

Commuter choices easing traffic

Lessons could guide city planning

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SPECIAL TO THE HERALD

If you Google 'cars and the environment', about 32 million results are returned.

Indeed, many people are concerned — well, frankly, mad as hell — about the impact that car emissions are having on our environment.

This concern is heightened because most North American cities continue to build more and more freeways, which only encourages sprawl patterns of growth.

At the same time, others argue that vehicle emissions will not be the downfall of our society, and that we should continue with our patterns of sprawl growth in pursuit of free travel choices for all individuals.

These proponents either contend that global warming is fictitious or that human brilliance will invent a solution to solve our environmental woes.

We'll withhold our opinion, but either way, truthfully no one can be completely sure what the future holds.

However, one thing that is absolutely certain is that major roads or freeways can have a devastating impact on the public realm and social character of a community.

City form and quality has always been closely tied to transportation methods — from the first location of the railway station and railway line that influenced the location of the downtown as well as the warehouse district; to the denser neighbourhoods and commercial streets that grew up around these fixed routes of the street-cars; to the post-war suburbs that were made possible by the new reliance on private cars coupled with the emphasis on road building; to today's coarser urban grain created by freeways and

large sector development.

Although it might seem as if we are on a one-way street to even more dependency on the car, consider this example of how the public realm was saved or possibly enhanced in the face of possible destruction.

Recently, the City of Calgary completed a 10-year review of the Calgary Transportation Plan.

Among the more interesting findings, the report notes that over the past 10 years the job growth in downtown nearly doubled city expectations, yet no new roads were built to service the downtown.

Instead, commuters are voluntarily making alternative choices such as walking, cycling, transit, and simply avoiding peak hours.

Without these behavioural changes, the report determined that the city would have required an additional 19 lanes of traffic, or four additional

Centre Street Bridges to service the growth.

Yes, nineteen lanes.

Engage your imagination and picture what would happen to Kensington with another six or so lanes of traffic down 10th Street.

Imagine Centre Street or 9th Avenue through Inglewood with another six or eight lanes.

No doubt for you, as for us, this is incomprehensible.

Some of our city's most precious shopping, walking, meeting, dining, and entertainment districts would simply be devastated.

Why were they saved? Through simple voluntary behavioural choices of unnamed everyday heroes — people who contribute to our downtown vitality without compromising the quality of the adjacent neighbourhoods.

Now, consider the awesome power that all 956,000 Calgarians have through our collective behavioural choices.

If Calgarians can choose, during this period of unprecedented growth, to save the unique character areas around 10th



Jim Dewald



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Major roads can have a big impact on the public realm and social character of a community.

Street NW., Centre Street N., and 9th Avenue S.E., why stop there?

Think of the impact that some concentrated effort would have on some of the other threatened important areas in our city.

For instance, would the city really come to a standstill if 11th and 12th Avenues SW. were made more people friendly?

Could the lessons of downtown growth without the need for destructive and expensive major roads provide guidance for new development in suburban locations?

Maybe we can get by without major divided roadway entrances into each and every new community?

Indeed, fewer lanes and less space devoted to costly traffic infrastructure would be a more efficient use of taxpayers' money as it would surely reduce operating and maintenance costs.

We are sure that there is a better way — a way that saves taxpayer money, that includes streets with beauty,

charm, and character (rather than just roads for traffic), and enhances the public realm by taking back the streets to serve their multiple purposes of circulation, transportation, commerce, socialization and culture, rather than the single purpose of traffic movement.

Let's learn from the results of our downtown growth that allows vehicles to participate without ceding to their domination.

Let's find the middle road (please pardon the pun).

OF THE URBAN DESIGN PROGRAM IN THE FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY, DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN DESIGN LAB, AND DEPUTY CHAIRWOMAN OF THE CALGARY URBAN DESIGN REVIEW

PANEL JIM DEWALD IS A PARTNER IN PETERS DEWALD LAND COMPANY AND AN INSTRUCTOR AND DOCTORATE CANDIDATE IN THE HASKAYNE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY. BEV AND JIM HAVE MADE IT A MISSION TO ENGAGE URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES AS THE METHODOLOGY FOR PLANNING, DESIGNING, AND CREATING CALGARY COMMUNITIES.

ALSO SEE

■ Downtown plan goes 'holistic'

J11



A jogger uses the the bike path along the Bow River near Fort Calgary.

THE THINGS THAT HELP US REMEMBER MAKE GARRISON GREEN HARD TO FORGET.

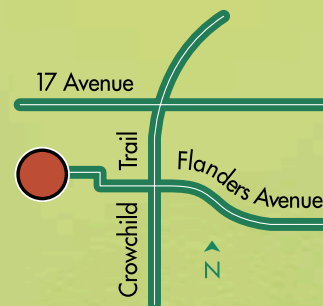
FOR DECADES, CFB Calgary was home to thousands of men and women who had dedicated their lives to bring peace to Canadians and others around the world. This legacy of heroism is honoured in Garrison Green, Calgary's most exciting new urban community.

Distinguished memorials, extraordinary statues and even custom street signs are seamlessly integrated into the community along with three completed parks featuring over six acres of green space. Lush landscaping highlighted by 50 year-old trees and quiet walking paths complement beautiful Tudor, Colonial, Craftsman, Prairie and Victorian homes by Calgary's finest builders. All just nine minutes from downtown, with convenient access to amenities and schools.

Garrison Green's pledge to build for the future while honouring the past gives the community a distinctive character you'll find nowhere else in Calgary.

FEATURED BUILDERS

- Albi Homes 249-0924
- Artisan Homes 217-3590
- Aspire Condo Living 723-7640
- Carriage Homes 240-7833
- Homes by Avi 246-4979
- Sandlewood Developments 249-9958



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HOME BUYER HELP

The following is a list of some organizations that new home owners may find useful. Websites are in parentheses:

- **Accessible Housing Society** — 282-1872; e-mail info@ahscalgary.ca (www.ahscalgary.ca).
- **Alberta Home Builders' Association** — 1-780-424-5890, or 1-800-661-3348; (www.ahba.ca/).
- **Alberta One Call** — for the location of buried lines and utilities, 1-800-242-3447; (www.alberta1call.com).
- **Calgary Region Home Builders' Association** — 235-1911; (www.crhba.com).
- **Calgary Transit** — 262-1000; hard of hearing, 268-8087; (www.calgarytransit.com).
- **Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp.** — 515-3000; (www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/).
- **City of Calgary** — main switchboard, 268-2111; (www.calgary.ca).
- **Enmax** — 310-2010; (www.enmax.com).
- **Federation of Calgary Communities** — 244-4111; (www.calgarycommunities.com).
- **National Home Warranty** — Calgary office, 278-5665, toll-free 1-888-776-7707; (www.nationalhomewarranty.com).
- **Professional Home Builders Institute of Alberta** — 216-8310 in Calgary, or 1-888-325-9999. (www.phbia.com)
- **The Alberta New Home Warranty Program** — Calgary office, 253-3636; (www.anhwp.com).
- **TransAlta Utilities** — 1-800-667-2345.
- **Urban Development Institute** — 531-6250 (www.udicalgary.com).