

## URBAN DESIGN AT THE FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

The Faculty of Environmental Design received approval in November of 2002 to offer a graduate program in Urban Design. This is a studio-based program consisting of the faculty interdisciplinary core, a series of studios, electives plus a Masters Degree Project. Students will receive the degree Master of Environmental Design (Urban Design), making this program only the second graduate program in Urban Design in Canada. The start of this program represents the formalisation of the long standing interests that the Faculty has had in Urban Design, and provides the opportunity for students to acquire the skills and knowledge that will prepare them for the growing number of opportunities in private and public sectors. The program will be of interest to early or mid career professionals wishing to acquire additional expertise or credential in Urban Design, to students with a baccalaureate design degree interested in graduate studies in urban design, and also to students with a non design baccalaureate degree interested in pursuing a first design degree. Individual student programs of study will depend on background and interests.

The Faculty of Environmental Design offers graduate programs in Architecture, Environmental Science, Industrial Design, Planning and Urban Design, and a PhD program in Environmental Design. All EVDS programs collaborate in an interdisciplinary core of courses, including the opportunity to participate in the Barcelona study term abroad, and share common facilities and a diverse group of faculty members.

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**Tsenkova, S. (2002) (ed) Urban Regeneration:**

## LEARNING FROM THE BRITISH EXPERIENCE.

Calgary: University of Calgary/Faculty of Environmental Design.

The research addresses one of the most significant challenges in post-industrial cities the need to rebuild local economies, communities and places through comprehensive planning policies. Drawing on the British experience, it provides a much-needed evaluation of the evolution of urban regeneration policies in four cities and their contribution to the creation of places that are economically competitive and socially sustainable (Fig.1).

### **Definition**

Urban regeneration is a comprehensive and integrated vision and action to address urban problems through a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area. Given its emphasis on partnership and strategic approach, it can perform an enabling role in achieving sustainability.

### **Objectives and Methodology of the Research**

The study aims at exploring regeneration outcomes in a comparative perspective using evidence from several urban centers in England. The research is guided by the following objectives:

- To analyze the evolution of the partnership framework and regeneration processes implemented in England since the 1950s;
- To evaluate the results of urban regeneration policies in London, Manchester, Leeds and Brighton with an emphasis on economic, social, environmental, and physical impacts;
- To identify the main elements of a successful public-private partnership model in the context of urban regeneration.

The methodology combined qualitative and quantitative research methods. A literature review was conducted to bring together theoretical concepts and perspectives on urban regeneration and public-private partnerships. The analysis of secondary sources of information on the topic and discussions with experts working in the field of urban regeneration assisted the development of an analytical framework for the research and the selection of conceptually appropriate case studies. The selection process was based upon the following criteria:

- Case studies that would allow the exploration of a diversity of regeneration programs addressing a variety of social, economic, environmental and physical problems;



Figure 1  
Regeneration Challenges  
in Butlers Wharf, London



Figure 2  
Enterprise Zone at  
Safford Quays,  
Manchester

# Faculty of Environmental Design News & Current Research

Tsenkova, S. (2002) (ed) *Urban Regeneration: Learning from the British Experience*. Calgary: University of Calgary/Faculty of Environmental Design.

- Case studies with regeneration results and achievements that were recognized as successful by scholars, public officials, community groups and the business community;
- Case studies where regeneration was delivered through public-private partnership which allowed the results of regeneration efforts to be sustained over time.

In summary, the focus was on successful urban experiences with regeneration programs, where diversity of approaches, sustainability of results and partnerships were the key. The case study approach was selected to illustrate the diversity of results as they relate to urban policy evolution in general, and the shift from welfare planning regimes to market based planning policies (Fig.2). Site visits of selected urban regeneration schemes were conducted during a two-week field study course in England in April-May, 2000. The field work focused on data collection and documentation of results in London, Brighton, Manchester and Leeds. In-depth interviews and discussions were carried out with a variety of stakeholders -- leading planning and industry professionals, project directors, developers and government representatives -- participating in urban regeneration schemes.

### **Conclusion: Key Factors for Success**

Unlike earlier *ad hoc* attempts to develop and implement urban regeneration in England, recent programs and strategies for change have emphasized strategic approaches. A clear vision is fundamental to urban regeneration and is likely to continue to be a hallmark of successful

regeneration projects. However, the shift in ideology also implies the need for strategic long-term resource commitments, which still appears to be beyond the delivery capabilities of many public and private sector bodies. The case studies suggest that 'top down' approaches have been replaced by 'bottom up' initiatives and diverse public/private partnership models that create collaborative synergies and ensure the sustainability of urban regeneration efforts (Fig.3 and 4). With the apparent risk to oversimplify a wide diversity of partnership arrangements, three broad categories have been identified: i) property development coalitions, ii) strategic alliances with local authorities, and iii) community-based partnerships (Fig. 5).

Successful regeneration seems to involve a process of balanced incremental development, in which a combination of pilot projects and flagship schemes is used to attract and establish new uses for redundant space. Proactive planning concerned with economic and social, rather than just physical and or environmental development can assist the process. Although each city/place is unique, five key factors are instrumental for success:

- Partnerships are the *modus operandi* of urban regeneration and have proved to be a powerful vehicle for accelerating the process of change;
- The public sector has a key role in providing strong leadership, and needs to ensure that positive synergies arise from different strategies and programs;
- Public investment is a catalyst for change, regeneration should provide a ladder of opportunities for private sector involvement and community participation;
- Regenerating people, rather than places, although difficult to achieve, needs to be the primary goal of regeneration initiatives;
- Sustainability of results is the key.

Figure 3  
New Housing, Royal Docks London



Figure 4  
Rebuilding the Industrial  
Heritage in Leeds

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Figure 5  
Hulme City Challenge,  
Manchester

## Lessons from the British Experience

Urban regeneration has taken a back seat in the overall political agenda for change and action in Canada. Canadian cities experience similar processes of dramatic economic and social transformation, however, little is done to redirect planning and policy efforts to the problems of inner cities. Cities need a long-term approach to economic development and regeneration policy that will systematically improve economically and socially deprived areas. Urban regeneration could become a champion of sustainable cities and/or provide a comprehensive framework for the implementation of sustainable development principles. Based on the British experience, the following actions need to be considered:

- Strengthen the strategic role of municipalities in regeneration activities by empowering them to become efficient facilitators of regeneration efforts;
- Improve the coherence of urban programs at the national and provincial level, emphasize coordination across and within government departments to achieve better results;
- Improve targeting of resources through integrated programs of physical, economic and social measures for the benefit of people and places;
- Create more effective coalitions and strategic alliances within localities encouraging long-term, collaborative, sustainable partnerships with the private and non-government sector.
- Plan and deliver a comprehensive package of regeneration benefits to local people and communities.

In summary, this is the first study on international urban regeneration experiences carried out in Canada. It pioneers new areas of planning research. Its research findings contribute to the on-going theoretical debates on public-private partnerships and the strategic role of planning in post-industrial cities as well as provide important insights into the dynamic relationships between urban policies, planning and markets. More importantly this policy/practice-oriented research has identified planning policies that would yield the most desirable results, both in terms of performance and in creating a well-designed built environment.

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[http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/faculties/EV/designresearch/projects/Urban\\_Regeneration/index.html](http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/faculties/EV/designresearch/projects/Urban_Regeneration/index.html)

Photographs: Dr. Sasha Tsenkova  
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## BIOGRAPHY



Sasha Tsenkova is an Associate Professor in International Development in the Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Calgary. Over the last 20 years, Dr. Tsenkova has been involved in consulting, research and teaching in the areas of urban planning, housing policy and urban development. She has extensive experience working with different research institutes, government agencies and international organizations. Please refer to <http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/faculties/EV/> for more information.

by Tim Blair

## STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECT SAMPLE

### The Bicycle Compatibility of Streets in Downtown Calgary

The bicycle is the most efficient mode of transport yet devised. It is healthful, quiet and pleasurable, while also the most common and universally accessible mode of travel worldwide. Its increased use as a transportation method in western cities would help to alleviate traffic congestion, improve air quality, and increase the carrying capacity of streets without major capital investments.

This paper attempts to evaluate current streetscape conditions from the perspective of cyclists. Specifically, analysis focuses on the overall safety and usability of streets for the purposes of bicycle travel through the use of an operational model. The model comparatively rates street sections and intersections, identifying those that are best suited for cycling in terms of physical conditions and other characteristics.

The analysis was undertaken in an effort to further understanding of the applicability of mathematical models in assessing roadway suitability for urban cyclists, users of transportation facilities that were generally not designed with their needs in mind. Bicycles are permitted and expected on almost all public roadways, yet there is little infrastructure in place to facilitate their use.

This case study focuses on the downtown core of Calgary Alberta, an area that currently has no bicycle-specific on-street facilities. The study area also lacks recommended routes for cyclists while being the single largest destination for bicycle users in the city (up to 2500 one-way trips/day). The bicycle is the fastest growing mode for trips to and from Calgary's downtown; the area is home to more than 100,000 jobs yet fewer than 10,000 residents.

Results of the model in Calgary allow a comprehensive analysis of downtown conditions and suggest recommendations for bicycle route designations based on the ratings achieved. The results also pinpoint problem areas and conflicts between roadway users which allow a prioritization of changes to traffic management in the core.

#### The Model

The model used in this study is a formula developed by Jeff Davis (a traffic engineer interested in bicycle safety prediction modeling) in 1987. It uses data such as Average Daily Traffic, Curb Lane Width, Traffic Speed, along with operational (parking, land use) and surface condition (bumps, drainage grates) measurements to produce a rating for each street section with similar characteristics. Another formula is used to evaluate intersection conditions for the cyclist, and the two types of results are averaged to produce overall ratings along entire streets.

The Davis model is useful in identifying which streets are most safe, comfortable, or usable for cyclists in a general sense. It does not attempt to interpret the responses of individuals and how safe or comfortable they might feel while cycling. Neither does it account for which routes are the most

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The Bicycle Compatibility of Streets in Downtown Calgary

direct or best connected, and therefore of most value for commuter type cyclists. The model is used to predict average conditions in off-peak hours: it is a general measurement of compatibility that a cyclist can expect to encounter. The rating categories for streets and intersections are set out in Exhibit 1.

While some changes were made to the model to simplify its application (dropping factors that did not exist in Calgary or did not vary across the study area) and some changes were made to increase its accuracy, not all factors that could possibly affect the cyclist could be considered. For example, using actual or 85th percentile speed instead of posted speed would provide much more accurate ratings.

However, the difficulty associated with collection and treatment of this data for an urban area was prohibitive for this study. It is perhaps not possible to account for all of the potential variables that might affect cyclists while they are using a public street, due to the high variability of bicycle rider skill and age, as well as the number of environmental factors at play on busy streets.

The results of this model can assist the transportation practitioner in recommending routes for cyclists, prioritizing traffic flow modifications, street repairs, or the construction of bicycle specific facilities. The results can also be used by cyclists to make decisions with respect to route choice.

### The Case Study

The downtown core of Calgary is approximately 11 x 9 blocks. This area comprises the study area because it is the business core, and therefore highly trafficked: it is a major destination and hub of activity for many users. It encompasses many commercial towers, some as high as 55 stories. There are also several residential towers ranging up to 25 stories. Multi-level parking structures, various commercial and public buildings, surface parking lots, urban parks, and "+15" overhead walkways (which connect adjacent buildings over the street at the level of the second floor) also typify the downtown built environment.

The on-street environment is typical, by North American standards, with a combination of unidirectional and bi-directional surface roads running roughly north-south and east-west. Block sections range from 50-120 meters long. The number of lanes ranges from as few as one (per direction) to as many as six (one way) at peak periods. Most intersections are signal controlled, and the bulk of traffic flows east and west, owing to the area being sandwiched between the Bow River to the north and the Canadian Pacific Railway line to the south.

### Results

The application of the Davis model returns a rating for each street section (block) and intersection for each direction. These are normally averaged along entire streets so that adjacent routes can be compared for their relative cycling suitability.

In the study area, results ranged from -0.7 to 8.3 for street sections, and 1.3 to 6.9 for intersections. This means that there are a wide range of ratings, from "poor" to "excellent" in the downtown core, though most are rated below 4.0 and are thus "excellent". Intersection

#### DAVIS MODEL RATING CATEGORIES

<u>Value</u>	<u>Rating</u>	<u>Descriptor</u>
0-4	Excellent	Extremely favorable
4-5	Good	Conducive, yet not unrestricted
5-6	Fair	Marginal desirability
6+	Poor	Questionable desirability

*Exhibit 1. High Index values indicate poor cycling conditions. Negative values (as low as -1) may also be returned, indicating particularly favorable conditions.*



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ratings are typically very similar to those for adjoining street sections. See Exhibit 7 for the ratings for all downtown street sections.

Several points affect how the results might be interpreted, and must be addressed. First, the results represent average conditions: they are representative of average yearly traffic flows, and can only be considered accurate for weekday, non-peak hours because of altered street parking conditions that change traffic flows at peak hours and on weekends. Secondly, the rating categories devised by Davis and also used in Calgary are meant to allow streets to be comparatively assessed. They are not intended to serve as absolute indicators of whether a street is usable by certain types of riders: personal comfort in urban cycling conditions is a matter of experience level, familiarity, and a combination of other factors. This study does not attempt to account for this type of variable.

### Recommendations

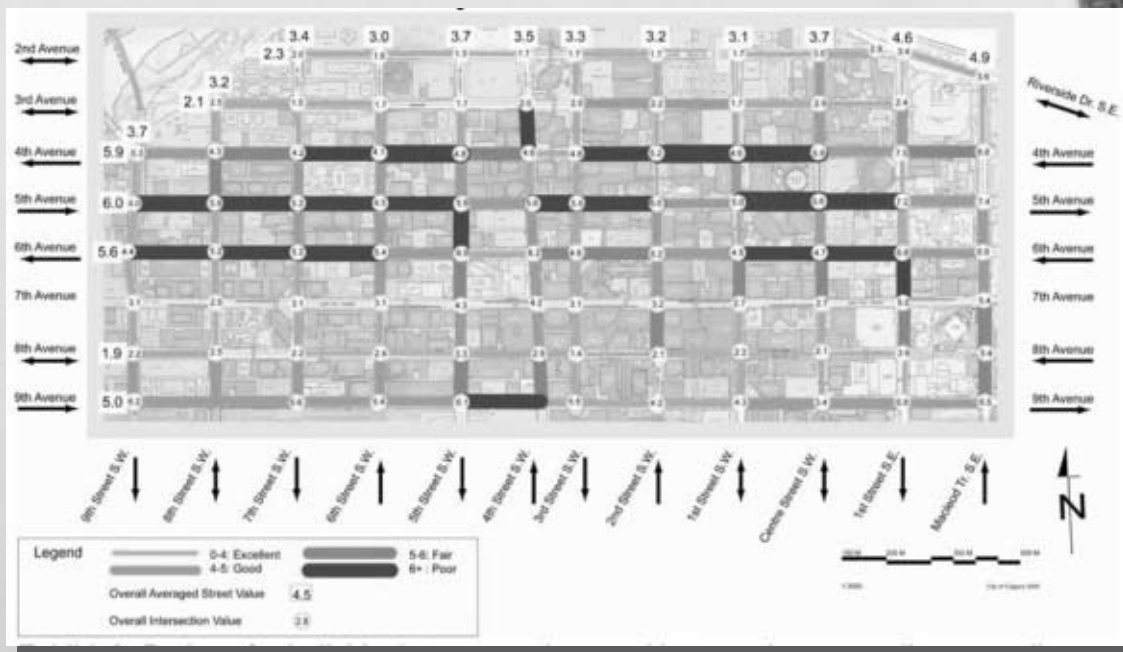
Recommendations stemming from this study are of two types: potential recommended routes in the core identified as the most favorable cycle axes, and the pinpointing of specific locations identified as having obvious deficiencies for cyclists.

The recommended routes from a planning perspective are streets and avenues with the best ratings which also feature good connectivity to regional pathways and to other parts of the city while providing adequate coverage of the core. Accessing the core by any transport mode will likely require



▲ Exhibit 2. Typical on-street environment in Downtown Calgary. Note how part of the parking lane might be used by the cyclist, yet might also present hazards such as opening car doors and cars accessing the roadway.

▼ Exhibit 3. Ratings for individual street sections and intersections as well as overall ratings for entire streets (these ratings include intersection)



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The Bicycle Compatibility of Streets in Downtown Calgary

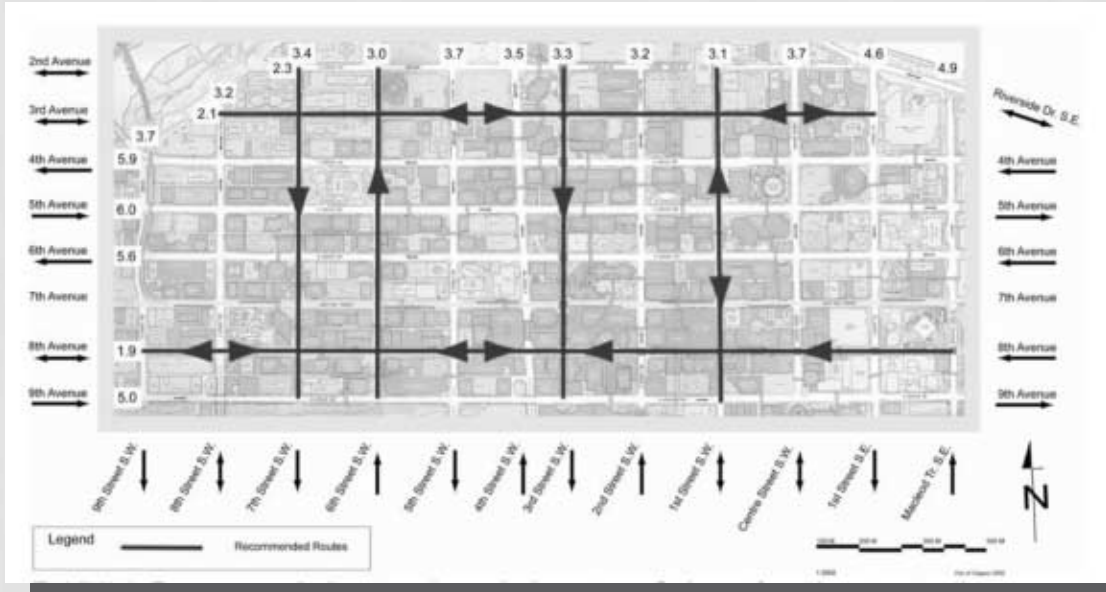


Exhibit 4:  
Recommended routes through  
downtown Calgary & entire street  
ratings

that a certain portion (the last part) be made on foot, since it is rare that a bus stop or parking spot is located precisely at the end point of a trip. Using the routes recommended in this study will allow a cyclist to come within two blocks of any downtown destination by bicycle. The remainder of the trip can be made on foot or on streets that do not form a part of the recommended route system.

Certain specific problems with bicycle compatibility were identified while completing the fieldwork portion of this study. The poorest-rated street sections are often an indicator of the location of these specific issues, though not always. The most obvious problems were street sections with very narrow curb lane widths, unexpected narrowing points, and streets with serious surface quality irregularities.

For example, loading zones that narrow the available lane width considerably when they are in use can present a hazard to cyclists, but since they are not always in use the problem is only occasional in nature. Some Calgary-specific signal peculiarities, such as dual turn lanes, also pose a hazard for cyclists in a general sense, but were not judged to be deficiencies that warranted highlighting because they are very common across the study area and can be successfully negotiated by the confident cyclist.

Recommendations made in this report focus on resolving issues related to curb lane width on Centre Street, 1st Street SW, and 9th Avenue SW; lane striping continuity with respect to curb lane width between blocks; and surface irregularities on Barclay Mall and 3rd Avenue SW. Improved cooperation between traffic signals, parking, and transit operations at the City of Calgary would help to alleviate some of these issues.

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The Bicycle Compatibility of Streets in Downtown Calgary



*Exhibit 5. Local deficiency associated with narrow curb lane width on 6th Avenue S.W. at Centre Street, leaving very little space for motorists to overtake cyclists.*

## Conclusions

Recommended routes through downtown Calgary would help to complete the current cycling map, which effectively abandons users when they reach the core perimeter, and would improve transportation options for commuters and local residents alike. The specific problems uncovered here could for the most part be addressed without adversely affecting other road users, and would improve conditions for cyclists as well as other road users even at current traffic levels.

Short of the implementation of bicycle-oriented facilities on all streets, or provisions such as universal wide curb lanes, total accessibility for all cyclists to downtown Calgary (or to any area) is unattainable. Highlighting recommended routes through the core, simple changes made at certain locations, and potentially the construction of specific facilities on a few axes to improve on current conditions and connect to the pathway system would be a logical step towards increased integration of bicycles on downtown Calgary streets.

The modified Davis model has been proven to be a useful, easy to apply tool for evaluating roadway conditions. When adapted to local conditions, the model used here is a useful tool for transportation practitioners who wish to assess the state of their streets for cyclists.

*For additional information on student research projects, past and present, please see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/faculties/EV>*

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by Gary Weikum

# Building Bridges through Public Involvement

**BRIDGES** often become unique architectural features in the built environment. The uniqueness associated with bridges is the result of several factors. Bridges are used to span topographic and geographic features. Bridges cross rivers, span valleys and provide grade separation for simultaneous activities. Bridges symbolize the creative problem solving skills of humans to cross barriers using various materials and design techniques. Bridges are features that can stand in distinct contrast or be absorbed into the surrounding environment, due to their height, shape, materials and colours. Roadway, railway or pedestrian trail bridges may offer variety and contrast to otherwise linear transportation features, by creating vertical relief and opportunities for vistas and views. Thus the unique character and location of bridges often results in bridges becoming visual statements, by design or default.

In 2000, the City of Lethbridge completed the Coalbanks Crossing, a 275 meter long pedestrian bridge across the Oldman River. The design concept for the bridge was directed by a citizen steering committee that used aspects of social learning theory to ensure the bridge reflected the

social, physical, environmental and economic values of the residents of Lethbridge. The political acceptance and public reception to the new bridge reflects on the successful public involvement process during the design phase.

The City of Lethbridge is divided by the Oldman River. In 1999, the major river crossing for automobiles consisted of a 4-lane arterial divided arterial with a posted speed of 90km/hr. Approximately 30,000 vehicles per day cross the river at this location. Provision for pedestrians to cross the river was via a 1.5 meter wide walking surface on the bridge deck, separated from the traffic lanes by jersey barrier. The walking experience at this time was less than desirable. Due to the need to accommodate additional automobile traffic, an opportunity arose to construct a stand-alone pedestrian

The physical context for the pedestrian bridge is the Oldman River valley. The valley is approximately 1.5 kilometers wide and 300 meters deep within the City of Lethbridge. The valley walls are characterized by undulating grass-covered coulee slopes. Spanning the valley is the CPR High Level bridge touted as the largest of its kind in the world. Constructed in 1908, the High Level Bridge has become a landmark structure and significant symbol for Lethbridge. The river valley is also the largest park within the City containing more than 1,000 hectares of land used primarily for nature conservation purposes.



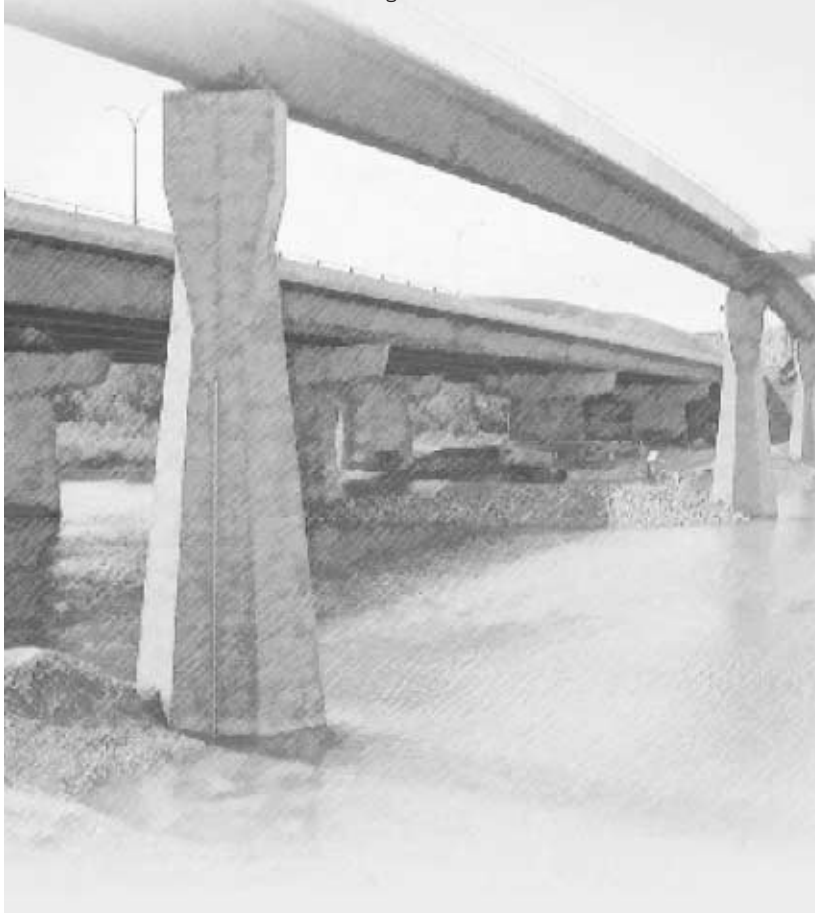
Upon initial review of the potential issues related to a pedestrian bridge, it was determined that significant public involvement in the design was critical. For example, social issues regarding safety and comfort for a bridge in a remote location; physical design challenges related to seasonal variation in river levels; environmental concerns associated with sensitive riverine areas; and limited funding sources were identified early in the planning process. Consequently, it was decided to consult with the public and create a design process that would ensure all citizen issues would be identified and addressed.

A multi-disciplinary team was assembled with representation from architecture, landscape architecture, bridge engineering, hydrology, geo-technical engineering, city planning, environmental assessment and transportation. The team convened a public meeting with Lethbridge residents to determine first, if a pedestrian bridge was viewed as necessary and second, to assess the level of public involvement desired by the community. The result of the initial meeting led to the creation of a citizen steering committee to guide conceptual design of the bridge. Representation on the committee included a high school student, college student, university student, senior citizen, bicycle and runners organizations, father of young family, environmental advocate, Alberta Environment representative and several citizens-at-large.

The citizen steering committee was provided a short course in architecture related to bridge design. The architecture background provided the basis for a discussion on the preferred location for the bridge. Reviews of pedestrian movements, pathways and major destinations suggested that the new bridge should be in close proximity to the automobile bridge for security and convenience, but just far enough away to reduce disturbances from fast moving automobile traffic.

The committee then reviewed several hundred slides from bridges around the world. Committee members provided feedback on the various bridge designs and through the discussion, a clear set of values emerged which suggest the new bridge should be designed as a slender, sleek, elegant structure that blended with the river valley environment. Other words that provided instructions to the designers included subtle, transparent, soft and graceful lines. The committee specifically instructed the designers to not create a bold landmark structure. Rather the design was not to compete with the existing High Level bridge, nor was the new bridge to add clutter to the river valley. Safety, security, comfort and economy were also thoroughly discussed and provided as additional design objectives.

In response to the committee input, the designers then prepared a conceptual design that was immediately embraced by the participants. The design consisted of a girder bridge that was curved horizontally and arched vertically. The simple concept met a wide range of committee desires. The bridge lands lightly on either side of the river utilizing the abutments of the existing automobile bridge. This resulted in budget savings by using existing earthwork and also reduced the need to disturb the adjacent riverine environment. The bridge then curves horizontally away from the existing traffic bridge to separate pedestrians from the nuisances created by fast moving automobiles. The bridge is arched and arises above the elevation of the adjacent automobile bridge. The arch allows pedestrians an uninterrupted 360-degree panoramic view of the river valley. A viewpoint with seating area was provided at the apex of the arch. A handrail designed with thin vertical pickets allows



by Gary Weikum

## BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

# BIOGRAPHY

### **Gary Weikum, MA, MCIP, ACP**

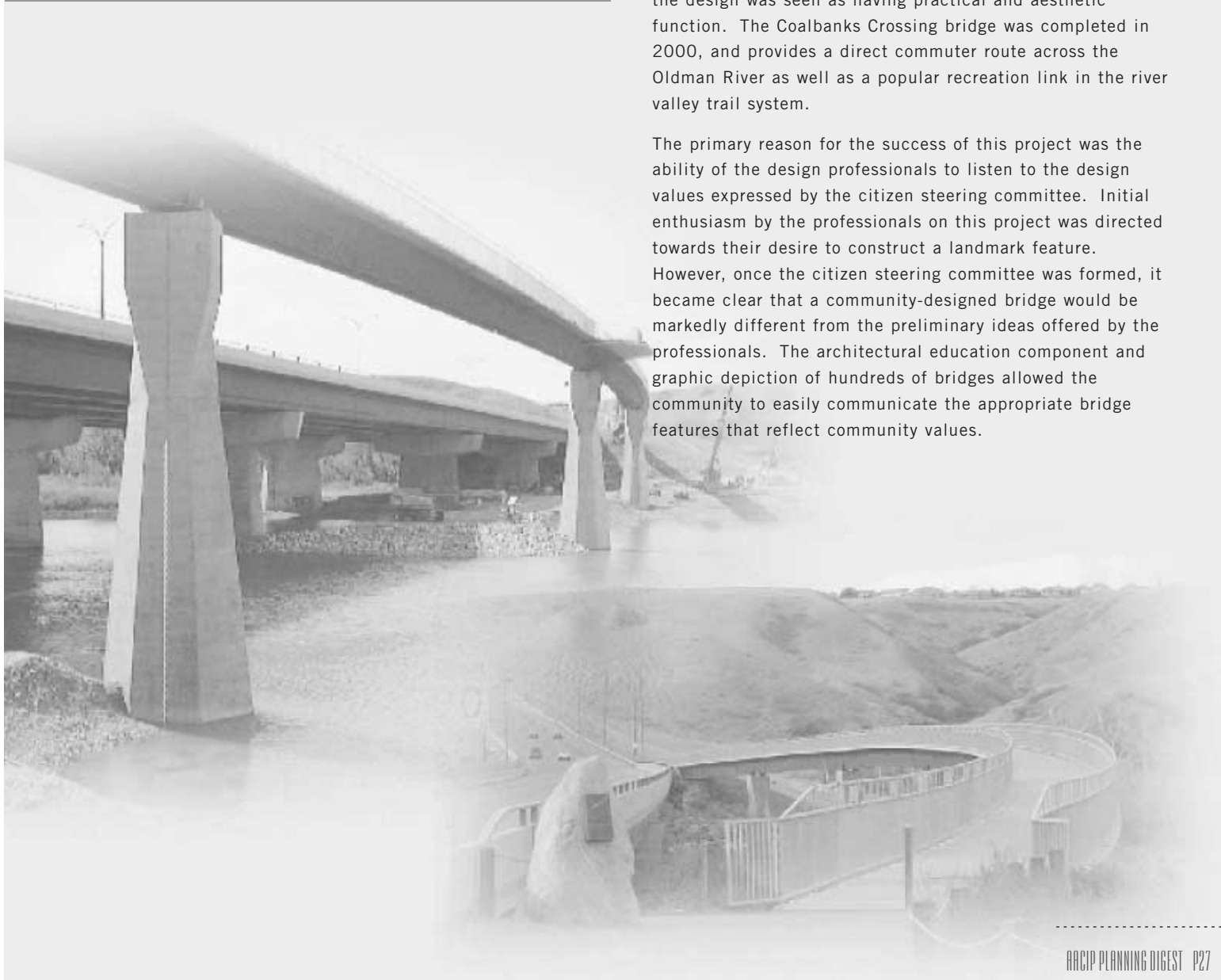
Lethbridge, Alberta

Gary Weikum is a community planner with the City of Lethbridge. He has been instrumental in implementing citizen decision making processes for a variety of projects, including, landslide repairs, road widenings, park designs and comprehensive plans. He has a Masters degree in Community and Regional Planning from University of British Columbia.

the bridge to appear transparent to riders in automobiles, yet the security of pedestrians is enhanced by high visibility. The curved and arched design reflects the undulating topography of the valley. The bridge utilizes slender piers and the thin bridge deck cantilevers the box girder in a manner that reduces the apparent mass of the structure.

The citizen steering committee held a public open house to gather feedback on the proposed bridge design. There was very strong support in the community for the presented design. Open house guests were able to relate to the stated values that underlie the design concept. Thus the form of the design was seen as having practical and aesthetic function. The Coalbanks Crossing bridge was completed in 2000, and provides a direct commuter route across the Oldman River as well as a popular recreation link in the river valley trail system.

The primary reason for the success of this project was the ability of the design professionals to listen to the design values expressed by the citizen steering committee. Initial enthusiasm by the professionals on this project was directed towards their desire to construct a landmark feature. However, once the citizen steering committee was formed, it became clear that a community-designed bridge would be markedly different from the preliminary ideas offered by the professionals. The architectural education component and graphic depiction of hundreds of bridges allowed the community to easily communicate the appropriate bridge features that reflect community values.



# Planning a City in the Beltline

by Don Schultz, Kristin Bell & Rob Taylor

**Calgary's central city communities of Connaught and Victoria get an urban attitude and roll out the welcome mat for innovative high density residential development.**

Most Calgarians who live or work between the CPR tracks and 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue call the area the Beltline. The name comes from a former streetcar line that once looped around the district. Incorporating the historic communities of Victoria and Connaught, the Beltline is located immediately south of Calgary's downtown. The area has long served as the central city's high density residential and mixed use district. Given its eleven decades of development and diverse urban character, many think of the Beltline as the site of Calgary's most authentic, "big city" neighbourhoods.

This is the first in a series of Planning Digest articles about the Beltline district of Calgary. The Beltline is experiencing an unprecedented revival in urban thinking. Subsequent articles will address a number of exciting initiatives in this inner city district. To begin with, we present the story of a new residential project in the Beltline known as Emerald Stone.

Over the years, the Beltline has housed many Calgarians who have just moved to town or who have just rented their first apartment. In recent decades, the district has also developed one of Calgary's largest concentrations of owner occupied, apartment style condominiums. Walk-up apartment blocks from the post war decades, Victorian and "craft era" houses, massive rental towers and smaller high rise condos built in the 1970's oil boom, 1990's townhouses and courtyard condos all contribute to the Beltline's eclectic housing mix.

# Planning a City in the Beltline TODAY!

by Don Schultz, Kristin Bell & Rob Taylor

Enter the Beltline Communities of Victoria and Connaught. All of a sudden, a group of positive activists came together to organize the area's overlooked urban sentiment. New leadership from the district's previously moribund Community Associations came together and challenged Calgarians to value the big-city character of the Beltline. They insisted that the district be understood and treated as a unified whole. They explained the Beltline's contribution to the economic and cultural life of Calgary. They moved to reinvent the district's hodge-podge of planning policies. They started urban forest, public realm and development initiatives. They engaged local businesses through the area's three Business Revitalization Zones. They got involved with social agencies and the Calgary Police Service. They published a newspaper. It didn't take very long before they had the attention of both City Hall and the development industry. Their first goal was achieved. The Beltline was back on the agenda.

Rather than “fighting City Hall” and scaring off developers with the threat of appeals, protracted approval processes, and scaled-down projects, the community decided to work **with** the bureaucrats and the industry to build out a vibrant, “big city” district in the heart of Calgary. In order to accomplish these goals, they announced the promotion of three core urban values: **density**, **variety**, and **quality**.

## THE VIEW FROM CITY HALL

Don Schultz has taken on a number of planning assignments at the City of Calgary, but his most recent project has been the **Connaught/West Victoria Special Study**. In the Spring of 2001, the City's Downtown & Inner City Planning Section set up this Special Study as a new way of responding to established communities' requests for policy planning. The existing Area Redevelopment Plan was twenty years old and the predominant residential land use district, known as RM-7, catered to a built form that nobody wanted to develop any more: the slab tower surrounded by passive landscaping and surface parking.

“When I began meeting with the community planning committee, I had a very limited understanding of the issues, let alone the aspirations of the residents. I knew they were dissatisfied with the new wood-frame apartments that were moving into the area and that they wanted to see some improvements to their streets, boulevards, sidewalks, and lanes. What I wasn't prepared for was their willingness to embrace higher residential densities as the primary tool to achieve more life on the street and to attract more public and commercial amenities to their community.”

“We started our work by looking at photographs from Connaught, Victoria, and other areas. We soon realized that although a picture is worth a thousand words, it can't compare with seeing development up close and in person. Consequently, we set ourselves the task of walking around the neighbourhood with evaluation sheets on clipboards, recording our observations of as many different types of development as possible. It proved to be an invaluable experience for me to see as well as hear the community's point of view.”

“Once we had collected and organized our thoughts from the walking tours, we realized it would be useful to have a set of principles that could be applied to all different types of development. We also wanted to ensure that our principles would reflect not only what we saw in the community, but also what we want the community to look like in the future.”

“It was during our discussions and drafting of the development principles that we received a presentation from Kristin Bell of BKDI Architects and her client George Schluessel from Procura Real Estate Services Limited, who were proposing a new residential tower to be called Emerald Stone. The site in question had just been the subject of a proposal for a cinema, which, due to the complexity of the development and the ultimate withdrawal of the cinema operator, ended up being a bit of a disappointment for both the developer and the community.”

“The ensuing dialogue among Kristin, George, the community representatives, and me began to reveal more opportunities than constraints. Initially, Procura tried to stay within the bounds of the existing RM-7 land use rules, but ran into the typical roadblocks of parking, landscaping, and yard requirements.”

# Planning a City in the Beltline TODAY!

by Don Schultz, Kristin Bell & Rob Taylor

“After describing our policy work to Kristin and George, the community explained that other qualities, including active street frontage, innovative design, and better conditions for pedestrians were more important than slavish adherence to arbitrary standards and site dimensions. The community suggested to Kristin that her client might achieve a more efficient development pro forma by raising the height of the building, thereby generating the economic conditions that would allow for an extra level of underground parking. This story has already become the stuff of urban legend on the streets of Calgary!”

“Thanks to the forward thinking of Procura and the remarkable degree of collaboration among BKDI, the community, and the City, we have been able to break the old RM-7 mold. By virtue of an innovative direct control district for the site, we are watching Emerald Stone become a reality prior to adoption of the new policies that inspired it. Although work continues on the Special Study, we are making every effort to ensure that this ongoing policy formulation will not delay any current development initiatives.”

## THE VIEW FROM THE DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY

Kristin Bell, Partner at BKDI Architects and project leader for the Emerald Stone development, recounts her experience working in this community. “It has been an absolute pleasure to work with both the City of Calgary and the Community of Connaught on the Emerald Stone Residential project. Having dealt over the years with most of the communities in the City of Calgary, the forward thinking attitude of the inner-city community of Connaught has been both refreshing and positive for the growth of the City Core. In order to summarize the effective working relationships among the City Planners, the Community as a whole and the Design team, we really must point out the collaborative work effort involved.



“From the outset, at my very first meeting with the Development Committee for the Community, I was really taken aback with the attitude of the group. Not only were they all supportive of development in 'their' community, collectively, they gave input which enabled the project to work from an economical aspect for the developer. The community truly understood the notion that the project needed to be financially 'viable' or there would be no project. This really became evident when the discussion of 'density' was literally thrown out the window. The classic statutory number of units per acre was not a major issue for this community. Instead, the driving factor was what would work on the site to ensure the quality of development that all were looking to achieve. Through many discussions, it became apparent that height was not an issue either. Instead, the project would achieve the highest level of efficiency by generating a building with minimal setbacks to create a street frontage that was appropriate for the commercial corridor into

downtown, and retail at grade from 8<sup>th</sup> street, with access to the residential tower from the residential 15<sup>th</sup> avenue. The most efficient building became a 23-storey tower with eight units per floor, two elevators, underground parking, and a two-storey podium.”

“What a refreshing idea dialogue with the developer while reinforcing the growth ideals of the Community and the City Planners! Transportation studies provided the proof that indeed the numbers could work.”

“As a result of this collaborative effort the Land Use, Development Permitting, and ultimate construction start all occurred in a very short period of time – only nine months from Land Use application to construction start!”

“The other inner city communities could take this project as an example of the successful way the planning process can work if it is indeed carried out in a collaborative manner. We

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are looking very much forward to continuing our relationship with the Community of Connaught, and hope that there will be many more successful projects and happy clients!"

## THE VIEW FROM THE COMMUNITY

"It's not an easy attitude to change according to Beltline activist and Connaught Community President Rob Taylor. Many people outside the Beltline expect us to be reactionary. We're supposed to fight density. We're supposed to fight developers. We're supposed to fight projects only because they're large enough to be viable."

"It's not an easy attitude to change, but it is changing. More and more people are catching on. Beltline residents choose to live in the district's intense, multi-faceted urban neighbourhoods because the Beltline offers the way of life they want. Our communities don't oppose density. To the contrary, we promote density because, without it, most of the things that make our communities vital and attractive would be too few and too far away."

"At this point, it's hard to say which of us said it. But when one of the members of our planning group asked if George would consider adding five stories to his condo project, you could have cut the air with a knife. Developer George Schluessel had come to us with another proposal to develop his empty lot at the foot of 8<sup>th</sup> Street. The site is just across 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue from his successful Mount Royal Village retail complex and adjacent to his mid-rise Residences of Mount Royal. After Alliance-Atlantis backed away from the movie theatre deal, George seemed prepared to move forward with what appeared to us be a pretty standard condo project. The initial concept seemed in large part to conform to the City's uniform land use classification for the district."

"We knew George to be a fairly visionary developer, a savvy businessman, and an active contributor to community's aspirations. He had hired architect Kristin Bell of BKDI, an established firm headed up by urban advocate Peter Burgener whose notable track record created a positive atmosphere. A landmark, mixed use high rise fit perfectly with the planning group's hopes for the future of 8<sup>th</sup> Street. The planning group knew immediately that this was a key opportunity, an opportunity to build a structure that said, "Here's Connaught, dead centre uptown, the heart of residential urban Calgary." So we moved instinctively to that all-important leading question, "Can we make it big enough to support the kind of features a building at this location deserves"? We saw an opportunity to demonstrate the community's policy direction, and we knew that now was the time to seize it."

"There would be several key issues. The first of these was how the building would deal with 8<sup>th</sup> Street and 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Recent changes reduced commuter traffic flows on 8<sup>th</sup> Street and opened the door to considering wider sidewalks and treed boulevards."

Stay tuned to the next Planning Digest for more views of planning in Calgary Beltline!

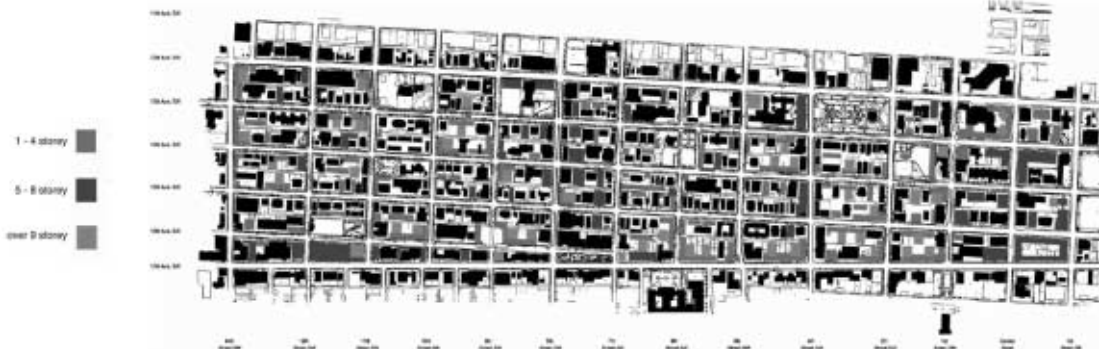


Kristin Bell



Don Schultz

connaught / west victoria special study



# ALBERTA ASSOCIATION CANADIAN INSTITUTE OF PLANNERS (AACIP) PLANNING DIGEST

The AACIP Planning Digest is a professional publication that showcases innovative and cutting edge planning and land development practices in Alberta and abroad. The Digest also profiles our professional planners, award winning ideas, and other noteworthy contributions and accomplishments in Planning. The Digest is a must read for planning and design professionals, decision-makers, government officials and staff, and the general public, who are involved in all forms of economic, social, and environmental (urban, suburban or rural) development.

For those that have seen and enjoyed the positive metamorphosis of the Digest over the past two years, we thank you for your readership and feedback, and promise that more enhancements to the look and content will continue to evolve. Please visit the [www.aacip.com](http://www.aacip.com) website for past issues. The AACIP Planning Digest is on a path to become a premier planning publication and reference source. In order to accomplish this, we also need the continued assistance of the professional membership via your comments and contributions.

## Call for Submissions

Each edition of the Digest offers diverse perspectives in numerous specialized topic areas. Some of the topic areas we are developing are suggested below. This is not an all-inclusive list and is only meant to spawn ideas.

- Member Profiles
- Student Frontiers
- Innovations
- Urban Design
- Community Development
- Sustainability Initiatives
- Success Stories
- Critical Project Reviews
- Book Club
- Provincial Landscape
- National & International News
- Public Consultation

If you have other suggestions please forward them for review. There is a wealth of knowledge among our Membership and the Planning Digest is a great forum for individuals from the Profession to communicate their experiences and insights, as well as market their expertise. Please share your experience and wisdom, or if you know of someone who's efforts would be of value to the planning community's body of knowledge, urge them to submit or forward their names to us and we will follow-up.

## Submission Deadlines for 2003-2004

	Summer 2003	Fall 2003	Spring 2004
Article Submission Deadline	July 21 <sup>st</sup>	Nov 10 <sup>th</sup>	Mar 14 <sup>th</sup>
Advertising Copy Deadline	July 28 <sup>th</sup>	Nov 17 <sup>th</sup>	Mar 21 <sup>st</sup>
Tentative Publication Date	Aug 1 <sup>st</sup>	Nov 24 <sup>th</sup>	Mar 28 <sup>th</sup>

*There may be some flexibility with these dates to accommodate our valued contributors but generally, these targets will be adhered to.*



The background of the page features a stylized, high-contrast illustration of a city skyline with several skyscrapers. Overlaid on the right side is the AACIP logo, which consists of the letters 'aa' stacked above 'cip' in a bold, sans-serif font. Below the logo, the text 'ALBERTA Association' is written in a smaller, all-caps font.

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## ADVERTISING IN THE AACIP PLANNING DIGEST

The AACIP (Alberta Association Canadian Institute of Planners) Planning Digest is a concise professional Journal focusing on land development practices across a broad spectrum of scale and context. It is a growing publication currently with a circulation of over 550 across Alberta, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, but the Digest also reaches nation wide through our affiliates. The Digest caters to professionals involved in land development and design as well as various developers, builders, architects, civil engineers, and political agencies. It is anticipated that circulation will grow to over 1000 within the next 2 to 4 years.

If you are involved in any industry related to land development and construction, then this publication should be of interest to you. Educational or marketing information will reach many of those people responsible for design and development decisions across Alberta and North America. If you are interested in advertising opportunities, please do not hesitate to contact Ben Lee at IBI Group, the publishers of the AACIP Planner Digest, at [blee@ibigroup.com](mailto:blee@ibigroup.com) or by phone at 403.270.5600.

The per issue advertising rates for 2003 are as follows (multiple issue discounts are available):

Business Card size:	\$ 55
¼ page	\$ 165
½ page	\$ 300
full page	\$ 575
double page	\$ 1100

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY!

AACIP currently has a vacancy on its editorial team for the Planning Digest. The Digest is published three times a year and contains articles and papers dealing with professional practice and current planning issues relevant to Alberta, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. The role of the Editorial Board is to ensure quality control of articles and content. Articles/papers are reviewed for their relevance to current practice and professional development, and wherever possible, the Board is responsible for providing guidance to help ensure that the Planning Digest professionally represents the vision of AACIP, and accurately reflects the diversity of its membership.

The Editorial Board is not responsible for soliciting Digest submissions. However, working with the publishing team to identify potential contributors from time to time is encouraged. If you are interested in this exciting and rewarding opportunity, please direct your inquiries and resumes to the AACIP office.

## Publishing Team

### AACIP Editing Team

Stan Schwartzenberger, Jane Power,  
Cathy Ascroft, Lorene Archdekin

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