¹⁶⁰ Hajer, Maarten and Arnold Reijndorp. *In Search of New Public Domain*. (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2001), 89.

¹⁶¹ Rapoport, Amos. *Human Aspects of Urban Form: Towards a Man-Environment Approach to Urban Form and Design*. (Oxford: Pergamon Press), 316-384.

multiplicity of meanings rather than uncertainty; and variety, richness, and unfolding that is “not visible in a single view but unfold and reveal themselves and thus have an element of surprisingness, unexpectedness, mystery, and so forth”.¹⁶²

The experience of place is “human experience” involving our personal interface with place as influenced by the experiential aspects engendered by its physical characteristics, and the human aspects of meaning and identity, but also encompassing our interface with others in place. In the section on meaning, memory and identity (Section 4.4.2) we discussed the concept of “multiple imagined communities”, that is, imagined communities to which we belong. Such communities are called “imagined” communities as we are members of the communities but extended by our minds as larger groups than the number of members we may actually know. An essential criterion of “membership” is that our choices do not conflict with, but rather would be approved by such communities. Important choices are not simply what we do but where we go, what places we frequent. Thus the presence of others of our imagined communities in particular places draws us to such places, that is, we wish to be seen in such places and seek the interface with other members in such places.

It can be seen then that social activity in particular places attracts other members of the same “imagined communities”. Particular places that enjoy social activity typically attract members of these multiple imagined communities to the extent that such communities are compatible with each other. Large open spaces such as parks and squares are often able to attract a very diverse mix of community types, although conditions that result in lack of sufficient activity may result in the dominance of one community type that is negative to others, deterring others. The earlier works of Jane Jacobs and William H. White, discussed in Chapter Three, pointed out how the presence of people generates more people. Busy public spaces not only appeal to multiple

¹⁶² Rapoport, Amos. *History and Precedent in Environmental Design*. (New York: Plenum Press, 1990), 263.

communities, but busy places are safe places, according to Jane Jacobs. Busy streets and squares act as magnets drawing more people, that is, they are a forum for multiple communities.

In the urban realm, streets, squares, and parks or waterfronts are the traditional public settings, particularly if they include outdoor cafes and vendors, and provide public festivals and events. The forum for social activity also includes other “public places” found in interior spaces such as cafes, eating and drinking establishments, night clubs and entertainment establishments, retail stores, art galleries, performing arts centres, cinemas, and other complexes open to the public such as shopping centres. These various forums may appeal to and attract particular or multiple communities, but, as discussed, individuals today typically belong to multiple imagined communities.

The question then becomes, what causes this social activity to occur in specific places? Are there attributes of specific places that lead to the generation of this activity? The answer is obviously yes. Places with a strong combination of the elements that contribute to a positive emotional experience of place are most likely to become places of social activity and develop identity for the local population, often also resulting in tourist activity in cities that attract tourists. On the other hand, there must be the opportunity for such places to manifest themselves through private initiatives such as cafes, shops and other uses that attract people, and this is sometimes dependant on ownership, lack of municipal constraints on use, issues such as dominance by groups that deter people, and accessibility. Opportunity is also an issue. In the suburban community at one time the regional shopping centre was the venue for the suburban housewife since it was easy to get to and park, unlike the downtowns. It also became the preferred venue for teenagers, due to the food courts, stores that sold goods targeting them, and lots of space to move around. The factors discussed in Chapter 2 on the “tug of war” between downtowns and the suburbs have played a role in where people go and what places develop activity in the cities of Canada and the United States.

4.14.3 *The Holistic Experience of Place*

It can be seen that any analysis of the (positive) experience of place would include a complex multiplicity of elements, the combination of which provides a holistic experience. Place and experience are interconnected, and the experience of place involves both the nesting and juxtaposition of place with other places and the nesting in time, as well as the social aspects of the presence or engagement of people. It involves meaning, memory and identity. It involves stimulation, anticipation and reward that provide positive emotional experience. What makes it particularly difficult to analyse is the fact that, although some places have similarity, every individual place is unique, with a fixed relationship to other places. Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 2, cities in Canada and the United States are dynamic and growing, and places themselves are dynamic - even when they don't change in physical characteristics, the surroundings and larger context typically change over time, and uses change, and these dynamics influence the experience of place. In this respect place is a complex interactive entity.

Christian Norberg-Schulz, in *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* and his more recent volume *Architecture: Presence, Language Place* refers to “genius loci” or “spirit of place” in relation to places. He relates this to “comprehensive unities or special local atmospheres” which a place can convey, or a “full-fledged aura” evident in a place¹⁶³. Norberg-Schulz approaches the experience of place from a phenomenological perspective, referring to how place, historically, could be thought of as a concrete manifestation of the world of life, and his second volume is an attempt to bring architecture back to this perspective. Place today, as discussed in Chapter 2 on the Dynamics of the City Centre, and as described in the quote of David Shane in Section 4.12.3 on Organic Development, is typically more fleeting and changing than in the more static cities of the past, and thus genius loci is often missing or transitioning in our cities.

¹⁶³ Norberg-Schulz, Christian. *Architecture: Presence, Language, Place*. (Milan: Skira, 2000), 88, 160.

Christopher Alexander's writings refer to the experience of "wholeness" resulting from organic development or organic order. His latest volumes allude to a "living" quality. In his epilogue to Volume Four, he explains that his method of observation is based not simply on observation of the "outer reality of mechanisms of the world" but a "focus on the inner reality of the observer's feeling of wholesomeness as well". His observations are based on shared experiences, and thus are contended to be objective. Alexander claims "I have shown that each one of us is capable of feeling an existence of wholeness, feeling the existence of value, and that we use this capability, constantly, to keep on making distinctions and learning things".¹⁶⁴ The historic development of cities that Norberg-Schulz refers to is of course organic development, and it can be seen that Alexander's perspective has similarities to that of Norberg-Schulz.

Alexander's wholeness relates, of course, to the human experience of "dwelling" as discussed by Ingold. What Alexander is expressing is that places with the quality of wholeness *facilitate* a satisfying "dwelling experience" and therefore *foster use*. This can be seen from Alexander's explanations in his earlier work, *A Pattern Language*, that explain why particular patterns, as discussed on Section 4.9: Sense of Fit and the Appropriate, are appealing, such as the examples "staircase as a stage" and "light on two sides of the room". The patterns *facilitate* a satisfying "dwelling experience", but it is the "dwelling experience" itself that provides the experience and results in the meaning, memory and identity associated with the place. And this dwelling experience includes the activity of people and the social element. Thus, from Alexander's perspective of wholeness, places with the "wholeness" he describes attract people and activity and thus the experience of "dwelling", that is, a holistic experience.

In summary, the discussion in the chapter has endeavoured to provide an understanding of the components that contribute to the experience of place, and, finally, the holistic

¹⁶⁴ Alexander, *The Nature of Order: An Essay on the Art of Building and the Nature of the Universe, Book Four: The Luminous Ground*. (Berkeley: The Center for Environmental Structure, 2004), 342-343.

nature of the experience of place. Ultimately, places that have a robust combination of the right components have the capacity to become enduring places of activity. This chapter on the experience of place is intended to provide a basis for understanding the exceptional experience of place that renovated historic districts can offer, and the consequent potential contribution that historic districts can offer to the centre city.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE VALUE AND ROLE OF HISTORIC DISTRICTS IN REVITALIZATION OF THE CITY CENTRE

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore and identify the unique characteristics of historic districts and the impact that the reinvigoration of historic districts located in city centres can have in downtown revitalization as regenerators of city life. The previous three chapters explored the macro and micro dynamics and factors at play, namely the dynamics of the city centre and the city, urban sociological dynamics, and the experience of place. This chapter will now relate these dynamics and factors to the subject of revitalization of the city centre and the value and role of historic districts in revitalization, as well as the processes involved.

This chapter commences with a discussion of the issues involved and the approaches to revitalization of city centres, leading to a summarization of the essentials in the revitalization of city centres. This provides a context for the examination of the value and role of historic districts in the revitalization of city centres.

Following this is a discussion of the unique attributes of historic districts. The discussion draws largely from the in-depth examination of the experience of place discussed in Chapter Four, as well as the adaptability and fit in relation to the critical factors in revitalization.

In dealing with historic districts, a key question is the level of intervention that will retain or enhance the unique attributes they offer. A discussion of this includes the alternatives and also the processes and players that may be involved.

The discussion then leads to the potential effects of reinvigorating historic districts on reinvigorating the city centre, and the potential self-generating vitality and sustainability

that such reinvigoration produces. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the root issues in the reinvigoration of historic districts.

5.2 Revitalizing the City Centre

5.2.1 Introduction

It can be seen from the discussion in Chapter 2 that there has been an almost continuous attempt by cities in Canada and the U.S to deal with deteriorating conditions in city centres as a result of suburbanization and other factors. Many city centres fared worse than others, and in fact some cities, an example being Montreal, never lost their inner city vitality. Apart from several of the larger cities, the downtowns in nearly every city in the U.S. went into severe decline in the second half of the twentieth century according to the Brookings Institute study authored by Christopher Leinberger. However, starting in the 1990s, population in the downtowns of many cities started to increase, reversing the prior trend, suggesting some form of revitalization was occurring. This revitalization did not happen on its own, but through the conscious revitalization efforts of the various players involved.¹⁶⁵ This section will examine some of approaches to this, and endeavour to summarize the essentials.

5.2.2 Defining the Issues

The various factors resulting in the decline of city centres have been discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. The forces at play have indeed not been static ones, and thus solutions are by no means simple in this ever-changing dynamic. Rather than simply address the causes, which had been the traditional approach, successful approaches have looked at defining the conditions needed for a vibrant city centre, and finding the means to achieve these conditions. Every city has unique characteristics – economically, in terms of how the various functions of the city centre and the city work and relate; physically in terms of the physical characteristics and makeup of the city centre and the city; and sociological,

¹⁶⁵ Leinberger, Christopher. *Turning Around Downtown: Twelve Steps to Revitalization*. (Washington: The Brookings Institute, Research Brief, 2005), 1-3.

in terms of the sociological characteristics of the city centre and city as a whole, as influenced by the economic and physical makeup of both the city centre and the city as a whole. All three of these are intertwined; and dynamic over the course of time.

Christopher Leinberger, in his Brookings Institute research brief, focused on “walkable urbanity” as the goal to be achieved for the revitalization of the city centre. This relates very much to what is sought by the “Creative Class” and the “Net Generation” and what appears to be an evolving sociologic dynamic discussed in Chapter 3. Leinberger suggested that people generally enjoy walking, provided that there is an interesting and safe streetscape and a density or concentration of sights and sounds and people that provide “energy” to the place - that is, the conditions that were found in the busy downtowns in an earlier era. Leinberger describes this condition as “walkable urbanity”. Walkable urbanity that is sustainable, according to Leinberger, requires a critical mass of pedestrian-scale uses, such that one can find enough to do for four to six hours. Leinberger contends that once a critical mass is achieved, further redevelopment will happen on its own as streets become busier and safer, generating more activity, and in turn generating commercial opportunities. Beyond this, Leinberger contends the process becomes unstoppable. He suggests that this critical mass results in an upward spiral of the number of people on the street, creating business opportunities that in turn enhance what is to be found there and resulting in even more activity and people on the street. Thus “more is better”, in contrast to suburban development where more is often worse, resulting in more automobile trips, more congestion, pollution, inconvenience and the destruction of features of the landscape that attracted the suburban residents in the first place.¹⁶⁶

Leinberger’s observations and suggested steps for revitalization, however, do not remove the necessity to realize that suburban alternatives that compete with the city center will continue to be reinvented, as exemplified by the example of the Santana Row lifestyle

¹⁶⁶ Leinberger, 2.

centre, cited in the section on suburban shopping in Chapter 2 (Section 2.6). In this example, San Jose's efforts to revitalize its downtown were not successful, and Santana Row, a lifestyle centre just three miles from downtown, provided "walkable urbanity" that was superior to what had been achieved in its downtown.¹⁶⁷ The rapid evolution of the newer forms of suburban mixed use complexes that incorporate "walkable urbanity" suggests that competition of this nature between suburbs and the centre city is not about to abate.

5.2.3 Approaches to Revitalization

In "*Turning Around Downtown: Twelve Steps to Revitalization*" Christopher Leinberger's stated purpose is to achieve "walkable urbanity", being the condition needed for a revitalized downtown. Leinberger's twelve step process commences with a public / private sector visioning process, often drawing on memories of what the downtown once was and envisioning what it should be, followed by the development of a strategic plan encompassing all of the components and uses that should exist in downtown, and the steps needed to achieve the objectives. The next four steps proposed by Leinberger relate to private / public partnerships, removing obstacles such as zoning constraints, establishing business improvement districts and creating a form of catalytic development organization. The next stages were creating an urban entertainment district, followed by a rental housing market, an affordability strategy for housing, and then for-sale housing. The final two steps were to develop local-serving retail and then re-create a strong office market.

The process Leinberger outlines is intended to first achieve the conditions to foster a housing market, starting with the entertainment components. As housing of various forms is built, ranging from rental housing, affordable housing to for-sale housing, local-serving retail will follow, and finally, a rejuvenated office market will develop as the result of the attractiveness of the downtown for executives to "live and work". According to

¹⁶⁷ *When the Lights Aren't Bright*, The Economist, March 3, 2007.

Leinberger, it takes fifteen to twenty years to reach the stage where office rejuvenation occurs. Although Leinberger's "process" is the result of actual experience in cities such as Chattanooga and Albuquerque, it can be seen that Leinberger's perspective relates to cities that had the experience of intense suburbanization of offices and a centre city that had lost its middle to upper income residents. This by no means applies to all cities, as many cities have a regional serving office base downtown in which a concurrent process of revitalization of the various uses can occur.

Cy Paumier takes a somewhat different perspective in his book *Creating a Vibrant City Center: Urban Design and Regeneration Principles*¹⁶⁸, but proposes, like Leinberger, that the process starts with a public / private visioning process. Paumier's focus is more oriented to planning and the public realm. Paumier contends that "it is the quality of the overall public environment that makes a city liveable and memorable. A well-designed and well-managed public realm evokes community pride and creates a strong positive image. This environment, in conjunction with a strong and diversified economic marketplace, attracts the development investment needed to sustain and enhance the economic and social heart of the city."¹⁶⁹

Paumier proposes that there are two linked characteristics that are critical to the success of a city center, namely:

"A diverse market. A city's unique character is defined by the diversity and concentration of complementary uses. These uses generate pedestrian activity and a lively social environment that, in turn, sustain the mix of uses.

A high quality place. A visually appealing, comfortable, and secure physical environment will create confidence, commitment, and investment in the community over the long term."

In achieving these objectives, Paumier proposes seven basic principles, namely:

¹⁶⁸ Paumier, Cy. *Creating a Vibrant City Centre*. (Washington: Urban Land Institute, 2004).

1. Promote diversity of use;
2. Encourage compactness;
3. Foster intensity of development;
4. Ensure a balance of activities;
5. Provide for accessibility;
6. Create functional linkages; and,
7. Build a positive identity.

Generally, Paumier emphasizes the role of city authorities in creating a high quality public realm to foster private development, and encouraging but controlling the nature and quality of private development to create the combination of a diverse market and a high quality place. Unlike Leinberger, Paumier does not suggest there is any particular order in the process, except that improvements to the public realm are a starting point to encourage private investment. Residential, retail, entertainment and cultural uses, and office revival and development can occur concurrently, given the right conditions, or even in the reverse order suggested by Leinberger, generally fostered by public initiatives. It is to be realized that every city has different characteristics and conditions that will influence the sequence.

5.2.4 Summarizing the Essentials: Retaining, Regaining and Sustaining the Vitality of the City Centre

Chapter 2 discussed the evolution of the city from an origin with a downtown serving its business and social functions to the suburbanized city pulling many of these functions from the city centre, and the various factors in the continuing “tug of war” between the city centre and the suburbs (and now the exurbs as well). For the city centre, it has essentially been a battle for retaining or recapturing a comparative and competitive advantage, with numerous factors involved, including ease of access, parking, convenience, the quality of the environment, the better offering, costs, absence of discomfort from safety and security issues, the demographic environment, changing

¹⁶⁹ Paumier, 3.

lifestyles, where people live, the changing nature of enterprises and businesses, technology, etc. Developers continue to find new ways to cater to the suburban population and tap the sources of demand in the city, the results of which may provide comparative and competitive advantage in the suburbs and exurbs over the city centre. It should be understood that suburbs are now firmly entrenched and the solutions do not revolve around counteracting the many of the advantages that the suburbs have, but rather regaining conditions in the city centre sufficient to prevent further weakening and create new vitality; that is retaining whatever vitality currently exists in the city centre, regaining lost vitality, and sustaining it against the continuing forces of competition from the suburbs.

Joel Kotkin, in his book *The City: A Global History* discusses how cities in various cultures have prospered or declined, and the key elements that have been responsible for this. He concludes that the key factors of sustainability can be summarized by the words “sacred, busy, and safe”. Kotkin uses the word “sacred” in the current context to refer to “those things that engender for its citizens a peculiar and strong attachment, sentiments that separate specific places from others ... a consciousness that unites their people in a shared identity”. Kotkin cites sociologist Ezra Park’s noteworthy observation, “The city is a state of mind, a body of customs, and of unorganized attitudes and sentiments”. Thus, according to Kotkin, sustainability is very much related to a shared attachment and identity, giving rise to shared attitudes and sentiments.¹⁷⁰ One can observe that in the historical context of cities in Canada and the U.S., the original downtowns of cities and towns once had these characteristics, but, through the various actions and forces outlined in Chapter 2 and 3, the cornerstone requirement of “sacred” dissipated or largely disappeared over time.

The second item of Kotkin’s three factors is “busy”. Busy means vitality. “Busy” relates to environmental conditions, uses (particularly mix of uses), and opportunities for activity

¹⁷⁰ Kotkin, 157.

to attract people there. Again, the various actions and forces discussed in Chapter 2 and 3 greatly diminished this quality of downtowns in Canada and the United States with the exception of some of the larger cities.

The final item of Kotkin's three factors is "safe". It is fundamental that a place that feels unsafe, or even uncomfortable, will neither be "sacred" or "busy". This is perhaps one of the strongest comparative advantages that suburban alternatives offer, as exemplified by the Santana Row example. Suburban alternatives have the benefit of single ownership control and management, thereby ensuring a safe environment, without many of the social problems of downtowns. Sacred, busy and safe are interconnected.

Christopher Leinberger's "walkable urbanity" is a characteristic that Leinberger claims provided the appeal of traditional downtowns¹⁷¹. In describing the process of revitalization of downtowns, Leinberger's conditions for a revitalized core are very much similar to Kotkin's conditions for sustainability, namely "sacred, busy, and safe". In Leinberger's visioning process, he talks about evoking memories of the past, describing how those who grew up in the 1940's to 1960's have indelible memories of that era "when all the lights were bright, where first dates occurred, where parents worked and parades occurred. The downtowns of this era were where you went for the fancy department stores and to see tall buildings. It was where the sidewalks were jammed with people, unlike any other place in the region."¹⁷² Although many of the elements of this past era have long departed in various cities, Leinberger focuses on steps to re-create busy streets, pointing out that "more activity attracts more people ...creating more business opportunity which means more people on the street" and "crowded sidewalks recommend downtown, signalling a safe environment, and providing an excitement and

¹⁷¹ Leinberger, Christopher B. *Turning Around Downtown: Twelve Steps to Revitalization*. (Washington: The Brookings Institute, Research Brief, March 2005), 1.

¹⁷² Leinberger, 4-5.

spectacle that draws people on the street”.¹⁷³ Thus Leinberger is describing Kotkin’s conditions, “sacred, busy, and safe”.

Cy Paumier’s two linked characteristics to achieve a successful city centre, namely a diverse market and a high-quality place also relate to Kotkin’s sacred, busy and safe. The high quality place relates to Kotkin’s sacred, and the diverse market relates to conditions needed to create a busy environment, which in turn will help lead to a safe environment. Thus Leinberger’s and Paumier’s writings have similar themes, although Leinberger’s paper is more focused on process whereas Paumier’s orientation is focused on the end result to be achieved.

The principal means of retaining, regaining and sustaining vitality could be summarized as follows:

1. Provide an environment that inspires pride and a common desire and thrust to make it a better place. Essentially, a place that meets Kotkin’s concept of “sacred”.
2. Provide an environment that attracts people to the city centre, people both from the other parts of the city itself and people from elsewhere such as tourists, convention and meeting attendees, and business travelers, again bolstering the economic strength of the city centre.
3. Provide an environment that makes it attractive for offices, businesses and various uses to locate and stay in the centre city. This includes not only the physical environment, but streets with vitality, a sense of safety and security, and a mix of businesses and services that create life outside of office hours, thereby avoiding the “9:00 to 5:00 weekday” city centre in which office workers and as well as others are absent after 5:00 p.m. and on weekends.
4. Provide an environment that makes it attractive for a residential population to locate in the city centre and inner city, a population that contributes to the

¹⁷³ Leinberger, 2,14

viability of businesses in the city centre, thereby bolstering the economic strength of the city centre, and enhancing access to employees for businesses and organizations in the city centre.

5.2.5 The Value and Role of Historic Districts

It can be seen from the foregoing that restored historic districts would appear to have inherent characteristics that can strongly contribute to the conditions described above, with unique characteristics relating the Kotkin's "sacred". The sections which follow will discuss their unique attributes in the perspective of these conditions.

5.3 Unique Attributes of Historic Districts

5.3.1 Introduction

Our topic in this discussion is historic districts that are within the city centre, focused on mid-sized cities that have seen a loss of the vitality in the city centre through suburban competition and other forces described in Chapters 2 and 3. This discussion will review the special attributes of historic districts that have value and can be reinforced through renovation and restoration, which potentially can, in turn, contribute in a large way to the reinvigoration of the city centre.

Historic districts are remnants of the morphological makeup of the city from an earlier era. Through demolition or redevelopment over the years, the historic fabric of many cities has largely disappeared, leaving intact only individual buildings or portions of original districts. Particularly valuable are intact portions of such districts that are within the city centre, especially those that are still within or adjacent to the current central business district. Such districts have the prospect for rejuvenation into a vibrant "precinct", contributing in a large way to the rejuvenation of the downtown, and creating sustainability.

The “unique assets” of historic districts relates largely to the discussions of Experience of Place in Chapter 4, as well as the conditions for sustainability described above.

5.3.2 Organic Nature

A defining characteristic of historic districts is that they were generally formed through an organic development process, whereas organic development started to disappear following the advent of the “skyscraper”, and after World War Two organic development largely disappeared in the development of our cities. Organic development, as discussed in Chapter 4, is generally piecemeal or incremental development by multiple players. In developing individual parcels, each individual player, acting in its own best interests, seeks to build what fits with the existing environment. In achieving this sense of fit, the entire built ensemble is strengthened, in turn strengthening the particular building. Failure to fit results in a weaker appeal for the new asset, usually resulting in modification of the asset or its replacement in due course with one that fits. This organic development process began disappearing when it was found that the “skyscrapers” could successfully stand on their own without the need to relate to their neighbours or even be close to other buildings, and ultimately organic development disappeared in our cities for this and a number of other reasons. Thus historic districts are unique in this respect.

The principal characteristic of organic development then is the sense of fit that was achieved, even though there are typically many variations in individual buildings. A defining feature is that each builder sought to maximize its site and the relationship of the building to the street. In the era when such districts were formed, the primary mode of getting around was on foot, and thus streets were pedestrian oriented and development was dense. The builder was constrained only by the street layout and the plot that it owned, as zoning and governmental restriction of form and uses did not exist. As a result of these factors, buildings typically occupied the full frontage of the lot and were built to the street line, giving a continuous building frontage conducive to the pedestrian activity.

Thus the organic nature of historic districts results in complexity but also conveys a sense of fit. As buildings were generally built adjacent to each other and to the street line, they are also particularly adaptable to pedestrian oriented uses, a condition lacking in most downtowns due to spaces between buildings and other forms of discontinuity such as setbacks, varying levels of ground floors, and other conditions. Historic districts, if properly located, generally provide a superior environment for active street life and activity.

5.3.3 Human Scale

Another characteristic of most historic districts is that they are human scale. As discussed in Section 4.11 of Chapter 4, human scale refers to the smaller scale to which people can relate and understand. In historic districts, their characteristic human scale is the result not only of the pedestrian oriented nature of the city at the time they were built, but also as a result of building technologies in the “pre-skyscraper” era that generally dictated relatively low-rise buildings. Even when higher buildings were built, they generally followed the street line and offered ground floor detailing and characteristics that related to the pedestrian realm.

Human scale environments are close grained and more personal. They offer visual complexity, but complexity that is clear and discernable. Low-rise buildings allow sky exposure and sunlight, and are conducive to social activity. Historic districts not only typically have façade continuity, but buildings most often front on streets with a comfortable “social” width allowing interface with people across the width of the street. Today, land values, zoning, code requirements, and economics essentially make the construction of new buildings of this nature prohibitive in the downtowns of most cities, and thus these conditions are irreplaceable in downtowns.

Once renovated and brought to life, the comfortable feel and social appeal of historic districts due to their human scale, combined with the other experiential features, is irreplaceable. These conditions promote sustainability, as discussed in Section 4.11 in the

discussion of Human Scale. Porta and Renne showed that streets that had sky exposure, façade continuity, “softness” (transparency and transitional space such as windows and visually accessible space), social width, visual complexity, more buildings, and “sedibility” (seating opportunities), and a lack of detractors, had a “friction” that not only contributed to street life and sociability, but to sustainability over time. Streets in renovated historic districts typically exhibit most, if not all, of these characteristics.

5.3.4 Aesthetics

Historic districts generally have considerable aesthetic appeal when renovated and brought back to life. The experience of aesthetic pleasure, as discussed in Section 4.8, is derived from the resolution of consonance and dissidence of the built form, and seeing the wholeness of the entity.

The design elements of historic buildings typically exhibit patterns and a great deal of detail that have aesthetic appeal. The fact that most of this detail, often lavish, was the result of the individual workmanship by craftsmen of an earlier era, craftsmanship now largely replaced by modern technologies, has appeal in itself, provoking marvel at both the level of detail and the values so different from those of today. Due to the organic nature of the development of historic districts, there is most often a variety of styles and forms to be found in the ensemble, and recognizing patterns and seeing the wholeness of the entity provides the aesthetic pleasure.

Historic districts offer considerable complexity. However, every city has its particular characteristics and epigenesist nature of its historic district. Various influences will have affected the built form of historic districts, ranging from the local materials available for construction; the origin of the people and their craftsmen which will have influenced style; the nature of the local industry and economy which will have influenced the types and uses of buildings; the physical conditions such as topography; transportation modes such as rail or waterways; and so on. This is the context in which the historic district

evolved. Seeing and grasping how the ensemble relates to this context provides a sense of “wholeness”.

It can be seen that each of the various aspects of aesthetic pleasure discussed in Chapter 4 may play a part in the historic district. Since each historic district is different, the presence and mix of these individual components in particular historic districts will vary from city to city and thus it is difficult to generalize. It can be said, however, that the overall organic nature of historic districts, the architectural detail and craftsmanship involved in the buildings, and the human scale nature of most historic districts lead to a high degree of aesthetic pleasure, and this aesthetic pleasure, to a greater or lesser degree, is generally experienced and appreciated by all. It is, of course, implicit that the historic district is renovated and brought back to life for these aspects of aesthetic pleasure to be fully realized.

5.3.5 Sense of History

As discussed in Section 4.13, historic buildings and districts have a universal innate appeal, both to the local residents and to visitors from other places and cultures. The extent of this appeal is dependent on both the extent to which the historic fabric is visible and maintained or restored, and continued use. Although the continuation of original uses as may be found in places such as cathedrals, public squares, historic cafes or markets often offers an elevated level of appeal, the appeal of historic buildings and districts is not contingent on the maintenance of original uses. The primary conditions for the full experience are continued usage, even though the usage may be entirely different than the original usage; and maintenance, restoration or renovation that exposes the original architecture and fabric. As discussed in Section 4.13, Peter Smith describes the experience as “the aesthetic spark generated across the gap between... the deep past and the present, the now and then”, being fundamental yet connected opposites, provoking a curiosity, a strong desire to understand. Kevin Lynch describes how historic buildings and districts exhibit a feeling of the continuity between the present and the past. Roger

Scruton describes how we feel an inward resonance of a way of life different from ours, and feel the workings of moral life.

In essence then, historic buildings and districts provoke wonder and curiosity and a strong desire to understand. This curiosity and desire to understand includes questions of what led to the built up forms that we see, why were these forms built in that manner and style, and what were the “workings of moral life” at the time. This curiosity and need to understand also includes unravelling the connection with the present, why the buildings are still there, and what may have occurred in between. Thus there is an enormous complexity involved in a full understanding of the historic district and its individual buildings and places, a complexity not found in the structures and places of our modern era. In fact, a characteristic of our modern “inorganic” era is that buildings and places come into and out of vogue, and much of the built-up fabric of our cities has a limited economic life.

The process of unravelling and discovering answers to the questions leads to developing a sense of significance and meanings. These meanings relate not only to the architectural forms that we see, but also to the underlying “workings of moral life” that relate to them, and thus have significance, capable of being deeply felt and memorable. The “workings of moral life” relates not only to the origins of the built-up form, but also relates to the continuity of their sustained existence over time. They include the numerous narratives associated with the buildings and district, from their original formation, their continued usage, to the present, or, as described by Jon Anderson in the discussion on collective meaning, memory and identity in Section 4.4.2, “traces” left by cultural life. The experience of the sense of history relates to an awareness that such narratives exist, even though one may have no specific knowledge. However, learning and discovering these narratives, even incrementally in small bites, adds meaning, layers of meaning and complexity that surpasses that available from most of what is found in places in our modern world. As discussed in Section 4.13, repeated exposure does not diminish but rather enhances experience, and the more places engage with the emotions, the more

resilient they are to erosion by habituation. As one uncovers new elements and aspects, or “traces”, meaning and experience is enhanced.

5.3.6 Adaptive Nature for Diversity of Uses

Steward Brand, in *How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built*, explored the subject of the constantly changing conditions that occur in cities over time and how buildings that survive undergo changes to adapt. He explains that “almost no buildings adapt well. They're not designed to adapt; also budgeted and financed not to, constructed not to, administered not to, maintained not to, regulated and taxed not to, even remodelled not to. But all buildings (except monuments) adapt anyway, however poorly, because the usages in and around them are changing constantly... New usages persistently retire or reshape buildings.” He also contends, however, that “Commercial Buildings have to adapt quickly, often radically, because of intense competitive pressure to perform, and they are subject to the rapid advances that occur in any industry. Most businesses either grow or fail. If they grow, they move; if they fail they're gone. Turnover is constant. Commercial buildings are forever metamorphic.”¹⁷⁴

Historic Districts in the context of this study are generally commercial districts. In many cases they are leftovers from the original downtown business district, and in other cases they may comprise multi-storey warehouse or manufacturing loft buildings. But, historic districts, being formed in an era when pedestrian use was the norm, typically have continuous street frontages, and pedestrian orientation. In addition, ceiling heights were typically high, particularly on the ground floors, allowing for their adaption to retail, restaurant, and other active uses. The high ceiling heights also allow for renovation and the addition of the modern heating, air-conditioning, sprinklers and other services needed in today's world.

¹⁷⁴ Brand, Stewart. *How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 2, 7.

In addition, due to the organic development of historic districts, buildings often have considerable variety, giving complexity to the streetfront, and allowing for adaption to diversity of uses such that each stand out as distinct, unlike the uniform nature of today's developments. Since they are preserved built forms, they are not saddled with many of the municipal requirements that exist for new buildings, and the somewhat prohibitive economics to create such forms. This, in turn prevents the creation of these unique forms, although, even if such forms were possible for a new complex, the complex would lack authenticity and the aesthetic appeal and sense of history of a historic district.

5.3.7 Capacity for Meaning, Memory and Identity

As discussed in Chapter 4, we develop meaning, memory and identity through the process of “dwelling”, whether at the micro scale of our home, or the larger scale of the environment that we frequent. Personal identity and place identity are interwoven in this respect. As discussed in Section 4.4.2, in today's society people generally belong to “multiple imagined communities”, compared to the close-knit communities of the past. Even though we may be aware of only a few members of such “multiple imagined communities”, we imagine that there are many others that share its common interests or values. We seek to make choices that we perceive would be approved by other members of our “imagined communities”.

Historic districts that are restored and brought back to active life are places that have universal appeal generated by their characteristics. The “sense of fit” and feeling of “wholeness” from their organic nature, the human scale and pedestrian friendly character, the aesthetics, and the sense of history provide levels of meaning to the built ensemble, meaning that increases as one achieves new levels of understanding and appreciation. These characteristics generate a strong positive “dwelling experience”, and the universality of this appeal means that it extends to the “multiple imagined communities” of all parts of our society, as well as visitors and tourists. The universality of appeal typically provides an unequalled context for the evolution of a broad range of restaurants,

stores and other active uses that appeal to many different segments of society as various businesses are attracted to the district, reinforcing this universality of appeal.

Through the “dwelling process”, one gains connectedness to the historic district, and develops images and memories of place and experiences. Narratives that occurred in the place form part of ones personal identity, particularly when connected to others of the “multiple imagined communities” to which one belongs. The presence of such others affirms their approval of this participation in place, strengthens place identity, and confirms personal identity as part of such “multiple imagined community”. This in turn adds incentive to visit and “dwell in” the historic district, a self-reinforcing condition.

It can be seen that restored historic districts thus have the potential to appeal to a large segment of the population, not simply to limited “communities”. The appeal is cross-cultural and cross-demographic, although the uses that evolve in the restored district will influence the extent to which it is visited. Historic districts are full of meaning; levels of meaning that are unavailable in most of our built form. Such districts have the capability to result in a broad “collective identity” and strong civic pride.

5.3.8 The Holistic Experience

In summary, the characteristics of historic districts, when renovated, provide a unique potential to become places of active street life and activity. The combination of experiential elements that restored historic districts can offer facilitates a strong, positive “dwelling experience”. This “dwelling experience” relates not simply to the physical aspects of the place, but the experience of people and the social elements that such districts attract, whether simply being in the presence of others, being with others, or anticipating that chance meetings with others might occur. This holistic experience provides a strong “sense of place” or “genius loci”, one that is sustainable.

5.4 Appropriate Intervention in Historic Districts

5.4.1 Types of Intervention

There is considerable confusion in the terminology of different types of intervention in dealing with historic districts and buildings. To this end the U.S. Secretary of the Interior formulated definitions of terms commonly used with respect to intervention in dealing with historic districts and buildings and Parks Canada, responsible for matters relating to historic resources in Canada, adopted similar definitions following the U.S. lead. A glossary of the terminology is found in *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America*, by William J. Murtagh¹⁷⁵ with respect to the United States and in *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*¹⁷⁶ with respect to Canada. Definitions of “Preservation”, “Restoration”, “Reconstruction”, and “Rehabilitation” (as applied to historic properties) are essentially the same in both jurisdictions, and we have adopted definitions taken from Murtagh. Other terms in common use but not within these glossaries are “Conservation and Consolidation”, “Reconstitution”, “Reconstruction” and “Replication”. For these latter terms, we turn to *Historic Preservation: Curatorial Management of the Built World*, by James Marston Fitch¹⁷⁷. It is to be noted, however, that references to “restoration” or “renovation” of the historic district throughout this paper are used loosely, referring to intervention that may involve several levels of intervention including “adaptive use”.

The following are definitions of these terms listed in order of increasing radicality:

Preservation: The act or process of applying measures to sustain existing form, integrity, and material of a building or structure and the existing form and vegetative cover of a

¹⁷⁵ Murtagh, William J. *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America* (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, 2006), Glossary 207-213.

¹⁷⁶ Parks Canada. *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*. (Ottawa: Queens Printer, 2003), Glossary.

¹⁷⁷ Fitch, James Marston. *Historic Preservation: Curatorial Management of the Built World*. 1982 (Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, Reprint 1990), 46-47.

site. It may include initial stabilization work, where necessary, as well as ongoing maintenance of the historic building materials and vegetation. (Murtagh)

Restoration: The act or process of accurately recovering the form and details of a property and its setting as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of removal of later work or by the replacement of missing earlier work. (Murtagh)

Conservation and Consolidation: The physical intervention in the actual fabric of the building to ensure its continued structural integrity. Such measures can range from relatively minor therapies (fumigation against termites..., stone cleaning) to very radical ones (consolidation of desiccated wood...insertion of new foundations). (Fitch)

Rehabilitation: The act or process of returning a property to a state of utility through repair and alteration that makes possible an efficient contemporary use, while preserving those portions or features of the property that are significant to its historical, architectural, and cultural values. (Murtagh)

Adaptive Use [often called “*Adaptive Re-Use*”]: Similar to the definition of “Rehabilitation”, but a term more commonly used by the development community. Adaptive Use is often the only economic way in which old buildings can be saved, by adapting them to the requirements of new tenants. This can sometimes involve fairly radical interventions, especially in the internal organization of space, in which any or all of the above levels may be called for. (Fitch) Since “adaptive use” is the most commonly used term rather than “rehabilitation”, and is more self-explanatory, “adaptive use” will be the term used in this thesis.

Reconstitution: A more radical version of conservation and consolidation in which the building can be saved only by piece-by-piece reassembly, either in situ or on a new site. (Fitch).

Reconstruction: The act or process of reproducing by new construction the exact form and detail of a vanished building, structure, or object or a part thereof, as it appeared at a specific period of time. (Murtagh)

Replication: ... the construction of an exact copy of a still-standing building on a site removed from the prototype. The replica co-exists with the original. (Fitch)

The above definitions are explained in the context of buildings, whereas it can be seen that dealing with an individual building could involve intervention that would fall into more than one of the above categories applied to different components of a building. Governmental authorities, particularly when grants are being applied, often have strict standards on the levels of intervention that are allowed.

In addition to the definitions, national authorities in both the United States and Canada provide a body of guidelines for undertaking work to historic properties, characterized by “recommended” and “not recommended” procedures in the interests of preserving or restoring character defining elements. These comprehensive guidelines guide or influence actions of governmental authorities having jurisdiction in dealing with heritage properties, particularly when individual properties are listed as historic, or when grants or other incentives are involved. The extent to which the guidelines are applied is dependant on the jurisdiction and whether or not governmental action is regulated or merely informative or persuasive.

5.4.2 Appropriate Levels of Intervention

5.4.2.1 The Concept of Repair and its Relevance

A central concept of Christopher Alexander’s body of work is the concept of “wholeness”. Wholeness, according Alexander, is unlikely to be achieved fully through initial design, but through step-by-step building in which each step relates to what is already there, attempting to achieve fit with what exists and removing defects or deficiencies, thereby creating a greater “wholeness”. This process is essentially organic development or, if controlled by one actor (or actor group) rather than multiple actors, the achievement of organic order, as discussed in Section 4.12.

In describing the development of a town and the individual buildings forming it, Christopher Alexander, in one of his earlier works, *The Timeless Way of Building*, uses the word “repair” to describe both the original construction of an individual building, and the subsequent modifications to the building to improve both the components of building and its relationship with the neighbouring environment. He contends that “each building, when it is first built, is an attempt to make a self-maintaining whole configuration” ... “but the process of design is an attempt to simulate, in advance, the feeling and events that will emerge in the real building and to create a configuration which is in repose with respect to those events. But the prediction is all guesswork; the real events which happen there are always at least slightly different; and the larger the building is, the more likely the guesses are to be inaccurate. It is therefore necessary to keep changing the buildings according to real events which actually happen there. And the larger the complex of buildings, neighbourhood, or town, the more essential it is for it to be built up gradually, from thousands of acts, self-correcting acts, each one improving and repairing the acts of others.”¹⁷⁸

Alexander explains that the common use of the word repair is to attempt to bring something back to its original state, but in his use of repair, he assumes that every entity is changing constantly and repair then relates to correcting the defects in relation to the present conditions and usage. Repair in this context refers to an ongoing process of paying attention over time to defects or deficiencies in the then existing “wholes” in relation to their usages, not only patching defects and deficiencies, but modifying and transforming them to create new wholes. Alexander describes this process as follows: “Broadly, what is happening is that there is, at each stage in the life of any part of the environment, a wholeness which is specific to that moment in its life: and that each new act of building, provided that it is done with an eye to making the overall whole more whole, more alive, will transform the whole, and gradually give birth to new wholes. In

¹⁷⁸ Alexander, Christopher. *The Timeless Way of Building*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 479-480.

this sense, then, the idea of repair explains how we can mend past defects in things, and also, at the same time, how it is possible to make and remake the world so that the cooperation of a number of acts of building, in sequence, also creates wholes that are complete, and live, at every moment of their history – yet always giving way, under the process of repair, to even newer wholes, which, once again remake themselves at the next stage of repair.”¹⁷⁹ It is noteworthy that Alexander uses both the words “more whole” and “more alive”, indicating that “whole” also connotes “alive”. “Alive” relates to active use, or fostering active use, a key objective in the process.

Alexander’s description summarizes the organic development process over time, using the word “repair” to refer both to the act of building and the act of modification, each with a view to achieve wholeness and fit with the existing environment at any given point in time. What is recognized here is that not only do modifications to buildings occur to achieve a better fit with the purposes for which they were built, but also to adapt to new conditions and usages over time as things evolve.

Chapter two traced the forces of change that have occurred in relation to city centres in Canada and United States. It can be seen that these forces have resulted in many changes of uses in historic buildings, and, in many cases, layers of physical changes to these buildings to adapt to changing conditions. “Repair” in this context has often meant adjusting to new economic realities as traditional usages became uneconomic in the city centre. Thus in many cases the historic district became a deteriorated precinct containing uses of lower economic value as conditions dictated. Physical changes in these cases often disrespected the historic and aesthetic characteristics of the buildings, such as adding layers of changes that covered up the historic fabric of buildings, particularly facades. Although many historic buildings and districts were torn down to make way for uses of more economic value, those remaining have inherent value. Stewart Brand claims

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 485-486.

that age plus adaptivity is what makes a building come to be loved, even in its lower level of usage and repair.

It can be seen that bringing the historic district back to life involves “repair”, the objectives being to create a mix of active uses that relate to and will be used by the current public, and to bring to the forefront the unique attributes of historic districts described above, namely the authentic organic nature of the precinct, the social appeal of the human scale, the unique aesthetics, the sense of history, and to realize the identity of the district such that it relates to individual identities and fosters collective identity. This is the context in which the restoration of the historic district is to be viewed. That is, it is in the nature of “repair” to uncover these attributes and bring out these values. Paramount is the realization of active uses that will make the historic district “alive”, failing which, “wholeness” is not achieved and “repair” misses the mark.

5.4.2.2 Appropriate Intervention

The ultimate objective of intervention in the historic district is to realize and build upon the unique attributes described previously, and to create a mix of active uses that will draw people. The latter objective is “repair” in the sense that Alexander uses the word, and is not only a “natural” process, but necessary to create the higher level of “wholeness” or “living quality” that is the central theme of Alexander’s works. Since the original uses that were there when the buildings were constructed are long gone, “adaptive use”, or “rehabilitation” as defined in heritage lexicon, is then the primary form of repair to be undertaken. However, this repair must be undertaken in a manner that does not compromise the unique attributes of historic districts described above, but rather, brings them to the forefront.

In his discussion of adaptive use, Stewart Brand breaks down the components of a building into categories ranging from those that are most inflexible to those that are most

adaptive. His categories are: “Site”, “Structure”, “Skin”, “Services”, “Space Plan”, and “Stuff”¹⁸⁰.

“Site” of course is not flexible, although at any time the dynamics of the surrounding environment is a relevant issue in examining what to do with a building. “Structure”, being the foundations and load-bearing elements, is a relatively inflexible component in a building, but often needs “consolidation”, that is, stabilization to prevent deterioration, or, in many cases, reinforcement or rebuilding if it has deteriorated beyond reasonable limits or is inadequate or unsafe for current uses. “Skin” is the exterior surface of the building. In many historic districts, exterior facades have been changed many times from the original, but often leaving the original facades largely intact under successive layers of new facades. “Services” are the various components that service the building ranging from electrical wiring, plumbing, sprinklers, HVAC (heating, ventilating and air-conditioning systems), elevators, and other components necessary for the use and occupancy of the building. These components have limited lifespan, and original systems have often been progressively changed and supplemented in most historic buildings. To meet requirements for new uses and building codes, as well as responsible environmental efficiencies, most often these systems need replacement and the installation of modern systems. “Space plan” is the interior layout of the space. In most buildings the space plan had undergone constant periodic change to meet the needs of changed uses and tenants. Most often the floors, walls and ceilings have undergone numerous changes, frequently with layers of coverings over the original surfaces and finishes. Unfortunately, only occasionally are the original coverings left intact or undamaged to the point that they can easily be restored. As well, original partitions still intact more often than not frustrate new uses and need reorganization to satisfy new uses. “Stuff” is the furnishings and movable items, which undergoes constant change in most buildings.

¹⁸⁰ Brand, 13.

In looking at the adaptive use of historic buildings it can be seen that there are many components to be dealt with, and the question becomes, what intervention is appropriate and what is inappropriate? The governmental guidelines previously discussed are very helpful in determining the appropriate approach, and may be mandated when grants or other forms of assistance are involved. However, governmental authorities are not always flexible and may prescribe requirements to protect the heritage elements of the building that lean towards presenting “museum-like” qualities, sometimes inhibiting adaptive use and economic feasibility. On the other hand, given a free hand, adaptive use can result in the destruction of character defining elements that are important to some of the values discussed. Thus a balance is needed to bring out the attributes but at the same time allow for adaptive use that is appropriate and economic. As discussed by both Brand and Alexander, adaptive use is both a natural process and an appropriate approach, but it has to be recognized that the “adaptor” in today’s context is typically focused on the adaptation to the use, and, without any constraints, may also focus on minimizing costs and not pay heed to bringing out the underlying values.

David Lowenthal, in his detailed discussion of the topic of preservation in his book *The Past is a Foreign Country*, contends that strict restoration without adaptation segregates the past from the present. He states “When we realize that past and present are not exclusive but inseparable realms, we cast off preservation’s self-defeating insistence on a fixed and stable past. Only by alteration and adding to what we save does our heritage remain real, alive, and comprehensible. Preservation narrowly construed cannot improvise or adapt to the implacable pressures of change. Seen as part of the process of change, however, preservation takes its place among other fruitful ways of treasuring our heritage. Without a past that is malleable as well as generously preserved, the present will lack models to inspire it and the future be deprived of a lifeline to the past.”¹⁸¹ Steven Semes, in his book *The Future of the Past: A Conservation Ethic for Architecture, Urbanism, and*

¹⁸¹ Lowenthal, David. *The Past is a Foreign Country*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 411.

Historic Preservation takes a similar view. He states “we must look for a balance between the preciousness and vulnerability of highly significant sites on the one hand, and their suitability to accommodate that part of their history still to come on the other. Monuments of such importance that we view them as unalterable or inviolate are few; ... Our task is to allow our historic traditions to do their work and let time take its course in the same way that it always has, but now with thoughtful management of change to ensure, to the extent feasible, the survival of valued character and significance without unacceptable loss. Rather than imposing a stylistic or ideological template on the historic resource, the conservation ethic enjoins us to allow the building itself to tell us what it is about, what kind of character it has or is capable of, and what kind of interventions will help it become “more itself”. ... The task of preservation is, therefore, not merely to ensure survival of artifacts in isolation, but to *recontextualize* the remnants of the past and ensure their future as living parts of our world.”¹⁸²

To summarize, adaptive use is necessary to bring life and activity. However, adaptive use needs to be sensitive to the positive attributes described previously. It needs to be coupled with bringing to the forefront the underlying aesthetic values, the sense of history, the underlying potential for meaning and identity. It needs to foster Kotkin’s concept of “sacred”, but at the same time allowing the building to adapt to new uses, thereby linking the past to the present. In dealing with these issues, then, physical repairs and modifications usually need to include “restoration” and “conservation and consolidation” to highlight historic elements and aesthetics, and preserve longevity. In many instances restoration includes repairing or reinstating particular elements of an individual building that have deteriorated, been covered up, or disappeared in order to bring out the historic character and aesthetics. Generalization is not realistic, since each case is individual to the potential uses available, the status of each building, and what “repair” is warranted to

¹⁸² Semes, Steven W. *The Future of the Past: A Conservation Ethic for Architecture, Urbanism, and Historic Preservation*. (New York: Norton & Company, 2009) 244-245.

achieve the appropriate use and at the same time to bring out the underlying values and connection of the present with the past.

5.4.3 Process and Players

5.4.3.1 Ownership

Typically, historic districts have, or at least start with, multiple owners, which may be a mix of individual property owners, owner-users, developers, and, sometimes, although less frequent in the Canada and United States context than in other countries, governmental ownership. A multiplicity of ownership means a multiplicity of motivations, objectives, and financial capability to make changes.

In today's society, the concept of organic "repair" is largely missing as a societal value, since we see all around us development and changes that are far removed from the "organic development" that occurred in the past. Insensitivity to impacts on other properties is predominant, as builders demolish and erect new buildings as "entities unto themselves". In this mindset, each owner is more likely to act in its own expeditionary interests rather than in the overall interests of the historic district, given no outside influence or intervention on the part of governmental authorities or public groups. The individual owner is often focused on short term profitability, least cost, and is subject to the constraints of its financial capabilities. Similarly, the owner-user is typically focused on the profitability of the business operating in the premises and is subject to the constraints of costs and financial capabilities. An owner-user is also focused on an exterior presentation that highlights its business, which may result in a facade out-of-sync with the historic character of the district. In both instances the physical changes made to buildings may be very much related to costs and what suits the occupancy, and thus may disregard heritage aspects to the detriment of the overall district.

The developer may come from the camp of assemblage for demolition for a larger development based on economics, or, alternatively, assemblage for renovation, hoping to influence the outcome of the district as a whole and therefore the value of its holdings.

This latter instance accelerates the process and influences other owners. However, ownership of too large a part of the district can have negatives as the developer is more likely to focus on the traditional retail and restaurant chains found in shopping centres rather than a unique mix of uses. This reduces the potential of an organic repair process that generates a diversity of uses by independent businesses that add interest and value to the district, which is, in the final analysis, an important component in creating uniqueness.

Governmental ownership of properties is often problematic in that governments are slow to act, have financial constraints due to being in the public eye, and are more likely to focus on strict restoration ideals that may frustrate uses. However, governmental ownership has an important role in preserving buildings that are likely to be lost. Governmental partnerships are another form that may be more nimble and adaptable than direct governmental ownership.

5.4.3.2 Governmental and Public Action and Influence

In *Preserving the Built Heritage: Tools for Implementation*, Schuster and Monchaux argue that governments must intervene to preserve heritage, but that there are appropriate boundaries for intervention. Intervention applies particularly when the market for historic districts and spaces is not capable of sustaining these places. They argue that markets tend to account for the private benefits, not the social benefits, of consumption, and that markets are usually unable to foster “spillover effects” that accrue to others resulting from an individual’s actions to conserve a historic place, creating a need for the public encouragement of the individual actions for conservation. Furthermore, public action fosters “interstitial benefits” by stimulating and coordinating private conservation action, whereby the quality of the public realm is greater than the sum of its parts. In non-economic terms, government action related to preservation of the built environment addresses societal values that differ from purely economic motivations, particularly the important aspects of conveying the history and meaning related to the district. Such

action, properly directed, enhances the sense of history and fosters the individual and collective identity previously discussed.¹⁸³

Schuster and Monchaux condense governmental action into five categories, which they also characterize, namely:

1. *Ownership and Operation* of heritage resources, characterized by “the state will do X”.
2. *Regulation* of the action of the actors that own and occupy heritage resources, characterized by “you must (or must not) do X”.
3. *Incentives (and disincentives)* designed to bring actions of actors with respect to heritage resources in line with a desired policy, characterized by “if you do X, the state will do Y”.
4. *Establishment, allocation, and enforcement of property rights* as these affect the preservation and use of heritage resources, characterized by “you have a right to do X, and the state will enforce that right”.
5. *Information*, that is, collecting and distributing information to influence the actions of others engaged in the preservation and use of the built heritage, characterized by “you should do X, or you need to know Y in order to do X”.¹⁸⁴

It can be seen that the applicability and choice of these varied tools of action will vary according to the circumstances. Schuster outlines the circumstances that are relevant to the choice of tools as follows:

- (a) *Government Attitude*: the choice of tools should reflect the attitude (interventionist to non-interventionist) the state wishes to adopt.
- (b) *Respect for State*: the choice of tools should reflect the degree to which the government is respected by local citizens.

¹⁸³ Schuster, J. Mark, John de Monchaux, and Charles A. Riley II, eds. *Preserving the Built Heritage: Tools for Implementation*. (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997), J. M. Shuster & J. de Monchaux, 9-10.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, J. M. Shuster and J. de Monchaux, 5-6.

- (c) *Degree of Consensus*: the choice of tools should reflect the degree of societal consensus concerning the preservation of heritage – it will be less necessary to use tools that mandate behaviour where there is societal consensus.
- (d) *Ownership Pattern*: the choice of tools should respond to the prevailing ownership pattern.
- (e) *Organizational Ecology*: the choice of tools should respond to the organizational ecology, that is, organizational context, within which heritage happens.
- (f) *Target Size*: the choice of tools should respond to the size of the entity that is being targeted.
- (g) *Identification and Dispersion*: the choice of tools should reflect the degree to which heritage properties are individually identified and the degree to which they are concentrated or dispersed.
- (h) *Fine Tuning*: the choice of tools should reflect the degree of fine tuning that might be necessary in the application of the tool.
- (i) *Incidence of Costs*: the choice of tools should reflect a conscious decision as to who should bear the costs of public policies.
- (j) *Timing*: the choice of tools should vary according to the urgency with which one wishes to act.
- (k) *Automaticity*: the choice of tools should reflect the degree to which automaticity of action is a desired property of heritage programs.
- (l) *Certainty*: the choice of tools should reflect the degree to which certainty about the implications of using a tool is a desirable attribute.
- (m) *Design Goals*: the choice of tools should vary according to the goal that has been specified for a particular intervention.¹⁸⁵

It can be seen from the above description of the various tools and their choice by governmental authorities (including quasi-governmental commissions), that authorities may or may not have the most appropriate tools in place. Thus in dealing with historic

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, J. Mark Shuster, 129-136.

districts, governmental action can enhance or frustrate processes needed for the restoration of the district and its revitalization with active and appropriate uses.

In *Preserving the Built Heritage*, Stephano Bianca points out that the change in paradigm from the organic paradigm of the nineteenth century to the current paradigm has resulted in diverging public attitudes ranging from dismissive to nostalgic with respect to the past, and utopian or defensive with regard to the future, thus justifying a definite need for governmental involvement in dealing with heritage buildings or districts. However, he points out the pitfalls of governmental involvement that perceives heritage as a “frozen substance” no longer subject to natural evolution, which tends to eliminate more spontaneous and personalized cultural initiatives. He argues that the government’s role is to set up the “right strategies, balanced between development and conservation, to incite, coordinate, and implement the necessary conservation actions, and to defend those actions against the interests of individuals who value outcomes that conflict with the broader public interest”. Bianca summarizes his arguments with “salvaging the physical shell of past cultures, though commendable, may prove meaningless if it is not supported by parallel efforts to encourage a living culture that can creatively relate to physical heritage.... Good heritage management requires that the material heritage be validated by non-material values and by meaningful use of historic structures”. From Bianca’s point of view, government action needs to comprise a range of modes of intervention on a case by case basis, depending on the particular circumstances, but with active and meaningful use being an essential objective.¹⁸⁶

The least interventionist of the five modes of governmental action is “information”, and the value of this cannot be underestimated. It is of vital importance. Without information, the actors, owners in particular, may be in the dark as to the underlying values that may exist, as well the appropriateness of their actions. As a tool of governmental action, it serves three purposes: informing the public of the various laws and tools that exist to

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, Stephano Bianca, 13-31.

promote preservation, their implications, and how to take full advantage of them; making the public more aware of the existence and importance of historic properties and the desirability of preserving them; and motivating as many other actors as possible in the preservation of heritage resources. As a component of the information process, listing of historic properties and historic districts is a significant motivational tool. A key role of information is to contribute to the conditions within which others will act. Information is also the primary tool for quasi-government and non-profit actors, including citizen groups, to induce action.¹⁸⁷

Information is much more, however, than simply a tool for promoting action. Information enhances the “sense of history” with further levels of understanding, contributing to this experience. As well, with restoration and the exhibition of the underlying aesthetics of buildings, there is enhanced understanding and connection between the aesthetics and their history, enhancing aesthetic pleasure. These components of information lead, in turn, to identity. With restoration and active use, the connections of historical information with place and aesthetics enhance personal identity through use, and place identity, and foster collective identity and collective pride.

In chapter two, the section on growth of cities describes the forces behind the continuous growth of cities and the generally held ideal of growth as a positive force. In *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States*, Ned Kaufman argues that “growth is not the ally of historic preservation but its implacable enemy...The ideology of growth prescribes constant change, disruption, ratcheting up of economic activity, density, people, production and consumption.” The market forces “move capital around at will, disinvesting here and overdeveloping there, following instincts rooted in profit rather than in community character, social equity, quality of life, historical memory, architectural connoisseurship, or any of the other values in which historic preservation trades”. In reference to places that have a history and sense of place

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, J. Mark Shuster, 101-102

in relation to this, Kaufman goes on to argue “A deep reverence for the act of inhabitation, manifested in presence and history, is a powerful corrective to the excesses of growth and the market. Against the view of places as commodities to be traded or thrown away in a pitiless game of growth, preservation can argue a view of place based on history: history of presence, struggle, inhabitation... The custodians of place and heritage express the desires of millions to wrest some control over the places they inhabit, while nurturing a connection with tradition.”¹⁸⁸ Essentially, Kaufman is emphasizing the forces that need to be counteracted in the preservation movement. It can be seen that a primary tool in counteracting these forces is information. Information thus has a dual role. Information helps create the values described, leading to an elevated experience of place, sense of place, and identity. It is also the fundamental tool for counteracting negative market forces and potentially influencing the actions of market players.

As pointed out by Stephano Bianca in *Preserving the Built Heritage*, one of the most important roles of government revolves around municipal ownership of the public street network and major squares attached to it.¹⁸⁹ Properly implemented, actions of municipal government can have a considerable influence on the historic district through developing the streetscape and the street linkages, as well as the programming of the public areas either directly or through the funding of public bodies responsible for this. A distinct streetscape is of particular importance in bringing out the aesthetic values and realizing the aesthetic pleasure of the district, as described in Chapter 4. Properly done, a distinct streetscape for the historic district enhances the feeling of unity or cohesiveness out of the complexity of a multiplicity of forms of buildings. It unifies the historic district as a distinct visual entity.

The municipal government has another important and essential role in the streetscape. The municipal government is responsible for policing and safety, regulations,

¹⁸⁸ Page, Max and Randall Mason, eds. *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States*. (New York: Routledge, 2004), Ned Kaufman 313-326.

maintenance and cleanliness, and other factors that can influence the viability of the historic district to a significant degree. Lack of adequate action in these areas can, and most likely will, frustrate reinvigoration of the district. The general public should not be expected to share the street with disruptive social misfits, drug dealers, or criminal elements, and this condition needs to be at all times, not intermittent. Otherwise, the general public will not come. The district needs to achieve Kotkin's "sacred, busy and safe", and the municipal government has a key role in the effort to achieve this condition.

5.5 The Historic District as a Sustainable Asset

5.5.1 Initiation - Public and Private Actions

Although some of the earlier successes with respect to historic districts were initiated entirely as private undertakings, as was the case with Denver's Larimer Square, successful efforts to reinvigorate historic districts generally involve private action in concert with governmental initiatives. Often the first step in this joint effort is local governmental recognition of the historic buildings and district and governmental actions aimed at encouraging preservation and reinvigoration. Such actions, of course, vary from passive to active initiatives, but start with identification and uncovering information on the history and evolution of the district. Information leads to listing of buildings of historic importance, and often national registration. National registration of buildings of historic importance in Canada, however, is scant due to jurisdictional differences, whereas listing at the municipal level is the norm.

In the United States, based on initiatives of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, a quasi-government organization, the National Historic Preservation Act was passed by Congress in 1966. This established a National Register that allowed registration of not only buildings of historic importance, but also the registration of historic districts. The act also set out the roles of the levels of government. The registration of historic districts motivated municipalities to identify and register historic districts, and a great many have

¹⁸⁹ Schuster et al, Stephano Bianca 22.

been registered to date. Registration in itself has no direct impact on property rights, but does affect eligibility for various forms of incentives. The registration process involves unearthing “information” related to the district, and registration in itself is a form of “information” that influences actions and attitudes. In Canada, a similar Canadian Register of Historic Places exists on a national basis. It similarly does not affect property rights for historic districts, and similarly relates to eligibility for incentives. However, in Canada, only a few historic districts have been registered, and incentives are considerably less available and generally are restricted to individual buildings.

Although information aids in understanding the inherent values of the historic district and the possible potential, and is a driver in promoting action, to be effective this understanding must be coupled with a thorough understanding of the dynamics of the existing city centre, and the competitive forces that may be affecting it. What businesses are there and why, including offices, retail, restaurants, entertainment, and others; what cultural and public amenities are there; what are the demographics of the residential population in the inner city; what are the competing forces that may potentially pull activity from the inner city or alternatively compete with the historic district within the city centre; what are the social conditions in the inner city that may need to be addressed; how accessible is the inner city and the historic district; and so on. It can be seen from the discussion of the dynamics of the city center in Chapter Two that there are many forces to be reckoned with, and many obstacles to success in the reinvigoration of a historic district, particularly in mid-sized cities that have experienced strong expanding suburban growth.

From the governmental and public side, their role is not only the fostering of the renovation of the historic district through the various tools at their disposal, but also providing the “hard and soft” infrastructure, namely the streetscape, linkages, and public improvements combined with safety, comfort and cleanliness of these public resources. Without this important hard and soft infrastructure, the initiatives of the private sector

may fail. Thus the renovation of the historic district needs to be viewed as a joint public and private undertaking.

5.5.2 Achieving Critical Mass of Renovation and Active Uses

The renovation and bringing to life of an historic district is seldom a quick process. From the governmental side, actions and initiatives require public support and generally take time. It can be seen from the previous discussion on the types of governmental tools and actions that the choices are complex and will vary to fit the particular circumstances. From the ownership side, historic districts often contain a multiplicity of ownerships and interests with varying objectives and capabilities that slow the process. Action is most often the result of specific motivated owners from the development community that envision the opportunity.

A successful start of the renovation process will motivate others to act. The initiation of the renovation process uncovers the inherent aesthetic values, but also needs to demonstrate that viable businesses can be attracted. This may or may not occur, and will have a bearing on the rate of progress in the renovation of the historic district. Often, initial uses are restaurants, and restaurants with outdoor cafes are great value in drawing attention to the district. Ultimately, however, a mix of restaurants, stores and other forms of active uses is needed to create activity throughout the day and evening. Once a critical mass of mixed uses is achieved, sustainability is in sight and the continuation of renovation and addition of active uses is assured.

5.5.3 Generation of Identity and Civic Pride

It can be seen that renovated historic districts brought back to life can develop levels of meaning that are not available in other places by virtue of the various factors discussed, namely their organic nature and sense of fit, their human scale, their unique and irreplaceable aesthetics, and sense of history. Coupled with new active uses, particularly restaurants, cafes and an active street, people quickly identify with such places, and they become memorable. This creates personal and place identity to the users, as well

collective identity with their “multiple imagined communities” as previously described. Such places develop as prime places for chance meetings, and their positive nature strongly supports the “approval” of other members of one’s communities, whether imagined or real.

Such districts also become a source of civic identity, based on the history of the district. Civic identity, as discussed by Judith Morley (see 4.13 Sense of History), celebrates “heritage”, which is more or less a sense of history that celebrates a past that may not necessarily be based on true historical fact, but nevertheless a narrative past the populous feels must be true. This “heritage” generates civic pride that forms part of the appeal, and the “heritage” serves as a promotional tool used by civic authorities and others in promoting the district.

5.5.4 Attraction of Tourists and Their Impact

5.5.4.1 The Nature of Tourism

John Urry, in *The Tourist Gaze*, explains that the tourist experience is based on seeking and finding pleasure in experiences that are different from what is encountered in ordinary life. Tourists “gaze” upon or view sets of different scenes, landscapes and townscapes which are out of the ordinary. “When we ‘go away’ we look at the environment with interest and curiosity. It speaks to us in ways we appreciate, or at least we anticipate it will do so... we gaze at what we encounter.” The tourist gaze involves “departure... a limited breaking with established routines and practices of everyday life and allowing one’s senses to engage with a set of stimuli that contrast with the everyday and the mundane”. Urry describes the tourist gaze as fundamentally visual, with gazes as organizing and structuring the tourist experience. Hearing positive things about a place, whether the place is an object of tourist promotion or a place one has been told about by a friend, generates a desire to visit, but places need to be seen for oneself and experienced

directly. The tourist gaze then subjects the place to comparison with one's everyday world, not only physically, but from the social perspective.¹⁹⁰

Performing Tourist Places, a subsequent book authored by Baerenholt, Haldrup, Larsen, and John Urry, expands on what makes a place a "performing tourist place". According to the authors, "places only emerge as 'tourist places' when they are appropriated, used and made part of living memory and accumulated life narratives of people performing tourism, and these performances include embodied and social practices and traces of anticipated memories. Tourist places produce particular temporalities. They are inscribed in circles of anticipation, performance, and remembrance." "They combine together five components: physical environment, embodiment, sociality, memory, and image".¹⁹¹

The authors explain these five components. The physical environment depends on its localized and enduring character, that it can be revisited. Embodiment refers to embodied characteristics and patterns of activity. In this respect restaurants and places of food and refreshments are nodes of tourist activity and "networked by memories of consumption performed earlier by people or their peers". Sociality encompasses the different orders from the tourist couple or group to the general atmosphere of the place generated by the people in it. Sociality includes attending to one another in the setting, as well as the presence and attention of other people. In this respect, strolling is an experience of interactivity, not only with the environment in which it occurs, but also because of the interactivity and "attention of other people in constant adjustment and spatial negotiation". Place memories relate not only to the physical environment, but are bound to specific events and social encounters performed, whether with travel companions or others. Memories are powerful and relate to sequences of actions in time

¹⁹⁰ Urry, John. *The Tourist Gaze*. 2nd ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2002), 1-3.

¹⁹¹ Baerenholt, Jorgen Ole, Michael Haldrup, Jonas Larsen, and John Urry. *Performing Tourist Places*. (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 3,144.

and space, and social places here and there. Images of place, sometimes myths, often pre-exist travel, but the most powerful are those that incorporated within peoples memories of tourist practices in the same and related places, according to the authors. “The sociality and rhythm of attending to other people is crucial to the consumption of tourist places”¹⁹².

The authors summarize their analysis of “performing tourist places” as being contingent on being significant to both those who live there and those who visit. Performing tourist places are “contingently stabilized sources of deeply held meanings and attachments... where these stem from networks that enable particular embodied and material performances to occur, performances normally involving both ‘hosts’ and ‘guests’. Such places often have what is referred to as “a hauntingness of place, through voices, memories, gestures and narratives that can inhabit a place for both locals and for those visiting... the atmosphere of place”.¹⁹³

5.5.4.2 The Historic District – Tourism and its Impact

It can be seen that the renovated historic district that has achieved a critical mass of renovation and active uses will not only be strongly appealing to local residents, but also to tourists and visitors to the city. The characteristics that make it attractive, namely the organic nature, the human scale, the unique aesthetics, and the sense of history make historic districts a prime destination for tourists and visitors to the city. Since historic districts vary in architecture and characteristics from city to city, they invariably differ from the “everyday world” of the visitors, and, provided there is active use and activity, are prime destinations for the “tourist gaze”.

The human scale and pedestrian friendly nature of historic districts make them prime places for strolling, and provides memorable images of place. It is, of course, of

¹⁹² Ibid, 45-47.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 139-140.

importance that there is active use and activity, and the presence of locals, to give the historic district atmosphere. Restaurants are vital, and outdoor patios and unique shops are particularly important. A street that contains the same types of restaurants and stores as are found in typical shopping centers, however, diminishes the appeal of being different from the “everyday world” of the visitor.

However, in *Quality Tourism Experiences*, Jennings, Nickerson and others explored the impact of tourism on the local community, and under what circumstances it is looked at as a positive or, alternatively, a “nuisance” by the local populace. They suggest that if tourism is perceived to change their community in a negative way, then the local community is likely to regard tourists in a negative way, behaving in the way described by Lofland in her description of the how the public realm has evolved in many cities; that is, characterized by shifting glances and lack of eye contact.¹⁹⁴ This latter situation would impair the quality of the tourist experience. On the other hand, the opposite is the case if tourism is regarded as positive. With respect to historic districts, it appears likely that tourism related to enjoying the historic district would be regarded by the local populous as a positive, and it is obvious that service staff of restaurants, stores and other components of the historic district catering to the public would treat tourists favourably.

When the historic district has reached the level of collective identity and strong civic pride, with active use by locals, it provides a higher level of experience to the visitor. Local use means sociality and signifies authenticity. The civic pride of locals results in a noticeable spirit of friendliness, a welcoming attitude exhibited by local residents and service staff, an atmosphere. They wish to show off the district, and are motivated to engage in conversation or point out particular places of interest. This enhances the experience of the visitor and creates memorability.

¹⁹⁴ Jennings, Gail and N. W. Nickerson, eds. *Quality Tourism Experiences*. (Burlington, MA, 2006), 232-233.

Renovated and active historic districts become part of the promotional material and images of governmental and tourist agencies, and become an important part of the promotional effort to bring tourists and visitors to the city. As discussed in Chapter 2, tourists spend money in restaurants, retail stores, and entertainment and cultural venues, and contribute to their viability. As well, hotels depend on visitors, and the principal sources of visitors are business travel, leisure travel, meetings and conventions. Thus tourists and visitors are an important contributor to the viability of these uses, particularly in the city centre, and are vital to the viability of hotels and meetings and convention venues. The renovated and active historic district is an important asset in promoting the city, and this promotion will bring visitors to the historic district.

With respect to the historic district itself, tourists and visitors contribute significantly to revenues of restaurants, stores and other businesses within the historic district, and thus are very assistive in attracting and sustaining these uses. It is to be noted that this does not only apply to the seasonal periods that have a large influx of leisure tourists. Visitors to the city include business travellers who inhabit downtown hotels year-round, as well as the convention and meetings visitors who are most abundant during spring, fall, and early and late winter, offsetting the seasonality of the leisure tourists. The contribution to the viability of the businesses in the historic district is obviously enhanced if the historic district is located close to hotels and convention and meeting facilities.

5.5.5 Self-generating Vitality and Sustainability

It can be seen that historic districts that achieve a critical mass of renovation and active uses have characteristics that are unique and irreplaceable. They have an authenticity and identity that is readily grasped by both the local citizenry and tourists and visitors to the city. They are timeless in nature, symbolizing the link between the deep past and the present, and become “sacred” to the local citizenry in Kotkin’s sense of the word. They represent the “walkable urbanity” described by Leinberger once a critical mass of pedestrian-scale uses is achieved, and have the capacity to continue to evolve with new uses, becoming busier and safer. Ultimately, they have the capability of meeting Kotkin’s

“sacred, busy and safe”, the condition for sustainability, and provide an environment that stimulates new vitality in the city centre.

Achieving this position is by no means simple, since there are typically multiple actors, and concerted governmental initiative is required to provide the conditions required in the public realm. The example of San Jose’s Santana Row success versus the failure of its downtown revitalization illustrates the obstacles and necessity on the part of the municipality to deal with issues relating to the public realm, particularly safety and public perception issues in the downtown, conditions that exist in many cities. Very few cities start with major historic assets that can provide “instant” critical mass on completion, jumpstarting the revitalization process, such as was the case with Boston’s Faneuil Hall Marketplace and Seattle’s Pike Market. Rather, most cities need to deal with a painstaking piece by piece process ultimately leading to critical mass. In the context of this study, which is focused on mid-sized cities, this is more typical situation.

Even though a critical mass of active uses has been achieved, it must be remembered that “repair”, in Christopher Alexander’s definition, is also required over time to sustain the qualities that the historic district offers, and maintain and enhance the characteristic of “wholeness” as particular uses come and go over time, and conditions change. Repair that adds to the wholeness of the district is, as discussed, in the nature of organic development. It is important, therefore, that such changes are “organic” and contribute to, rather than detract from, the wholeness of the district. This pertains not only to physical changes and modifications to individual buildings, but also to uses. Jane Jacobs stressed a mix of uses such that streets are active throughout the day and evening. With the streetfront the primary public interface, the replacement of an active use on the streetfront with a use that is not active, for example offices, detracts from activity and thus wholeness. Sustainability is not a given unless the district continues to evolve and “repair” itself in an organic manner over time as things change. It can be seen that there is a role for the public sector to help ensure this result, through zoning and other means.

5.6 Reinvigorating Effect on the City Centre

5.6.1 Overcoming the “9 to 5” Weekday Syndrome

The most significant aspect of the renovated and active historic district is its impact on activity in the downtown. The typical downtown in cities that have undergone significant suburbanization suffers from the “9 to 5” weekday syndrome, in which the people inhabiting the downtown offices and other uses leave the downtown at the end of the workday, leaving the downtown largely devoid of people and activity after 5:00 P.M. and on weekends. The result of being deserted is that the downtown also becomes, at least perceptually, unsafe, as the main inhabitants during these off hours become the homeless, panhandlers, drug dealers, and other members of society that effectively make people feel unsafe or at least uncomfortable. This is a condition that requires concerted effort to overcome, since considerable change is needed to overcome this image, and the press and news media are rarely an ally, more focused on reporting crime and problems. Businesses, under these conditions, need to survive largely on “9 to 5” weekday hours, during most of which downtown workers are working. Under these conditions retail businesses drift largely to service uses, and restaurants become weekday venues, often marginal since restaurants generally depend on evening dining that is priced higher than lunchtime to achieve profitability. Without evening business, restaurant operators cannot afford to invest in high quality facilities.

Because of its unique characteristics, the renovated historic district, fortunately, is capable of becoming a destination that can attract people not only during the “9 to 5” weekday, but also on evenings and weekends. Restaurant / bar operators, with the expectation of these enlarged operating hours, are usually amongst the first types to open in the renovated historic district. In addition to the very unique dining and drinking venues that can be developed within the historic buildings, there is also the attraction of the pedestrian scale nature of the district, being a prime place for outdoor cafes. Initial success by restaurants motivates other restaurant / bar operators to open, and a “restaurant row” starts to evolve in the district. People working downtown begin to stay downtown for evening dining, often joined by others from the downtown working community,

spouses, or others who travel downtown to meet them. Since the downtown workers become familiar with what is available in the district, they are also the most inclined to return to the historic district on weekends and outside of business hours, particularly if their place of residence is not too distant from the downtown. In addition, tourists and visitors become strong contributors to the viability of the restaurants.

For continuing viability, the historic district needs to include a mix of active uses that will attract people throughout the day, not just restaurants. The activity generated by the initial entrants, typically restaurants, in turn attracts retail stores and other active uses that add to the vitality of the district. Leinberger contends that once a critical mass of pedestrian scale uses is achieved in the downtown, further development will happen on its own as streets become busier and safer, generating more activity, and in turn generating commercial opportunities, and the process becomes unstoppable.

Thus the renovated historic district that achieves a critical mass of active uses has a reinvigorating effect on the downtown as a whole, capable of motivating the introduction of new active uses not just in the historic district, but outside of it, particularly nearby. In the historic district, new venues have unique characteristics strengthened by the attributes of the historic district, and differ from what is found in the suburban malls that are filled with chain stores and restaurant chains and have little variation from mall to mall. Restaurants in suburban venues are generally family-oriented rather than focused on the business community, whereas restaurants locating in an active downtown focus on the business community, as well as tourists and visitors, and generally include unique fine dining venues not found in the suburbs. On evenings and weekends, parking is generally not an issue, as the parking that serves the weekday working population is available in these off-hours, and accessibility is not hampered by rush-hour traffic. The extent to which the activity spills over to other parts of the downtown, however, is dependant on a number of factors, including the location of the historic district in relation to the central business district, the compactness of the downtown, the physical characteristics of the streets and street-fronts of the buildings in the downtown, to name a few.

5.6.2 Reinvigoration of Offices, Residential, and Other Uses

It can be seen that the new vitality brought by the renovated historic district, including the restaurants and other uses that are attractive to members of the business community, enhances the image and desirability of locating offices downtown. Business people located in downtown office buildings now have a desirable gathering place for business luncheons, dinners, and get-togethers. The historic district becomes a place for chance meetings and also becomes a desirable place to bring business visitors from elsewhere. Another factor in the location of offices is the accessibility to employees. The Creative Class and Net Generation discussed in Chapter 3 are attracted to active street life, and particularly inclined to locate in the city centre if these conditions are found. Offices related to the technology field and creative industries are therefore prime candidates for downtown locations. In cities with a concentration of home offices of specific industries that value interaction, such as the energy, resources, and financial sectors, downtown offices are favoured provided the environmental conditions are there. Essentially, the renovated historic district and the rejuvenating effect from it help to overcome the competitive and comparative disadvantages of the downtown compared to the suburbs for a number of office types. This enhanced desirability of the downtown is very assistive in not only retaining offices downtown, but also attracting new offices, thus aiding in achieving occupancy levels that may lead to new office building construction. Thus the downtown that has had a revival as the result of the renovation of the historic district has inherent attractiveness for offices, provided the historic district is reasonably accessible.

The renovated historic district that achieves a critical mass of active uses also has a spillover effect on residential. With a proper mix of uses, particularly restaurants and outdoor patios, the district becomes a desirable gathering place for those living nearby or within walking distance. This attractiveness needs to be combined with employment opportunities in the proximity to propel new residential construction, typically apartments and condominiums. Thus residential reinvigoration is often in tandem with the reinvigoration of office and other uses in the downtown or centre city. In Leinberger's

discussion of the sequence of the “Twelve Steps to Revitalization”, he put creating an “urban entertainment district”, that is, what might be found in the renovated historic district, as the starting point after the visioning and formative steps, followed by residential. This was followed by local serving-retail and then re-creating a strong office market. Although in his experience this was the sequence, it can be seen that there is a tandem relationship between residential and offices and the sequence of rejuvenation can be office first, offices in tandem with residential, or residential first, depending on the particular conditions in the city.

As every city has unique characteristics and conditions, and is dynamic in nature, it is somewhat difficult to generalize on the impact that the renovation of the historic district will actually have in the revitalization of the city centre. Indeed each historic district is unique in many respects, ranging from location and accessibility in relation to the central business district, the physical nature of it, the ownership and players involved which will influence timing and initiatives, to name a few. One is reminded of the many massive undertakings of cities in the post-war period to reinvigorate downtowns which failed, as discussed in Chapter 2, often as the result of identifying and focusing on singular problems rather than understanding the overall dynamics of what was happening through suburbanization. One can readily see that there are few other assets in the suburbanized city of today that can achieve all three conditions of sustainability, “sacred, busy, and safe”, qualities that can be achieved by the renovated historic district. The renovated historic district can be an anchor for the downtown, one which can contribute greatly to the initiation of the revitalization of the downtown, and its sustainability.

5.7 Root Issues in Reinvigorating the Historic District

Since every city is unique in its characteristics, as is the historic district that might be found in each city, renovating and bringing to life a historic district has many complexities. This complexity is compounded by local politics and political priorities, ownership of the assets, and other issues discussed in the previous sections.

Some of the more important issues are the location of the historic district in relation to the office or central business district of the downtown, which may affect the extent to which it relates and is used; whether the downtown is compact or overly spread out, which will also affect the extent to which it relates and is used; the ownership of the assets comprising the historic district and whether the ownership includes individuals that are or can be motivated to renovate and achieve higher levels of use, and have the financial capacity to do so; the extent to which the municipality provides not only initiatives and incentives to promote action, but the basics such as streetscapes, policing and safety, and cleanliness; and the success of the initial entrants in terms of restaurants and stores, which will have an impact on the timing of progress.

The next chapter is a case study of The Stephen Avenue Historic District in the City of Calgary, which will provide a chronology of the development of this district. This is intended to illustrate the particular issues involved in the renovation of this historic district, and the impact of the renovation of the historic district on the revitalization of the downtown core. The final chapter will provide some conclusions related to the discussion of renovated historic districts and their rejuvenating effect on the downtown core.

CHAPTER SIX: CALGARY: A CASE STUDY

6.1 Introduction

Calgary's Stephen Avenue Historic District provides a good example for an examination of the unique characteristics offered by an historic district, the problems and processes exemplified by this particular case, and the impact that its reinvigoration has had on the revitalization of a city centre. The author has been intimately involved in this endeavour through the renovation of three significant properties in the district (The Alberta Hotel Building, the Clarence Block, and more recently, The Alberta Block / Hull Block / and Macnaghten Blocks to comprise "Fashion Central", a complex of fashion stores), thereby providing an inside perspective. The Stephen Avenue Historic District is located in the downtown and was part of the original "main street" of Calgary.

The Calgary case study is intended to examine the general hypothesis, in relation to this particular case, that reinvigorated historic districts in city centres have the capacity to generate new urban life, and can play a very important role in reinvigorating the downtown, and offer sustainability over the long term. It will also examine the subsidiary questions related to how the historic district has achieved vitality against the dynamics of suburban competition; how the current sociological dynamics have contributed to the vitality of the historic district; and the experience of place that the historic district enjoys and contributes to urban life in Calgary.

Calgary, in the Province of Alberta, is an important city in Western Canada, primarily noted as the centre of Canada's oil and gas industry. It has also established itself as a distribution centre for Western Canada, and manufacturing and technology are also important parts of its economy. It houses a large number of head offices, ranking second only to Toronto in the number of head offices of both Canada's 100 largest and 500 largest corporations according to a Globe and Mail 2008 survey. Due to the concentration of head offices, particularly those of the oil and gas industries, it has also developed as a

significant financial centre. The downtown core is the primary location of the head offices and financial offices, whereas many other categories of office users, such as engineering and technology, are found in the suburbs. Calgary's population was estimated at 1,043,000 in 2008 and the Census Metropolitan Area estimated at 1,230,000 in 2009. Calgary has had a policy of annexation of land adjacent to the city so that residents of communities that work in the city are also taxpayers of the city. As a result of this policy, the city has continuously annexed adjacent suburban lands over the years, rather than permit adjacent municipalities to develop in the suburban areas. It now has an exceptionally large land area at 727 square kilometres or 280 square miles, making it, overall, a very low density city in relation to its population.

Calgary is a relatively young city, and has experienced various periods of rapid growth. The first settlement was Fort Calgary housing the Northwest Mounted Police in 1876. Subsequently, the establishment of the Canadian Pacific Railway linking Calgary to eastern cities in 1883 spurred the growth of Calgary, and it was incorporated in 1884 as a town of 400. By 1904 it had a population of 4,000 and was incorporated as a city. Initially Calgary's industries and businesses were very much focused on serving the ranching, agricultural and meat industries, and the business opportunities generated by the presence of the railway.

In 1914 oil was discovered in Turner Valley, Alberta, and offices of the oil industry became centered in Calgary. However, the Leduc, Alberta oil discovery in 1947 firmly established Calgary as the headquarter city for the oil and gas industry, and led to rapid population growth, doubling from about 100,000 in 1948 to 200,000 in 1958. Although the oil and gas industry has gone through periods of both boom and bust, collapsing when oil prices collapsed, the oil and gas industry, and the multiplier effects of it in the financial, engineering, legal / professional services, and other support services, has been very much responsible for the dramatic periods of growth that Calgary has experienced. The multiplier effect, as discussed in Section 2.2, was once estimated at seven jobs for

each individual employed in the oil business¹⁹⁵. Growth was particularly rapid in the period from 1973 to 1981 when the population reached almost 600,000, and more recently in the period from 2003 to 2007 when its population first reached 1,000,000. The magnitude of Calgary's growth has been supported by a high degree of in-migration, and the city enjoys a relatively diverse population, a comparatively younger population with income levels well above the national average, and a high proportion of "white collar" employment with relatively higher average educational levels than the national average. These conditions have led to the almost continuous construction of single family housing, as well as suburban multi-family housing, and suburban sprawl. The map following shows how the borders of Calgary have grown through annexation.

¹⁹⁵ Foran, Max. *Calgary, An Illustrated History*. (Toronto: Lorimer, 1978), 158.

6.2 Early Morphological Growth of Calgary

6.2.1 Initial Development of the City

Although the initial settlement in Calgary was primarily to the east of the Northwest Mounted Police at the Elbow River¹⁹⁶, the location of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) station at 9th Avenue and Centre Street firmly established the commercial core of the city north of the railway tracks, with a warehouse district along the south side of the tracks. The initial industrial area of the city was to the southeast and housed meat packing, malting and brewing, as well as CPR's shops. Following are maps showing Calgary in 1908 and the downtown area in 2009. The railway track running east-west and the Bow River to the north formed physical "barriers" that would ultimately delineate the downtown area, and, although the passenger railway station itself is no longer in operation, the railway tracks remain in use today. Until 1904 streets had names, but when Calgary became a city in 1904 a numbering system was adopted. Centre Street, extending north and south from the CPR station, became the north-south street delineating east and west, and streets south of the Bow River are named Southeast or Southwest on either side of Centre Street, starting at 1st Street Southeast and 1st Street Southwest. Avenues were the east-west streets with numbering commencing at the river. With the CPR station on 9th Avenue and Centre Street, commercial buildings and hotels were generally located on 9th Avenue, 8th Avenue, and 7th Avenue, with 8th Avenue being the main street. This north-south / east-west numbering system continues today throughout a significant part of the city except for major arteries not following the grid that adopted names, as well as post-war subdivisions that no longer followed the grid system.

Although 8th Avenue is still its legal name, a pedestrian mall section of 8th Avenue, which contains the historic district, is now generally called Stephen Avenue, the original name of the street up to 1904. The pedestrian mall area is four blocks in length, extending from 1st Street Southeast to 3rd Street Southwest. The historic district encompasses about two

¹⁹⁶ Smith, Donald B. *Calgary's Grand Story*. (Calgary, University of Calgary Press, 2005), 34.

and one half blocks of this, and, in turn, about one and two third blocks of the historic district, consisting of largely uninterrupted historic buildings, was designated as a National Historic District in 2005. Some scattered historic buildings are found nearby outside of this historic district. To avoid confusion, we generally refer to the street by its legal name, 8th Avenue, throughout this discussion except in specific reference to the historic part of the street or the pedestrian mall. The maps following show the downtown area of Calgary in 2009, and Calgary in 1908. The downtown area is north of the CPR railway tracks, and the CPR Station was located at the foot of Centre Street in 1908.

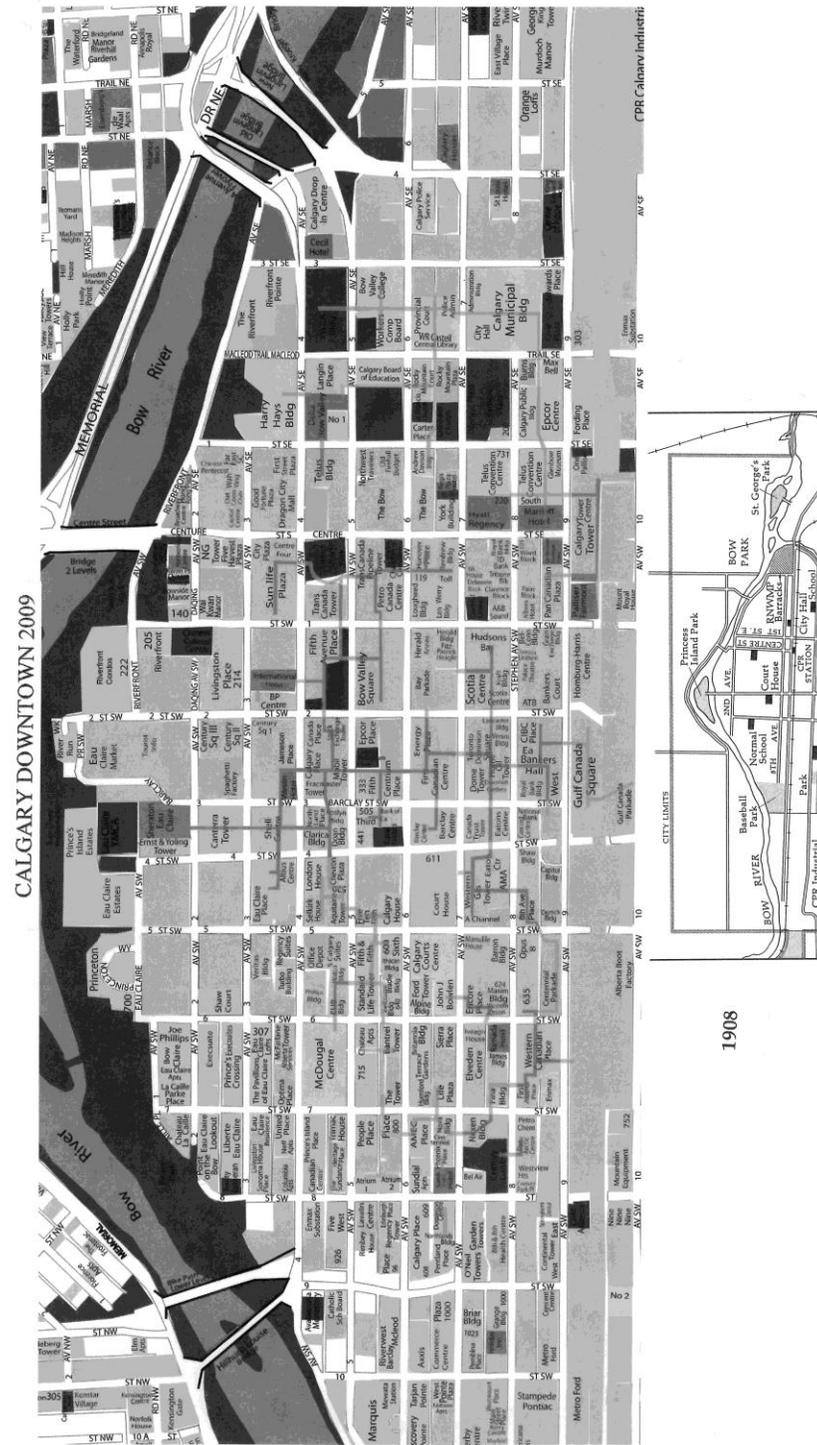
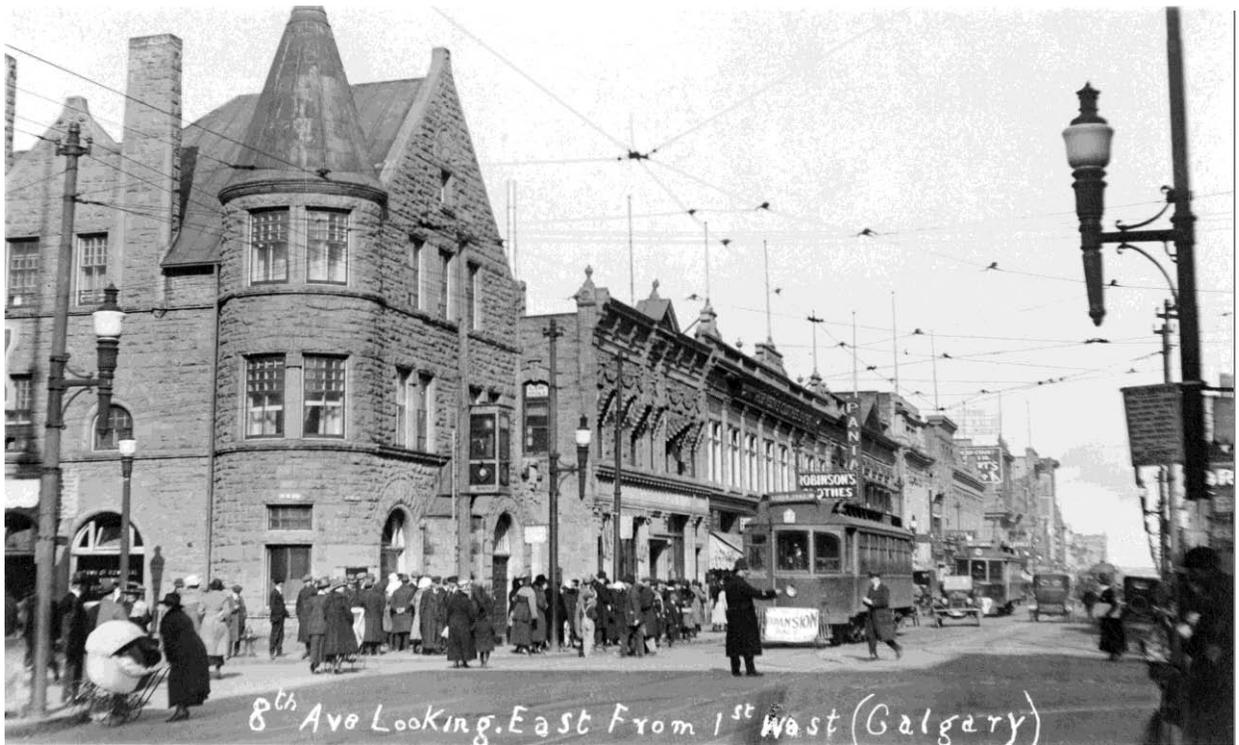


Illustration 2 – Map of Downtown Calgary and 1908 Map

6.2.2 *8th Avenue (Originally Stephen Avenue) – Calgary’s “Main Street”*

8th Avenue, then known as Stephen Avenue, had established itself as Calgary’s main street before the CPR, and 8th Avenue remained the main retail street for the city until postwar suburban shopping complexes and other conditions described below took away its viability.

The first stores of Calgary were primarily located on 8th Avenue (then called “Stephen Avenue”), and were of wood frame construction. In 1886 “The Great Fire” occurred in Calgary, destroying most of the 70 wooden buildings in downtown Calgary. This resulted in the City Council passing a bylaw requiring the exterior walls of all “public buildings” to be constructed of fire-proof materials. Following this, exterior walls of new buildings were subsequently built primarily of local sandstone or brick. Stone carvers came from Scotland, and sandstone became so predominant that Calgary became known as “Sandstone City”. However, by the First World War the combination of depletion of supplies and carving costs curtailed the use of sandstone. The historic buildings in the district have very distinctive and handsome architecture, with decorative styles taken from then contemporary European architecture, influenced by the origins and prosperity of the builders, the executives of CPR, and craftsmen that were engaged in the construction. The following is a photo of 8th Avenue and 1st Street Southwest, looking east, taken in 1912 (the building in the foreground was later replaced with The Bank of Montreal Building).



**Illustration 3 – 8th Avenue Southwest Looking East from 1st Street Southwest
(Glenbow Archives PA-3689-32)**

A good part of 8th Avenue was built up as Calgary's primary business and shopping district in the period between 1888 and the First World War, extending east as far as 4th Street Southeast and west as far as 5th Street Southwest, some nine blocks. The Hudson Bay Company department store relocated for the third time from 8th Avenue Southwest and Centre Street to 1st Street Southwest and 7th Avenue Southwest in 1913, and built an addition fronting on 8th Avenue in 1929. With Hudson Bay Company on the northwest corner of 8th Avenue Southwest and 1st Street Southwest, The Bank of Montreal building, a major new bank building, on the opposite corner to the west, the Alberta Hotel and Alberta Block on the opposite corners on the south, and streetcar lines intersecting at 8th Avenue and 1st Street, the intersection was affirmed as the prime intersection of 8th Avenue. Another department store, The T. Eaton Co. was built further east on 8th Avenue in 1929. However, a further addition of the Hudson Bay Company on 8th Avenue

frontage in 1957, replicating the original design, firmly established it as Alberta's largest department store, a distinction it retains today.

8th Avenue continued to flourish as the primary retail centre of Calgary through the 1950's and into the 1960's, and benefited significantly from the growth of offices of the oil and gas industry in the downtown. However, like many cities in Canada and the United States, the downtown 8th Avenue retail street started to decline in importance as the result of various forces and conditions described in the next section, and ultimately the decline became severe.

The aerial photograph following shows how downtown Calgary looked in 1958 from an aerial perspective. The view is from the south, and the downtown is north of the railway tracks, with a warehouse area south of the tracks. The CPR railway station is on the right side of the photograph, with Centre Street leading north from the station and across the bridge over the Bow River. To the left of the railway station is the Palliser Hotel (then Calgary's tallest building), which is bordered by 1st Street Southwest on its left. One block north of the Palliser Hotel is 8th Avenue, and the Hudson Bay Department Store is the large building at the northwest corner of 8th Avenue and 1st Street Southwest.



Illustration 4 - 1958 Aerial Photo of Downtown Calgary (Glenbow Archives NA-5093-578)

6.3 Vitality Lost

6.3.1 Suburbanization

Suburbanization started in Calgary very early on with the introduction of the streetcar in 1909. From two cars in 1909, the system grew to 70 cars operating 71 miles of track by 1915. The streetcar was responsible for “phenomenal suburban growth”, with subdivisions opening up along streetcar routes as far as ten miles from the city center. This was also augmented by land developers who built and donated connecting streetcar lines in the suburbs. Although the streetcars were replaced with buses in 1950, and

automobiles were then in common use, the pattern of suburbanization has characterized Calgary from these early beginnings.¹⁹⁷

Unlike many other cities, however, the downtown retained its status as the Calgary's principal business and shopping district into the 1960's before any decline was evident. This was due to the presence of the oil and gas headquarters downtown, and relatively easy access to the downtown from the low density suburbs, particularly from the higher income suburbs such as Mount Royal and Elbow Park that were relatively close by. In 1964 it was estimated that 40% of Calgary's workforce worked downtown. The resident population in the downtown area, however, contained only about two to three percent of the city's population.¹⁹⁸ Although the downtown area and adjacent areas within easy access to the central business district began to be built up with new high rise apartments during the boom period from the late 1960's until the "oil bust" of 1981, the inner city population still remained a relatively small proportion of the population of the overall city.

The status of downtown as the city's principal shopping district began to change with the introduction of suburban shopping malls, and starting in the 1960's, the city actively promoted the concept of services in the suburbs to support the residential population, including suburban shopping centres. The first major suburban mall, Chinook Centre, located south of the downtown, opened in 1960 with a Woodward's Department Store as its anchor. This was later followed by other regional shopping centres in different quadrants of the city, and even another regional shopping centre further to the south of Chinook itself. These major shopping centres each had department stores anchoring them, and many have been expanded and renovated over the years. In addition, there has been a proliferation of retail strip centres throughout the suburbs, and, in the last fifteen years, big box stores and power centres in various suburban parts of the city. Thus it can

¹⁹⁷ Foran, 90, 96.

¹⁹⁸ Foran, 164.

be seen that, like other cities, the downtown was to lose its status as the principal shopping area, with its vitality weakening as new shopping complexes opened in the suburbs. Although the population began to increase in the inner city with the construction of new apartment buildings in the west end of the downtown, and in the “Beltline” area just south of the CPR railway tracks, this population was inadequate to stem the decline of downtown shopping.

Ultimately, other components of the downtown also lost to the suburbs. This included movie theatres that were replaced in the suburbs with major multiple screen theatres, benefitting from the use of the large parking lots of the shopping complexes. As well, suburban restaurants were built, both in shopping centres and freestanding, that could serve local population and local businesses in the suburban areas.

Offices, however, are another matter. Fortunately, the oil and gas industry is very transaction based and values clustering downtown. Thus almost all of the offices of this industry have traditionally located in the downtown, and many of the services related to the oil and gas industry, such as finance, legal, and accounting similarly locate in the downtown to service this industry. As a result, Calgary has never had the extent, comparatively, of suburbanization of offices that has occurred in many cities, although there is a reasonable quantity of suburban office space housing engineering, technology and other categories of space users that do not need to be downtown, and can benefit from the lower rents, accessibility, parking, and access to employees that the suburbs offer. As of 2009, Calgary had some 34 million square feet of rental office space downtown, and 18 million square feet of rental office space in the suburbs.

6.3.2 The Pedestrian Realm and the “Plus 15” Pedestrian Walkway System

The 1958 photo in the previous section shows downtown Calgary as it looked then. The downtown was built up with relatively low rise buildings, none exceeding the height of

the twelve storey Palliser Hotel that adjoined the CPR railway station. The downtown was relatively compact. Buildings had been built to follow the street line, and adjoined each other. They were largely human scale and streets were pedestrian friendly, conducive to street-front uses. However, as the booming oil and gas industry required more and more space, buildings were continuously being demolished to make way for the new, and by the 1970's, high-rise office buildings were in vogue. There was little sentiment on the part of the developers or the city to save historic buildings, it being felt entirely appropriate to "modernize" the city with new high-rise structures, and in fact the City of Calgary zoning imposed setback requirements that dictated demolition of historic structures if additions were proposed. Although the oil and gas industry has been characterized by periods of boom and bust, and thus building activity has occurred during the intermittent boom periods, the philosophy of demolition and replacement with new has continued to today. The latest to be demolished was "Penny Lane", a collection of historic structures on 8th Avenue just two blocks west of the Stephen Avenue historic district, demolished in 2007 to make way for two major freestanding office towers, replacing an uninterrupted street frontage of human scale historic buildings.

Unfortunately, the result of this "modernization" has been to replace the prior human scale and pedestrian-friendly streetfront realm with "pedestrian-unfriendly" streets. The new high-rise office buildings have generally been conceived as "entities unto themselves", with little consideration of the relationship to the surrounding environment and the street from a pedestrian perspective. Individual buildings have been characterized large lobbies, often encompassing their entire street frontage, varying ground floor elevations, and varying setbacks and plazas that serve to enhance the architectural stature of the building, to the detriment of pedestrian use of the streets. These characteristics have led to an office core with a pedestrian-unfriendly streetfront environment, with only discontinuous and sparse frontages that could be suitable for retail or other streetfront uses. Additionally, the development activity resulted in large swaths of land acquired by developers who then demolished the buildings and introduced surface parking pending development. As well, assisted by building setback zoning requirements, various streets,

particularly the east-west avenues, were widened to allow for growing automobile traffic, and became major traffic arteries. Thus the downtown environment throughout the office district became largely pedestrian-unfriendly, with streets functioning only as a means for travelling from one place to another from a pedestrian perspective.

The pedestrian-unfriendly condition of the streets meant that pedestrian use of the street became largely focused on getting from one place to another, and pedestrian use of the streets became limited to this purpose throughout most of the office district. This condition has been exacerbated, or more correctly, “replaced” by another pedestrian realm that provided an alternative to the street – the “Plus 15” walkway network. This is a system of overhead walkways between buildings, “Plus 15” referring to 15 feet above the street, with public corridors through buildings at this level connected to these bridges. It is an alternative to the sidewalk introduced with the logic that Calgary has cold winter weather, and the system allows comfortable movement between buildings, particularly in winter. The Plus 15 walkways were introduced in 1970, and the City of Calgary promoted their development by providing bonus floor space density to developments that included a Plus 15 connection. Ultimately developers looked at the Plus 15 as an important feature for marketing their office space, and Plus 15 connections became the norm for all major office buildings. The system now contains 59 enclosed Plus 15 bridges between buildings, with some 16 kilometres (10 miles) of interior walkways at the Plus 15 level.

What has evolved over the course of time are numerous lunchtime food courts, coffee shops, restaurants, stores and services in the interiors of office buildings, catering to the weekday needs of the office working population. With the Plus 15 system, these services are accessible to occupants of both the particular office building and those nearby, avoiding any need to go outside. For those who travel to work by automobile, they may park in the office building where they work, or a nearby parking garage, and never go outside, since all the services they need are to be found inside, accessible in the building where they work or through the Plus 15 network. The result is that, in spite of a very high

density of people working in the downtown office core, pedestrian use of the streets in the office core is quite limited, particularly in the winter months and when weather conditions outside are unfavourable. Next following is a map of that shows the Plus 15 network in white, as well as examples of the Plus 15 bridges and interior walkways.



Illustration 5 - Plus 15 Network (City of Calgary map)

6.3.3 Accessibility to Downtown

Calgary has also had a significant focus on public transit to downtown. Its “LRT” (light rapid transit) rail transit system was introduced in 1981 to alleviate the intensifying automobile traffic into downtown during weekdays. It is touted as one of the most successful electric rail systems in North America, and is locally referred to as the C-Train. To encourage LRT and public transit usage, the city introduced a zoning policy

that limited the amount of parking space that office buildings in the centre core of the office district could contain to 50% (initially only 20%) of the estimated requirement if all employees travelled by car, and required developers to pay moneys to its parking authority to provide public parking at the fringes of the core area. The object of this was to force office workers to travel by public transit rather than automobile, as well as encourage inner city living. The LRT now has 45 kilometers (28 miles) of track, with 37 stations, and some 44% of workers travelling to downtown travel by public transit, most using the LRT. The LRT system is continuously being expanded and improved.

However, one impact of the system is that downtown workers get on and off at stations along 7th Avenue (the transit corridor through downtown), and are able to get into the Plus 15 network at or close to the stations, largely avoiding the streets. Thus, similar to those that park within office buildings who have no need to go outside, with the Plus 15 network persons travelling by LRT to downtown to work may get off at the station, enter the nearest Plus 15 entrance, and never go outside except between the station and the Plus 15 entrance. It can be seen that, although the LRT reduces traffic congestion and thereby helps reduce the potential loss of downtown offices to the suburbs, it combines with the Plus 15 system to keep people off the streets.

The other result of the restricted parking is that for those not working downtown who wish to visit downtown during business hours by automobile, convenient parking is not easy to find, and parking rates have continuously increased. For a trip downtown for shopping or a luncheon, this weakens its appeal, and strengthens the competitive of advantages of suburban alternatives. Although this condition was not a leading factor in the decline of downtown shopping and dining, it was a contributor, and it has progressively worsened as parking lots disappeared for development, although peripheral parking has generally been available. On the other hand, ample inexpensive parking has always been available outside of weekday business hours and on weekends.

6.3.4 Downtown Enclosed Malls and Their Impact

To counteract the introduction and popularity of the suburban retail malls, attempts were made to provide equivalent shopping malls in the downtown. The first attempts were Scotia Centre and Toronto-Dominion Square. These interior malls were erected with frontages on 8th Avenue Southwest, west of The Hudson Bay Company department store. Scotia Centre opened in 1976 and contained Scotia Tower, Calgary's tallest office building at the time, with a three level retail mall adjacent to, and connecting internally with, The Hudson Bay Company department store. Toronto-Dominion Square was opened one year later in 1977. It included a three level interior mall, with the fourth level being Devonian Gardens, an interior public garden. This complex, occupying almost a full city block, contained office towers of Toronto-Dominion Bank and Home Oil. The complex also connected with an adjacent historic building, The Lancaster Building, occupying part of its frontage, and the complex interconnected across the street by Plus 15 and Plus 30 bridges to Scotia Centre. Although Toronto-Dominion Square had frontage on 8th Avenue, it had a very limited entrance and connection with the street, the focus being the interior mall. Even though some of the stores fronted on 8th Avenue, these stores generally locked the exterior entrances for security reasons and used their mall entrances only. Thus this complex was interior focused and took away from the street environment. Similarly, Scotia Centre also had a limited entrance, with a banking hall occupying the rest of its street frontage, although four other historic buildings fronting on 8th Avenue remained intact in front of about half of its length. These two initial complexes were intended to compete with the suburban malls that were introducing new retail chains and their impact seriously impaired the viability of other stores fronting on 8th Avenue, some of which relocated into these malls, as well as to suburban malls.

To enhance their competitive position in relation to the suburban malls, further expansion of the interior shopping complexes continued. In 1990 the Eaton department store relocated one block further to the west and, in conjunction with this, a new four level interior complex called Eaton Centre was built between the new Eaton department store and Toronto-Dominion Square. This was interconnected with the Eaton department store

on the west side, and, on the east side, to the Toronto-Dominion Square across the street with connections at the Plus 15, Plus 30 and Plus 45 levels. The total complex that was connected internally now consisted of the Eaton department store, Eaton Centre, Toronto Dominion Square, Scotia Centre, and The Hudson Bay Company department store, occupying some three and one half city blocks, with interconnections on the upper levels over the streets. Joining Eaton Centre as a major tenant was Holt Renfrew, a small but very high-end department store that relocated from the historic Penny Lane complex fronting on the other side of 8th Avenue. A further complex, Bankers Hall, was developed opposite Toronto Dominion Square on the other side of 8th Avenue, opening in 1989, with three levels of retail (also a fourth level movie theatre that later closed due to lack of viability). It was interconnected across the street at the Plus 15 and Plus 30 levels with the Toronto Dominion Square, further enlarging the interior shopping complex.

These major interior retail complexes then dominated downtown retail. Scotia Centre had a major office tower, Scotia Tower, as part of it; Toronto Dominion Square had two major office towers forming part of it, the Toronto-Dominion Bank and Home Oil towers; Eaton Centre had the Canada Trust tower; and Bankers Hall had initially one major new tower plus existing smaller office buildings of Canadian Imperial Bank of Canada and Royal Bank, and a second major tower was added in 2000. The complexes together contained retail that was intended to match that found in the suburban malls, plus high-end components not found at the time in the suburban shopping complexes. On completion of the final components, they also contained food courts, restaurants, cafes and services. They contained some 1,300,000 square feet of retail space including 700,000 square feet in the two department stores, and 3,900,000 square feet of office space within the complexes. Additionally, they were interconnected with other major office buildings through the Plus 15 system. It can be seen how the status 8th Avenue as a viable retail street continued to be weakened as these complexes, supplemented by further retail within major office complexes and the Plus 15 network, dominated downtown retail.

Subsequent iterations have been the failure of the Eaton department store chain, its replacement with a Sears department store that subsequently closed, and currently, a relocation of the high-end Holt Renfrew department store, now occupying most of the former department store building. This is being undertaken in connection with a major renovation of the department store / Eaton Centre / Toronto Dominion Square complex, being renamed The Core.

6.3.5 Calgary, a 9:00 to 5:00 Weekday Downtown

Calgary's downtown, like many of its counterparts, was impacted by the effects of suburbanization. However, unlike many of its counterparts, it retained a strong office core, a condition that should have mitigated these impacts to a certain degree. But other conditions, namely pedestrian-unfriendly streets that evolved in the downtown office core, the Plus 15 network that interconnected buildings, accessibility factors, and the interior mall complexes, progressively had the effect of taking people off the streets. This in turn helped compound the impact of suburban competition, and resulted in a downtown with poor streetfront viability in most of the core. With everything available and connected inside through the Plus 15 network, the downtown progressively became very much an interior city, making it easy to stay inside and then "escape" to the suburbs at the end of each weekday. The conditions that evolved were not very conducive to encouraging people to stay downtown. This resulted in most downtown restaurants thriving on a healthy lunchtime trade, with evening dining limited to a comparatively few popular spots. Although performing arts and museums located downtown, and cultural functions largely remained in the downtown, movie theatres declined in attendance as new suburban venues opened, and major movie theatres closed, although two were converted to art cinemas. Except for those living in areas close to downtown, the incentive to return for shopping or dining on weekends was reduced as major suburban malls opened and expanded and new restaurants opened in the suburbs. As well, competing shopping and restaurant districts began to evolve in the districts close to downtown, again weakening the incentive to shop or dine downtown for those living in those areas.

As a result of these conditions, the status of downtown as the center for shopping, dining and entertainment was weakening progressively, although shopping remained strong during the weekday business hours, but largely confined to the interior complexes. Due to the absence of people downtown after weekday working hours, business hours of downtown stores were limited compared to suburban malls that were open evenings, and weekend business was weakened by the suburban alternatives that were closer to where most people lived. Evening and weekend dining and entertainment diminished in viability, with only a limited number of dining establishments, catering largely to the business community and visitors staying in downtown hotels. Calgary's downtown was evolving to a "9:00 to 5:00 weekday downtown", with activity limited outside of those hours. Under these less viable circumstances, the downtown as a centre for shopping and dining was in decline outside of these hours, and streets that once were full of people were no longer full of people, and largely empty outside of particular times during the daytime weekday.

As a consequence of these conditions, retail stores outside of the interior complexes suffered. Over the course of time only a limited amount of streetfront retail space remained except for what remained along 8th Avenue and close by, and this retail had limited viability. One attempt to introduce new and unique retail was Eau Claire Market, a freestanding festival marketplace built in 1993 to much fanfare. An enclosed mall containing independent food stores and a variety of other independent store types, with four freestanding restaurants and pubs, its location was in the north part of downtown near the Bow River. Hoping to cater to the nearby residential towers and downtown workers, as well as to become a shopping destination attracting visitors from elsewhere, the same conditions affecting 8th Avenue also affected it, and, except for three of the freestanding restaurants / pubs located on the site that remained viable, it ultimately failed as a shopping complex, with a large portion of its space now vacant or converted to offices. It is now slated for redevelopment.

6.4 The Revitalization of 8th Avenue and its “Stephen Avenue Mall”

6.4.1 The Decline of 8th Avenue

It can be seen that, as the result of the conditions previously described, 8th Avenue was to severely decline in importance and viability from its previous status as Calgary’s original main street where most of the retail stores were found, as were movie theatres, restaurants and drinking establishments. The street had little chance to remain viable against the assault of suburban shopping centers, the Plus 15 system resulting in the pedestrian internalization of the office core, accessibility factors, and downtown interior retail malls with their introduction of new retail chains, even against the rapid growth of the city and the growth of the downtown working population. The decline was progressive, starting in 1960’s and 1970’s when some of the 8th Avenue retailers relocated to new suburban and downtown interior malls, and it continued to deteriorate thereafter.

During the early part of the decline properties on 8th Avenue changed hands and many of the properties in the district were assembled by property developers with various intentions, particularly in the two blocks between Centre Street and 2nd Street Southwest. One developer intended a major office complex encompassing frontage on both 8th Avenue and 7th Avenue and achieved extra high density zoning to permit this, while another had a plan to roof over one block of 8th Avenue from Centre Street to 1st Street Southwest to create a climate controlled pedestrian mall. At the time, uses of many of the properties held by developers were considered “interim”, and leases had demolition clauses, further diminishing the possibility of attracting new tenants for other than marginal uses. During this period only a limited number of properties were renovated for retention. This included The Alberta Hotel Building at 8th Avenue and 1st Street Southwest, and The Clarence Block on north side of 8th Avenue between Centre Street and 1st Street Southwest, both renovated in the 1970’s, but only limited attention was paid to the historical elements of these buildings in these renovations.

In addition, as retail developed in the new interior malls in combination with department stores, extending from 1st Street Southwest westward, retail and active uses east of this

concentration suffered more severely as this was now outside of the concentrated area of activity. Thus, as one went further to the east of 1st Street Southwest on 8th Avenue, viability declined. Over the course of time the decline resulted in 8th Avenue evolving to lower uses, with deferred maintenance and vacancies, and it became a district for panhandlers, homeless persons, and social “undesirables”. 8th Avenue became more and more unattractive to visit, although 8th Avenue retained its status as the site of parades and special events, particularly during the Calgary Stampede, a celebration of Western heritage each July.

6.4.2 Urban Renewal

As a result of the decline of 8th Avenue, Calgary’s traditional retail street, and the lack of cultural and other amenities matching Calgary’s growing size, various initiatives were undertaken to add new life to the downtown, focused particularly on 8th Avenue. These initiatives were both private initiatives, often with the help of the City, as well as initiatives by the City of Calgary itself. They all were projects located on 8th Avenue or nearby, between Centre Street and 3rd Street Southeast. The concentration of these projects on or close to the 8th Avenue Corridor was in general helpful to the street, but by no means sufficient for its revitalization.

The initiatives in chronological order were as follows:

The Husky Tower, subsequently renamed the Calgary Tower, was built by private companies as an urban renewal project to celebrate Canada’s Centennial. Commenced in 1967, it opened in 1968 at Centre Street and 9th Avenue on the site of the former CPR station, which was relocated below grade. It dominated the skyline at the time. A Calgary icon, it is some 627 feet in height, has a revolving restaurant and an observation deck on top, and contributes to drawing tourists and visitors to the area, with visitor traffic once estimated at some 400,000 to 500,000 per year.

The Calgary Convention Centre and Glenbow Museum were opened in 1974 and 1976, respectively, with an adjoining hotel, now a Marriot Hotel. They occupy one full block

between Centre Street and 1st Street Southeast, with frontage on both 8th Avenue and 9th Avenue, but 8th Avenue being the principal entrance for the Convention Centre and Museum. Although intended to attract conventions, over time the Calgary Convention Centre was recognized as too small to attract a meaningful number of conventions, and functioned mainly for small local or regional conventions and meetings. The Glenbow Museum, on the other hand, was significant in size. Eight storeys in height, with some 84,000 of space, it has a considerable collection of art and archives donated by its founder, Eric Harvie, and it is considered to be Western Canada's largest museum when its collections and archives space are included. The impact of the Glenbow was to add a fair amount of traffic to this point on 8th Avenue, which, although most of it could be characterized as destination traffic, ultimately benefitted new restaurants and other uses that later opened on 8th Avenue. The impact of the Calgary Convention Centre and hotel was to add new tourist and visitor traffic, ultimately benefitting 8th Avenue in the same way.

The next initiative, organized by a group of private citizens, was the Performing Arts Centre (now named Epcor Centre for the Performing Arts) which opened in 1985. Fronting on 8th Avenue Southeast, it occupies a full block between 1st Street Southeast and 2nd Street Southeast (known as Macleod Trail), and 8th Avenue and 9th Avenue Southeast, but excluding one historic building, The Burns Building (a beautiful historic building saved from demolition by only one vote of City Council). This complex is some 400,000 square feet in size and includes several performing art theatres. It is a major cultural facility, reputed to be the largest performing arts complex under one roof in Western Canada. Its impact has been to bring people downtown for evening cultural events. However, with abundant parking within the complex and later in the nearby Municipal Building connected to it by a Plus 15 walkway, visitors have generally arrived by car and left by car after performances, with little spillover to the downtown. It is only in more recent years that spillover has occurred, as restaurants began clustering on 8th Avenue, providing venues for early evening dining or after performance outings.

Next to come was the Calgary Municipal Building, opened in 1985. Intended to clean up an area of 8th Avenue Southeast with a major new office building and public plaza, it adjoined the existing historic Calgary City Hall. The complex encompassed an entire two blocks bounded by 7th Avenue Southeast and 9th Avenue Southeast, between 2nd Street Southeast (known as Macleod Trail) and 3rd Street Southeast, and included the section of 8th Avenue between. This caused 8th Avenue to dead-end at 2nd Street Southeast, disconnecting it from the eastern part of the street.

Following the Municipal Building, Olympic Plaza, a major public space, was opened by the City of Calgary in 1988. It was across the street from the Municipal Building complex, occupying most of the block between 1st Street Southeast and 2nd Street Southeast (Macleod Trail) and 8th Avenue and 7th Avenue. Olympic Plaza is a beautifully designed public plaza opened to celebrate the Calgary Winter Olympics. Olympic Plaza was intended to be Calgary's primary civic plaza, and could be combined with the large plaza of the Municipal Building across the street for major events. It has enjoyed some success for intermittent major events, but has been generally unsuccessful in attracting many visitors otherwise because its location is at some distance from the centre core, and has very limited office or residential density nearby.

The latest initiative, completed in 2000, was an expansion of the Calgary Convention Center across 8th Avenue from the original convention centre, together with a new Hyatt Hotel. The project comprised one full city block between Centre Street and 1st Avenue Southeast, and between 8th Avenue and 7th Avenue. This initiative expanded the available convention and meeting room space to some 130,000 square feet including a new 68,000 square foot column free exhibit area. An important part of the project was the restoration and preservation of the historic buildings occupying about half the frontage on 8th Avenue, particularly the renovation and restoration of the building at 8th Avenue and Centre Street for a new seafood restaurant. The facades of the other historic buildings were restored, but the buildings were otherwise largely integrated into the complex with some historic elements retained. This historic restoration was part of the historic

restoration movement that was now underway on 8th Avenue west of Centre Street. The addition of the Convention Centre and the Hyatt Hotel has added new tourist traffic to 8th Avenue, although the convention centre is still too small to attract larger conventions, attracting mostly local meetings and only modest sized conventions, bookings of which are very sporadic and largely seasonal.

Although these initiatives resulted in the demolition of most of the historic buildings along 8th Avenue between Centre Street and 3rd Street Southeast, some three blocks, they cleaned up a section of the street that had deteriorated. The street was in a downward spiral, had poor visual appearance as the result of incongruous “modernized” facades covering up historic facades, and suffered from substantial deferred maintenance and vacancies. At the time of these initiatives, except for the last one, the prevailing mindset of the City of Calgary and the general population was towards the new and modern, and demolition of buildings to make way for the new was part of the process. Although the City of Calgary was responsible for most of the demolitions of historic structures, it is difficult to predict what might have resulted in the absence of these initiatives. Perhaps the most negative aspect of these urban renewal initiatives was the “dead-ending” of 8th Avenue at the Municipal Building, which disconnected 8th Avenue from its eastern extension. But, fortunately, enough of the 8th Avenue historic district remained, closer to the central core, to comprise a reasonably sized precinct of historic buildings.

6.4.3 The “Stephen Avenue” Pedestrian Mall on 8th Avenue

Following the introduction of the interior malls of Scotia Centre and Toronto-Dominion Square that fronted on 8th Avenue, the portion of 8th Avenue east of 1st Street Southwest went into severe decline, and in the early 1970’s, the four blocks of 8th Avenue between 3rd Street Southwest to 1st Street Southeast was converted into a pedestrian mall known as the Stephen Avenue Mall, an urban renewal trend popular at the time, with adjacent owners enthusiastically supporting the initiative. However, in spite of a boost in pedestrian traffic, and some initial success, by the late 1970’s it became evident that the people being attracted were not spending money in the stores. As a result the retail stores

saw their viability decline substantially, and retail uses gravitated to marginal uses and occupancies. Finally, in 1986 – 1987 the City of Calgary undertook studies culminating in a “Stephen Avenue Mall Revitalization Report” proposing a plan of action¹⁹⁹. This was in conjunction with the initiatives then underway - the Calgary Municipal Building, The Performing Arts Centre, and Olympic Plaza. Following the recommendations of this plan, in 1987 the city passed a bylaw that designated the four blocks of 8th Avenue between 3rd Street Southeast and 1st Street as a permanent pedestrian mall. The Revitalization Report also proposed the future possibility of evening traffic on the mall, but this was not initiated until later, and also proposed active restoration of the historic buildings. The blocks between 1st Street Southeast and 2nd Street Southwest contained a large number of low to medium-rise historic buildings, almost all of which were un-restored at the time. In conjunction with this initiative, the City of Calgary renovated these three blocks of the four block section with a new streetscape, including new sidewalk and roadway improvements, and street furniture and lamps with a historic theme, to provide a distinct and very attractive setting for the pedestrian mall (the fourth block opposite the Toronto-Dominion Square to be dealt with by the adjacent owners, and originally proposed as a glass covered section, which never happened). Management responsibility of the pedestrian mall was to be shared between The City of Calgary and a board established to oversee it, the “Stephen Avenue Board” under the bylaw.

The initial impact of this initiative was minimal. In order to bring people onto the street, part of the program was kiosks for street vendors, and buskers, during the warm weather months, and, as a result, the street took on the flavour of a “Coney Island” or a “fall fair”. However, this did not improve the nature of the stores on the street, and in fact did not improve the attractiveness of the street for other than marginal uses such as T-shirt shops, gift shops offering cheap merchandise, lower-end food uses, and pubs catering to tourists and the lower income segment of society.

¹⁹⁹ City of Calgary, *Consolidation of The Stephen Avenue Mall Revitalization Report*, 1988.

Realizing that the “24/7” pedestrian mall was not achieving what had been envisioned, and attracted the wrong elements, particularly in the evenings, the City of Calgary ultimately permitted automobile traffic on the street after 6:00 P.M. and, in 1996, assigned the task of managing the pedestrian mall to the Calgary Downtown Association. The Calgary Downtown Association was organized under provincial legislation for overseeing revitalization of the downtown, and it received funding from the city based on a levy as part of the business taxes of downtown businesses. At the time the Calgary Downtown Association took over, the vacancy rate on the mall was 15%, and most buildings were in disrepair²⁰⁰. Under the management of the Calgary Downtown Association (CDA), attention was paid to street cleanliness, and a more focused management of street vendors. Following the recommendation in the Revitalization Report, the City of Calgary finally opened the mall to automobile traffic after 6:00 P.M., with free parking along the street. This had the impact of exposing the street to the public and encouraging visitation, of significant importance for potential evening venues such as restaurants, and the traffic lessened the negative impact of undesirable street people who had inhabited the largely vacant streets at night. Under the management by the CDA, Stephen Avenue Mall was now actively marketed, which the CDA now promoted as the “Stephen Avenue Walk”. These marketing initiatives were undertaken to draw attention to the mall, and with this marketing, not only was visitation to the street increased, but more importantly, the attention of the development community was attracted. The other important initiative underway at the time was the focus on restoration of the historic buildings by The City of Calgary, its Heritage Planner, and the Stephen Avenue Historic Board, to be discussed in the next section.

6.4.4 Restoration and Renovation of Remaining Historic District

The map following and accompanying list, produced by the City of Calgary, identifies the historic buildings on 8th Avenue, and nearby.

²⁰⁰ McNamee, Maureen. *Future Looks Bright for Downtown*. Calgary’s FFWD, 23 April 1998, 11-12.

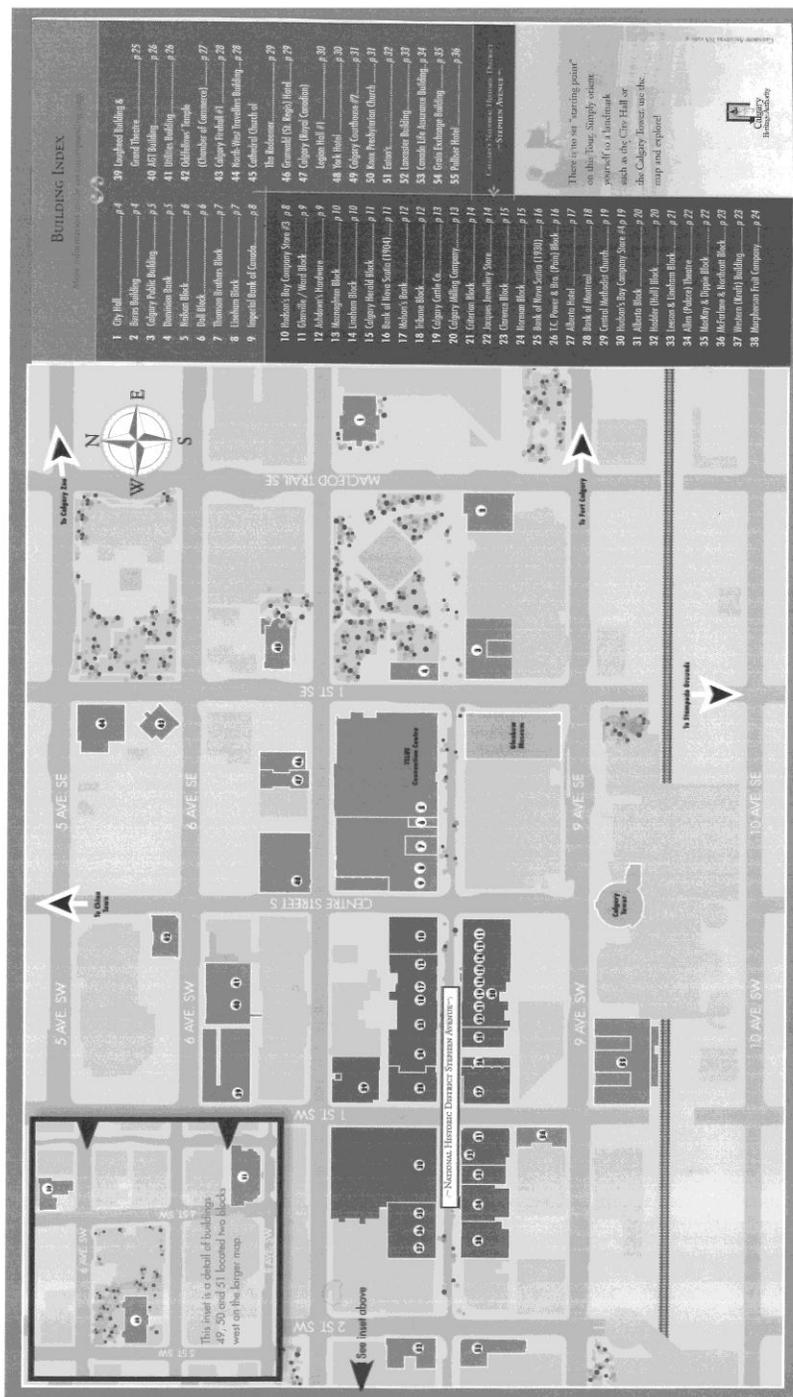


Illustration 6 – Map showing Stephen Avenue Historic District and Historic Buildings from City of Calgary Publication.

<http://www.calgary.ca/DocGallery/bu/planning/pdf/heritage/historicdowntowncalgarybrochure.pdf> (link to City of Calgary publication)

With the exception of the historic buildings in the block containing Toronto-Dominion Square and Banker's Hall and two buildings adjacent to the Performing Arts Centre between 1st Street Southeast and 2nd Street Southeast (Macleod Trail), most of the buildings on 8th Avenue shown on this plan were un-renovated in the early 1990's, and many had 1950's and 1960's style "modernized" facades that covered the historic facades of the buildings. These facades were dated, often ugly, and suffered from deferred maintenance due to the nature of the "interim" ownerships and occupancies. Although the historic architecture of many of the buildings was evident, deferred maintenance and the predominance of the covered over facades took away from the underlying character.

One of the earlier successful serious attempts at renovation and restoration of an historic building on 8th Avenue was that of the Dominion Bank Building (No. 4 on the map) on the north-east corner of 1st Street Southeast and 8th Avenue Southeast, at the border of the Stephen Avenue Mall. A beautiful terra cotta building in Beaux-Arts Style, originally housing a bank with a grand banking hall interior, following an extensive restoration in 1992 the ground floor became the home of Teatro, a high-end restaurant. It was immediately popular, and drew members of the business community and the social set for both lunchtime and evening dining, and set the tone for what was possible on the street, defying the disadvantage of its distance from the office core. Other important renovations and restorations followed in 1996 – 1998, mostly in the block from Centre Street to First Street Southwest. These included the James Joyce Pub (No. 17 on the map) occupying the ground floor of the Molson Bank Building, beautifully redeveloped with an interior by Guinness Breweries of Ireland; the Norman Block and Bank of Montreal Buildings (Nos. 24 & 28), each renovated for major retailers; the Glanville / Ward Blocks (No. 11) that included the Belvedere Restaurant, another high-end, but smaller, restaurant; and the Tribune Block (No. 18) renovated for a retail store. These renovations drew new pedestrian traffic onto the street and created a momentum for further renovations and

restorations. According to the 1998 article previously cited, some \$20 million in development and leasehold improvement investment in properties on the mall had been attracted in the space of a couple of years²⁰¹.

As a developer who had previously focused on renovation, upgrading and adaptive re-use of various types of properties, both in Calgary and in Eastern Canada, I had been following the saga of Stephen Avenue for many years, and, in 1997, decided to focus on Stephen Avenue, and, through my company Encorp Inc., acquired three properties on the street, The Alberta Hotel Building (No. 27) and The Alberta and Hull Blocks (No. 31, 32), (and later the adjoining Macnaghten Block), located on opposite corners of 8th Avenue and 1st Street Southwest, and The Clarence Block (No. 23) located mid-block between Centre Street and 1st Street Southwest. The Alberta Hotel Building was the first renovation, renovated on a phased basis. In addition to securing two ground floor retailers that over the course of time have become quite successful (although not initially), we opened The Cellar, a large wine store in the basement, and a highly successful restaurant, Murrieta's, on the second floor. This second floor restaurant, with windows overlooking the street, includes a skylit courtyard (skylight added), and exposed sandstone walls, and was immediately successful and achieved sales volumes well above expectations.

The immense popularity and success of Murrieta's restaurant helped lead to many more restaurants opening on the street, and the street very rapidly evolved, becoming a "restaurant row" with numerous restaurants along its stretch, many of which opened outdoor patios in the spring to fall period. As almost all of the restaurants were opened by private operators, not all were successful and many have turned over, as have some of the initial retail stores. Other renovations on the street included the Palace Theatre, a former movie theatre, renovated for a nightclub, and more recently re-renovated to house a sports bar / entertainment complex called Flames Central.

²⁰¹ McNamee, 20.

Retail stores were slow to evolve in the mix as some of the initial entrants fared poorly as there was not the “critical mass” of retail needed to create a successful retail precinct, and space was more readily leasable to restaurant occupancies. However, retail occupancies continue to evolve on the street as restaurants have probably now reached a saturation point and retail occupancies have improved in calibre. The adjoining Alberta, Hull, and Macnaghten Blocks owned by Encorp Inc. has recently undergone a renovation for fashion retail occupancies, with the project named “Fashion Central”. This complex containing both streetfront stores, as well as internal stores faced on a skylit atrium, adds a mix of international fashion stores and local fashion designer stores to the historic district.

As of today, with few exceptions, most of the historic buildings in the historic precinct within the Stephen Avenue Pedestrian Mall have had their historic façades restored and had some form of renovation. In 2002, a section of the historic district was designated as a National Historic District.

6.4.5 The City and Drivers of the Renovation Process

The City of Calgary, The Calgary Downtown Association, and various motivated developers can share the credit for the restoration and rejuvenation of the historic district. The starting point, however, was perhaps the City of Calgary’s urban renewal efforts that, although they resulted in the demolition of a great many historic buildings, cleaned up the easterly section of the street, and added some new life to it, particularly the hotels and convention centre. This was followed by a new streetscape in the historic district that provided a setting for the historic district, and later, the management and promotional efforts of the Calgary Downtown Association were successful in attracting the interest of developers.

It can be seen that the earlier approach and actions of the City of Calgary would seem to have been contradictory. The attitude of the City started with a focus on demolition of historic buildings for urban renewal purposes, with very limited thought to preservation

and restoration. During the “urban renewal” era from the first projects in the 1970’s even until the late 1980’s the consensus favoured demolition of historic buildings to make way for urban renewal projects. Some six city blocks from Centre Street to 3rd Street Southeast, between 9th Avenue and 7th Avenue, were largely razed by the City of Calgary, leaving only isolated historic buildings intact in the period up to the Convention Centre expansion / Hyatt Hotel in 2000, but fortunately in this latter instance several historic buildings were integrated into the complex. However, by 1990 a focus on identifying historic buildings was underway leading to the publication of a pamphlet entitled “Stephen Avenue Tour” which was meant to provide a walking tour of 8th Avenue. This pamphlet, published by the City of Calgary Planning and Building Department and Alberta Historical Resources Foundation described and illustrated the historic facades of all of the buildings that had lined 8th Avenue, from City Hall to 4th Street Southwest, including those that had been demolished - some 61 demolished buildings (the later versions of this pamphlet, still available to the public, omits the demolished buildings). The impact was finally to provide the public with some tangible information on the historic nature of the street, and illustrate many of the historic facades that had been covered over.

In the period that saw the renovation of part of 8th Avenue with an historic streetscape, and dissemination of information on the historic buildings to the public, the City of Calgary, its Heritage Planner, and the Stephen Avenue Historic Board had major influence on the restoration of the historic buildings that remained. The City of Calgary adopted a “shadow bylaw” that effectively prohibited properties in the historic district fronting on the south side of the street from building higher and thereby casting further shadow on the street. Many of the historic buildings are only two or three storeys in height, and this bylaw protects the low-rise character of the street, and protects sunlight on the street. To offset this, the City also adopted a density transfer bylaw that allows a property owner to transfer density to other sites in the downtown core, provided the property is designated historic, thereby allowing property owners to sell the excess

density, that is, the unused floor area that would have been developable, to a developer of another site (although there have only been very limited instances of these transactions).

After identifying and cataloguing the historic buildings, the City of Calgary rated them into categories, with Category 1 being the highest historic rating. Unlike the United States, however, the listing of individual buildings nationally is very limited, and listing is normally at the municipal level, whereas historic designation is provincial (whether undertaken by the province or the municipality). Under provincial legislation, if the municipality chooses to designate a property as historic it becomes liable for loss of value, and therefore the municipality seeks the consent of the property owner and waiver of compensation for designation, whereas if the province designates a property as historic, it is not liable for compensation. As a consequence, the municipality will only designate properties historic if the property owner consents and waives its right to compensation. The municipality may request the province to designate a property, but the province has rarely done so. Thus very few properties in Calgary are designated historic; the exceptions being properties owned by the municipality and properties in which the property owner seeks a density transfer. As a result the importance of listing of individual properties is of persuasive influence only, but it may increase eligibility for available grants.

The City of Calgary, however, has been successful in using persuasive influence to cause the restoration of historic buildings. In the development permit application process, applications that relate to listed historic buildings go to the Heritage Planner for approval. The work of the Heritage Planner has been to influence developers to undertake a restoration of the historic elements, particularly the façade. To this end, moneys were available for this purpose from a provincially funded body, The Stephen Avenue Historic Board. Over a period of about ten years, the facades of almost every historic property in what was to become the Stephen Avenue National Historic District were restored, although not all were restored as the result of grants.

Similar to the listing of historic districts in the United States, the listing of an historic district in Canada is of persuasive influence only. In July, 2002 the efforts of the Heritage Planner, together with a group of interested parties (including myself), resulted in the designation of a section of 8th Avenue as a National Historic District, one of only three such designated national districts at the time. A monument was erected in 2005 in the district to celebrate and identify the Stephen Avenue National Historic District.

Under the guidelines of federal authorities, a National Historic District is selected on the basis of a determination that the district chosen had a distinct “sense of place” and is largely uninterrupted. The buildings highlighted on the map at the beginning of this section form the National Historic District. Under these criteria, you will note that the district does not include all of the historic buildings on 8th Avenue due to interruptions with more recent buildings. However, from a practical standpoint, these buildings slightly outside of the National Historic District are part of the actual historic district and contribute to it.

It can be seen that the role of the City of Calgary in the renovation of the buildings in the historic district has been mainly two-fold: the upgrading of the streetscape to provide the setting; and the dissemination of information and persuasive influence of the City of Calgary Heritage Planner, coupled with some available grants for façade renovation. Ultimately, through these influences, combined with economic success in the renovations, motivated property owners could see the value of the restorations and drove the process.

6.4.6 Nature of the Renovations of Historic Buildings

The influence of the City of Calgary Heritage Planner was directed primarily at restoring the facades of the historic buildings and secondarily at assuring that the exterior signs of occupants of historic buildings were compatible and in general related to historic signs. This did not necessarily mean that facades were fully true to the original, but rather that the important historic elements of the facades were restored, or in some cases reinstated.

In this respect, latitude was given to storefronts to meet reasonable functional requirements for stores or restaurants, but with the objective that the overall façade was restored to its original appearance as much as possible. On the other hand, interior renovations were allowed to accommodate new uses as needed, and there was a focus on interior restoration only where historic elements remained. In this respect the City of Calgary was cognizant of the necessity of adaptive use to provide viability for new uses. However, in most renovations the original sandstone or brick walls were left exposed internally, whereas they would have originally been covered over by plaster and wood lath. The exposure of these historic elements in fact more fully revealed the historic nature of the buildings, and sandstone walls accented by lighting provided charming and “warm” interiors.

Only in the case of provincially designated or, in one case, a federally designated historic building, were the interior elements more carefully preserved. Such was the case with the Palace Theatre and Bank of Montreal Building, provincially designated, and more recently the Lougheed Building at First Street and 6th Avenue Southwest that was federally designated. In each of these cases important parts of the historic interiors were restored.

The restorations truly exhibit the historic character of the buildings, notwithstanding that in most cases it is only the façade that in fact has been restored, and, even then, with modifications to allow for functional use by new occupants. Thus Calgary’s approach has been largely through information and persuasion, with some influence through grants, rather than through regulation, combined with setting the framework through the streetscape and management efforts. Additionally, flexibility to allow for the requirements of adaptive use has been the norm.

6.4.7 The National Historic District

The nationally designated Stephen Avenue Historic District indeed has a distinct sense of place, uninterrupted by modern buildings. The designated section extends about 1 2/3

blocks westerly along 8th Avenue from Centre Street. It comprises some 29 contiguous buildings, including one wood structure that survived The Great Fire of 1886, and one that was recently rebuilt resembling the original building, one whose original front no longer existed and has been replaced with a modern façade but retaining historic elements internally, and one whose front remains to be restored. The frontages of the rest of the buildings have been restored, although the ground floor store frontages have been adjusted to accommodate current uses, but in a manner that generally respects the original frontages and materials. As discussed in the previous chapter, the registration as a National Historic District does not affect property rights, but rather can be looked at as providing identity. The Stephen Avenue National Historic District has a cohesive “sense of place” and forms the foundation of the district, although historic buildings just outside of the designated historic district that have been restored, although not part of the National Historic District, clearly form part of the historic district .

6.5 The Historic District Today

6.5.1 Characteristics

6.5.1.1 Sense, Legibility and Orientation

The historic district on 8th Avenue has the advantage of having been the original main street, with the intersection of 8th Avenue Southwest and 1st Street Southwest being the principal intersection where streetcars crisscrossed. Although this stature has diminished, the intersection is still highly legible as the location of The Hudson Bay Company department store. 8th Avenue itself is the frontage of the retail complexes comprised of the two department stores and the interior retail complexes, and it extends to the east to the Telus Convention Centre, the Glenbow Museum, the Performing Arts Centre, ending at the Municipal Building / City Hall complex. The historic district within 8th Avenue provides a highly visual place identity tied to 8th Avenue, giving it an outstanding clarity of sense, legibility and orientation, contrasting with a largely amorphous office core containing a considerable variety of “disconnected” high-rise office buildings that is difficult to navigate and secure a sense of where you are at the pedestrian level (and also

“connected” with a Plus 15 pedestrian network in which a stranger can easily be lost without the aid of a map).

6.5.1.2 Aesthetics

The following is a view looking west on Stephen Avenue. Most of the buildings in the historic district are two to four storeys in height, with the higher buildings being the Hudson Bay Company department store and the Leeson-Lineham Block at six storeys. What first strikes one on entering the district is the contrast of this distinct patch of low to medium rise restored historic buildings against the modern high-rise buildings of the downtown, giving the district a very pronounced sense of place (the condition that led to the designation of the historic district). The dissonance of these distinctive buildings against the high-rise setting is the initial aesthetic experience of the historic district.

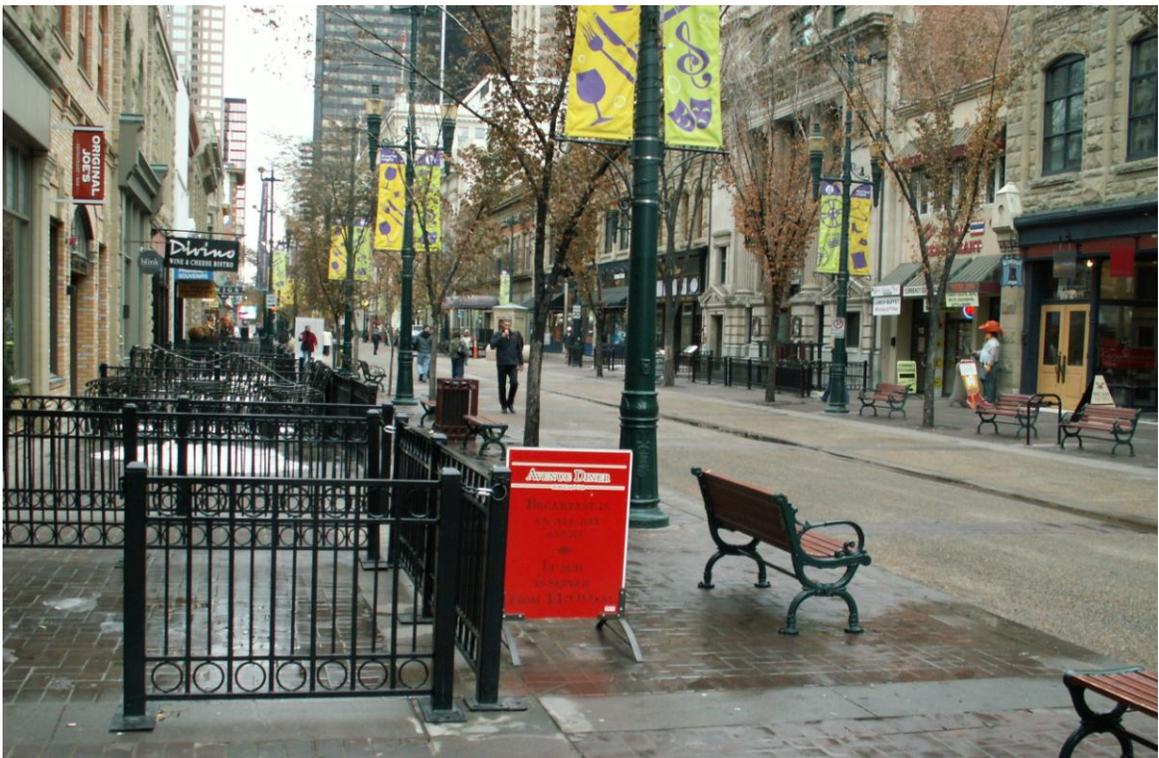


Illustration 7 – View of Historic Buildings Looking West on Stephen Avenue

As can be seen, the individual buildings have considerable architectural detailing in the facades and represent many different styles. These styles have been described as including Italianate, Romanesque, Classical, Renaissance, Baroque, Victorian, Art Deco, and Beaux-Arts elements. The differing styles of each building contrast with one another, but the masonry facades, the high ground floor elevations, the roof and cornice detailing, and the generally low-rise nature of the buildings provide a sense of unity as well as a sense that they were built in a specific earlier era. Many of the buildings were constructed between 1890 (The Alberta Hotel) and 1910, and several others up to the late 1920's (generally the result of demolition of earlier buildings). All of the buildings, with the exception of one wood-frame building that survived the 1886 Great Fire, have masonry facades ranging from sandstone used in many of the earlier ones, to brick, limestone and terra-cotta. The workmanship and detailing is quite remarkable and unexpected for a young prairie city in Western Canada, and represents the sophistication, and perhaps pride and exuberance, of the early merchants and businessmen. The merchants and businessmen that built these buildings were generally of British ancestry, with strong British values and attitudes, the majority originating from Eastern Canada, with some well educated and from "upper class" families in the East.²⁰² In addition, the quality of the craftsmanship found in the stonework and masonry is the result of the skills of many of the skilled craftsmen brought from the Eastern Canada and the overseas.

The aesthetic experience offered by the district is the "wholeness" of this ensemble of buildings, buildings that have contrasting styles but all exhibiting individual architectural detailing and high quality workmanship and some commonalities of characteristics. All of the buildings are attached, and all follow a common street line, providing a continuous frontage along the street, but with individualized storefronts. One could describe the aesthetics as the sense of orderliness or consonance that can be seen out of the dissonance

²⁰² Smith (2005), 16-19.

and complexity of the ensemble. Important to this experience is of course the activity of people in this ensemble, the result of the renovation and revival of the district.

As discussed, the National Historic District was delineated on the basis of being largely uninterrupted and having a cohesive “sense of place”. Not to be overlooked, however, are other important historic buildings found just outside of the delineated area that contribute, as well, to the district. This includes the Grain Exchange Building (No. 54 on the Historic Map in Section 6.4.4) on First Street Southwest just south of 8th Avenue; The Palliser Hotel (No. 55) - Calgary’s status hotel like New York’s “The Plaza”; the buildings integrated into Hyatt Hotel and Telus Convention Centre (Nos. 5 to 9); the Dominion Bank Building that houses Teatro (No. 4); the Public Building and Burns Building (Nos. 3 and 2); and, more recently renovated, with active ground floor uses, the Lougheed Building / Grand Theatre at 1st Street and 6th Avenue Southwest (No. 39). As well, to the west are the Lancaster Building (No. 52) and the Hollingsworth Building (No. 53) that contribute architecturally to the historic district, but are integrated into Toronto-Dominion Square and Bankers Hall, respectively.

6.5.1.3 Human Scale

The historic district on 8th Avenue Southwest is characterized by low-rise buildings with visual complexity on a relatively narrow street, some 66 feet in width, making it a very comfortable for pedestrians, providing a sense of enclosure and definition. As such the visual elements of the buildings are clear and unambiguous, providing a sense of comfort within the district. The streetscape developed by the City is designed for only one one-way traffic lane, a condition that slows traffic during the periods permitted for automobiles. In addition, the streetscape contains design features including historic styled lamps, benches, and street furniture that unifies the district and contributes to its sense of place and its attractiveness for pedestrians.

The low rise buildings give the street excellent sky exposure, providing sunlight in good weather, making it ideal for streetfront patios, which the restaurants take advantage of

during the patio season from mid-April to mid-October. The continuous streetfront and high ground floor storefronts make it ideal for restaurants and stores, and most buildings have active uses. These conditions distinguish the district from most of the downtown and promote activity, with the street becoming an active place for a noontime stroll for downtown workers, a place for chance encounters, and an active precinct for restaurants, patios, stores, and human scale active uses.

6.5.1.4 Organic Nature and Adaptivity – Then and Now

It is readily apparent that the historic district grew organically, that is to say, buildings were built individually to fit with what existed, thereby enhancing both the individual building as well as the overall setting. There were a multiplicity of owners and uses involved in the process, giving great variety to the street, both in terms of the buildings themselves, and the uses.

The “epigenetic program” for the district had several facets. Foremost was the pattern of building to a common street line and to the full width of the lots, providing a continuous building frontage along the street, and contributing to the sense of enclosure of the street. Additionally, each building had high ground floor elevations, generally with storefronts although the street was interspersed with certain bank buildings with more solid, but richly detailed, frontages. The high quality architectural design, detailing, and workmanship was also part of the epigenetic program, giving the street an aesthetic richness. All of these characteristics enhanced the social nature of the street as Calgary’s “main street” and business district.

Although many buildings in the historic district went through an earlier phase of assembly by developers, prior to the active renovation phase ownership was quite dispersed. As the result of this, renovations have generally been by individual owners, and tenants in the buildings have also been predominantly individual operators of restaurants and stores, although some national chains have been part of the mix. Some have been quite successful and some businesses have been less successful and replaced

with others. Thus the uses and tenancies have continued to evolve in an organic fashion within the framework of the historic buildings, with businesses that fit remaining and others modified or replaced to achieve a better fit.

The organic nature of the evolving uses adds to the wholeness of the district. It trends towards Jane Jacobs' ideal of the "intricate and close-grained diversity of uses that give each other constant mutual support, both economically and socially"²⁰³.

6.5.1.5 Sense of History and Meaning, Memory and Identity

The 8th Avenue historic district has a very apparent "sense of history", provoking a curiosity about the "workings of moral life", as described by Scruton, that led to the construction of the buildings, particularly the sophisticated architecture of the buildings in relation to what one might expect for a prairie city of the west that was surrounded by ranchers and cattlemen. Calgary's connection with ranchers and cattlemen is still celebrated annually in the ten day Calgary Stampede events, as well as referred to in Calgary's nickname that relates to its past - "Cowtown", emphasizing what seems to be a contradiction between the architecture and its past, and thus heightening one's curiosity about the past.

The Calgary Stampede has another important contribution, that is, its contribution to the sense of belonging, or being a member of Calgary's community. During the ten day Stampede celebration, traditionally local citizens wear western attire, and local firms have parties and celebrations. The Stampede parade which initiates the celebration traditionally ran through the historic district, but more recently runs along the adjacent 9th Avenue due to its size, with spectators spilling onto 8th Avenue after the parade. In addition, 8th Avenue is the place of other activities, and full of people, both locals and tourists, during the Stampede period. It is also the place for parades and other events, both during the Stampede and at other times, of the various ethnic communities of

Calgary, as well as the nearby native Indian communities. To local citizens native to Calgary, these celebrations contribute to the collective meaning and sense of pride with respect to the historic district. They also help to accelerate and cement “citizenship” in Calgary, or a sense of belonging, for newcomers to Calgary. This then helps to instill collective meaning and sense of pride in the historic district in these newer citizens.

The individuality of each building in the 8th Avenue historic district is a significant element of the sense of history as it indicates an individuality of players and past uses comprising the district, adding to the sense of complexity in the history of the buildings. As well, the continued active uses of the buildings with their very individualized uses provides a sense of continuity and allows a personal exposure to the historic elements of the buildings in the restaurants, stores, and other uses found on the street. The experience of participating in these active uses in the restored buildings and the active use of the street has a resonance that relates to and shows continuity with the past. As one gains information about the past the appreciation and experience is enhanced and such information is often available in historic photographs on display in many of the buildings. This appreciation enhances meaning and memorability.

Perhaps one of the strongest relationships of the present to the past is the pedestrian nature of the street. The 8th Avenue historic district has become a street that is full of people out for a stroll on good weather days or going to or from restaurants, particularly packed during the noon hour, and a place for chance meetings. The variety of restaurant venues, restaurant patios, drinking establishments, stores and other uses attracts people from every demographic and culture. As a result of this variety of both the venues and the people attracted, the district therefore is a place where one finds others of one’s “multiple imagined communities”, as described in Chapter 4, regardless of ones demographic, culture or perceived social circle. This enhances personal meaning, identity and memorability, both visual and narrative memory, with respect to the historic district, and

²⁰³ Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. (1961 Reprint, New York, Random House

gives the street a collective identity embraced by the local citizenry. In turn, there is a sense of pride in the historic district that is exhibited in a noticeable friendliness of people using the street, both to local residents and visitors.

The aesthetics of the district, and the collective identity related to the historic district make the district a Calgary icon. It has become Calgary's premier "place to visit" for tourists and visitors to Calgary.

6.5.1.6 Holistic Experience and Sustainability

It can be seen that the 8th Avenue historic district has many attributes that enable a strong holistic experience, arising from outstanding aesthetics, the human scale of both the buildings and the street, the organic nature of its development and continuing uses, its sense of history, the social activity on the street and in the restaurants, retail and other uses within the buildings, and its resultant capacity to provide meaning, memory and identity. Particularly relevant is the pedestrian orientation resulting from both the human scale elements, its location within the downtown, and the programming as a pedestrian mall, although the pedestrian mall aspect is somewhat of a negative during the winter months. The 8th Avenue historic district has a very strong sense of place, as well as very evident genius loci, as described by Norberg-Schulz, generated by these characteristics and the human activity that occurs on the street.

According to the Calgary Downtown Association, Stephen Avenue now generates pedestrian traffic of 5,000 to 10,000 persons per hour during peak times. Although actual pedestrian counts are not available for the period prior to the renovations that commenced in latter part of the 1990's, the pedestrian traffic on the street was only a fraction of these numbers (the exception being during the Calgary Stampede) and the street was characterized by social groups that deterred people. It was common for residents to say "they would never go there", particularly in the evenings, since the nature of the eating

and drinking establishments, and stores that existed at the time, catered to largely to this social strata. Typical stores were T-shirt shops and lower end uses. Thus the renovations, new restaurants and patios, entertainment uses, and upgraded calibre of stores and other uses has totally changed the character of the street.

Section 4.11 referred to a study done by Porta and Renne on the conditions that provided sustainability. These were: sky exposure, which indicates the street's ability to encapsulate the pedestrian; façade continuity, which contributes to a sense of enclosure and definition; softness (transparency and transitional space such as windows and visually accessible space), being elements that can make a street or environment feel safe and welcoming; social width or the breadth of the street as it effects human interaction across the traffic area, which measures social width by taking into account the severance effect that traffic lanes and other features place on human interaction from one curb to another; visual complexity, which describes the degree to which the street has visual tapestry; number of buildings, which indicates the scale of the street in relation to the potential for human activity; and "sedibility", or the measure of the number of seating opportunities visible. The eighth measurement included in the study was the detractors that deter street life such as blank walls, aggressive automobile facilities, and rejecting objects.²⁰⁴ The 8th Avenue historic district generally meets these qualifications for sustainability.

Kotkin's conditions for sustainability are "sacred, busy, and safe". The 8th Avenue historic district also meets these qualifications for sustainability, subject to maintaining some more recent issues relating "safe" to be discussed in the next section.

6.5.2 Status of the 8th Avenue Historic District in 2010

Currently, in the two blocks of 8th Avenue Southwest that contain the designated historic district, there are now some nineteen restaurants, four pubs including the large Flames

²⁰⁴ Thwaites & Simkins, 123 -124, referred to in Section 4.11 of Chapter 4.

Central pub / restaurant / entertainment complex, and twenty-three streetfront stores and “service type” outlets. This does not include the stores and services found in the interior complexes that are accessible from the street. The pedestrian mall area extends one block to the west and east of these two blocks and contains additional restaurants and pubs in these blocks, largely benefitting from being a part of this area of activity. This includes two pubs in historic buildings plus three restaurants in the western block, and two restaurants in historic buildings plus two others in the eastern block. In addition, the TD Square component of what is part of the complex being renovated and renamed “The Core” now has stores that open onto the street in order to benefit from the large volume of pedestrian traffic that now exists on the streetfront mall area, whereas previously the streetfront entrances to the ground floor stores were generally locked for security reasons, with access only from the interior mall.

Most of the restaurants and pubs in the four block pedestrian mall area have outdoor patios in the patio season which runs from mid-April to mid-October. These patios are licensed for a fee by the Calgary Downtown Association. They enliven the street. Those on the north side in the historic district benefit from direct sunlight due to the low-rise historic buildings on the south side.

The 8th Avenue historic district continues to evolve and improve. It has achieved the status of “restaurant row”, with numerous restaurants on the street ranging from diner to very high end dining venues, and a multiplicity of food offerings. In addition, there are pubs and drinking establishments on the street, and entertainment venues include a sports and entertainment complex developed from a former movie theatre, and jazz and rhythm & blues venues within restaurants. The retail venues in the historic district include The Hudson Bay Company department store and a range of stores, and the stores are evolving and increasing in numbers and quality.

The historic district has had two impairments to its vitality. One is the limitation to a pedestrian mall in the daytime from mid-October to mid-April. During this period patios

are closed and programming of activities on the street largely ceases. Although restaurants and drinking establishments are not much affected by this, retail stores are and thus the street has reduced and more intermittent pedestrian traffic, making the street, as a pedestrian mall, appear largely empty during the daytime outside of the lunch period. If automobile traffic were permitted during the daytime in this period, the effect would change this “empty” appearance thus attract more people, as well as increase exposure and accessibility, and thereby increase the viability of stores. However, there does not appear to be a consensus to change this policy. It may be that, over time as the street evolves and strengthens with more retail, and as more residential and office density is developed nearby, this issue will have less relevance.

The other impairment has been the presence of panhandlers (both homeless persons and others) and, to a certain extent, activities related to drug trafficking and use. It must be remembered that these types will congregate, if allowed, in areas where there are a lot of people, and the 8th Avenue pedestrian mall is Calgary’s busiest location. The homeless problem had escalated in recent years due to a number of factors, and many homeless persons have alcohol and drug addictions and mental problems. The presence of panhandling, sometimes aggressive, and persons having abuse problems, made the street uncomfortable for many. However, two years ago the City of Calgary and The Province of Alberta implemented a forward thinking “10 year plan to eliminate homelessness” and these plans have had a noticeable impact. The crime relating to drug traffic and use had also escalated in recent years, and media were responsible for conveying an impression of “lack of safety” in the downtown, particularly in the late evening. This also had a negative impact on the district. However, the City of Calgary has, over the past couple of years, substantially increased its policing of downtown, including a large number of “beat officers” patrolling downtown and 8th Avenue in particular, and the criminal elements, panhandlers, and homeless persons have largely disappeared from the street. Without these programs it is clear that sustainability of the 8th Avenue historic district would be affected.

6.6 Impact on the Downtown

As discussed, prior to the renovation of the 8th Avenue historic district that commenced in the latter half of the 1990's, the downtown was largely a "9:00 to 5:00 weekday downtown", with little activity on the streets outside of these hours. Restaurants with evening dining were limited in numbers and street retail of any calibre was very limited. A good example of this condition was exemplified by the opening and subsequent bankruptcy of Bollum Books, a Vancouver based "big box" bookstore. Bollum opened its bookstore on 8th Avenue opposite the Eaton Centre in 1996, but by April 1997, the store closed due to lack of viability, and Bollum went into bankruptcy. An article on the *Globe and Mail* dated April 10, 1997, discussing the failure of Bollum stated "Mr. Bollum attributes part of his company's problems to the Calgary store, located in a downtown core where the sidewalks roll up at about 5:00 P.M., and business grinds to a halt. By contrast, he said, the Vancouver outlet did a healthy business."²⁰⁵

The renovation of the 8th Avenue historic district has had a major impact on changing this, although this did not happen overnight. The first part of the process was the renovation of the streetscape by the city to create the setting for the renovations, and the opening up of traffic in the evenings that encouraged restaurant and drinking establishments to open in the district. Developers became interested in the district and both restaurant and retail occupancies evolved. Retail was initially hard to attract due to the stigma of the Bollum Books example, and in fact the first retail tenant in the author's Alberta Hotel Building, "Out There by Bata", was unsuccessful in achieving viable sales levels, compounding the difficulty to attract significant retailers in the early stages. An important part of the process was the elimination of many marginal operators such as T-shirt shops and sub-standard restaurant and pub operators that catered to a clientele that detracted others. Although some of the initial occupants were unsuccessful and replaced with others, over the course of time the district has evolved to become a vibrant, active precinct of restaurants, drinking and entertainment establishments, and retail stores,

²⁰⁵ Ann Gibbon, "Bollum Books grows up too fast", *The Globe and Mail*, April 10, 1997, B18.

overcoming the “9:00 to 5:00 weekday syndrome” and establishing itself as a much visited pedestrian precinct.

In 2008 the City of Calgary recognized the importance of 8th Avenue as the location for retail, restaurants and “streetfront” uses. To this end the city imposed a zoning requirement that, subject to existing uses, all new uses of ground floors of buildings on 8th Avenue, from 2nd Street Southeast (Macleod Trail) to 7th Avenue Southwest must be “active uses”, that is, uses such as retail, restaurants and other types that are oriented to use by the public. This requirement was to prevent the ground floors of buildings on 8th Avenue to being devoted to “non-public” uses such as offices, a threat that was apparent at the time as office rents had escalated to exceptionally high levels. More recently, the City of Calgary and the Calgary Downtown Association commissioned a retail study by independent consultants with respect to the downtown. The study concluded that 8th Avenue was the principal street for retail uses in the downtown, and should be recognized as such.

The success of the 8th Avenue historic district has encouraged other streetfront retail and restaurant activity nearby, extending the active zone of streetfront activity to areas near the 8th Avenue historic district. This has enlarged the “activity zone” for streetfront stores, restaurants and active uses. The main impact of the rejuvenation of the Stephen Avenue historic district has been to add significant “city life” to the downtown, city life that has significantly increased not only daytime street activity, but activity that is outside of the “9 to 5” weekday, including both evenings and weekends. Stephen Avenue is now clearly the place to go for chance meetings with others of one’s “imagined communities”, and it attracts persons of every demographic and social status. It has become an important tourist destination, and is now a valuable tool in the promotion of Calgary as a place to visit, do business, or live.

Although would be difficult to establish a direct link between the revitalization of the historic district and development activity nearby, there has no doubt been significant

influence. Nearby sites just south of the Stephen Avenue historic district have recently been developed with major buildings on what would have previously been considered somewhat inferior locations, suggesting that these sites have gained favour as a result of the desirability of being close the Stephen Avenue historic district. This has included three major office buildings and a mixed use complex containing a boutique hotel, an office tower, and high-end residential condominiums above the two towers. Additionally, a considerable amount of high-rise condominium development has occurred south of the historic district in the last several years.

6.7 Summary

Although the City of Calgary together with private groups initiated several urban renewal projects that included The Calgary Convention Centre, Glenbow Museum, a Performing Arts Centre, a new Municipal Building, and Olympic Plaza, these had only nominal impact in rejuvenating the downtown. Even the later Convention Centre expansion had limited direct impact, and, although it set aside its ground floor frontage for retail uses, and its initial ground floor uses failed. Combined with the new Hyatt Hotel, however, its most direct impact was to help motivate developers to renovate the historic district. In the renovation of the historic district these various uses ultimately benefitted new occupants, particularly restaurants.

The renovation of the historic district was transformative for Calgary's downtown. The dying, run-down district became infused with active new uses that created social activity on the street. It led the downtown out of a "9:00 to 5:00 weekday syndrome" by creating the type of activity that was missing for the various reasons explained in this chapter. The overall impact has strengthened the downtown as the core of the city, not only reinforcing the desirability of the office core by adding restaurants and uses needed to complement it, but also strengthening the inner city overall for both residential uses and visitors to the city.

The historic district has become a Calgary icon and a meeting place for many, generating both a personal and collective identity and sense of pride for Calgary citizens. Without the historic district, it is unlikely the downtown would have shed its strong “9:00 to 5:00 weekday syndrome”, and, although the interior retail complexes would have still remained viable, streetfront activity would be missing.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study has been to explore and identify the unique characteristics of historic districts and the impacts that the reinvigoration of historic districts located in city centres can have in downtown revitalization as regenerators of city life. The study related to mid-sized cities in Canada and the United States. The general hypothesis explored was that reinvigorated historic districts in city centres have the capacity to generate new urban life, and can play a very important role in reinvigorating the downtown, as well as offer sustainability over the long term.

In considering the various factors involved in the general hypothesis, these subsidiary questions were apparent:

1. Can a renovated historic district, when brought back to life in an appropriate manner, achieve vitality against the dynamics of suburban competition?
2. How do the changing sociological dynamics of cities relate to the vitality of the renovated historic district?
3. Is the experience of place to be found in the renovated historic district unique and capable of regenerating urban life, and, if so, what factors are involved?
4. Is the vitality of the renovated historic district sustainable, and how does it contribute to the vitality and sustainability of the downtown over the long term?
5. What factors are involved in achieving success in dealing with historic districts?

A chapter was devoted to each of the first three topics. The study then went on to explore revitalization and sustainability of city centres and the specific role and processes involved in dealing with historic districts.

Finally, although it must be recognized that each city has its own characteristics, Calgary's historic district was studied to exemplify the factors, problems, and processes involved, and results that can be achieved.

7.2 Conclusions

7.2.1 Overcoming the Assault of Suburban Competition

Chapter Two outlined how downtowns declined in all but the largest cities of Canada and United States as cities suburbanized, with the decline accelerating in the post Second World War period as suburban roads were built and suburban alternatives to downtown were developed. Early attempts by cities to counter the decline involved addressing what were believed to be the problems - building expressways to provide better access, "urban renewal" schemes to deal with decline, more parking downtown, and so on. However, none of these fixes addressed what was really happening, namely suburban alternatives to what the downtown offered were being built where the majority of the population lived, including retail and other uses that had been indigenous to downtown, and, by the late 1960's, those categories of offices that had concluded that there was no need to be downtown. These alternatives offered not just easier access, but superior offerings in relation to what was to be found in declining downtowns. In the Calgary example, although the suburbanization of offices did not occur to the same extent as many other cities, the municipal government itself actively promoted suburban shopping near where people lived, and continuously built roads promoting suburbanization.

A key issue to downtown vitality is the presence of shopping, restaurants, drinking and entertainment facilities – in particular those facilities that would encourage the downtown working population to remain downtown outside of weekday "9 to 5" business hours or encourage return visits. In Calgary, suburbanization had provided alternatives to most of these facilities in the suburbs. In the downtown, what had evolved over the course of time was a downtown interior shopping complex connecting two department stores. However, the interior complex duplicated much of what was to be found in the suburban complexes, providing little incentive for downtown workers to remain or revisit outside

of weekday hours, (although the complex has contained, more recently, a component that caters to the affluent stratum). Restaurants catering to evening and weekend patrons were limited in the downtown. Three major movie theatres had also vacated the downtown.

The other condition was that the quantity of residential in the downtown was limited, and other shopping/ entertainment districts were to be found in the inner city residential areas outside of downtown catering to the residential in these areas. Otherwise, vitality would depend on pulling people from the suburbs, but the suburbs offered all of these services, with easier access and free parking.

The other condition that existed in the Calgary example was the lack of pedestrian streetfront activity, or lifeless streets. Calgary not only had this internal shopping complex connecting two department stores, but it also had a “Plus 15” pedestrian walkway system that interconnected the major downtown office towers, with food courts, stores and other services found in the interiors of the office buildings. These food courts, stores and services catered to the office workers during weekdays, and kept people off the streets. As well, the high-rise office towers generally had poor relationships to the street, so that streetfront pedestrian activity was sparse and generally insufficient to support viable streetfront retail throughout the office district.

The one streetfront area of activity was the four block 8th Avenue pedestrian mall whose primary base was the historic district. However, prior to the renovation of the historic district the pedestrian mall was characterized by panhandlers and social types that deterred others. It did enjoy reasonable pedestrian traffic for noontime strolls on warm weather days, but was missing the active uses that related to those that worked downtown or encouraged visits from nearby residential areas, let alone encouraged visits from those living further away.

It can be seen that there are a number of issues involved in creating a district that could compete with suburban alternatives. First and foremost is to create the setting that

encourages the types of unique active uses needed that will draw people outside of the “9 to 5” weekday hours. A key part of this is the experience of place in this setting, which will be discussed under the section on experience of place. Another part of this is dealing with the safety and social issues that discourage people from visiting. The private suburban complexes own their public space and therefore are able to control and exclude the social types that would discourage people, and in fact these social types normally gravitate to the downtowns of cities. Panhandlers in particular will gravitate to places in the downtown that are busy, if permitted. The article on San Jose referred to in Section 2.6 that discussed the success of a nearby lifestyle centre versus the failure of a downtown characterized by homeless people exemplifies the competitive disadvantage if not dealt with successfully.

In the Calgary example, this problem existed, as well as the problem of drugs, from the start of the renovation process and still exists to some degree. However it has been dealt with reasonably successfully and the current volume of people on the street makes this less of an issue. Perhaps the most effective recent action for dealing with these issues in Calgary was the introduction of “beat cops” that follow the English model of interfacing with citizens and shop-keepers in a friendly manner – the initial contingent of “beat cops” or “bobbies” were recruited from England. Nevertheless, successfully dealing with perceptions of safety and social types that deter people is a critical issue, particularly at the early stages when pedestrian traffic is lower.

The main issue, however, is to attract unique occupancies that are not found elsewhere, and, in particular, are not found in the suburbs. Restaurants are critical. Within the restored historic buildings they can provide a unique atmosphere, and outdoor patios add vitality to the street. Privately owned restaurants, versus the more family oriented restaurant chains that are generally found in the suburbs are of particular importance. Evening dining is critical to attracting business people to stay downtown or revisit. As well, with a good mix of restaurants, particularly restaurants with patios, the historic district will attract tourists, thereby strengthening their viability. Additionally, bars within

restaurants and pubs are important in helping to attract the downtown working population after business hours, people from the nearby residential areas, as well as tourists.

Stores are also another important component, particularly stores that are not duplicated elsewhere or in the suburbs. A lot of suburban shopping can today be characterized as “hurried” shopping for necessities rather than casual “pleasure” shopping, and unique stores in this latter category will distinguish the historic district from suburban alternatives. They are viable in a downtown precinct of stores since they can draw on the downtown weekday working population, attract tourists, and, if of sufficient calibre, draw people from nearby residential areas and the suburbs. However, a “critical mass” of such stores is needed to create a distinct and vibrant precinct of retail, which takes time to achieve. In Calgary example, the retail component is still evolving and strengthening.

In the Calgary example all of these uses are now found, giving the historic district great vitality, attracting those that work downtown (during weekday hours, after hours, and returning), attracting others from the inner city and the suburbs, and attracting tourists. The presence of this vitality supports and encourages interest in locating offices downtown, particularly close by, and attracting residential within walking distance.

7.2.2 Sociological Dynamics in Relation to Renovated Historic Districts

The sociological dynamics that have evolved in the recent past have had a significant influence on demand for the types of uses and activities that a renovated historic district can offer. The Creative Class, as described by Richard Florida, now represents close to one third of our working population. The Creative Class value interface with other creative people and creative people are from every ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, colour and social characteristic. They particularly value, according to Richard Florida, the type of social life that is offered by indigenous street-level culture, places with coffee shops, restaurants and bars, and other activities that might be found in a vibrant downtown. They are not deterred by street activities such as musicians, panhandlers,

performers, and passersby and find this stimulating, according to Florida. These in fact are conditions that are to be found in a vibrant historic district.

In addition, the Net Generation, those that grew up with the internet, appear to have similar characteristics, and the “networked individualism” that has evolved from this is similarly creating interface between people in the same manner as described by Florida’s Creative Class. This interface, particularly generated through the internet and electronic communications, is now spreading to older generations and similarly breaking down sociological barriers and the conditions that led to the “ghettoization” of our suburbs. However, although a proportion of the members of these groups would also be within the count of members of the Creative Class, this duplication has not been measured.

A further condition is the changing demographics of our population. Households without children living at home now represent two thirds of the households in the United States, and similar proportions are thought exist in Canada. A significant proportion of these types of households, particularly households consisting of empty nesters, never nesters and singles, are likely to favour “walkable urbanity”, or living in places where one can similarly partake in street-level culture. These conditions augur well for a growing demand for housing in the inner city, provided employment opportunities exist in the downtown and “indigenous street-level culture” is to be found.

A significant proportion of the people working in the downtown offices of Calgary would fall in the category of the Creative Class, probably a higher proportion than the overall one third suggested by Florida due to Calgary’s position as a head office city of the energy industry as well as a regional financial centre. This condition, together with the evolving “net generation” and social changes, would strongly favour the types of uses and activities found in the renovated historic district, and would be a significant factor in its vitality. As well, the changing demographics that are increasing the numbers of empty nesters, never nesters, and singles is increasing the proportion of those who would favour living downtown or in the inner city if “walkable urbanity” is to be found, together with

employment opportunities. Calgary has recently enjoyed a significant boom in high-rise apartment construction in the inner city that caters largely to these groups. Although the primary driver of this could be attributed to job opportunities downtown, there is no doubt that the vitality of 8th Avenue, which includes the historic district with its restaurants, pubs and stores, as well as the interior shopping complex, influences these decisions. A significant part of this construction has been high-rise residential developments south and south-east of the 8th Avenue historic district, and within walking distance, which has enjoyed only recent redevelopment.

7.2.3 The Experience of Place Offered by Historic Districts

The aesthetics of historic districts and sense of wholeness, particularly when renovated, provide an entirely unique setting for a precinct of active uses. The physical characteristics of a renovated historic district might be possible to copy, although not economically, but it is not possible to replicate the various elements that make it unique and provide its level of holistic experience. The organic nature in which such districts were formed provides its sense of fit and wholeness, and lends the historic district to a continuance of organic development with new uses over time. Historic districts, built before the automobile came into common use, were built for pedestrian use and are typically close-grained, human scale, usually having continuous street-fronts with high ground floors, and therefore ideally adapted to restaurants, restaurant patios, bars and pubs, retail occupancies, and a mix of uses.

A particularly important element of the sense of place is the universal appeal of the sense of history that historic districts convey, and, when renovated and brought back to life with active uses, the sense of continuity with the past. Information about the past history enhances the appeal and civic identity. Usage of the district instils meaning and collective identity to those that frequent the district, fostering civic pride and a spirit of friendliness to others that visit the district. The universal appeal of this sense of history means that the district becomes a place for not only those of one's "multiple imagined communities", but those of other segments of society. It becomes a place one desires to visit, with the

likelihood of chance meetings with acquaintances or persons from one's "multiple imagined communities". And it also becomes a place that visitors and tourists seek to visit, and tourist bureaus promote.

Another contributor is the streetscape of the historic district. In the Calgary example, the municipality provided a streetscape that consisted of new street and sidewalk finishes unique to the historic district, together with lamps, benches and street furniture with a historic theme. This unified the historic district as a distinct entity, contributing to its sense of place.

7.2.4 The Sustainability of the Historic District and its Contribution to the Vitality and Sustainability of the Downtown over the long term.

Joel Kotkin concluded that cities that have been sustainable over time had three qualities, "sacred, busy and safe". It can be seen that historic districts, when renovated and brought back to life will exhibit these same qualities, given proper management by municipal authorities. In fact, today's "non-organic" forms of development could rarely be characterized as "sacred", whereas the historic district is the one remaining component of our cities that is characterized by "sacred" when renovated and brought back to life. And, at that point, "busy and safe" are also conditions that will be realized. Thus the historic district clearly has the capacity to be "sacred, busy and safe", and thus meets Kotkin's criteria for sustainability.

The extent to which the historic district realizes its capacity to be "sacred, busy and safe" depends on how well it evolves with renovation and a mix of active uses that are unique and attract people. As discussed, simply leasing the spaces to chain stores and chain restaurants found in the suburban alternatives takes away from the uniqueness, but this is not likely to happen when there is a multiplicity of ownership. In the Calgary example, multiple ownership has resulted in a multiplicity of restaurants, pubs and stores, with only a couple of national chains that might be found in the suburbs, offering quite a variety and considerable uniqueness.

The other test of sustainability was offered by Porta and Renne by comparing the conditions of streets that had exhibited sustainability (see Section 4.11), namely sky exposure, façade continuity, softness (transparency and transitional space such as windows and visually accessible space), social width, visual complexity, more buildings, and sedibility (seating opportunities), and lack of detractors. The Calgary historic district has all of these characteristics.

Finally, safety and pedestrian comfort is of paramount importance to not only achieving success with the historic district, but making it sustainable over time. Thus the municipality has a key role in this. Without adequate policing and the feeling of safety and comfort, the success and sustainability of the historic district is in jeopardy.

The contribution of restored historic districts to downtown vitality can be significant, as exemplified by the Calgary example. Their characteristics provide an entirely unique setting for human activity at the pedestrian scale. The process of building on these characteristics through the various means described will result in a vibrant precinct of activity that counteracts the 9 to 5 weekday syndrome that characterizes the downtowns of cities that have felt the effects of suburban competition. The precinct will not only provide an incentive for those working downtown to stay or return downtown and partake in what is offered, particularly restaurants and entertainment uses, but has the capability to attract visitors from other parts of the city, as well as tourists and visitors to the city, all of which increases activity and reinforces the viability of commercial enterprises located there. As the precinct realizes its potential, this activity will have a spillover effect on the downtown, the extent of which will depend on the location of the historic district to the downtown commercial core. In the Calgary example the spillover effect has been mainly nearby the historic district, but it has also contributed to the attractiveness of other uses nearby such as the convention centre, hotels, performing arts and visual arts by changing single purpose visits to multiple purpose visits - for example, a visit to a performance or museum combined with dining in one of the restaurants in the district. The most

measurable and direct impacts in Calgary were the introduction of active street life into the downtown that had been missing due to its internalized nature, and the generation of downtown city life outside of weekday working hours that was largely missing.

The impact on the downtown is twofold. First, the activity of the historic district itself, and its spillover effect in increasing streetfront activity nearby as the historic district gains in uses and activity. This can be clearly seen in the Calgary example. Secondly, the addition of this activity increases the desirability of locating offices in the downtown, as well as residential. Locating near this area of activity becomes attractive, and this promotes development activity in the vicinity, both for offices and residential. Although there is no evidence to show a direct relationship other than an influence, in the Calgary example significant new office development did occur in the vicinity, as well as high-rise residential development within walking distance. As well as a new boutique hotel was developed adjacent to the historic district.

The overall impact of the renovated historic district on the downtown of course will relate to the convenience of the historic district's location in relation to the office core of the downtown, which in turn will have a bearing on the extent to which the historic district is visited by the downtown working population. It will also influence the extent of the spillover effect that it will have on the downtown. In the Calgary example, the historic district is within the downtown, close to major office buildings and hotels.

It can be seen that the renovated historic district, when renovated and brought back to life with appropriate uses, can be a significant regenerator of urban life in the downtown.

This process of regeneration with new active uses is not instantaneous and likely to occur over a number of years as new uses are introduced and many turn over, as was the case in Calgary. Once firmly entrenched, however, the district gains sustainability, as it gains the characteristics of Kotkin's "sacred, busy, and safe". As discussed in Section 5.2.2, Leinberger contends that once a critical mass of pedestrian-scale uses is achieved in the downtown, further redevelopment will happen on its own as streets become busier and

safer, generating further activity, and the process becomes unstoppable. As the successful historic district achieves this critical mass, it will have a spillover effect on adjacent areas. This generates sustainability of the downtown as it becomes more attractive for offices to locate there, residential to locate nearby, and for people to visit - not only those working downtown or living nearby, but those living in the suburbs as well tourists and visitors to the city.

7.2.5 The Factors Involved in Successfully Dealing with Historic Districts

Every city has its unique characteristics and historic districts will vary in nature and in location with respect to the downtown core as it has developed. As well, since the priorities and attitudes of civic authorities vary from city to city, there is no simple formula for dealing with historic districts. In the Calgary example, the municipal government itself was responsible for the large-scale demolition of historic buildings in its downtown (some six full city blocks, saving only a limited number of historic buildings in these blocks), but fortunately it left a section of historic buildings within its downtown that formed its historic district. Apart from the attitudes of civic authorities, there is also the factor of the ownerships of buildings, which will have a bearing on the process and outcome of dealing with the historic district.

However, municipal authorities have the key role in the process, although there are many instances where private developers led the way, as in Denver's Larimer Square. We have seen from the discussion that there are many approaches that civic authorities can take to deal with historic districts, ranging from restrictions, grants and incentives, to dissemination of information. Of prime importance is to first recognize the value and role that historic districts can play in revitalization, document the buildings and their history, and convey this information to the owners and the public. Secondly, develop a vision for the historic district and a strategy to foster renovation. Finally, municipal authorities are responsible for the public space comprising the district, and its management, including creating a suitable environment that creates a sense of safety, comfort and cleanliness.

Without seriously addressing these issues, private owners do not have the incentive to renovate and upgrade uses, and the potential of the historic district will be impaired.

In the Calgary example, the upgrading of the historic district started with a new streetscape having a historic theme which included new pavement and sidewalks, lamps, public seating, and other embellishments, tying the district together and providing a sense of place. Providing the streetscape set the stage for renovation, and renovation of facades was encouraged through grants. However, the time frame was considerably impaired by lack of policing and dealing with public safety and comfort issues, as well as an initial attitude that the district was to remain a pedestrian mall around the clock. What did generate interest and momentum was giving management of the pedestrian mall area to an independent public entity that actively promoted it to developers as an opportunity, and ultimately allowing evening traffic.

Thus municipality's role as a driver of the process needs to be recognized. It can set the stage with a streetscape that ties the district together, and it is responsible for the public sphere in terms of cleanliness, and creating a sense of safety and comfort through policing and management, without which it is difficult to attract the types of businesses needed to rejuvenate the district.

The other issue is the extent that the municipality controls or influences the nature of renovations to the buildings. Restoring facades of historic buildings restores the aesthetic qualities of the district, its sense of place as a district, and its sense of history. Exposing historic internal brickwork or stonework can add to the aesthetics and sense of history, even though these elements may have been originally covered by lath and plaster. However, renovations need to be "sensitive" adaptive use, recognizing that this links the present to the past, rather than attaining "museum-like" qualities that impairs achieving adaptive use. In the Calgary example the focus of the municipality was the facades, and renovation of facades to restore as much as possible the original was incentivized through the use of grants, although these renovations were flexible with respect to storefronts and

entrances to accommodate new uses. To summarize, the municipality's actions will set the pace and influence the outcome by providing and influencing the setting that will be attractive for new uses such as restaurants and stores. With this setting, property owners and developers have the conditions and thus the incentive to find these new uses.

The other condition that will influence the outcome of the process is the ownership of buildings. As discussed, a diverse ownership encourages organic development of a variety of unique uses, but diverse ownership will slow the pace of development. However, as uses gain success, this leads to demand for new users to be in the district. But it should be recognized that the process to achieve a vibrant precinct may occur over a period of many years.

7.2.6 The General Hypothesis

The general hypothesis was that reinvigorated historic districts in city centres have the capacity to generate new urban life, and can play a very important role in reinvigorating the downtown, as well as offer sustainability over the long term. We have seen from the discussion that, by virtue of the unique characteristics of the historic districts that this hypothesis has validity, but there are a number of qualifiers as to the extent that a renovated historic district will achieve these conditions. The case study on Calgary represents one city, and every city is unique in its characteristics. The next section is a set of recommendations in dealing with historic districts derived from this study, commencing with assessing the potential of the historic district to reinvigorate the downtown and offer sustainability over the long term.

7.3 Recommendations

7.3.1 Assessing the Potential

A starting point in dealing with an historic district at its initial stage is to assess its potential for generating new urban life and its potential for reinvigorating the downtown and remaining sustainable over the long term. There are several factors to be evaluated.

Location:

For the historic district to be successful and have the capacity to reinvigorate the downtown, location certainly has a bearing. If it is to influence the vitality of the downtown, it needs to be within easy walking distance from the office core, and ideally adjacent to it so that it attracts people from the core, at least initially during weekdays. In the Calgary example, although the office core is relatively spread out, the historic district is at the south side of the core, but close to a number of major office buildings. Secondly, if the downtown has an existing or remaining retail complex, proximity to this retail complex assists in the ability to attract a viable retail component to the historic district. In the Calgary example, the historic district was the original main street and it is partially adjacent to a downtown retail complex. Third, proximity to other uses such as museums and performing arts that might result in a multi-purpose trip is assistive. Finally, proximity to hotels and tourist related entities is also assistive in attracting tourists and visitors. In Calgary, at the outset the historic district was one block from a major historic hotel, the Palliser. During the period of decline, another hotel and a small convention centre was added adjacent to the historic district, although the hotel initially was not viable. However, in the year 2000 an expansion of the convention centre was added (although still relatively small) and a hotel was constructed that connected to 8th Avenue. Finally, in 2010, a boutique hotel was completed just south of the historic district. Reports from retailers in the historic district are that a significant proportion of their sales are derived from tourist and visitors to the city, which is very significant to their viability.

In Christopher Leinberger's discussion of revitalization, he proposes, based on his experience in two cities, that downtown revitalization commences with an urban entertainment district, which then makes it attractive for multi-family housing, leading to a rejuvenated office market. However, this does not remove the relevance of being within easy walking distance of offices and hotels. In the Calgary example, due to a strong office market, multi-family housing development was already occurring in nearby areas, but with entertainment and shopping precincts serving these areas. In recent years, however, multi-family development has occurred in areas close to the historic district

without other precincts serving them. Ultimately it is the downtown working population that represents the core of the downtown and provides its vitality.

Scale and Continuity:

The scale and continuity of the historic district will have an impact on its viability. A very small district would have a lessened ability to attract the variety of tenants and uses that would generate the volume visitors to provide noticeable vitality and thus it would have, on its own, little impact on rejuvenating the downtown - unless it resulted in these types of uses spilling onto adjacent areas, combining with the historic district to form one active precinct. Similarly, a district that is interrupted by spaces that do not relate to it will have more difficulty to attract suitable tenants and achieve vitality. In the Calgary example, the core historic district is close to two blocks in length, and the adjacent blocks to the east and west contain some historic buildings. The two blocks of the core historic district, with numerous smaller buildings, provide a sufficient number of restaurants, pubs and stores for a very active precinct of activity.

Physical Characteristics:

The physical characteristics of the historic district can be evaluated from several standpoints. Of primary importance are the aesthetics, assuming renovation, particularly the exteriors, and the sense of history that the district conveys. The aesthetics and sense of history will influence the extent to which the district will develop meaning and identity for the local citizenry, leading to civic pride. Aesthetics and the sense of history are also very significant in attracting tourists, which in turn contributes significantly to the viability of potential tenants or occupants.

Human Scale:

Human scale and suitability for pedestrian use and pedestrian related occupancies, particularly sidewalk cafes, are important factors. The conditions described by Porta and Renne related to sustainability in Section 4.11 describe the ideal conditions. These were: sky exposure, which indicates the street's ability to encapsulate the pedestrian; façade

continuity, which contributes to a sense of enclosure and definition; softness (transparency and transitional space such as windows and visually accessible space), being elements that can make a street or environment feel safe and welcoming; social width or the breadth of the street as it effects human interaction across the traffic area, which measures social width by taking into account the severance effect that traffic lanes and other features place on human interaction from one curb to another; visual complexity, which describes the degree to which the street has visual tapestry; number of buildings, which indicates the scale of the street in relation to the potential for human activity; and “sedibility”, or the measure of the number of seating opportunities visible. The eighth measurement was the detractors that deter street life such as blank walls, aggressive automobile facilities, and rejecting objects.

Most historic districts, having been built in the pre-automobile era, can meet many, if not all, of these qualifications when developed. The extent to which these conditions exist, or can be put in place, is assistive in evaluating the potential of the historic district. The Calgary historic district meets, to a large degree, these conditions,

Ownership and Influences on Development:

As discussed, ownership of the properties comprising the historic district will influence the pace of renovation as well as achieving the best mix of uses. On the one hand, ownership of a large proportion of the properties in the historic district by one developer can accelerate renovation, but can also result in a mix of chains that can be found in shopping malls, reducing the distinctiveness and appeal of the historic district; or, alternatively, a focus on a strata of uses that appeals to only one social category, such as high-end uses, given an appropriate location. On the other hand, diverse ownership will mean a slower evolution of renovation and uses, but is also likely to result in “organic development” of a variety of tenant types that appeal to wide mix of social categories. However, diverse ownership may include those with little capability to renovate, but when those in the development community see the potential, properties do change hands.

In the Calgary example, a significant influence on the renovation of the historic district was the promotion of the potential by the Calgary Downtown Association. Even though the historic district was still characterized by deterring social issues, developers and users that undertook restoration of individual properties were attracted.

7.3.2 Setting the Stage

The city has very critical roles in both initiating the process and achieving success in the historic district, since the city is in control of the public space. These are as follows:

Streetscape:

The streetscape is the setting for the historic district. By providing a streetscape that is unique to the historic district, this sets the historic district apart as a distinct entity. This includes not only the sidewalks and paving, but street lamps and street furniture, which needs to include public seating, and adequate waste units to prevent littering. The configuration also needs to include provision for sidewalk cafes. The width of the street will determine how it can be laid out, and a narrower street is generally more desirable. To maintain the sense of civic pride in the district, the streetscape needs to be maintained.

Pros and Cons of a Pedestrian Mall:

The disadvantage of a pedestrian mall is that, if it is not busy, panhandlers and social types that deter people will stand out, and these types will gravitate there. As well, because of the space of the mall, it will give the impression of being largely empty if there isn't a large volume of people, whereas a much smaller volume of people on sidewalks will give the impression of being busy. Busy places attract people. The other disadvantage is that one cannot drive through the district to see what is there, which reduces the exposure of the various tenants occupying the buildings. For these reasons over the past decades many attempts at pedestrian malls in various cities have been initiated and then abandoned.

In the Calgary example the four block pedestrian mall that includes the historic district was unsuccessful, and only started to achieve any viability when traffic was permitted after 6:00 P.M. The mall area has one lane of traffic and parking on one side of the street. This parking fills up quickly in the evening, but turns over, and there is a constant flow of taxis on the street looking for customers. During the patio season, the foot traffic in the daytime is mostly on the street, and the Calgary Downtown Association, which manages the mall during this period, also leases out a number of kiosks on the street to vendors of various items, reducing the area of pedestrian traffic. As well, the street is programmed by the CDA for various activities, and is the site of parades, particularly during the Calgary Stampede. It is successful as a pedestrian mall during this period, but the pedestrian mall character is more of a negative in the winter season when these activities do not occur.

It therefore needs to be recognized that designating an historic district as a pedestrian mall has pros and cons and needs to be very carefully evaluated.

Sense of Safety and Comfort:

As discussed, the city has the responsibility of maintaining a sense of safety and comfort in the historic district. This is fundamental and needs to be a strong focus of the city in the early stage when there is less pedestrian traffic. As well, cleanliness and maintenance of the streetscape are basic requirements. These issues are fundamental to competing with suburban alternates that are privately controlled and offer this environment.

7.3.3 Encouraging Renovation and Appropriate Uses

As discussed, a first step in encouraging renovation is the provision of an appropriate streetscape. However, as we have seen in the Calgary example, it was a full decade after the streetscape was installed before any renovation occurred. This can largely be attributed to the image of the pedestrian mall that, during this period, was a pedestrian mall twenty-four hours per day.

Section 5.4.2 discussed appropriate levels of intervention in historic districts and Section 5.4.3 discussed the alternatives that the city might take to deal with historic districts. It is clear that adaptive use is the primary approach, and that the exterior facades of the buildings are the primary elements to be restored to bring out the historic character as a district. Information is the starting point, and conveyance of this information to property owners is an important first step. Following this incentives for façade restoration encourage restoration to happen. The city has a critical role in both of these issues. Again, in the Calgary example, although information was available in published material on the historic district concurrent with the new streetscape, for the reasons above the restoration of facades did not happen in earnest until a decade after the streetscape was installed.

Although the city may promote restoration and renovation, the driver of the process is really the success of the new occupants. This attracts other occupants, as well as developers interested in purchasing properties for renovation and leasing to new uses. In the case of Calgary, perhaps a key driver was the announcement of the development of an expansion of the convention centre, together with a new hotel connected to 8th Avenue, which signalled confidence in the district and added support for new occupants.

However, until the point that a critical mass of uses is achieved, it is to be expected that some initial tenants or occupants will be unsuccessful, and this needs to be recognized. Restaurants, bars and pubs are likely the first occupants to be attracted, whereas stores, to be successful, need pedestrian traffic to succeed, and the presence of the restaurants, bars and pubs is highly assistive in providing this traffic and exposure. It needs to be recognized that achieving an appropriate mix takes time.

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