Urban History Review
Revue d'histoire urbaine

URBAN HISTORY REVIEW
REVUE D'HISTOIRE URBAINE

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Cite this article

Wall, K. L. (2002). Old Strathcona: Building Character and Commerce in a Preservation District. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, *30*(2), 28–40. https://doi.org/10.7202/1015905ar

Article abstract

Urban spaces of leisure serve to coordinate cultural and economic benefits for local citizens, and contribute to civic profiles in the international competition for prestige and resources. The potential conflicts between cultural and commercial priorities in urban development are particularly marked in the cases of heritage or conservation-oriented districts. The Old Strathcona Historical Preservation District in Edmonton, Alberta provides a case study for an inquiry into how local community has been imagined and expressed through material development processes. The discourse of heritage as both cultural and economic resource is reflected in an analysis of the negotiation among various interests to define Old Strathcona's character and functions. A central point of tension lies between the mandate to conserve and narrate what are primarily community and cultural values, and the economic potential of pragmatic commercial development using that historical content as a marketing feature. As an environment dedicated to consumption, however, Old Strathcona does in fact represent a core element in local civic identity.

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Abstract

Urban spaces of leisure serve to coordinate cultural and economic benefits for local citizens, and contribute to civic profiles in the international competition for prestige and resources. The potential conflicts between cultural and commercial priorities in urban development are particularly marked in the cases of heritage or conservation-oriented districts. The Old Strathcona Historical Preservation District in Edmonton, Alberta provides a case study for an inquiry into how local community has been imagined and expressed through material development processes. The discourse of heritage as both cultural and economic resource is reflected in an analysis of the negotiation among various interests to define Old Strathcona's character and functions. A central point of tension lies between the mandate to conserve and narrate what are primarily community and cultural values, and the economic potential of pragmatic commercial development using that historical content as a marketing feature. As an environment dedicated to consumption, however, Old Strathcona does in fact represent an a core element in local civic identity.

Résumé

Les espaces urbains consacrés aux loisirs servent à coordonner les avantages culturels et économiques pour les citoyens locaux et contribuent à rehausser le profil des villes dans la concurrence internationale pour le prestige et les ressources. Les possibles conflits entre priorités culturelles et priorités commerciales dans le développement urbain sont particulièrement perceptibles lorsqu'il s'agit de quartiers patrimoniaux ou faisant l'objet de dispositions visant leur préservation. Le Old Strathcona Historical Preservation District d'Edmonton, en Alberta, offre une étude de cas qui permet de faire enquête sur la façon dont la communauté locale a été imaginée et exprimée au moyen d'importants processus de développement. Une analyse de la négociation entre les divers intérêts afin de définir la nature et les fonctions du secteur reflète le discours du patrimoine en tant que ressource à la fois culturelle et économique. Un point central de tension existe entre le mandat de conserver et de faire connaître des valeurs qui sont essentiellement culturelles et communautaires et le potentiel économique d'un développement commercial pragmatique utilisant ce contenu historique comme élément de marketing. En tant qu'environnement voué à la consommation cependant, le quartier Old Strathcona représente de fait un élément central de l'identité municipale locale.

Following civic celebrations for Canada Day 2001, Edmonton's Whyte Avenue in the Old Strathcona Historical Preservation District was the scene of the worst riot in the city's history. Hundreds of people headed to the area and more emerged from the bars as they closed. Violence was directed mainly toward property destruction, vandalism, and looting—and toward the police riot squad that responded to reports of disturbances. Analysis of the event attributed blame to several influences, including actions of the media in associating Canadian patriotism with beer and partying (hockey sticks were a favoured weapon), and the reportedly aggressive and confrontational attitude of the police. Most common contributing factor, though, was previous calls to City Council to finally act on the long-standing problems related to the fact that activity in the Old Strathcona area was not regulated.

> It's Edmonton's party street, a dense concentration of bars and dance clubs and coffee houses and restaurants, where people come to play ... the street is also packed with young people cruising in their cars. They head there, almost out of herd instinct, because Whyte Ave is 'the' place to go.[1]

In thirty years, a community-driven heritage conservation program had evolved into a commercial leisure magnet for the entire city, raising questions about the definition of "successful development."

Today's heritage environments—living history villages, historic districts, gentrified relics—draw in many aspects of the broader history of urban, public leisure space. Since the nineteenth century, these have included exhibition halls, panoramas, public museums, department stores, and the streetscape itself. Such environments have typically combined some element of public education with the sensory appeal of an everyday world enhanced by either fantasy elements or didactic focus. The symbolic capital of built heritage became common material in the production of urban consumer spaces in post-war Canadian cities. When a city designates a certain district as significant because of historical provenance, the street typically takes on both functions of essentially serving as a display case of local history, and offering a range of generic leisure and recreation within its boundaries. Development of heritage or historical districts, accordingly, involves some level of conflict between cultural and economic interests. An ethos of stewardship associates itself with the authentic, the local, and the community. The interests of commerce, crucial to the revitalization of such areas, tend to be associated with the superficial, commercial, and an agenda drawn from outside the community itself. However, the economic function of associated space becomes the privileged reference point for decisions about it.

This situation, of course, has implications for the scope of public participation in the development of contemporary urban life. Consensus building on the significance of heritage resources is affected by the fact that the real estate of shopping, drinking, and entertainment is also home or workplace for local people who, in turn, divide into potentially opposing roles of producers, marketers, and consumers. Success in terms of economic revi-

Figure 1: *Whyte Avenue 1969, just prior to the redevelopment project. In the heart of the later restoration district, the range of businesses here includes an auction mart, beauty college, tobacconist, furniture and applicance stores.* Source: *City of Edmonton Archives EA-20-100.*

talization—display and leisure space—threatens to cause an imbalance between all of these elements. These contradictions are a central part of Old Strathcona's development history, contributing to interpretations of it as either heroic conservation of a threatened community, or as one of the many "ersatz…historic districts and festivals which present a diorama of [history's] most superficial ideas."[2]
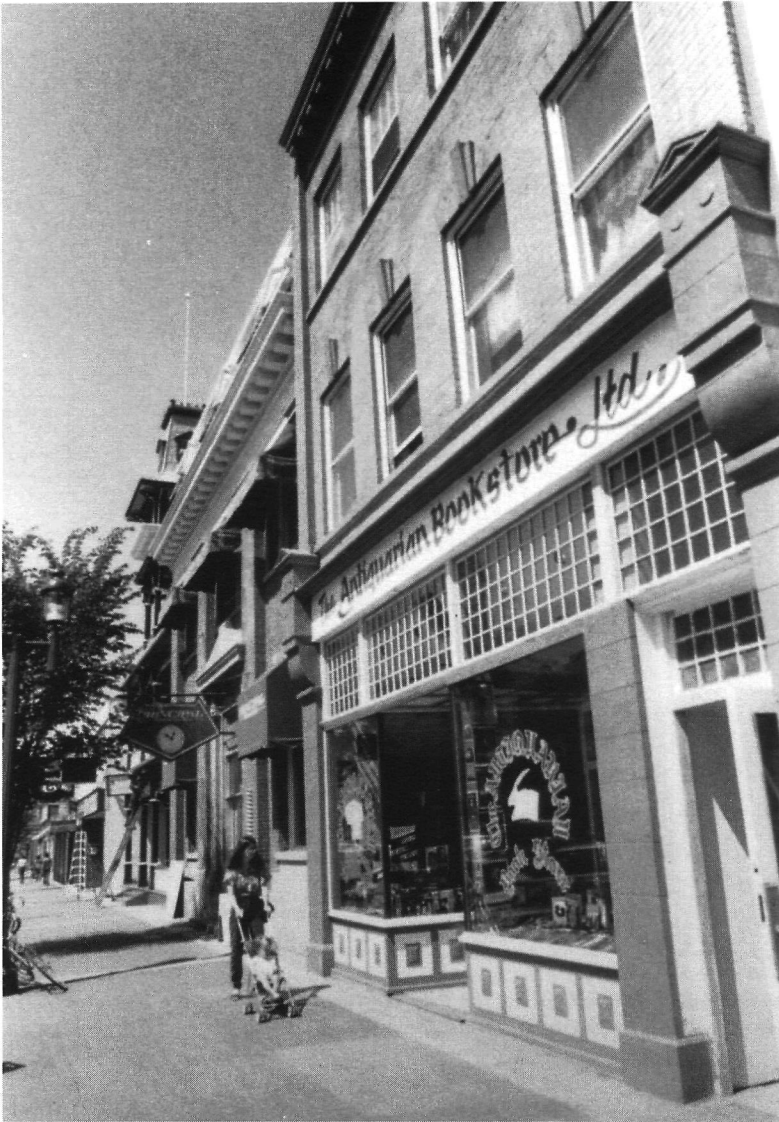
Edmonton's architectural history is not widely evident in its streetscapes, having been either destroyed during construction of boom-era modernist buildings or salvaged for display in the valley enclave of Fort Edmonton Park. Old Strathcona represents the highest concentration of original construction in one area, and, like other historical buildings and sites, is thus valued beyond the material worth of the structures as part of the symbolic capital of distinct civic identity. Significantly, this identity is based in a pragmatic tradition of commerce, trade, and material progress, as well as the more familiar, generic frontier community narratives of self-sufficient craft and production. These two strands blend inextricably in the character of the Old Strathcona

Historic Preservation District. The history of the struggle to define the district's character, objectives and administration raises several questions:

- How has the project been affected by changing contexts of urban development over a period of several decades?

- What roles have been played by heritage agencies, advocacy groups, city council, and citizens?

- Whose interests have been served? Can Old Strathcona be accurately called a community?

- What level of public participation is possible in the context of the institutionalized administration and marketing of public space?

"Portraying the community": the 1970s
Part of Edmonton's south side today, Strathcona was until 1912 a separate townsite. Following its amalgamation with Edmonton in 1912, Strathcona's commercial area slowly deteriorated while the downtown area became the new focus of activity. Whyte Ave-

perity, the City of Edmonton prepared for the future in 1971 by announcing plans for a new freeway through Old Strathcona.

For citizens' groups, the proposed freeway plan embodied the worst of several threats of modernization. As an alternative, the new Strathcona Historical Group proposed that city council designate a conservation area in order to preserve and promote local architectural resources. The rationale rested on the district's significance as "a small prairie town" surviving in the midst of the city, "complete in almost every detail, standing where the pioneers built it . . . [and where] many of the elements associated with the end of steel in 1891 remain intact." Projected social benefits to the city included the sustaining of "qualities of variety and diversity which are among the best safeguards against the decay of inner-city districts."[4] Part of this projected diversity would be defined in the economic benefit of its attraction to tourists and to day visitors for recreation and leisure.

Here we encounter one of the contradictions that tend to haunt such "revitalized" urban areas. Social and cultural values of variety and diversity are difficult to foster in an environment with a narrow focus on specific consumer activities, especially where these are coordinated by central authorities. Although its coordinators may define it as an "anti-mall," the process of coordination itself works against any broad interpretation of those core values. "Variety and diversity", for instance, become associated with the range of available retail goods. Old Strathcona was originally imagined as a mix of heritage sites, local services, and retail shops, but the defining direction was set by an early market survey citing Whyte Avenue's potential as a "character shopping subcentre" for high-profit, impulse-oriented tourist and specialty boutique goods.[5] During the 1960s, the street's convenient location and everyday goods and services—restaurants, barbers, bicycle and book stores, shoe repair and hardware shops—had continued to attract customers from the surrounding area (Figure 1). In the early 1970s, however, the street had begun to look a lot like contemporary malls, as apparel, accessories, and specialty-goods merchants began to dominate the Whyte Avenue strip. Ultimately, local historical character became part of the packaging of this overall product. However, the promotional literature legitimating the area consistently foregrounds historical significance and cultural preservation. The balance, of course, depends on which of the many interested parties are presenting their agenda. Although the local community has the highest stake in such a project, as cultural and material real estate it attracts a range of other stakeholders.

Agreeing that the proposed program would stimulate private investment and retail rehabilitation, in 1974, City Council moved to prohibit any development that would "impair or detract from the preservation of the historical character of Old Strathcona." The Old Strathcona Foundation (OSF), made up of representatives from education, business, heritage, and citizen groups, was es-

Figure 2: Whyte Avenue 1985. The restored Dominion Hotel turret can be seen in the background, and the new historical ambiance in the decorated storefronts and brick sidewalks.
Source: City of Edmonton Archives EA-340-2008.

nue, the old town centre, remained a commercial ribbon along which street cars served retail establishments. After World War II, new patterns of commercial and residential use followed increasing numbers of automobiles and apartment buildings. In the 1950s, the downtown core remained the centre of commerce but the new suburban malls were already drawing away customers and reshaping leisure activity. By the 1960s Whyte Avenue was situated directly between the traditional downtown department stores and two new southside malls. There was little financial incentive for owners to maintain or restore inconvenient old buildings in their original forms.[3] Meanwhile, the CPR tracks through the centre of the community were congesting traffic travelling into the booming downtown. Anticipating continued pros-

tablished with a mandate to research, develop, and administer a historic conservation area "within the boundaries of the Town of Strathcona . . . preserving the buildings and relics and portraying the community of that era. . ." Funding began to flow in from city council, the province, and the Devonian Foundation. And, largely due to the town's association with the national railway, the new Heritage Canada Foundation adopted Old Strathcona as its first Main Street project.[6] The program aims to conserve, restore, and revitalize selected urban commercial districts. Sharing the economic goals of comparable projects, it has added cultural rationales grounded in the museum tradition. The program tries to balance aesthetic and utilitarian principles by restoring "period" commercial streets as part of the everyday landscape of the present. Ideally, we can salvage and transform decaying areas into tourism and shopping destinations, while sustaining a sense of place and community for those who live and work there.[7]

The rationale for the province's $1 million contribution to Old Strathcona during the 1970s was controversial. The 1973 *Alberta Heritage Act* allowed for the protection of designated sites or monuments, but not for an entire urban area. Other legislation worked in direct contradiction to the *Act*'s preservation and restoration principles and to those of other heritage agencies. For instance, provincial building code regulations prohibited such features as outside staircases. Heritage Canada's Main Street developments, though, established historical period and ambience precisely through the presence of such details. Meanwhile, OSF plans also stipulated the conservation or restoration of historic style and scale. However, the foundation was to avoid creating a generic "theme village."

The cooperation of so many interests in the area's revitalization was, in hindsight, a product of idealism and pragmatism which could not be sustained. Disputes and controversy, both internal and external, followed the establishments of the conservation area and the Old Strathcona Foundation itself. Throughout, the foundation aimed at potentially contradictory goals: to promote creative economic development while constraining all activity to the heritage-zone vision. At the same time, this narrow focus should not produce a tasteless commercial tourist trap. At the end of the decade, the OSF evaluated its work of progressive recycling as a successful alternative to new development (a timely theme as the city's economic and construction boom waned.) While the foundation's mandate and role remained acceptable, however, its practices and business dealings came increasingly into question by the 1980s.[8]

The Price of Millstones: the 1980s
During an era of economic recession and restructuring, the city of Edmonton remained remarkably committed to public expenditure on Old Strathcona. Despite signs of economic downturn, the province funded a 1980 anniversary program focusing attention on its pioneer past, reinforcing the legitimacy of heritage projects much as the nationalist Centennial era had for the country a decade earlier. A year later, Heritage Canada bestowed its Award of Honour on the Old Strathcona Foundation.[9] But while the restored streetfronts basked in the presence of culture mavens, tourists, and shoppers, the Foundation itself was los-

ing a measure of public support. One of the OSF's main roles was advocacy among "historical-minded, public-spirited" citizens and businesses, as government funding was supplemented by donations, real estate deals, and the Princess Theatre business. But although it had grown out of a collective rally for community preservation, the foundation had not remained representative of community interests as local conditions changed. Ideologically less relevant, administration was also inefficient; no long-term bureaucratic structure served to stabilize the foundation, its membership, or its project focus. Challenged were the foundation's business sense and operating procedures, and thus its right to taxpayer funding. Even if conservation were still of primary significance, which was debated, many of its decisions were made not on those principles but on those of business—and, according to critics, poorly made at that. In a vote of non-confidence, a coalition of local citizens and merchants effectively took over the OSF board in early 1982. They in turn were denounced as "middle-class, business-oriented bureaucrats" hiding behind the political banner of the public good. However, some of the most vocal critics were disgruntled small-business people for whom heritage politics complicated the evolution of a "second downtown," a shopping centre with a special, quaint ambiance. And even that ambiance did not guarantee the promised customers, for example in 1985 the Old Strathcona Post Office, historic symbol of the district, failed as a multi-venue indoor entertainment centre.[10]

The most visible conflicts during the 1980s concerned real-estate deals by the foundation. Starting out by buying and renovating a few aesthetically noteworthy structures on Whyte Avenue, the OSF was carrying a $3.4 million investment in real estate by 1985. Public attention grew with the foundation's economic clout, underwritten by public funds. City aldermen questioned the OSF drift away from its restoration mandate. Even when restoration was deemed central, the OSF made unwise decision. It accepted the donation of the Ritchie Mill building, and its subsequent restoration expense, on the basis of what it later called an inappropriately "gung-ho historical preservation policy." Even supporters found the "Ritchie millstone" an eyesore, a decaying relic whose main charm was that it contrasted nicely with the modern skyline across the river behind it. And both recession market conditions and the provincial heritage-site building constraints prevented resale of the Mill and other OSF white elephants. Nevertheless, city council called its $81,000 grant to support the Mill project in 1981 "the price of heritage", a price that mounted to almost one million dollars in public funds to the district over the next few years. In 1985, the city made further funding contingent on the OSF shifting its attention back to the commercial and residential areas of Old Strathcona.[11] The problems during this period stem from the inherent conflicts of developing an area projected to serve so many immediate interests, as well as the long-term objectives of conservation.

"We wanted each thing to fit in": the 1990s
While local planning rhetoric in this period was characterized by the opposition of commercial and cultural values, in practice the boundaries between them have never been clear. Preservation concerns converged increasingly with those of class and aes-

thetic taste in the 1990s. Besides its intrinsic appeal, Old Strathcona is also a central location in convenient proximity to parks, downtown, shopping malls, and the university. In 1990, developers proposed to fill the wide, mostly unused railway corridor dividing the district with new apartment buildings, raising the local population by almost two hundred. Merchants supported this move for obvious reasons, cultural groups occupying a few buildings on the land opposed it, and residents rejected it. The latter group, primarily homeowners, cited a decrease in quality of life due to the projected loss of the open space and view north to the river valley, and an increase in transient neighbours—this despite the fact that apartment dwellers have for some time outnumbered single-family home owners in the area.[12]

Lobbyists drew upon conservation ideology, defending the district as significant to a broader public than local residents, "a unique historical environment to serve all of Edmonton." Their proposed alternative of a railway memorial appealed to city planners, who zoned the space for what would become End of Steel Park in 1995 at a cost of $250,000.[13]

During the 1980s, charges of elite privilege became more common. This was based partially on the perception of higher levels of education and cultural capital in the area. People in other city districts objected to the long tradition of preferential city concessions and grants to Old Strathcona at the expense of other projects.[14] Through 1991, as the OSF tried to persuade the city to renew its annual $500,000 in funding—a full one-third of OSF resources—councillors continued to press instead for revitalization of other, less prestigious, historic neighbourhoods. After all, the foundation's original aims had been achieved; the city warned the board to cut costs and move toward self-sufficiency. Arguing that the values of cultural heritage still needed vigilant defending against development interests, an OSF spokesperson compared the area to "a ship—you're either bailing or it's sinking." It was also claimed that the Foundation was the anchor of a "cooperative community effort" keeping the neighbourhood afloat.[15]

There was evidence, however, that the Foundation was actually falling short of effective administration of its preservation mandate. Several instances of reconstruction appeared to take priority over preserving original buildings, against the principles attached to funding by Heritage Canada and Alberta Historic Resources. In 1992, the OSF demolished the deteriorating Dominion Hotel and replaced it with an imitation. The foundation did not intervene when the owner of a pre-1914 building with an intact facade demolished it to raise a "new, fake-old structure."[16] Other ongoing practices appeared to favour cosmetic rather than conservation criteria. The Building Front Improvement Plan granted renovation funds even to property without particular historic or aesthetic value. Although (or because) the OSF does not dictate authentic period details, even new buildings in the area tend to display a broad range of "hints and references from the past" rather than the results of architectural research. Whyte Avenue's program of street beautification has also resulted in widened brick sidewalks and generic "old fashioned" rather than locally authentic lamps and benches (Figure 2).

Streetscape supervisors emphasize a tasteful restraint in adding components "without being too ornate. We didn't want to make the sidewalk the thing that shines. We wanted each thing to fit in with what was there."[17] But, according to one representative observer, these trends have all brought Whyte Avenue a step closer to Disneyland's model of historic preservation, its small-town Main Street USA.[18]

The common question in these debates was essentially whether the effort to create a seamless aesthetic facade had become the ruling principle of development, at the expense of the intrinsic (or even potential) worth of elements within the pastiche. The ecomuseum principles of internal relationship are crucial to understanding the historical record, but may also serve the construction of a narrative framework which itself dictates selection from that record. The development of controversy during the 1990s reflects a central (though wavering) vision that was at once unsatisfying to any of the interests involved, but strong enough to shape their participation. During the 1990s, cultural, heritage, and business interest groups involved in decision-making about the district included the Fringe Theatre organization, the Farmer's Market, the Merchants' Association and the Society for the Preservation of Architectural Resources in Edmonton (SPARE). The OSF claimed to be the only organization still concerned with the holistic principles and "heritage interests" of the area as a whole. In other words, it continued to see its role as central authority, advocate, and visionary, unifying diversities into a collective whole defined by itself and focused on promotional events and "sensitive" local improvements. The latter included revising the aesthetics for a new McDonald's franchise.[19]

By 1995, Edmonton taxpayers had contributed almost $5 million to Old Strathcona. Although other provincial and civic heritage projects had also drawn fire, Whyte Avenue's visibility and popularity made it a particularly large mote in the public eye. Allegations of the foundation's incompetence and financial irresponsibility were particularly aggravating in a climate of fiscal restraint. The relevance of concerns about culture and history were lost on a substantial part of the citizenry whose first priority was making a living during a recession. Heritage purists objected to fast food outlets, while large numbers of people preferred them to more pricey restaurants on Whyte Avenue. As Old Strathcona developed, public accountability and the nature of target "clientele" emerged as persistent related themes.[20]

The Anti-Mall: Public Relations, Aesthetics and Commerce

The chronology of the Old Strathcona project is marked by conflicts and tensions regarding material processes and their symbolic meanings. The order of the symbolic landscape reinforces material and social structures, and this order is established in public discourse by aligning powerful myths with everyday practices, such as consumption. As this discourse is established, the myths of preserved, pre-modern ways of life are less and less able to stand in opposition to those of prefabricated, postmodern culture. The rejection of mass-market values becomes itself the basis of the appeal of mass-market commodities. Although the buildings themselves are not being sold in the heritage shopping district, the area as a whole functions as display

case, its historical details and ambiance suggesting the unique value of the contents. As the area becomes commercially successful, the question of its intrinsic, non-market values recurs as it did in the original context of development threats. Community priorities and identity, then, are the common themes through successive eras of the area's evolution. Implicit or explicit in these themes are concerns about the social restructuring that accompanies material and economic redevelopment.

During the controversies about its power and mandate during the 1980s, the Old Strathcona Foundation had learned the value of good public relations. How could the district become more visibly accessible and relevant to a wider public in the city, justifying the use of civic resources? New traditions such as street dances, parades, and arts festivals established Old Strathcona as an entertainment district with great popular appeal by the early 1990s. The non-historical, accessible themes and content of these events offered an alternative to the city's established but stale Klondike Days summer festival, an earlier invented tradition rooted in the city's tenuous connection to the gold rush. However, the Old Strathcona District had built its reason for being on its uniquely authentic historic streetscape, and had developed attractions and activities oriented to public heritage appreciation. With the loss of city funding in mid-decade, it was the popular generic festivals and amusements that survived, while research and publishing projects such as the historically oriented *Strathcona Plaindealer* were replaced with occasional promotional materials. The provincial Historic Sites Service, rather than Old Strathcona organizations, still sponsors "edutainment" walking tours and skits, mixing information about architectural features with jokes and anecdotes about life in the past.[21] But, except for a telephone museum, a reconstructed railway station located off the main thoroughfare, and a few building plaques, the potential for a focused and particular narrative of heritage experience has given way to the invocation of history as a marketing feature.

As alternative venues to the glittery facades of downtown and mall shopping, historical facades provide a reverse glamour of organic wood and brick for the same activities. Marketers must somehow present these activities as a unique opportunity, primarily by virtue of association with the setting—in this case, "Edmonton's prettiest, most historic, shopping area." Typical advertising materials have blended the elements of heritage aesthetics, a sense of community, and retail culture to define Old Strathcona. Promotions stress "the historic integrity" of the "historic streetscape" which has become "one of the most popular historical areas to visit because of its living blend of history . . . shops and . . . restaurants."[22] One sales campaign honouring new, faux-antique sidewalks recounted the history of how "[d]edicated citizens [had saved] one of Alberta's greatest heritage assets," resulting in "a wonderfully quaint and functional community steeped in tradition." No longer was the area simply an "architectural curiosity," merely a visual success. Attributing its progress to local merchants' efforts to provide atmosphere and old-fashioned service, as well as celebratory discounts, the advertising feature celebrated its current and future status as a consumer magnet.[23]

This is not to say that commercial activity is somehow unauthentic or detrimental here. The original streetscape had, of course, been developed as a commercial district serving the settler and transient population. In its revitalized form, Old Strathcona had been a specialty retail district since its first decade. However, a persistent theme in the construction of the area's popular identity was that, as commercial, recreational space, Old Strathcona was, in fact, more true to local identity and history—more authentic—than other shopping alternatives. And leisure alternatives were consistently, overwhelmingly defined in terms of consumption. These rhetorical and marketing emphases emerged during the period when Old Strathcona's public identity was in transit from that of salvaged community to a leisure and tourist attraction. Old Strathcona's promoters, whatever local faction they represented, had always described it as representing a distinct merging of historical and commodity display, but the latter function had become dominant in defining it as a resource for the city.

In 1986, the OSF programming director stressed the low-key "flavour" of the area in contrast to the tired "glitz affair" of West Edmonton Mall and downtown. Old Strathcona, branded by history, attracted those who wanted "a [unique and] lasting thing" in both environment and purchase. In her analysis:

> People come down here for an experience and they get it. If you've been to West Edmonton Mall why go downtown? You're going to have the same kinds of shops . . . so if you want something different, come here. You're going to find something really neat while you're shopping that you won't find anywhere else. . .[24]

The markers of history and uniqueness served to distinguish the district as a product from its main competitor, the shopping mall. The comparative demonization of malls was particularly popular among Whyte Avenue merchants. Operating a mall lease in a corporate-planned environment, said one retailer, was like "working for Hitler!" whereas Old Strathcona had diverse and independent businesses. One of the best protections for Old Strathcona, said a store owner, was this "hands-on atmosphere" of independents. Without them, "people might as well go to Heritage Mall or Southgate" which were dominated by the chain stores that she believed customers now reviled. The president of the Old Strathcona Merchants' Association also worried, "for us to become like West Edmonton Mall, I don't think that would go here."[25]

While the assumptions about preferred clientele are obvious (boutique as opposed to mall shoppers), less so is the increasing pressure from the foundation on "independent" merchants to conform to local standards. For instance, stores were refused the right to mount mall-standard modern signs and advertising to attract customers, at a time when the price of doing business on Whyte Avenue made volume sales critical. Sales practices were restricted even as the rising popularity of Whyte Avenue drove rent and lease renewals out of reach for many businesses. This was particularly true of those which, unlike the gift

shops and coffee bars, dealt in everyday goods with small price margins. In 1988, a Heritage Canada representative suggested that because the district is so dispersed, existing residents and businesses were not threatened with displacement by commercial development. However, as the core area of the district became the focus of consumer attention over the next ten years, this is exactly what did happen. You can take the customers out of the mall, but they tend to import patterns of mall mobility, mentally dividing desirable zones between central corridor and marginal byways.[26]

Nevertheless, cultural and marketing priorities usually coincided in Old Strathcona, as illustrated by a controversy in late 1988. The city planned to sell the building housing the weekly farmers' market to a developer who would evict the tenants in order to create (in the words of protestors) a "mini-West Edmonton Mall." In protesting, the produce and handicraft merchants employed the prevailing cultural rationales for the district as a whole. The market, one said, is above all "a great meeting place," embodying the "real spirit" of Old Strathcona and one of the few remnants of the area's agricultural tradition—actually, the market was a 1980s innovation. Others compared the weekly shopping event favourably to the city's program of generic festivals divorced from everyday life. As a vegetable merchant said, "Culture is people. You can't manufacture culture."[27]

Eventually, the city reversed its plan and the market has prospered. The incident, however, points to the centrality of food and drink as leisure attractions. Goods purchased at the farmer's market are affordable luxuries (with prices generally higher than elsewhere) and the extra time necessary for shopping the old-fashioned way is part of the consumer experience. The interaction of producers and consumers is perceived as the quality that sets "traditional" grocery shopping apart from current practices. Themes of constructed taste, class, and the symbolic potency of selected objects run through the commentary. Food journalist Judy Schultz called the market a complement to the district's "funny architecture . . . and small town personality." OSF programs director, Elaine Warick, also directly associated the consumption of food and drink on Whyte Avenue with leisure activity: visitors need not just purchase objects but could also "just stroll around . . . and have cappuccino," which at the time was a novelty in the city. A 1994 editorial in the OSF periodical *The Strathcona Plaindealer* drew direct historical associations between the "increasing number of cheer-dispensaries on Whyte Avenue" and a nearby brewery in operation from 1894–1975.[28] During the 1990s Old Strathcona began to take on the appearance of a giant outdoor food court and Whyte Avenue became a fountainhead of designer beverages of all kinds.[29]

At this point, several coordinated patterns emerge along geographic, social, and aesthetic lines. Referring to social patterns of emphasis on art, culture, and consumption, Robins notes that what he calls the "cappuccino lifestyle" involves "exactly the same social group that stands behind the wider political programme of post-fordism." In the urban economy of tourism, consumption and spectacle, certain zones tend to be insulated from disadvantaged areas, with corresponding control over the boundaries between different elements. This is true in areas

dedicated to business and those dedicated to recreation and leisure. In tourist-oriented shopping districts, of course, these directly coincide.

By the 1990s, the revitalization plans had succeeded to the extent that issues of social order arose. For the Old Strathcona Foundation, supported by most merchants and residents, the role of watchdog over the area's essential character began to extend to the human element. In 1990, director P.J. Duggan defended the banning of Saturday afternoon motorcycle parking in front of the Commercial Hotel tavern. The rationale was that certain types of people and vehicles were inappropriate for the area. If this viewpoint was based in the OSF mandate, though, inappropriate would mean not traditional to the area in terms of heritage. However, the Commercial had been a traditional destination for bikers and blues fans for decades, including the years when the Princess Theatre next door showed porn movies rather than its new repertory of art films. Observers concerned with issues of democratic access to public space questioned the Foundation's right to serve only the interests of, as a *Journal* editorial put it, the delicate "sensibilities of Saturday shoppers and cinema-goers." The OSF leader, in turn, dismissed the idea that bikers had rights, and questioned the value systems of anyone who would defend bar patrons "against moms and dads."[30] Concerns about the activities of patrons of bars were, of course, justified by the end of the decade, during which neither politicians nor business owners seriously attempted to curtail the rapid increase in these lucrative establishments. The problem in this case was more likely the timing of the activity, outside the boundaries between night-time drinkers and day-time shoppers who were the other reason for the area's economic success. The consequence, though, was an ongoing discourse about social control.

Related efforts included moves by the Old Strathcona Business Foundation to ban panhandling and loitering by the certain other people who had frequented Whyte Avenue during its less glamorous decades. The presence of "inner-city" people, according to many merchants, tended to drive off boutique and cappuccino customers as well as families drawn by the safe community atmosphere of the street.[31] One solution to conflicts of use on Whyte Avenue was the "charity meters" installed on Whyte Avenue in spring 2001. These were intended as impersonal receptacles for charity donations, replacing the option of giving coins directly to panhandlers. Again, human rights advocates viewed the meters as substitutes for contact with human need, arguing that "panhandlers are a reality that cannot be swept under the rug" to desensitize the public from underlying problems.[32]

Dynamics of the development process here, as always, include tensions between certain values and assumptions. First, the initial project set up the values of community and heritage against those of urban redevelopment. These tensions recurred in later debates around the OSF mandate and priorities. As the area's popularity increased, so did the potential for conflict over resource use between bar patrons, afternoon shoppers, café and restaurant customers, street people, youth, and business owners. Attempts to resolve these conflicts resulted in the actual or discursive exclusion of certain groups. The overriding rationale

was to ensure the unimpeded operation of businesses fronting on the streets. Preferences concerning street decor, food, and commodities were extended to the types of citizen who would fit into the constructed scenario. Ultimately, control over the modelling of the historical streetscape, with its specific fixtures and facades, provided a precedent for the more subtle moulding of its human features.[33]

Has the role of Old Strathcona in the city of Edmonton been primarily one of community preservation or of consumer-facility development? With the recent additions of the once-reviled chain stores, such as Chapters and Starbucks, has a placeless commercial culture been "imposed" upon a more authentic version of the settlement heritage? Again, the integration of commercial concerns with community heritage has always been a fundamental part of the character of urban life. And so has the struggle to maintain a balance between authentic and diverse street life and the necessary control over the consequences of that vitality. One of the tests of these processes is the extent to which the public interest is served and represented in decision making. In response to campaigns curtailing selected types of people on Whyte Avenue, one of the real and consistent traditions of Edmonton's cultural life emerged. In public meetings, information fliers and on letters pages, the local citizenry appeared to object more to paternalistic, transparent programs of social control than it did to the presence of bikers or panhandlers. People pointed out that compassion and diversity are local traditions at least as important as heritage ambiance and cappuccino. The campaign to ban panhandlers died after several months of public criticism, during which most local merchants withdrew from the program.[34]

However, these incidents point to the increasing challenges to the district's directions and perceived civic privileges. As the OSF reminded the public, it had headed the transformation of a previously marginal area into a showplace, "a better place to live and a more vibrant . . . social and community environment." But the character and function of a commercial district as "showplace" was itself the problem for critics. Was the city pouring money into what was essentially private enterprise rather than a cultural preservation project? Was the area actually better defined as part of the regional tourist business rather than a community or neighbourhood service area? Was Old Strathcona contributing to the quality of life for Edmontonians, not just those who lived there?[35] Despite repeated arguments to this effect from the OSF, city councillors representing other districts had protested the city's preferential investment in Old Strathcona since the 1980s. A second farmers' market controversy almost ten years after the events described above highlights the persistent sense of injustice in city planning and resource distribution.

During the 1970s, the Alberta and Saskatchewan governments established programs to encourage the presence of farmers' markets in various communities. A meeting of producers and consumers would, in theory, enable people to rediscover the tradition of early western settlers' dependence on such markets in garrison and government towns. Their present incarnations could also compete with the monopoly of supermarkets, most

of which were not locally based, and, like heritage shopping districts, present an "alternative to downtown and mall shopping."[36] Edmonton's original, downtown market was slated for closure in 1997, a no-longer profitable relic in a deteriorating inner city. In its place, developers and city council planned a faux "town centre"—with aesthetics and projected clientele modelled on successful revitalizations like Old Strathcona. In other words, the market would be replaced with a glamourized, more expensive version of itself. Defenders of tradition immediately resorted to precisely the same terms used by the Strathcona Market in the face of threatened closure in the previous decade: the city market was an authentic historic tradition dating to the turn of the century, part of the city's "cultural heritage," a place of genuine old-fashioned service and small town familiarity. This time, though, the counter-example was the Old Strathcona market itself as the icon of everything the downtown was not—specifically, unauthentic and inaccessible for most people. Unlike the new Strathcona Market, most vendors and customers had come to the city market for generations. Street people and panhandlers were tolerated in the area. The downtown institution was a "real and down-to-earth . . yuppie-free alternative" to Strathcona's "upscale market . . . where they charge twice as much for the same thing."[37] Implicit in these arguments were class oppositions and questions about the relative value of shopping for leisure or for necessity. Associated issues continued to haunt Whyte Avenue as it struggled with success.

By the 1990s, the area had, as predicted, attracted a diverse street life roughly divided into shoppers, coffee drinkers, and panhandlers by day and pub-crawlers by night. The Midas touch of revitalization brought with it less-glittering components of urban life, and concerns among residents and merchants about the drifts in character away from the advertised "unique, small-town appeal." The Whyte Avenue Land Use Planning proposal in late 1997 addressed problems connected with the many bars in the area, but was apparently reluctant to impose any restrictions or development controls on these profitable businesses. Instead, the proposal was the one of the first sources to recommend that the "unique shopping area" be controlled by measures such as video and police street surveillance of non-customers. Planners suggested that aesthetics would also be improved by the elimination of free expression in the form of handbills or posters.[38]

In reaction to the proposal, merchants, as well as patrons and journalists, pointed out that the district's character, and thus its attraction, actually depended on the presence of "a lot of very eclectic people" who should be distinguished from those responsible for "the violence and drunkenness that spills onto the streets after the bars close." Demonstrating a variety of reverse stereotyping, one columnist wrote that to remove youth and eccentrics was to stifle the same "bustling and prosperous street scene" in favour of one dominated by a homogeneous "suburban dwellers . . . pushing their giant-wheeled baby carts." The proposal's apparent objective was "to turn a wildly successful, hip area—the only strip in Edmonton with anything resembling a street life—into a 'safe', but sterile, outdoor mall." This was no longer charmingly packaged and promoted small-town culture, but a less attractive "small-town mentality" which would result in

the outdoor version of West Edmonton Mall's upscale Europa boulevard. Either Whyte Avenue was a public street which belonged "every bit as much to . . kids or buskers as it does to cinnamon candle merchants," or it was a private shopping mall, monitored and controlled by central planning. Planners reassured everyone that restrictive measures would be limited to certain people and confined to certain locations, but to protesters, defining public streets as controlled commercial space through the clean-up of undesirable messages and unsightly people essentially limited "a spontaneous and unregulated public discourse . . ."[39]

Also received with skepticism were the proposal's suggestions for the imposition of commercial building restrictions. By this point, despite the role of the OSF, aesthetic and commercial pressures had eliminated several old buildings in favour of "new buildings designed to look like old buildings." Chain stores, restaurants, and faux-traditional pubs had replaced long-standing local institutions pushed out by rising lease and tax rates. By late 1999, the Foundation's campaign to halt construction of a cinema complex on Whyte Avenue rang a bizarre note. The OSF protests that "the faux-façade of this design is reminiscent of Europa Boulevard in West Edmonton Mall ... inappropriate design for Whyte Avenue." And in fact, whatever support the protest gained was on the issues of local parking and overcrowding rather than on heritage or aesthetic grounds. After all, most users of the area could not tell the difference between real and false heritage facades, nor was it a crucial issue for the majority.[40]

In fact, the district, at least as defined by its anchor of Whyte Avenue, had in many ways become the thing it despised: a shopping mall, complete with fast-food outlets and discount chain stores. The *in situ* re-use of historic buildings means that the traditional museum (or shopping mall) strategy of enclosure from the outside world is absent in Old Strathcona. However, such districts develop their own codes of distinction between areas and margins; zones of comfort according to the individual's sense of social belonging within a certain type of environment, or simply of convenience. Old Strathcona's psychological "centre" is defined by Whyte Avenue, and specifically by its core area between the railroad tracks on one end and a car dealership on the other. The distribution of shops and services in the area reflects a sense of these invisible borders, with leisure venues, clothing boutiques and gift shops more concentrated in the core area as compared to a broader mix of businesses outside of it.[41]

Responding to criticism and dissent about the area's development and function, the OSF steering organization has consistently defended its work as conservation, and thus in the broad public interest. While the project is a successful instance of economic revitalization, producing an attractive and pleasant environment for leisure activity, the question remains of who defines the public interest, with corresponding power over public expenditures. There has been very little inquiry into assumptions that the general public in the city supports such projects on the basis of the heritage conservation rationale, although academic and planning research has brought such assumptions into question. Many of these analyses suggest that, outside the middle

class, people have little attachment to historic architecture or objects. The rhetorical opposition of traditional shopping environments to mass-retail malls reflects not only the relative values of past versus present, but attitudes toward popular taste or necessity in leisure and recreation. The work of cultural legitimation and distinction has been as much a part of constructing Old Strathcona as activities of preserving selected shop facades.[42]

Certain features and practices in urban spaces tend to exaggerate existing differences between zones of economic prosperity. Such distinctive spatial practices arise out of specific material circumstances, such as the relative value of real estate and development, and the effects of changing markets on a local economy. For instance, consumer outlets become more specialized as they are geared to either the luxury market in attractive, convenient areas or to the efficient distribution of utilitarian goods in malls or discount warehouse districts. The divergence in consumption patterns points to what Castells calls the "dual city," in which the gap between the professional middle class and other "tribes" is defined in part by power over information and communication.[43] Certain consumers have more direct access to the symbolic capital of a restored urban landscape, in that they share in the web of associations and references that make a certain set of features, such as the historical, significant or meaningful. In a broader sense, though, the social process of drawing out meanings about community, however vague, can be a form of coping with new conditions of everyday urban life such as the sense that commuting to work from the suburbs precludes a sense of belonging to a real community. In some areas, including inner-city neighbourhoods in Calgary and Edmonton, "new-old" single-family residences have been built and sold partly on the strength of their location in older urban areas. The association of the housing style with a sense of place and history overrides concerns about the fact that such areas are presently economically and socially marginal. In all cases, such projects share the conviction of broader Main Street projects that conservation of historic buildings can revitalize neighbourhoods in some significant way. The potential for the distribution of benefits to longer-term, established residents includes higher property values.[44]

Whether urban streets read as primarily cultural heritage areas or business zones, control over public space by private interests remains a continuing issue. The transformation of streets into "streetscapes" by vested interests immediately implies the presence of a frame around the image. Historic preservation districts are controlled versions of urban life, incorporating representative details into tasteful new settings and purposes. In Old Strathcona, balancing on one hand Edmonton's (too developed) malls and official museums, and on the other its (under-developed) neglected neighbourhoods, we have a symbolic capital of (just right) controlled time and space. The historicized community—a commodified space—represents the collapse of the assumed opposition between everyday, lived routine and a cynical, imported economic regime. In this sense, the clash of interests in the case of Old Strathcona—what it actually was, is, and should be—was predictable. But the local meanings of such projects are unpredictable, as is the course of their evolution outside the protective boundaries of the museum.

By the end of the 1990s, much of the force of dichotomous rhetorics had waned in Old Strathcona, as elsewhere. Lines had blurred between the perception of local cultural identity and a sense of identity based more on patterns of shared taste in consumption. This shift in concerns was underwritten by contemporary shifts by museums and heritage agencies toward commercial development in compensation for decreasing public funds. Public landscapes became more associated with organized spectacle in surfaces and activities and few worried about distinctions between citizens and consumers. With the wide popularity of taste-and decorating-maven Martha Stewart, the heritage-oriented pastiche of texture and colour became more influential in spaces from malls to home decorating boutiques. As imagery and style become critical in urban spaces, actual environment becomes a "concrete abstraction" in which the authenticity or rootedness of a particular feature ceases to matter much. The leisure function of Old Strathcona, as a constructed environment, has superseded its cultural function of preserving local history, and challenged its prescribed social function of sustaining community identity.

David Harvey describes postmodernity as a complex in which spectacle becomes an instrument of "bourgeois community unification", and related processes may be linked to the evolution of the Old Strathcona streetscape and nature of its clientele. He suggests that complex new global patterns of production and consumption emerged around the early 1970s, the period when Edmonton's booming oil economy brought rapid material re-development of the traditional urban landscape. Heritage conservation and economic gentrification movements gained political credibility; cultural production merged with consumer aesthetics. Edmonton, like other cities, worked to define itself as a distinct stylistic "product," a prime commodity of location in the system of capital circulation; civic support for revitalization projects arose in this context. As well as residential properties, shopping and leisure facilities are indicators of image-conscious economics, zones of conspicuous consumption where specialized tastes distinguish it from those of mass consumption. As the city itself must appear as a package of innovation, creativity and safety—vitality and energy—urban life orients itself around spectacles and display.[45]

Harvey goes on to outline how certain areas are distinguished further according to oppositional myths: urban as opposed to suburban (stagnation, death), both imagined in generic terms or models, not necessarily drawn from actual local experience. As cultural objects act as media for negotiating meanings, new myths attract resistance, often phrased in excluded or dismissed worldviews, and lost master-narratives. These may include a nostalgia for traditional production methods and social relationships, and a rejection of a consumer-oriented lifestyle. However potent, these objections address visible irritants and miss the underlying economic and social changes.

As malls came to be blamed for the deterioration of traditional neighbourhoods and social patterns, and museums accused of elitism, the development of Whyte Avenue appeared to be the perfect alternative: neither historical simulacra nor mall culture. However, these lines have blurred everywhere, with museums becoming more commercially appealing and commercial venues employing cosy heritage motifs such as peaked gables on big-box buildings. Part of the message of the latter is safety and familiarity, as well as meeting aesthetic tastes for the generic traditional and social nostalgia.

In answer to area residents concerned about the effect on quality of life of overdevelopment, the Old Strathcona Business Association asked householders "look at the big picture" in which a greater integration of residences and businesses create "a climate of urban living." Again, the picture depends on a vague shared positive image of urban diversity, convenience, and activity. The implied message here is that the proliferation of bars and nightclubs a block or two away from houses is a natural price to pay for the positive aspects.[46] The restoration, replication, and installation of selected elements offered a dynamic zone of reference points for promoters to define Old Strathcona in opposition to almost any other recreational spaces "We are not a shopping mall ... a museum ... a gentrified theme park" like all other sites that are either less sacred and authentic, or less relevant and attractive to the community as a whole. The implication of a separation between some "authentic" essential past and the artificial, replicated version of it is especially difficult to sustain in the case of communities dating back only about a century. As a railway town, Edmonton constructed itself as immigration, tourism, and business locale for most of that period. Programs of social exclusion from the area began as early as 1876 when the local newspaper began agitating for the removal of a Cree band from what was then a reserve close to the town boundaries (real estate "needed by better men" in the words of editor Frank Oliver.[47] The debate over what a Calgary conservationist has called "façade-omy" is not unique to Whyte Avenue, and raises again the importance of considering context when applying criteria of authenticity or rationale to assessing specific projects.

The philosophy behind district conservation rests in part on the notion that community develops in organic context of a unique built environment, which is inseparable from that community's ongoing identity; for purists, any compromise results in diluted, Disneyfied referencing. Rigid interpretations of that approach—"without this exact façade, we are not Strathcona"—should be considered in light of local context. Prairie towns were usually laid out according to a common plan, with street widths, names and railway lines replicating each other from one to another. The same builders often moved from town to town, and constructed facades according to the same templates over a relatively brief historical period of swift development. The direct linkage between authenticity and specific sense of place and identity must then be questioned. Practical considerations also relate to this historical context. Decisions about what building or portion of a building to conserve must address modern codes for safety and function, and given the conditions of early construction in prairie cities, original commercial buildings were often pragmatic "storefronts with not much behind them." For many, what they represent in terms of the spirit and rhythm of earlier urban life is more important than conservation of all physical details.[48]

All these issues are complicated by matters of jurisdiction and power in the development of the urban "heritage" landscape. In the case of Old Strathcona, ideologies of community development have attempted to reconcile complex agenda over more than thirty years. As a combination of realism and fantasy, the constructed environment itself is the main commodity. These days Old Strathcona appears more a variation on, rather than a challenge to, a mass popular culture of leisure. One legacy of strong post-war cultural development in Alberta is that the term "heritage" is ubiquitous in the everyday life. It is omnipresent as a label not only for parks and festivals but for retailers including drycleaners, construction firms and shopping malls. It can be particularly disconcerting to see a truck labelled "Heritage Exterminators" on a street full of restored period buildings. When an entire urban district is given the label of heritage, it too is packaged as a product—a Ghost Town attraction without the ticket gate. Whatever their results, heritage conservation movements have served as a medium for statements about the nature of community. The development of Old Strathcona is one way that a community is imagined and expressed through the resources at hand. Whether or not it defines some essential heritage of that community is less important than its ongoing role in the selective process of community life.[49]

Notes

1. *Edmonton Journal,* (hereafter *EJ*) "Anarchy on Whyte Avenue", 4 July 2001; see also Jim Farrell and Edward Parsons, "Crackdown coming: after Whyte Avenue rampage", *EJ*, 3 July 2001; smaller-scale vandalism and disturbances are common in the area, prompting calls for a more balanced mix of retail and hospitality establishments; the "changing ambiance" of the whole area is also blamed as high rental rates drive out many established businesses. Carol Fraser, "Rental rates too high", *EJ*, 9 July 2001; Bradley J. Mole, "Failure at the top", *EJ*, 10 August 2001.

2. T. Boddy "Prairie architecture", *Canadian Heritage* 37, Oct–Nov. 1992, 126.

3. S.P. Martin. "Selected aspects of the functional relationship between consumers and commercial ribbons: a case study of Whyte Avenue, Edmonton", M.A. Thesis, Dept. of Geography, University of Alberta, 1974, 56–62.

4. [Strathcona Historical Group (hereafter SHG)]. *Strathcona: The Asset of Heritage. A Plan for the Future* [1974 Report to Edmonton City Council], 9; see also Martin *ibid.*; P. Cashman, "Retaining the charm of Old Strathcona", *EJ*, 26 March 1990. Vancouver's Gastown district was cited as a successful western precedent for the Edmonton project. Prairie urban conservation often takes in entire districts because a concentrated array of otherwise undistinguished buildings lends each one a heightened significance; see W. Jamieson, "Creating historic districts: new challenges for historic preservation in Western Canada", *Prairie Forum* 15, no. 2, Fall 1990, 222–23.

5. [SHG 1974] In the 1960s, restaurants, hotels, barbers, and shoe repair shops occupied approximately as much space as shops in the largest group; those selling drugs, books, stationery, bicycles, gifts, and music equipment. Stores selling hardware, furniture, and domestic goods were also significant in number. For further background, see Martin *ibid.*, 46–47.

6. Development Control Resolution, City of Edmonton 1974; SHG 1974, 20–31.; also, *EJ*, 9 June 1985, A3. In a 1974 agreement with the Old Strathcona Foundation (hereafter OSF) and Heritage Canada, the city granted the district $50,000 per year for the next ten years; Heritage Canada and the Devonian Foundation each granted $100,000 per year for five years.

7. The heritage district or ecomuseum is defined as a "geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources...that has been influenced by or reflects human activity or was the background for an event or person significant in human history" which warrants "preservation of the historic appearance of the landscape." H.C. Miller, "Rural landscape", *Cultural Resource Management Bulletin* 10, no. 6, December 1987, 1. Emphasis on citizen participation, community resource development, and local culture in the Albertan and Canadian context is represented in sources including J. Dalibard, "The community is the curator", *Canadian Heritage* 12, no. 1, February–March 1986, 2–3; *Reviving Main Street*, ed. D. Holdsworth (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); H. Stovel, "Storefront evolution", 16–18, and J.J. Stewart, "A strategy for Main Streets", both in *CH* 40, May–June 1983, 4–7; T. Ward, "Focus on the Alberta Main street programme: Vermilion", *Alberta Past*, Winter 1993, 10. For a rural example, see J. Balan, *A Development Strategy for the Proposed Ukrainian Settlement Block Ecomuseum in East Central Alberta* (Alberta Culture & Multiculturalism, Historic Sites and Archives Service/CIUS, University of Alberta, March 1992). See also *Museums and Communities: the Politics of Public Culture*, eds. I. Karp, C.M. Kreamer and S.D. Lavine, (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992); P. Vergo, ed., *The New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books, 1989). The potential for genuine community participation in these projects is debated. The vernacular quality of the streetscapes often appears too mundane to galvanize local interest, particularly in rural areas, and Main Street programs have incorporated educational components to help locals reconceive their landscape in terms of historical value, and their display windows in terms of appropriate retail aesthetics.

8. As early as 1975, for instance, a new city council had disputed provisions of land use made in the 1974 agreement; O. Elliott, "Old Strathcona's future threatened", *EJ*, 19 September 1975, 30; also see R. Sibley, "Scona foundation's financial future poor", *EJ*, 19 May 1982, A2.

9. Specific projects recognized by Heritage Canada included the Gainer Block, the Dominion Hotel, and the Princess Theatre. In the Old Strathcona area as a whole, 600 buildings are estimated to date from 1914 or earlier; 25 of these are in the core area near Whyte Avenue; see H. Sullivan, "Old buildings worth recycling—architect", *EJ*, 29 August 1982, F8.

10. Comments on OSF, see O. Elliott, "League 'takeover' means we've come full circle," *EJ*, 18 February 1982, A6 and "Strathcona revitalization needs bureaucrats", *EJ*, 20 May 1982, A4. In 1981, Heritage Canada protested the OSF's decision to loan $67,000 to a community league; J. Vlieg, "Scona foundation rocked by takeover", *EJ*, 27 January 1982, B11. The loan was later accepted as legal, according to OSF bylaws; R. Barstow, "$67,000 loan sparks call for city probe", *EJ*, 17 February 1982; "Scona loan called legal", *EJ*, 17 March 1982, H3; D. Staples, "Strathcona—fine past and finer future", *EJ*, 16 January 1986, B5; the Princess Theatre was profitable not because of its charming decor or authenticity but because it showed films to an identified market; "Council lets foundation buy Princess Theatre", *EJ*, 9 March 1982, B1; L. Faulkner, "The Princess presence", *The Strathcona Plaindealer* 29, no. 2, Winter 1994, 6–7.

11. The city finally purchased the mill in 1985, and approved a grant of $131,000 to sustain OSF operations and new funding of $50,000 to $100,000 over the next five to ten years. See V. Killeen, "Mill gets new lease on life", *EJ*, 9 May 1982, B1; *EJ*, 9 June 1985, A3; "City council agrees to buy Ritchie Mill from local group", *EJ*, 25 Nov 1987, B4; Cashman *ibid.*; A. Ascher, "The Ritchie millstone", *Alberta Report* 12, no. 7, 4 Feb 1985, 9–10; P. Arab, "Rebuilding of Scona block under study", *EJ*, 9 June 1985, A3.

12. The Old Strathcona area, which technically includes the University district, is in some ways not representative of the character of the city as a whole. For instance, while the number of city home owners is almost twice that of renters (206,140 to 113,465 in 1996), in Old Strathcona apartment dwellers far outnumber single homes (72% to 21%.) By contrast, the Bonnie Doon area immediately to the east has nearly the reverse situation, with 64% single homes and 21% apartments. (Statistics Canada, 1996 Census data.)

13. S. McKeen, "Hearing date set for Old Strathcona Plan", *EJ*, 19 September 1990, B2; D. Howell, "Old Strathcona's future tied to development of rail lands", *EJ*, 15 October 1990, B3; M. Sadava, "Old Strathcona view may turn out to be costly", *EJ*, 24 October 1990, B3, and "Historic Old Strathcona will be saving its face", *EJ*, 31 October 1990, B16; *The Old Strathcona Foundation Newsletter* 16, no. 3, May–June 1995. The railway ended in the town of Strathcona in the early 1900s, and was not extended across the river into Edmonton for many years.

14. Actual income levels in the district are not substantially different than those in the city as a whole. However, as in the case of housing patterns, education and employment of occupants in the area differ from the city norms in key respects. City education levels are 50% trades or non-university certifi-

cates and 18% university degrees. In Old Strathcona, this is almost the reverse, with 45% holding university degrees and 17% trades or other certificates. Employment patterns also show differences: in the city of Edmonton, 27% in sales and services, 21% in trades and industry, 20% in business and administration, and health, education/government and management all below 10%; Bonnie Doon's figures are virtually the same. In Old Strathcona, however, sales and service jobs are 24%, education/government 18%, business/administration 16%, and trades and industry 9% (Statistics Canada, 1996 Census data.)

15. D. Belanger, Editorial, *The Old Strathcona Foundation Newsletter* 16, no. 3, May–June 1995.

16. In response to critics, the OSF asked for further city funding to support financial incentives against demolition. This was an approach which had had limited success in preceding years of the project. J. Geiger, "Historical group too complecent [sic]", *EJ*, 24 August 1991, A8; R. Sibley, "Scona foundation's financial future poor", *EJ*, 19 May 1982.

17. Geiger, *ibid.*

18. M. Tougas, "Old Strathcona buildings given facelift", *EJ*, 12 September 1987, G1; Staples *ibid.*

19. A.Kellogg, "Factions face off in Old Strathcona", *EJ*, 19 November 1989, C13.

20. From 1986 to 1994, the OSF's annual operating expenditures ranged between $200,000 and $300,000. 25 jobs were created in various programs. The city of Edmonton had contributed a total of $900,000 in annual grants, which ended after the 1994–95 season. This was supplemented by approximately $4 million in property improvement grants. *Old Strathcona Foundation Summary: A Community Revitalization Success* (Edmonton: OSF, 1994).

21. C. Mullen, "Jokes and bug repellent part of job for history tour guide", *EJ*, 22 August 1982, B7. In the early 1990s, this program was operated and expanded by the OSF as the Strolling History Players Walking Tours; P. Arab, "Old Strathcona ready to chop events if city cuts its funding", *EJ*, 30 May 1991, B3.; Cashman *ibid.*; D. Belanger, Editorial, *The Old Strathcona Foundation Newsletter* 16, no. 13, May–June 1995; D. Ellis, "Publications Committee Report", *Old Strathcona Foundation 1995 Annual Report*, Edmonton, 14 Nov. 1995. In the late 1990s, the *Plaindealer* resumed publication with articles on local history. Events and festivals continue to use generic or commercial themes.

22. For similar examples of promotional rhetoric see *Old Strathcona* (Edmonton: OSF, 1993).

23. OSF, "Old Strathcona stores move outside for sidewalk sale", *EJ*, 1 May 1987, B4–5; R. Chalmers, "Stores thumb noses at malls", *EJ*, 12 March 1988.

24. *Ibid.*; see also *News and Views* 3, no. 2, Fall 1980.

25. Cashman *ibid.*; Chalmers *ibid.*; R. Chalmers, "Chain stores would fail, Old Strathcona retailers say", *EJ*, 23 June 1991, B2.

26. Heritage Canada representative Morris Flewwelling, cited in P. Reichwein "Stand up for heritage!", unpublished paper, University of Alberta, 1988. Some local landmarks, like the family-owned Bee Bell Bakery and United Cycle, were forced to move to less patronized streets. Others survived by changing their retailing strategies to follow an overall shift toward an upscale clientele. For instance, Chapman Bros. had sold utilitarian work wear for decades but now stocked stylish casual gear for students and young professionals. Eventually, Chapman Bros. was replaced with an upscale wine shop. The Old Strathcona Business Association's 2001 Directory lists businesses and services in the district from 99th Street to 111th Street, and from 77th Avenue to 86th Avenue. This area incorporates the residential districts surrounding the core shopping and entertainment district, which is the area with which this discussion is primarily concerned. The core area—103rd Street to 108th Street and 80th to 84th Avenues—serves the district's residents, but also a much broader range of day tourists and shoppers, who give way in the evenings to an influx of bar, club, and restaurant patrons. Old Strathcona Business Association 2001 Business Directory. OSBA, Edmonton.

27. L. Shorten, "Strathcona market sold out?" *EJ*, 11 December 1988, A1.

28. J. Schultz, "A taste of Old Strathcona", *EJ*, 16 August 1989, C1–2; Staples *ibid.*; A. Kydd, Editorial, also E. Cooke, "Creating a unique brew", both in *The Strathcona Plaindealer* XIX, no. 2, Winter 1994, 2.

29. As of 2001, the largest business categories in the area are restaurants, cafes, and bars, with 41 establishments concentrated in the core area. Gift shops are second, with 39 in Old Strathcona as a whole, and 28 in the core area. Old Strathcona Business Association, *ibid.*

30. "Does Strathcona Foundation need a leader like this?", *EJ*, 25 July 1990, D15.

31. In the course of field research in 1998, I observed two occasions in as many days upon which low-income vendors of a tabloid on poverty issues were told to leave because the city street was now "private property" due the nature of its use: in Old Strathcona, by shoppers and clothing vendors, and in the downtown civic square, by an arts festival supervisor.

32. J. Caswell, "Replacing the face of human suffering," *EJ*, 18 May 2001; M. Walters, "Our Voice will struggle to be heard on Whyte", *EJ*, 3 May 2001.

33. For related accounts of a struggle for control of European city streets through use of signage, lighting, and pavement design, see W. Schivelbusch, *Disenchanted Night: the Industrialisation of Light in the Nineteenth Century,* (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1988), 81–134.

34. See M. MacKinnon. "Panhandlers pan plan", *EJ*, 16 October 1997, A1; M. MacKinnon. "Everything's not all right on Whyte", *EJ*, 17 October 1997, B1.; L. Faulder. "Whyte Avenue cleanup looks like a sterilization", *EJ*, 17 October 1997, B1; "Don't turn Whyte into 'White' Avenue", *EJ*, 17 October 1997, A18; "Whyte Avenue plan still too authoritarian", Editorial, *EJ,* 3 November 1997, A8.

35. OSF, *Old Strathcona*; D. Belanger, "Looking back on 1995", *Old Strathcona Foundation 1995 Annual Report*, 2. OSF's president argued that "it took a long time for this area to gel, for this vision to be acceptable to the many and the passionate concern of the few" (Cashman 1990).

36. L. Beisenthal. "To market, to market", *Canadian Heritage*, May 1982, 34–36; Fyfe, 1980, 3.

37. J. MacDonald. "Downtown market a magnet, patrons say", *EJ*, 22 June 1997, B3. The planned development was dropped by city council due to lack of resources, and the downtown market continues with some incentives introduced such as free weekend parking, as of early 2000.

38. B. Bouw. "The great Whyte hope", *EJ,* 16 October 1997, A1. Following the Canada Day riot, surveillance cameras along Whyte Avenue again appeared to be a monitoring option; Jen Ross, "Privacy boss puts video surveillance in doubt", *EJ*, 17 July 2001. Following the riot, police activity in the area became more visible and aggressive. Both city officials and other observers warned that attitudes of zero tolerance and an increased police presence would work to the detriment of business in Strathcona. A central concern of council, as voiced by the Mayor, was that the events not have an impact on tourism for the upcoming world track and field championships a few weeks away. Farrell and Parsons, *ibid.*; S. Burgess, "Weekend on Whyte means blue wall of police", *EJ,* 29 July 2001; G. Vanderburg, "Police to keep pressure on Whyte", *EJ*, 7 August 2001.

39. L. Faulder *ibid.*

40. OSF, "Proposed theatres," circular, n.d [November 1999].

41. A listing of businesses in the area as a whole shows the top three as restaurants, etc., gift shops, and professional services (41, 39 and 38 respectively), similar to the core area. However, the area as a whole contains a more diverse range of businesses, especially notable in the category of everyday or community goods and services. For instance, there are 4 community leagues in the area, with none in the core. Of eleven car services, only one is in the core, with the same proportion applying to apparel services such as tailoring and shoe repair. There are 24 food or grocery stores in the broader area, with only 4 in the core, and 17 banks as compared to 3 in the core. This does not mean a serious deprivation of those services for those who need them, of course, since the area as a whole is not prohibitively large, but it supports the perception that the core area, which represents the foundational development of the heritage community preservation project, has primarily developed into a tourism and entertainment district catering to a non-resident clientele. Professional services such as medicine, law,

and accounting, however, although they occupy office spaces and are thus far less visible, do represent services convenient for residents, rather than visitors, *2001 Business Directory* (Edmonton: Old Strathcona Business Association, 2001).

42. T. Boddy, "Underground and overhead: building the analagous city" in *New American City and the End of Public Space*, ed. M. Sorkin (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 147. Boddy notes that what these productions avoid is as important as what they contain. See also D. Chaney, *Fictions of Collective Life: Public Drama in Late Modern Culture* (London/New York: Routledge 1993), 151–52, and *Lifestyles* (London/New York: Routledge 1996); K. Robins, "Prisoners of the city: whatever could a postmodern city be?" in *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location*, eds. E. Carder, J. Donald and J. Squires (London: Laurence and Wishart 1993), 321, 323; Zukin 1997. Specific discussions of heritage as expression of taste: H. Kalman. "Can they all be wrong?", *CH* 4, May–June 1983; J.J. Stewart, "A strategy for Main Streets", *CH* 40, May–June 1983, 4–7; J. Dalibard, "The community is the curator", *CH* 12, no. 1, 1986, 2–3.

43. M. Castells, "European cities, the information society and the global economy", *New Left Review*, 1994, 204. Those who are excluded are often present in forms of nostalgic representation and simulations of chaotic street life; this process is also evident in West Edmonton Mall (M. Crawford, "The world in a shopping mall", in M. Sorkin *ibid.* 23–27; J. Williamson "Notes from Storyville North: circling the mall", in *Lifestyle Shopping: The Subject of Consumption*, ed. R. Shields (London and New York: Routledge, 1992.) See also D. Harvey, *The Urban Experience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 237–77 and *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

44. Gentrification, in the opinion of a Heritage Canada representative, is valued mainly "in contrast to the slum that was there before." M. Flewwelling in Reichwein *ibid.*

45. D. Harvey, "The geopolitics of capitalism", in *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, eds. D. Gregory and J. Urry (London: Methuen 1985); also Harvey 1987 and 1989, *op. cit.*; H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1991), 26–32, 306–8. C. Mills takes a similar approach to analysis of a Vancouver development, in "Myths and meanings of gentrification," in *Place/ culture/ representation*, eds. J. Duncan & D. Ley (London: Routledge 1993), 149–70. Related discussions of the politics of place: F. Inglis, *Popular Culture and Political Power* (New York, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988; *Place and the Politics of Identity*, M. Keith & S. Pile, eds. London: Routledge 1993).

46. The mix of residences and businesses promoted here was a complex of up-market condominiums, cafes, and home decor shops on Whyte Avenue.

OSBA executive director Dawn Fargey quoted in Joe Ranger, "Strathcona biz boss changing gears," *The Edmonton Examiner,* 5 May 2000. The danger of death-by-success now plaguing the district is brought into focus here by columnist L. Faulder's commentary on Economic Development Edmonton's plan for historic Glenora as "another Whyte Avenue," but less popular and over-manipulated, and without the "parking meters, the traffic congestion, the bars and the panhandlers" of Old Strathcona (Faulder, *ibid.*); B.J. Mole, "Leave 124th Street as it is now", *EJ*, 17 January 1998, A155; these perspectives echo those of the early Strathcona preservation movement citing the advantages of Whyte Avenue in contrast to the then-booming downtown.

47. Frank Oliver, editor of the *Edmonton Bulletin*, cited in C. Reading, "We built this city on lust and greed," *Vue Weekly*, 15–21 June 2000, 4. Many of the photographs of the turn-of-the-century towns now used as restoration models exist because they were produced as promotions or souvenirs for the mass print market; commercial sites in early Edmonton took a central role in developing idiosyncratic cultural public spaces and displays. B. Rusted has discussed similar photographic resources in eastern Canada in "Framing a house, photography and the performance of heritage", *Canadian Folklore Canadien* 17, no. 2, 1995, 149. A 1993 study noted that storefronts are vital to the character of historic commercial neighbourhoods, and are usually the main focus of period restoration work. Preservationists also claim that the public's attraction to everyday historic shopping districts demonstrates the heritage movement's (non-elitist) response to basic human needs. See *Guidelines for the Rehabilitation of Designated Historic Resources*, ed. K. Russell, 2nd ed., (The Alberta Association of Architects/Alberta Community Development 1993), 37; H. Kalman, "The lesson of conservation", *Canadian Heritage* 38, Dec. 1982, 32.

48. For discussion of these issues in the context of current projects in Calgary, see D.L. Andrews, "Changing the face of Calgary," *Legacy*, Summer 2000, Vol. 5, no. 2, 14–17 and M. Miller, "Defying location," *Legacy*, Summer 2000, Vol. 5, no. 2, 19–21. An overview of typical prairie town formats: H. Kalman, "Canada's Main Streets," in *Reviving Main Street*, ed. D. Holdsworth (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

49. For related discussions see de Certeau, Michel, Luce Girard, & Pierre Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life, Vol. 2.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 130–40; Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 40–42; *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Hobsbawm and Ranger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).