



A new house by McKinley Masters Custom Homes arises on the site of a demolished home in Calgary. Calgary Herald Archive

FROM J1

TEARING: Demolished houses more than \$1M

"They've got the money and they can always build what they want, so down comes the house," says Zaharko. "It's all about location and being close to the downtown."

Cameron Kraychy, president of four-year-old Rocky Point Custom Homes, has a growing file of clients who have purchased high-priced older properties in upscale neighbourhoods with the intention of tearing them down and rebuilding.

"We're seeing houses valued at \$800,000 to more than a million coming down and, in some cases, two-million-dollar ones going up," he says over the noise of heavy equipment ripping down a 40-year-old home in Eagle Ridge.

The 6,000-square-foot home, backing onto Heritage Park, will be replaced by a walk-out bungalow with 3,800 square feet on both levels.

Never having been renovated, it was bought by a young professional couple with a family who was looking to live in an established area.

"People are looking to grow roots," says Kraychy. "They're done moving around and want to settle down in a location they consider desirable and accessible."

Zaharko agrees. He says homes located along ridge areas overlooking the city are in high demand, as are those in prestigious communities like Mount Royal, Britannia, Lakeview, Eagle Ridge, Lake

Category	YTD* 2005	Sept.	YTD* 2004	Sept.
■ \$900,000-plus	140	19	45	4
■ \$700,000-\$899,999	156	19	83	7
■ \$500,000-\$699,999	519	59	259	31

*Year to date

Source: Calgary Real Estate Board

Bonaventure and Scarboro.

"It's also a function of lot availability for the size of the home some people are looking to build — and a growing number of them don't want the suburbs," says Kraychy. "Besides, there are some things a renovation won't fix."

A growing number of jobs undertaken by Burke Builders Inc. are largely such homes, says president Clarence Burke

"I had one client who bought a place for \$1.2 million and just knocked it down," he says.

"It's the land. People want to be close to downtown and are willing to pay for the privilege."

Heather Waddell, who has been working the high end of the housing market with Royal LePage for a couple of decades, says the appeal of the high end says plenty about Calgary's economic well-being.

"Inner-city knockdowns are a function of the demand for land," she says. "People used to spend a

million dollars for a home to live in. Now, a lot of them are spending it to knock it down and build something newer."

In other major Canadian cities, sales increases have not been as strong.

For the first half of this year, Calgary is up 197 per cent, followed by Winnipeg at 107 per cent, Toronto with 48 per cent and Vancouver up 18 per cent, while Ottawa slipped seven per cent, says Royal LePage.

The growing number of high-end purchases are an expression of confidence by consumers in both the national economy and housing as an investment, says Phil Soper, president and CEO of Royal LePage Real Estate Services.

"But we are also finding that luxury buyers initiate a significant amount of upgrades and renovations, improving their lifestyles while adding to the equity in their homes," he says.

OPINION

Sense of home vital to Calgary

Urban designers look at city

JIM DEWALD and BEV SANDALACK
SPECIAL TO THE HERALD

Define your "home." At one level, home is the house you live in.

However, when asked "where is your home?" while away on business or vacation, we instinctively refer to Canada, or Alberta, or Calgary.

When you meet someone at work or at the theatre, home is a quadrant of the city, a community, a neighbourhood, or maybe a well-known street.

Home has many meanings, yet it represents one thing — a distinctive sense of place. Home is where we belong.

Leading urban design researchers and practitioners recently held an international conference in Calgary called the 21st Century Cities and Urban Design Strategies Symposium.

While this event was no match for important news stories, such as the local sightings of movie star Dan Ackroyd, at stake was the creation of a set of principles that could change the way the community sense of "home" is built in the future.

Urban design is a specialized combination of architecture, planning and landscape design focused on the "public realm" — the network of streets, squares, parks, plazas and other public spaces.

When we enjoy a summer afternoon lined up for ice cream in Cochrane, a fall day wandering through the leaves in an Edgemont ravine, skating on the lagoon at Bowness Park, dancing on the spot at the Prince's Island Folk Festival, any day strolling along 17th Avenue, or pushing a stroller as we walk to the corner store, we are experiencing the public realm as a fundamental part of what we call home.

Great cities have great streets and great places, as do great communities and great neighbourhoods.

A key focus of the 21st Century Cities Symposium was addressing how new suburban communities can have a better public realm through urban design.

As noted by a senior city official attending the symposium, more than 90 per cent of Calgary's population growth is accommodated in new suburban communities.

Yet, creating meaningful public places in new communities is a challenge because successful public places are often brought to life through mixed-use activities (such as shopping, work, and arts mixed in with housing).

When they are first developed, most new communities only have housing, with shopping well down the road, and only in a few instances are arts and places to work added into the mix.

If places are not designed and developed to include this mix of uses at the beginning, then they need to be adaptable to change over time as

communities evolve — a more difficult task.

Effective urban design achieves this challenge by gracefully adapting to an ever-changing variety of programs, activities, and events, and by attempting to include enough of a mix of uses so that most of the day-to-day needs can be accommodated within easy walking distance of most residents.

It also emphasizes development of high quality public streets with sidewalks, trees, and places to walk to. These are some of the places where we develop strong ties to our communities, and also where we are more likely to meet our neighbours.

Good urban design also attempts to provide a link between the natural landscape and the built form of our communities.

Calgary has a wonderful diversity of landscapes, from river forest to rolling grassland, with dramatic views of mountains and prairies.



Jim Dewald

Neighbourhoods that incorporate natural landscape or topography into their design seem to have a better "fit" and are places that we seem to be able to develop stronger ties.

New community examples are as diverse as the commercial street in Garrison Woods or Fisherman's Lake in Elbow Valley.



Bev Sandalack

There is no formula for great urban design — in fact, what is required is a blend of sensory attention to the unique characteristics of each place and a focus on the development of a high quality public realm, equal to the at-

attention that we spend on our private properties.

This kind of design is more likely to produce special places with a true and unique sense of place.

You are probably reading this article on a Saturday morning at home. Some time during this day, you may go shopping, visiting, or out for an evening of entertainment.

When you head toward home, try to notice the exact point when your senses tell you that it feels like home. Great urban design should create that feeling many times in many places of our city.

That's what makes cities great.

BEV SANDALACK IS ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AND CO-ORDINATOR OF THE URBAN DESIGN PROGRAM IN THE FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY AND DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN LAB, AN AWARD-WINNING, INTER-DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH GROUP. SHE IS A LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT AND PLANNER WITH A PHD IN URBAN DESIGN. SHE IS DEPUTY CHAIR OF BOTH THE CALGARY URBAN DESIGN REVIEW PANEL AND THE EAST VILLAGE URBAN DESIGN REVIEW PANEL, PAST PRESIDENT OF THE ALBERTA ASSOCIATION OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS, AND COMPETITIONS CHAIR OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS. JIM DEWALD IS A PARTNER IN PETERS DEWALD LAND COMPANY AND AN INSTRUCTOR AND A PHD CANDIDATE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY. SANDALACK AND DEWALD WERE MEMBERS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE THAT RECENTLY ORGANIZED THE 21ST CENTURY CITY AND URBAN DESIGN STRATEGIES SYMPOSIUM.

TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY.

HOW ARE YOU SPENDING YOURS?

YOU CAN (TRULY) LIVE...

- 15 MINUTES TO DOWNTOWN
- 2 MINUTES TO THE WESTSIDE RECREATION CENTRE
- 3 MINUTES TO PRIVATE & PUBLIC SCHOOLS
- 2 MINUTES TO STRATHCONA SHOPPING
- 5 MINUTES TO WEST HILLS SHOPPING

...IN THIS ESTATE COMMUNITY

Developer Direct Sales:
Mon. - Fri. 9am - 5pm
Sat. & Sun. 12pm - 5pm
53 Aspen Ridge Way SW 242-2072

Aspen Estates
Address of Distinction
a QuinnCorp Community

www.aspenestates.ca

IT ALL UNFOLDS HERE

CALL 235-7323 TO SUBSCRIBE

IT ALL UNFOLDS HERE

CALL 235-7323 TO SUBSCRIBE

FREEDOM to imagine.

open your imagination.

Baywest HOMES

CANSTON (SE) 257.1366
TUSCANY (NW) 239.3163
AUBURN BAY (SE) 257.1544
CRYSTAL GREEN (OKOTOKS) 938.2033

BAYWESTHOMES.COM

Residential construction workers help build a house by Homes by Avi in Garrison Woods.

Calgary Herald Archive