

Progress and Potential

Red Deer's Greater Downtown Action Plan
2008 Update

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Acknowledgements

The City of Red Deer would like to thank the Red Deer Chamber of Commerce and its Tourism Committee for initiating discussion of innovative concepts for a “riverwalk” and waterway developments in Riverlands. The ideas put forward by the Chamber Committee members provided significant impetus in the creation of a vigorous new vision for this area of Greater Downtown.

Thanks from the Greater Downtown Action Plan consultants

Hundreds of people contributed ideas and energy to this Update of the Greater Downtown Action Plan. To each of you, our sincere thanks for your involvement.

We particularly appreciate the guidance of the Greater Downtown Action Plan Steering Committee: Cindy Jefferies (Chair), Al Gamble (Vice Chair), Larry Pimm, Craig Curtis, Carol Craig, Janice Wing, (John) Paul Stewart, Shirley Hocken, and Duane Smethurst as well as Steering Committee resource people Haley Horvath (Parkland Community Planning Services), Laura Turner (Downtown Business Association), Ed Morris and Jerry Tennant (The City of Red Deer).

Thanks to the urban design ‘swat team’ of Michael von Hausen, Calum Srigley, Don Wuori and Dolores Altin for their creativity, enthusiasm and design skills.

Thanks to Michael Geller for bringing the best ideas from downtowns around the world to Red Deer.

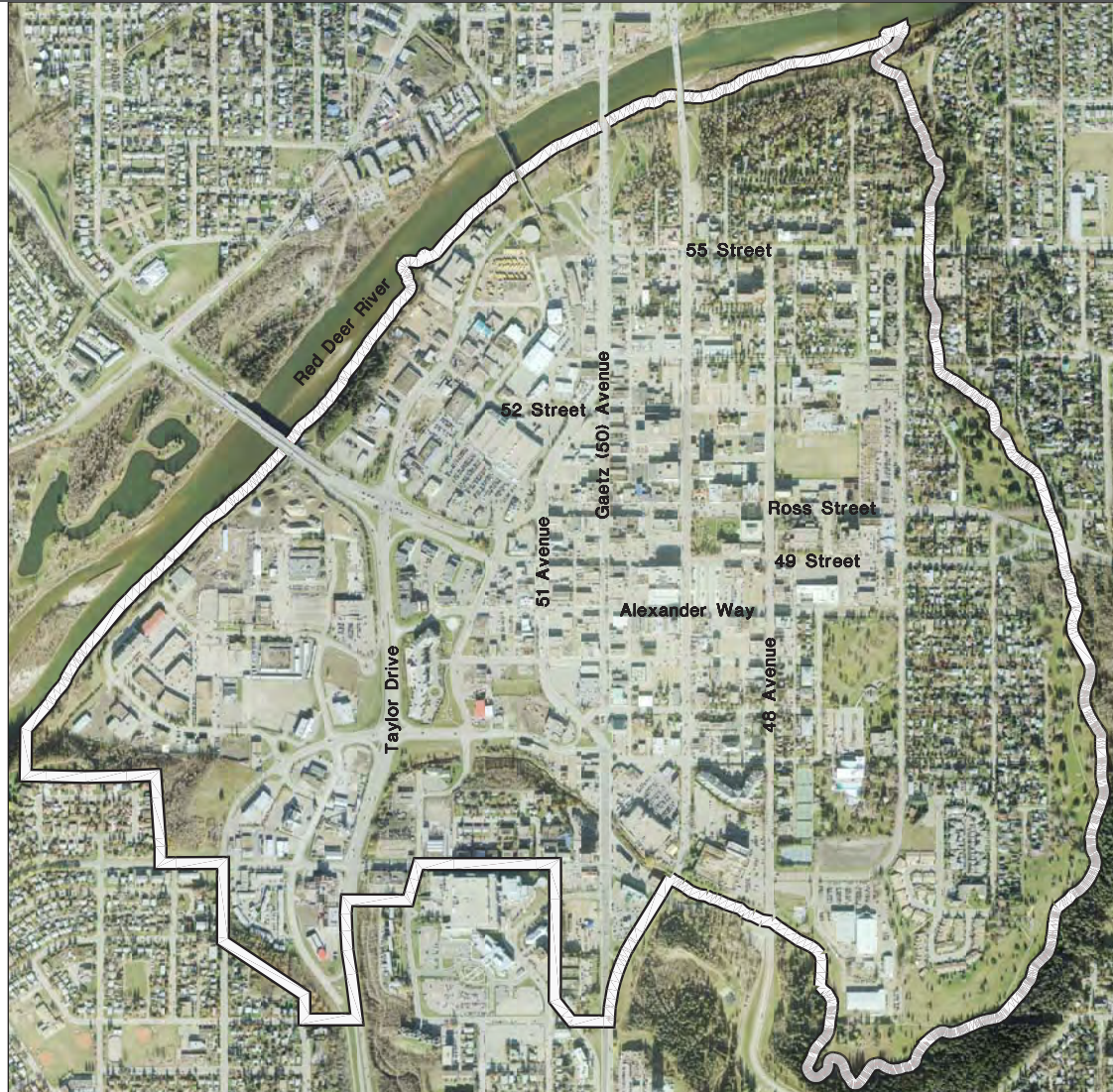
Thanks to Ken Johnson of Urban Design for his assistance with all issues relating to zoning and land use.

Thanks to Redpoint Design for document design and layout.

Finally, thanks to the members of our staff team who contributed great work and long hours to this update: Christine Thiele, Laurie Harder, Peggy Birse and Riel Suntjens.

- Lorne Daniel and John Hull, lead consultants

Figure 1. 2006 City of Red Deer Aerial Photograph



Boundary of Greater Downtown Red Deer Study Area



A. Overview

During 2008, the people of Red Deer reviewed and renewed their vision of our city's Greater Downtown. The community consensus is that Greater Downtown has made significant progress in the years since the Greater Downtown Action Plan 2000 and has even greater potential to lead future development in the city – hence the 'Progress and Potential' title of this 2008 update report.

The vision for the future of Red Deer's Greater Downtown is that it will be a vibrant, diverse urban centre. Development over the next 10-20 years will be led by the emergence of three distinct but complementary districts:

- Historic Downtown – a continuously reinvigorated office and retail centre featuring major government buildings, the city's historic character, and new mixed-use residential and commercial developments;
- Riverlands – a special area with an emphasis on the culture of Red Deer – a district that fosters formal and informal gatherings for our community and visitors; and
- Railyards – the new residential lifeblood for Greater Downtown, where high-density urban living will create a new energy in the city's centre.



Downtown Red Deer looking south east, September 1980.

Photo courtesy of Red Deer and District Archives, John Roberts photographer

A. Overview

Although the three feature districts will all have a ‘mixed use’ character, the emphasis in each is different. In the ‘live-work-play’ triad of activities, the emphasis in terms of district character in Railyards will be on ‘live,’ in Historic Downtown on ‘work,’ and in Riverlands on ‘play.’

A common thread of the 2008 consultations was public enthusiasm for a reconnection with the river that is at the heart of our city. This ‘Renaissance on the Riverfront’ is a key theme, not only for Riverlands and Railyards, which have river frontage, but for Historic Downtown, which has an opportunity to be reinvigorated by new connections to the riverfront.

The Greater Downtown Action Plan (GDAP) 2008 Update reaffirms the planning directions established in the original GDAP. It also introduces a number of new projects and directions.

Public and stakeholder consultation confirmed that the GDAP 2000 was on the right track. If anything, the 2008 Update found that organizations and individuals are more strongly committed to creating a pedestrian-first environment, more excited by the vision for riverfront public spaces and developments, and more aware of the potential for high-density residential development.

Six themes emerged from the consultations. These are:

- Great Streets
- Great Places
- Great Connections
- Vitality
- Authenticity
- Sustainability

A. Overview

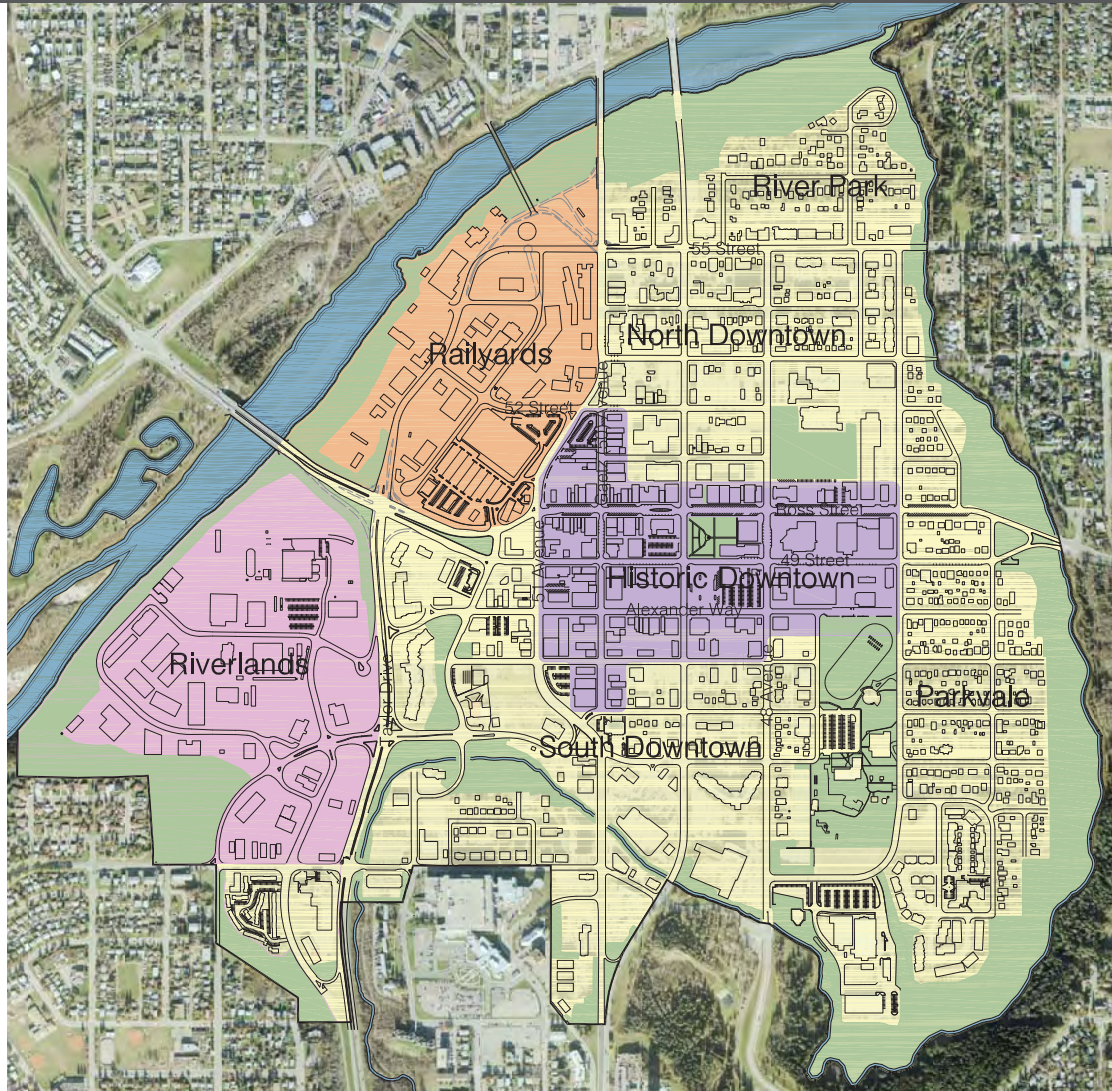
Figure 2. Archival Aerial Photograph: 1948



*Aerial View of Red Deer, 1948 Looking North
Photo courtesy of Red Deer and District Archives*

A. Overview

Figure 3. Greater Downtown: Defined Areas



A. Overview

Each of those six themes was then applied to the three priority districts of Historic Downtown, Riverlands and Railyards,* as shown on the following pages.

**(In this document, various names are used for key planning areas or features – such as the Railyards district north of Ross St. and west of 51 Ave. There was considerable discussion of potential names during the consultation process. This GDAP 2008 Update recommends that a public naming process be held but for purposes of this document, the consultants have used 'placeholder' names such as Railyards in order to refer to a specific district. The assumption is that some of the names used, except for Historic Downtown, will change as a result of a naming review process.)*

Greater Downtown is seen as the area that can and should lead growth and development in Red Deer over the next 20 years. While growth will no doubt continue in the industrial, commercial and residential suburbs, there is strong public support for 'growing up' as a city – building a higher density urban centre with an emphasis on sustainable living.

While the emphasis is on the areas where the greatest growth and change will occur – Historic Downtown, Riverlands and Railyards – the other commercial and residential areas of Greater Downtown (River Park, Parkvale, North Downtown and South Downtown) also have important roles to play in our city's future. For the most part, these districts are envisioned as evolving more slowly while retaining their current characters and configuration.



CentreFest: a downtown festival

A. Overview

Our Vision of a Great Downtown

Greater Downtown Red Deer (or simply ‘downtown’) is a large area at the heart of our city – most of the areas in our river valley, south of the Red Deer River. Greater Downtown will be the thriving core of our city, with a cluster of popular urban areas where people can live, work, interact, visit and enjoy themselves.

3 Great Districts

Greater Downtown development will be driven by development in 3 distinct districts.

To fulfill that vision, downtown aspires to be a place of:

Historic Downtown	Riverlands	Railyards
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Great Streets



Vision: Lively streets filled with people interacting amidst bustling stores, offices, shops, restaurants, public buildings and open spaces. Our great streets encourage multiple types of use, balancing the need for slow, safe vehicle movement with the many other non-vehicular uses.

- pilot projects – bicycle lanes, parking and other improvements
- new ‘Complete Streets’ traffic design guidelines to encourage multiple uses

- Alexander Way extended from Historic Downtown
- new sidewalks with landscaping

- added sidewalks throughout
- new walk / bike routes connecting to Old Train Bridge

Great Places



Vision: The buildings, outdoor spaces, and informal spaces are designed to enhance positive interaction among residents and visitors. Courtyards, plazas, fountains, flower gardens, ice sculptures abound. The great spaces of downtown are our first choice for gatherings of community members.

- new Civic Plaza and enhanced laneways
- water (and ice) features
- child-friendly amenities

- signature community / visitor activity centre
- outdoor and indoor public gathering spaces
- water features and waterways

- high density residences
- mini plazas in new developments

Great Connections



Vision: Our central district is strongly connected, through attractive natural and constructed corridors, to the Red Deer River, Waskasoo Creek and districts outside the core. Downtown also weaves together natural and constructed spaces into seamless, continuous spaces.

- continuous Alexander Way promenade from Barrett Park to Bower Ponds
- new bike path link through 45 St. green belt

- new or improved intersections on Taylor Drive to connect to Historic Downtown
- free public wi-fi zone to encourage creative collaboration

- improvements in Taylor / Ross intersection to connect with Riverlands



Vitality



Vision: Our downtown is a place for all citizens, for diverse urban activities, and for varied buildings, facilities, and outdoor amenities. Downtown is continually changing, re-inventing itself over time. As the living centre of our community, downtown is a place of innovation, ideas, exploration and creative progress. It is alive and evolving.

Historic Downtown	Riverlands	Railyards
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- zoning, guidelines and incentives for high-density residential
- more parking on streets, above and below ground to minimize surface parking lots
- guidelines to encourage on-street cultural events

- mixed-use commercial and residential attractive to varied demographic groups including culture sector and RDC students
- phased redevelopment with early success projects

- mix of services (food, recreation, child care, etc.) to support high-quality urban living

Authenticity



Vision: Red Deer originated at its river crossings; the history of our community is embedded in the layout, buildings and natural areas in the downtown. Today, downtown honours its origins and builds on authentic western Canadian themes.

- public involvement to name newly enhanced lanes in Historic Downtown
- commitment to preserving historic resources

- interpretive features to enhance learning about the waterfront district and water usage

- honour rail heritage
- add historic locomotive as attraction
- historical interpretive signage

Sustainability



Vision: With its existing natural and built infrastructure, downtown is inherently sustainable. In our downtown, we can achieve higher density and lower per-capita resource use. Greater Downtown is a model of our community's commitment to living in concert with our environment.

- commitment to multi-use buildings and public-private partnerships
- improvements to encourage active and low-emission transportation

- 'green' development standards
- development partnerships to ensure private involvement and financial feasibility

- 'green' development standards
- commitment to multi-use buildings





A. Overview

Context for the 2008 Update

Greater Downtown is a large area in the centre of Red Deer, comprising most of the river valley, bordered by the river to the north-west and Waskasoo Creek to the south-east. It includes Historic Downtown, Riverlands, an area informally known as Cannery Row, Parkvale and adjacent unnamed commercial and residential areas. The original GDAP was adopted by City Council in August 2000.

The focus of this Update is on changes that have occurred in the Greater Downtown since 2000, emerging societal influences such as a greater emphasis on sustainability, and new input from citizens and stakeholders on their vision for the area's future. The planned 2009 relocation of the Civic Yards from the Riverlands area to a new site near Three Mile Bend also created a desire to review the future of that area. A Riverlands Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) was completed in 2004 subsequent to the original GDAP but new input such as a proposed "Riverwalk" canals development (see Appendix 1, documents 39, 40) as well as a desire for more public development in the area, made it timely to review the ARP.

The GDAP 2008 Update is a concept plan – it provides the broad directions for future development of Greater Downtown Red Deer. It guides the future development of area redevelopment plans, zoning, bylaws, strategies and budgets for Greater Downtown but does not prescribe specifics. Full build-out of the GDAP 2008 Update is expected to take 20-25 years and will depend on not only The City of Red Deer budgets but potential funding partners, private sector investments and, of course, the overall economic climate.

The GDAP 2008 Update reflects the Vision, Mission and Goals of the 2009-11 City of Red Deer Strategic Direction. The Strategic Direction, with its three-part Vision, is very applicable to Greater Downtown:

- Innovative thinking.
- Inspired results.
- Vibrant community.

Many of the Goals of the Strategic Direction are also reflected in the GDAP 2008 Update, including the emphasis on sustainability, leadership, collaboration and distinctive character.



'Sound the Alarm' sculpture, part of the Ghosts public art program, outside the children's library (old fire hall)

In addition, at least 60 plans, studies and related documents either flowed from the original GDAP or address specific issues within Greater Downtown. Highlights of the recommendations from these plans as they affect the GDAP 2008 Update include:

- downtown growth and ‘intensification’ in the business core, with more residential development (Municipal Development Plan, 2008)
- a comprehensive long-term strategy and budget for public realm initiatives in the downtown (Downtown C1 Public Realm Upgrades, 2006)
- increased density; revitalization and reinvestment (Future Directions, Red Deer at 300,000, 2006)
- connecting downtown to recreation trail system (Bicycle Master Plan, 2000)
- developing street designs for multiple types of users (Red Deer Trails Master Plan, 2005)
- defined districts with an emphasis on social interaction spaces (Main Street Project, 2002)
- support for downtown business (Community Services Action Plans, 2008-2010)
- heritage building regulations (Heritage Management Plan, 2006)
- downtown cultural focus, authenticity, stronger connections between spaces, improved green and agora spaces or mini plazas (Community Culture Vision, 2008)
- design and support for Bower Ponds – Riverlands pedestrian bridge (Waskasoo Park Special Gathering Spaces, 2005)
- Red Deer as an ‘active transportation centre’ and downtown as a focal area for arts facilities (Community Assets Needs Assessment, 2008).

These sources are mentioned at points in the GDAP 2008 Update and listed in Appendix 1.

A. Overview

Plan Process

This update was conducted on behalf of The City of Red Deer by Grandview Consulting Inc. and John Hull Architect, led by Lorne Daniel of Grandview Consulting and John Hull of John Hull Architect.

Early in 2008, The City of Red Deer commissioned an update of the Greater Downtown Action Plan (GDAP), which had been adopted by City Council in August 2000 as a statutory development plan incorporated into the Land Use Bylaw. In contrast, this GDAP 2008 Update is proposed as a comprehensive planning document for The City.

A public consultation and review process was conducted from April 2008 through late fall, with this GDAP 2008 Update submitted to City Council in January 2009.

The consulting work began with a review of the GDAP 2000 and the many plans and studies that followed it (see Appendix 1).

In addition, the consultants received and reviewed many documents outlining organizations' and individuals' recommendations on the future of downtown, or specific aspects of it. A list of organizations consulted is included as Appendix 2.

The consultants met regularly with a Steering Committee appointed by The City of Red Deer. The committee includes representatives of key stakeholder groups, citizens at large, and support staff from the Downtown Business Association, Parkland Community Planning Services and The City of Red Deer.

The consultants conducted an assessment of progress made on implementation of the GDAP 2000 as well as recent developments in the Greater Downtown. This assessment showed that significant progress has been made on a number of initiatives. At the same time, gaps and opportunities for further progress were identified – hence the title “Progress and Potential.”

A series of meetings were also held with key stakeholder groups; see Appendix 2 for a partial

listing of consulted groups and individuals.

‘Greater Downtown Planning Week’ was held June 23-26, 2008. The week’s activities included:

- a luncheon talk by urban planner / educator Michael Geller (attended by 200 people);
- a Greater Downtown transit and walking tour;
- a downtown ideas workshop led by the Michael von Hausen design team; and
- a Concepts Presentation (attended by roughly 200 people) by the Michael von Hausen team.

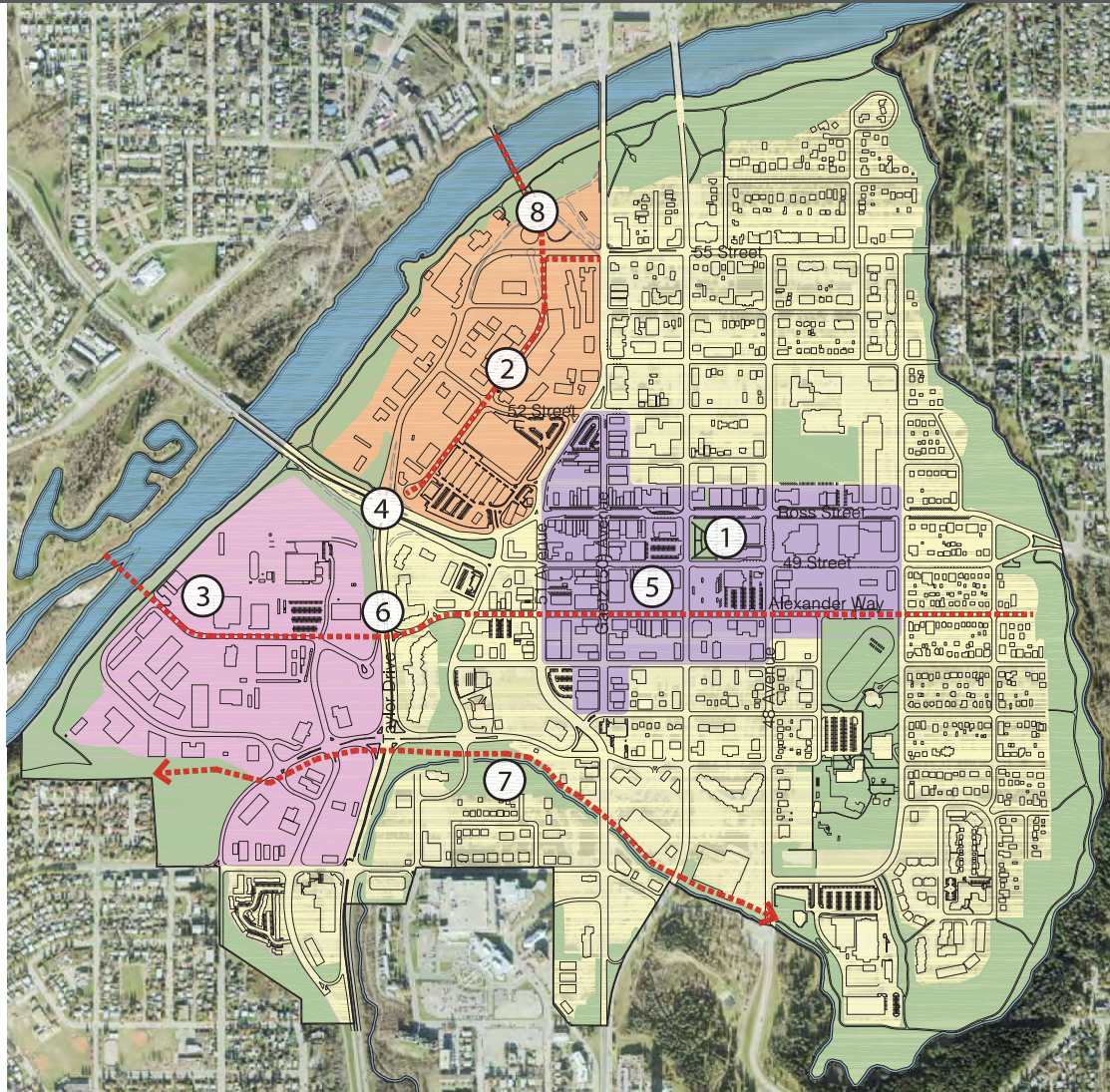
Over the summer, the lead consultants worked on the plan overview / vision, with its focus on six themes and three geographic areas. This was developed in the form of a series of information boards, two handouts, and a PowerPoint presentation for a public Open House, held October 8.

At the October Open House, two feedback instruments were used, and these were also posted online to solicit input from those unable to attend the event. One instrument consisted of three open-ended questions, while the other was a combination of choice and open-ended responses to aspects of the Riverlands plan.

From public feedback, the consultants then developed a draft Update plan document. The draft was circulated to the Steering Committee and City departments for feedback, which was then reviewed by the consultants and discussed with the GDAP Steering Committee in early December 2008.

Following review of the plan by City Council, a public information mailing will be distributed early in 2009 to inform citizens about the key elements of the plan.

Figure 4. Greater Downtown: Key Planning Initiatives



- ① **Historic Downtown**
Major public construction initiatives and infrastructure upgrades: Civic Plaza; City Hall expansion; Parkade; Museum; lane and street upgrades.
- ② **Railyards**
New Area Redevelopment Plan; upgraded pedestrian realm; street and sidewalk improvements to 53 Ave; 55 St. extension and crossing.
- ③ **Riverlands**
Revised Area Redevelopment Plan; new major community / visitor activity centre, hotel, water features, public market; river front plaza; bridge to Bower Ponds.
- ④ Taylor Drive and Ross / 49 St. intersection reconfigured to allow and encourage pedestrian crossings.
- ⑤ Complete Alexander Way project as designed.
- ⑥ New at-grade pedestrian and vehicle intersection / crossing at Taylor Drive and 48 St.
- ⑦ New trail linking the south boundary of Downtown along Waskasoo Creek to the river.
- ⑧ New rail heritage plaza park at Old Train Bridge landing.

Major Pedestrian Links



Figure 5. Aerial Photograph: Downtown from West, 2001



*Aerial view of Red Deer, 2001 from West
Photo courtesy of Waite Air Photos Inc.*

Figure 6. Artist's Vision of a Future Downtown Red Deer





B. Priorities

In conducting their overview of new developments, current conditions and public input, the consultants determined that the principles and key elements of the Greater Downtown Action Plan (GDAP) 2000 remain valid. The 2008 review led to a new focus on priorities relating to processes, geographic districts and overall streetscapes:

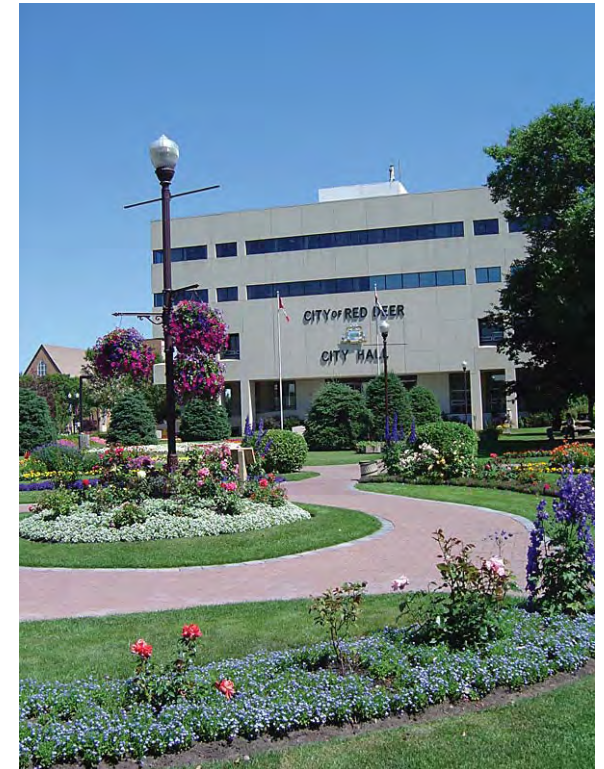
- Implementation Strategies
- Three Key Districts: Historic Downtown, Railyards and Riverlands
- Great Streets – transportation, pedestrian and public realm

Implementation is addressed ‘up front’ in this GDAP 2008 Update because it is often the greatest challenge of an urban plan. Moving from concepts to reality requires commitment and clear strategies. For that reason, the GDAP 2008 Update addresses Implementation methods first.

The three key districts were identified as the foundations for a vibrant Greater Downtown. Riverlands and Railyards are important because they are areas with the potential for once-in-a-lifetime transformation. As former light industrial districts, they require re-investment and re-planning in order to become effective urban living districts. Historic Downtown will not face the same transformation although it is important as the hub for not only Greater Downtown but the whole city. Our historic, civic and business core must remain attractive and active.

The broad concepts for these three distinct but compatible districts are:

- Historic Downtown – the office, retail and heritage centre of the city
- Railyards – a high-density residential district (with a train heritage theme) with integrated services to support urban living
- Riverlands – a mixed-use district supporting culture, entertainment and get-togethers ranging from small to large scale – a ‘magnet’ for citizens and visitors



Historic City Hall Park

B. Priorities

I. Implementation Strategies

Our community sees a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for a ‘Renaissance on the Riverfront’ involving not only the Railyards and Riverlands transformations, but more thorough integration of those riverfront districts with Riverside Meadows and Bower Ponds. This riverfront area at the centre of the city is a key community asset. Various ‘connectivity’ initiatives in the GDAP 2008 Update will enhance the links between these riverfront areas and the Historic Downtown.

The third priority – Great Streets – reflects the public’s desire to create an inviting downtown urban environment with vibrant life on the streets, a place that invites families, business people, visitors and all citizens to work, live and play. Successful downtowns the world over invariably are built around lively streets and public spaces – what is known as the ‘public realm.’ This has been a recurring theme in many City planning documents, dating back to the GDAP 2000, and is built upon in this GDAP 2008 Update.

Transformative Projects

The consultants believe that the early and full implementation of key projects will continue the significant positive momentum that has been achieved in recent years. The following initiatives are notable for their potential to be started soon, and for their potential to set the tone for the other projects to follow. These initiatives can continue the positive transformation of Greater Downtown:

- Alexander Way redevelopment, with enhanced street design, an at-grade Taylor Drive crossing and a signature pedestrian bridge to Bower Ponds – providing an attractive continuous corridor from Bower Ponds through Riverlands and Historic Downtown to Barrett Park
- Development of a Cenotaph Plaza and redevelopment of Ross St. as a model ‘complete street’
- Development of a stimulating community gathering area in Riverlands, featuring an enhanced Public Market, arts studios, a public plaza, a restaurant / brew pub and water features
- Development of a rail heritage park at the south end of the Old CPR Train Bridge and redevelopment of 53 Ave. from there to Ross St., providing an attractive urban connector to better link Riverside Meadows and Historic Downtown

Implementation Strategies

As noted in the Overview, this GDAP 2008 Update is a concept plan to guide the more detailed strategies, project plans and budgets that are to come. As such, this GDAP 2008 Update does not provide a detailed schedule for all initiatives. It does, however, outline priorities, implementation methods and a 2009 'quick start' workplan.

As a first step, the GDAP 2000 should be repealed (Recommendation 1) and this 2008 GDAP Update adopted as a concept plan, to be followed by amended Area Redevelopment Plans for Riverlands and Railyards.

In this document, formal Recommendations are noted in the right-hand column. Those Recommendations can best be implemented through four implementation strategies, as noted on the following pages:

- Greater Downtown Development Manager
- Pilot Project and Design Competitions
- Downtown Design Review Panel
- Education and Awareness

Appendix 3 provides a suggested 2009 Implementation First Steps, identifying first steps that should be initiated in the coming year. These include creating the Greater Downtown Development Manager position, initiating regulatory changes, commissioning more detailed urban plans, and continuing to build public, stakeholder and development community interest in the tremendous opportunities downtown.

Implementation Strategies

Recommendation I

Repeal the 2000 Greater Downtown Action Plan Bylaw and adopt the GDAP 2008 Update as a concept plan; initiate new Area Redevelopment Plans for Riverlands and Railyards.



Historic CPR Train Bridge

Greater Downtown Development Manager

The undertakings outlined in this GDAP 2008 Update are on a scale that will transform our city for the future. They therefore require and justify the focused attention of City administration.

Included in the tasks ahead are the coordination of major development plans for a year-round public market, a landmark community and visitor activity centre and a major hotel / gathering centre as well as initiatives to substantially increase residential investment and construction downtown. It is not reasonable to expect that these many projects could simply be added to the responsibilities of The City department managers.

Furthermore, no one department has over-riding authority for downtown development. Departments as diverse as Economic Development; Recreation, Parks and Culture; Engineering; Community Services and Transit have roles to play downtown but no one senior manager is charged with taking leadership and exerting control over how Greater Downtown evolves.

The level of dedicated, ongoing management work that is required in Greater Downtown has reached the level where it can not all be effectively handled by contracted consultants. To build internal capacity and ensure continuity, The City is advised to create a management role for Greater Downtown. Consultants, advisors and contracted project leaders will still be required for defined periods on specific projects but The City will have the capacity to effectively manage those external resources.

Greater Downtown Red Deer is complex and diverse. Currently, major decision-making affecting planning in the Downtown is divided among a number of different departments. As a result, opportunities for development synergies can be missed. An integrated design approach will more effectively address the special development needs of Greater Downtown in the years ahead.

Recommendation 2

Establish a senior management position responsible for overseeing the implementation of Greater Downtown projects, with authority for guiding downtown initiatives. This position will supervise the current Downtown Coordinator position and report to the City Manager.

Recommendation 3

Allocate a budget to the Greater Downtown Development Manager to (a) initiate a rotating series of innovative street design, streetscape, and public space Pilot Projects for a period of five years, (b) create a series of learning opportunities related to urban planning and downtown living, and (c) create a downtown events catalyst fund to stimulate innovative community activities in the Greater Downtown.

This GDAP 2008 Update therefore recommends (Recommendation 2) that a Greater Downtown Development Manager position be created immediately (2009) and that this person lead the development of detailed business and projects plans (including budgets) for the other GDAP 2008 Update initiatives. The position description should identify the need for a blend of skills in urban planning and development, management and project leadership. The current Downtown Coordinator would assist and report to the Greater Downtown Development Manager.

Pilot Projects and Design Competitions

“Innovative thinking” is one of three elements of The City of Red Deer Strategic Plan vision statement and “experimentation” is recommended in the Community Culture Vision. This GDAP 2008 Update encourages The City to practice innovative thinking and experimentation by using pilot projects and design competitions to advance Greater Downtown concepts.

During this GDAP 2008 Update, the consultants reviewed the practices of a number of cities with successful downtowns. An emerging trend that has met with significant success is the use of small-scale pilot projects. These low-cost temporary changes in a downtown create a quick but real-life test of elements in which the public has expressed an interest.

Pilot projects avoid the inertia of endless studies. Rather than doing a costly design study to attempt to assess the perfect design for a new street configuration, then investing even larger amounts in physical changes, cities are moving more quickly. For example, dedicated bike lanes are created on a temporary basis using moveable concrete barriers, large planting pots and signage. Once the temporary design has been tested and fine tuned, The City can invest in any permanent infrastructure changes supported by the pilot project experience.

Participants in the GDAP 2008 Update events noted that downtown construction sites

Recommendation 4

Use Requests for Proposals and Design Competitions to solicit the best options for the major development elements of the GDAP.



A successful pilot project: sidewalk cafe extensions

indirectly created street design pilot projects during 2008. An example would be Ross St. at 49 Ave., where the narrowing and slowing of traffic lanes is seen as a positive change that allowed better pedestrian movement and greater appreciation for the Cenotaph. That indirect pilot could be transformed, once Executive Place construction is completed, in a permanent plaza and street reconfiguration. The final design would require specialized ‘expert’ input and community input.

A second implementation principle is to strive for leading-edge design in our buildings, plazas, parks and public art. Great design makes a difference. How we design our buildings, public spaces, street crossings, parking lots, or art installations makes a difference in the community’s sense of pride and in visitors’ impressions.

Great design need not necessarily be more expensive than routine structures. The use of design competitions can often, for relatively modest investments, uncover innovative concepts, visions and directions for our urban environment. These, in turn, will draw greater public interest and private investment in our downtown.

Downtown Design Review Panel

Great design doesn’t only apply to large-scale projects, and it doesn’t begin and end with the professional (architect, engineer or planner). Current development review processes do not encourage a creative and collaborative exploration of urban planning principles. By the time most developments reach the formal review or approval stages, significant costs have been incurred (whether by a private developer or The City administration) and there is understandable reluctance to revisit design elements.

Better design can be achieved through a more collaborative early design process. There are precedents in many other cities for the successful use of community-based design committees to review projects with developers at the conceptual stages of design. Following on the



A successful small urban park



Rev. Gaetz sculpture, part of the Ghosts series, at Ross St. and Gaetz Ave.

GDAP 2000 recommendation, this GDAP 2008 Update recommends that a new, voluntary Downtown Design Review Panel be established, comprised of architects, engineers, planners, developers, real estate agents, councillors and others with a design / planning interest in the downtown. This group would be chaired by the Greater Downtown Development Manager. After reviewing conceptual design proposals (for any public or private projects in Greater Downtown) for adherence to the principles of this GDAP 2008 Update, the panel would make recommendations to both the developer and the Municipal Planning Commission (MPC). Developers would be encouraged to have projects submitted for review well before committing to the extensive design development drawings required by MPC.

Education and Awareness

Successful implementation of the GDAP 2008 Update will require broad understanding of the principles and objectives of a downtown urban live-work-play environment. Because so much of The City's development over the past 30 years has occurred on the periphery – in new residential, retail and industrial subdivisions – business people, The City staff and citizens have few opportunities to learn and apply the different principles of high-density urban living.

The principles of sustainability and healthy living are becoming more broadly understood in the community. Further opportunities are needed for professionals, community organizations, businesses and citizens to see how sustainability and health are achieved through urban design.

A number of organizations across North America offer training that would be appropriate to Red Deer's Greater Downtown development.

A key goal should also be to celebrate the best of downtown and to engage as many citizens as possible in ongoing and special events in the area – from bike-to-work days to summer street closings to children's festivals. Organizations as diverse as the Primary Care Network,

Recommendation 5

Develop a volunteer Downtown Design Review Panel consisting of architects, urban planners and citizen advocates, funded and coordinated by The City of Red Deer. Establish standard processes for collaboration between the design panel and developers.

Downtown Business Association, Rethink Red Deer, Culture Link and Red Deer Transit plus other organizations and individuals can play roles in creating a sense of healthy active involvement in downtown.

The consultants suggest that, in the six months immediately following the plan's adoption, a series of seminar / workshops be held to allow The City staff, developers and other key stakeholders to further explore the plan and how its principles apply to their work. This process will also facilitate the development of effective workplans.

It is also recommended that The City develop short web-based visual promotions to market the concepts and potential of Riverlands, Railyards and Historic Downtown. These promotional productions will help build general 'buy in' for the goals of the three districts and promote private sector development compatible with the design concepts. Produced in an electronic format, the productions could be edited and updated over time as plan concepts evolve.



B. Priorities

2. Key Districts

Historic Downtown

Vision & Principles

Historic Downtown Red Deer is defined by the originally surveyed railway town site of the early 1900s. It is a grid-form layout of streets, lanes and sidewalks lined with street-fronted commercial properties.

The wide axis of Ross St., visually anchored by the historic train station to the west, was designed not only for the day-to-day commercial life of the new frontier town, but also to hold markets, civic celebrations and parades. Gaetz Ave. was part of the Calgary-Edmonton Trail, an important commercial stop on the main north-south provincial artery.

Historic Downtown Red Deer is a vibrant, lively district defined by the original railway town site surveyed in the early 1900s. Its streets, lanes and sidewalks follow a traditional grid pattern, providing a comfortable scale to downtown blocks.

The wide axis of Ross St., visually anchored by the historic train station to the west, continues to serve not only as a commercial centre but (as in the city's earliest days) as a place for outdoor commerce and gatherings from parades to informal visits.

Gaetz Ave. is a bustling but very comfortable street where the buildings and street amenities reflect the avenue's important history as part of the Calgary-Edmonton Trail, Alberta's main north-south artery.



In the past, present and future, many citizens live in the friendly and charming residential neighbourhoods on the edges of Historic Downtown: Parkvale, Waskasoo, and River Park. Many others live in the less defined “Downtown South” and “Downtown North” areas and even at the centre of Historic Downtown, mixed use buildings feature residential properties blended with offices, restaurants, and commercial services.

Downtown Red Deer continues to reinvent itself and to survive shifts in community priorities. In the future, it will be not only the historic heart of the city but the focal point for growth and development – not only the growth of buildings but the growth of community awareness, culture, civic pride and diversity. Historic Downtown will be where Red Deer ‘grows up.’

What’s New in the Public Realm

Red Deer’s Historic Downtown is constantly evolving. The list of changes and growth in both the private and public sector since 2000 would be long indeed. Some of the major public initiatives are described below, but the list also includes: the temporary sidewalk patio program; initiatives related to the social environment; major additions and renovations to the Golden Circle Seniors Centre and the Recreation Centre; plans for an upgrade to the Red Deer Museum & Art Gallery; Main Street façade restorations and more.

The City of Red Deer shows an ongoing strong commitment to the public realm of Historic Downtown. This commitment is in turn matched by an enterprising private sector willing to invest with confidence in the heart of the city.

Alexander Way

The 48 Street Promenade was a key recommendation of the GDAP 2000, which envisioned a continuous pedestrian-focused corridor between Barrett Park in the east and the Red Deer River (and eventually to Bower Ponds) in the west. In 2006, The City engaged a consultant



Renovated Recreation Centre



Alexander Way Logo

to prepare design drawings for a redesign of 48 St. The street was named Alexander Way and a new historic lantern motif was adopted to give the route a stronger identity.

Design was completed for the street reconfiguration, but the anticipated provincial financial assistance for the project was not forthcoming and the scope of work done on the street was subsequently reduced. However, a substantial amount of sub-grade infrastructure was installed, many trees planted, some sidewalk upgrades completed, street furniture added and several public artworks commissioned and installed (between 52 Ave. and 48 Ave.).

Centennial Plaza Park

Along 52 Ave., from 45 to 48 St., The City constructed a fine north-south linear park, incorporating a trail, a heritage fountain and flower garden at the south end and, at the north end, a successful summer wading pool. The pool, which on a warm summer day is filled with children and parents, features fountains, picnic space and a major public art piece. At the south end, the historic Michener Fountain will soon be complemented by a new Arches sculpture (under construction, 2008). The bike / pedestrian trail through the park enhances north-south connectivity through this part of downtown.

Scott Block

Culture Link purchased the Scott Block, a 1947, two-storey building on Gaetz a number of years ago with financial support from The City of Red Deer. Over a period of years, it was renovated to a performing arts space with cultural support offices upstairs. Recently, the building has been sold but continues to be used for theatre and cultural events, and currently is receiving some well-deserved upgrades.

The Main Street Program

In 2002, The City of Red Deer, partnering with the Downtown Business Association (DBA), was successful in being accepted by the province's Main Street Program. Six complete



Scott Block at night



Prairie Office Products (Main Street upgrade)

construction seasons saw façade upgrades to heritage buildings in the downtown (including the Scott Block, Prairie Office Products, Buffalo Hotel, Farthing Block and Hayhoe buildings).

Another success was in raising heritage awareness in the downtown business community and the city.

More information may be found in C: Commentary section 6 Heritage Preservation.

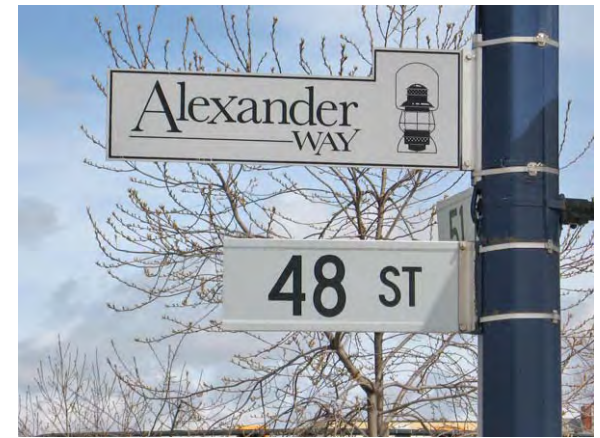
Murals, Banners, New Downtown Logo and More

In 2002, the DBA developed a distinctive new logo, which is now used on signage and banners in the downtown. Over the last six years, The Main Street Program and the DBA produced four large art works with a heritage theme that were installed on downtown buildings. Since 2000, two new Ghost Sculptures have been installed. That program is still available to assist groups who wish to propose the installation of major bronze sculptures commemorating Red Deer's history.

C1 Design Guidelines and Public Realm Initiatives

In 2004, as recommended in the 2000 GDAP, The City commissioned a set of architectural design guidelines for the C1 Zoning District. These were approved by City Council and form a part of the C1 land use requirements. The main thrust of these is to establish guidelines that ensure a new development maintains the strong and attractive commercial street front characteristics of Historic Downtown.

The 2006 Downtown C1 Public Realm Upgrades report was an important offshoot from the 2004 C1 Design Guidelines. It inventoried and evaluated all public realm construction, furnishings and equipment; made recommendations for The City to upgrade existing deficiencies; and laid out a long-term comprehensive strategy for needed upgrades, including lane enhancements, sidewalk continuity, street furniture, tree planting / sidewalk upgrades /



Part of significant public realm upgrades



Centennial Park wading pool and fountain

traffic calming and the hiring of a Downtown Coordinator.

From recommendations in both the GDAP 2000 and the 2006 Downtown C1 Public Realm Upgrades report, in 2008 The City undertook an extensive program of installing new metal refuse containers, flower pots, recycling bins, benches, street blades, painted light standards and bike racks in a themed black enamel finish.

Plans for New Major Public Projects

Several significant projects are planned for Historic Downtown in the near future. These include a new three-level civic centre parkade above the Red Deer Transit terminal, and a new City office annex building south of the Red Deer Public Library with a walkway link over 49 St. to connect to the existing City Hall facilities.

There has been a great deal of discussion over the last few years about the need for new Museum and Archives buildings, and where these would be situated. A current proposal suggests a new Museum / exhibition facility site be reserved on Alexander Way, at the northwest corner of Alexander Way and 48 Ave. This GDAP 2008 Update supports that location (see further notes in section C: Commentary).

In Rotary Recreation Park, the Recreation Centre has been significantly upgraded, with many energy conservation systems. The Golden Circle is also receiving a substantial addition and renovation (2008/09). Access to the park facilities has been improved with a sidewalk on the east side of the block and pedestrian crossing bulbs on 47 Ave.

A future concert hall or performing arts centre (larger than the Arts Centre at RDC) has also been broadly discussed in the community. Feedback received during and after the GDAP 2008 Update Open House indicated that Riverlands was the preferred location for such a facility, though space availability would have to be considered in light of needs for the

priority uses of a Public Market, hotel / convention centre and community / visitor activity centre. An alternate location for a concert hall would be the current parking lot at 49 St. and 49 Ave., after the civic parkade is open to provide patron parking.

Objectives

- Ensure a healthy and vibrant Historic Downtown to help anchor the Greater Downtown as one of three key defined catalyst areas
- Encourage new residential development in the Historic Downtown
- Slow traffic through the core and create ‘complete streets*’ serving multiple uses (*see definition in section 3 Great Streets)
- Create great urban public places in the heart of the city
- Continue to develop the built heritage and public art displays of downtown

A Diverse and Vibrant Downtown Core

The proposed new public projects proposed by The City (described above) ensure that Historic Downtown remains the civic centre for Red Deer. The increased administration offices at City Hall, a new twelve-storey office building on Ross, and two new floors on Millennium Centre will add to the daytime vibrancy of the core.

Slow...Down...Town

We need to slow traffic through the downtown. The public, urban planners and a review of precedents in other cities told us this over and over. “Pedestrian-first” was a philosophy proposed in the GDAP 2000 and it is an easier goal to write about than to achieve, but progress has been made (an example being pedestrian crossing bulbs that shorten crossing distances on 51 Ave.). Businesses, downtown residents and others who participated in the GDAP 2008 Update emphasized the need to continue working towards a friendly pedestrian environment.

It is worth noting, as well, that virtually every urban downtown plan in North America has adopted pedestrian initiatives as a key priority. Unlike suburban retail / service districts, downtowns depend upon being attractive to pedestrians.

A simple paradigm is to view the downtown as a special multi-use zone, with traffic slowed enough to ensure safety for everyone using the area (not unlike the way we treat playground zones). This approach recognizes that the major corridors through downtown need to continue to move through-traffic smoothly, but that speedy traffic movement can take a lower priority for a few blocks, to offer pedestrian comfort and safety.

The complete streets design approach (see section 3 Great Streets) allows for simultaneous consideration of, and balancing of, needs for vehicle movement, pedestrians, cyclists, retail uses, and public gathering spaces.

The public indicated an interest in taking advantage of the wide right-of-way on Ross St., from Victory Park in the east to the Train Station in the west, to create a new urban street incorporating a new continuous bike lane through Historic Downtown.

At the time of writing this report, we have lived for over two years with a street narrowing at the Cenotaph (for construction activity) with minimal adverse affects on traffic flow, but with a perhaps unanticipated improved pedestrian environment. This report recommends maintaining the configuration after construction is complete, by extending the sidewalk south to encompass the Cenotaph island. This offers an opportunity for a unique urban plaza allowing people to easily access the historic Cenotaph war memorial (Recommendation 6).

During the construction of an additional two storeys to the Millennium Centre, 49 St. also was narrowed for a period of several months. The consultants heard from the public that there was minimal disruption to traffic on 49 St. during construction, and consideration should be given to the creation of amenities such as a bike lane, sidewalk plazas, and / or

Great Public Places

Recommendation 6

Conduct an multidisciplinary design study for Ross St. from 49 Ave. to Gaetz Ave., incorporating a Cenotaph plaza, enhanced Ross-Gaetz pedestrian crossings (examining potential for a scatter crossing) and a major Ross-Gaetz sculptural element to signify the centre of downtown. Consider a design competition for the sculptural element(s) and research potential for arts grant funding and corporate / private sponsors.

Recommendation 7

Create a Civic Plaza west of City Hall and east of the historic City Hall Park flower gardens, as part of upgrades to City Hall and the building of the City Hall annex structure.

additional parking on this street as well. The Great Streets section discusses recommendations for upgrades to Ross St. and others in more detail.

Great Public Places

The 2008 Community Culture Vision talks about the importance of well-designed public space to the fostering of culture and health in the community. This is absolutely true of all great cities.

A true civic plaza would create a stronger sense of place in downtown Red Deer and provide a location for modest scale gatherings – from musicians and buskers to announcements and celebrations. It would also be a pleasant informal space for people who work downtown to enjoy a break outdoors, with benches or seating ledges.

This plan could be integrated into the current design work for City Hall expansion. It would be a hard-surfaced outdoor extension to City Hall, leaving the heritage flower gardens to the west intact. It is hard to imagine a successful City Hall that doesn't have an outdoor public component, and it's time for Red Deer to have one.

The back lanes (alleyways) through the core can be effectively upgraded from back-of-property service / utility corridors to include an enhanced pedestrian realm, while still allowing vehicle use and access. This is a recommendation of both the GDAP 2000 and the 2006 Downtown C1 Public Realm Upgrades report. A formal process to establish names of lanes should be developed as noted in the GDAP 2008 Update's naming recommendations. Priority should be given to the lane north of Ross St. between Gaetz and 49 Ave., in order to enhance the 'backdoor' activity already being created by small businesses on that block. The Main Street Program has already initiated some explorations regarding the naming of Historic Downtown lanes.

Recommendation 8

Upgrade laneways (back alleys) in a few blocks of the city centre from service corridors to part of an enhanced pedestrian and retail realm. This could include naming (including consideration of suggestions from the public) – using the word “Lane” exclusively for alleyways.

Heritage and Public Art

Recommendation 9

Commission at least one high profile water / ice art sculpture in a prominent location downtown.



A flourishing group of businesses opening onto the back lane (North of Ross St.)

Greater public use of the core laneways not only creates additional retail opportunities for businesses, but improves the ‘walkability’ of the entire area and increases the ‘eyes on the street’ safety of the downtown. Lighting, murals, signage and special pavement treatments (such as paving stone borders / accents) could be part of these enhancements.

Heritage and Public Art

Already entrenched in the Land Use Bylaw, the Ross-Gaetz Heritage Area should continue to be carefully considered as new developments come on stream. New development in the Ross-Gaetz Heritage Area requires special design attention, to respect and enhance the original scale and street rhythms of historic Red Deer. The intent is not to replicate heritage architecture, but to respect the scale and patterns of the original town with new work. Refer to section C Commentary: Heritage Preservation for more information.

We recommend elsewhere that upgrades to Rotary Recreation Park be undertaken as documented by the GDAP 2000 and the subsequent 2004 Red Deer Rotary Recreation Park Facilities Study. At its boundary with Historic Downtown at its northwest corner, we suggest a gateway plaza feature, incorporating improved lighting, furnishings and surface treatments. This gateway would lead into the planned new trail south into the park.

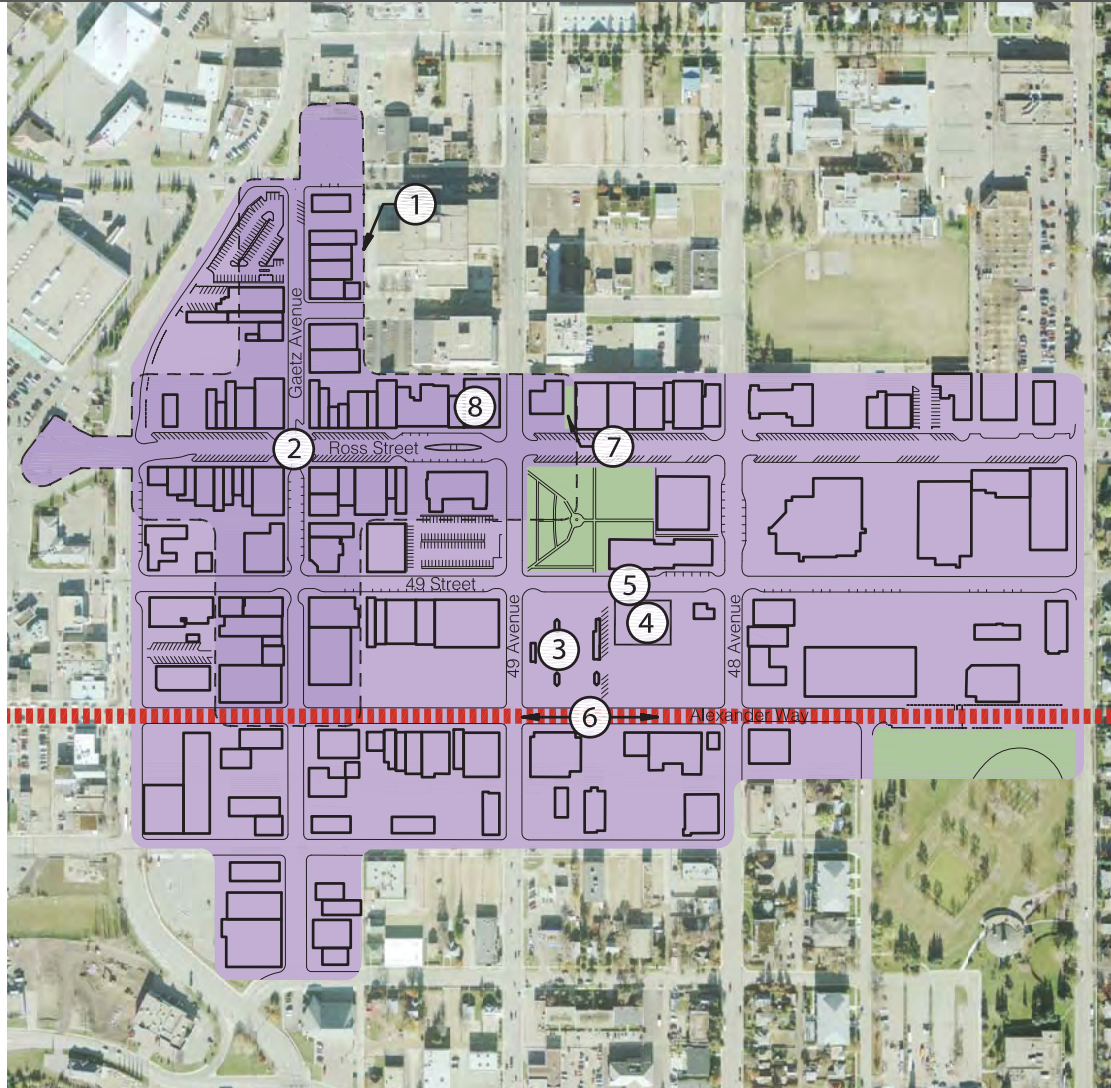
The Gaetz-Ross intersection is the historic commercial centre of the city. A major piece of artwork or sculptural architectural feature (such as arched intersection markers as suggested in the Community Culture Vision) would recognize this heritage location, identify a true ‘centre’ for the entire downtown and set a tone for appreciation of downtown places. The Main Street Program has done preliminary visioning for this concept.

The GDAP 2008 Update also calls for the creation of additional water features in Historic Downtown (see Recommendation 9). Some of these could be designed to be attractive ice and light show features in winter.



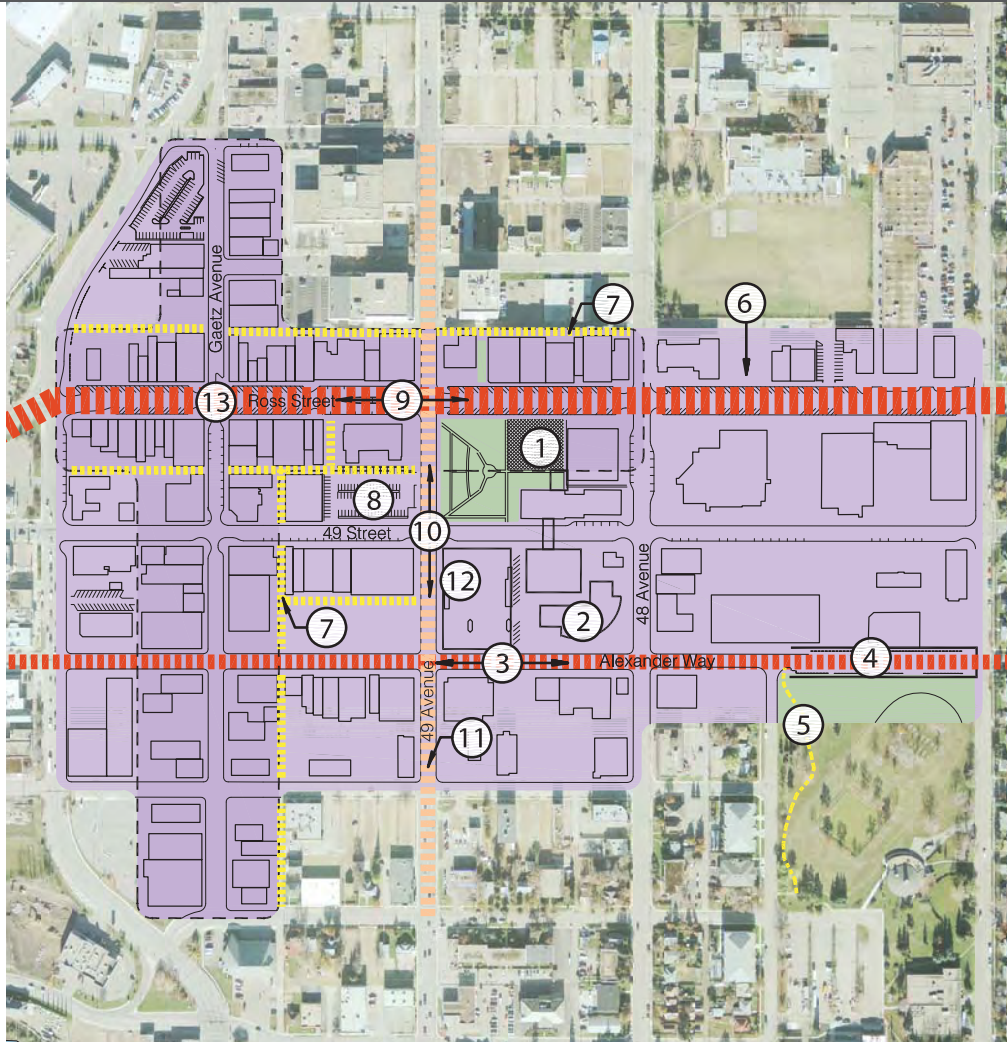
Two historic temporary installations on Ross Street

Figure 7. Historic Downtown: Planning Features



- ① Ross-Gaetz Historic District (shaded area): A concentration of significant heritage sites including the Old Courthouse, the Old CPR Railway Station, several early commercial buildings, and the Cenotaph war memorial.
- ② Feature intersection at Ross-Gaetz - the traditional commercial heart of Red Deer.
- ③ New Parkade over the Transit transfer station (scheduled for construction 2010).
- ④ New City Hall annex (scheduled for construction 2010).
- ⑤ Library expansion and City Hall public area linked by an elevated walkway to City Hall annex.
- ⑥ Alexander Way: continuous link between Barrett Park and Bower Ponds.
- ⑦ An excellent example of a small urban park incorporating public art, picnic tables, pathways and gardens.
- ⑧ New 12-storey office tower under construction.

Figure 8. Historic Downtown: Planning Initiatives



Ongoing street upgrades; off-peak parking



Lane upgrades



Ross Street upgrade



Alexander Way completion



- ① New Civic Plaza to the northwest of existing City Hall (City Hall Park flower gardens to remain).
- ② Proposed new museum site (possibly integrating the historic Parsons House to the north).
- ③ Alexander Way (some infrastructure work completed in 2007, further upgrades planned).
- ④ Parking area at dead end of 48 St. upgraded so it can be used to stage outdoor public events in conjunction with the Museum.
- ⑤ Gateway and link to new major north / south pedestrian path through Rotary Recreation Park.
- ⑥ Prime, vacant, privately owned commercial / mixed-use site on Ross St.
- ⑦ Upgraded alley / laneways through city centre retail area.
- ⑧ City-owned parking lot (and adjacent vacated Uptown Theatre) – potential residential / mixed-use or possible concert hall location.
- ⑨ Ross St. – reconfigured with dedicated bike lane.
- ⑩ Off-peak on-street parking pilot project on 49 Ave. and others.
- ⑪ Ongoing CI Public Realm Upgrades.
- ⑫ New parkade with integrated kiosks, art work and landscaping along its street faces.
- ⑬ Upgraded heritage commercial intersection with featured sculptural element at Ross and Gaetz.

Riverlands

Vision & Principles

Riverlands is a special mixed-use district in the heart of the city – a residential district for those who want to be close to the river and the city centre, a cultural activity area and a meeting / gathering area for visitors as well as citizens of Red Deer.

At the centre of Riverlands is an iconic public building – an inviting, innovative structure that draws visitors, student groups and citizens of all ages. A great indoor space, this building is a wonderful winter sanctuary but also a place where summer sun and outdoor activities play an important role. With a broad mix of facilities, services and programs, the building has something for everybody and draws repeat visits.

Riverlands is more strongly connected to the river, to Bower Ponds and to Historic Downtown through new and improved intersections, street enhancements, new water features, new access to the river and a new bridge over the river. It features a ‘riverwalk’ promenade along the river and a feature plaza where Alexander Way meets the river, supporting urban activities in the Riverlands district.



What's New

Some properties have been redeveloped in Riverlands since the adoption of the original GDAP 2000 and the subsequent Riverlands Area Redevelopment Plan. Former industrial-

use properties are gradually being converted to a mix of commercial and specialized uses, including medically-oriented buildings in the southern area of Riverlands.

Riverlands is now home to one of two remaining movie theatres in the city limits. This points to the importance of re-investment in the city centre, to continue to draw new developments into the heart of the city.

During the GDAP 2008 Update, the consultants received considerable public input calling for more public space, and greater public access to areas adjacent to the river, than had been identified in the Riverlands Area Redevelopment Plan. There is a trade-off between selling current City properties in the area to generate income for public developments, and the public interest in maximizing public spaces. Obviously, the more space that is designated for public use, the less income will be generated from property development. However, the consultants believe that the ratio shown in this plan reflects current public preferences and leaves a number of properties with significant market potential (either for outright sale, as public-private partnerships, or as City-developed sites that could generate revenue).

We see these strengths and opportunities:

- the 2009 relocation of the Civic Yards and Electric Light & Power facility will open almost half of the Riverlands area to redevelopment
- the 2008 enhancements of Bower Ponds are revitalizing it as a family recreation area and it holds even greater promise as a community festive area once connected to Riverlands
- the 2007 Chamber of Commerce Tourism Committee proposal for a 'riverwalk' of canals and related developments, as well as The Ark indoor gardens concept, generated significant public momentum for innovative development in the area

Infrastructure

Recommendation 10

Invest in relocating the overhead high-voltage power lines underground through Riverlands and Railyards. Conduct a review of utility services needed to support the planned redevelopment of Riverlands and Railyards.

Riverwalk

Recommendation 11

Develop an attractive 'riverwalk' in Riverlands featuring an urban style river's edge design, providing connectivity between public plazas, natural areas, and private developments in the area. Include a plaza at the point where Alexander Way will connect to the new Riverlands – Bower Ponds bridge.

Objectives

- Redevelop one or more existing City of Red Deer buildings into a Public Market and Arts Studio complex
- Develop a major public and visitor activity centre
- Construct a hotel / convention centre
- Improve vehicle, pedestrian and cycle connections between Riverlands, Historic Downtown and Railyards
- Develop a prominent, urban style riverwalk connecting public plazas, private developments and the river's edge
- Develop a linked series of innovative, attractive and sustainable water and ice features
- Create a 'Green Technology' zone

Riverwalk

There is considerable public support for an attractive riverwalk featuring an urban style river's edge design, providing connectivity between public plazas, natural areas and private developments in Riverlands. Preliminary conceptual design on riverwalk features was initiated at a design charrette with the Michael von Hausen team in December 2008. As Riverlands develops, it will be a very active district – one where people live, work, visit, attend special events and relax. An overview of this 'Renaissance on the Riverfront' concept is included as Appendix 4. The riverwalk (Recommendation 11) is a key public space in this concept – a way of connecting from point to point but also an informal gathering space.

Public Market and Arts Studio Complex

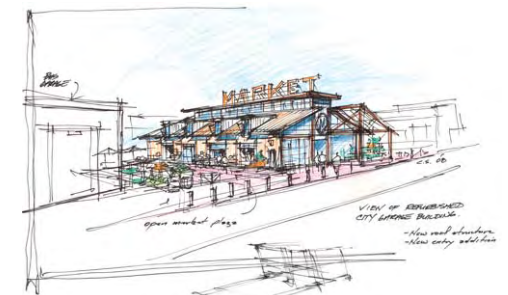
Red Deer's seasonal Public Market is a charming and successful focal point for community interaction and small business. It is an example of the sort of authentic development encouraged by The City Strategic Direction. This public asset can be a catalyst for even greater success in the Riverlands district.

Public Market and Arts Studio Complex

Recommendation 12

Develop a Public Market and Arts Studio complex in the current Civic Garage or Transit building. This can proceed in stages:

- (a) Assess the relative suitability of the Transit and Civic Garage buildings for use as a Public Market and Arts Studio Complex;
- (b) Implement minor renovations to facilitate temporary seasonal usage of one of the buildings and its grounds for the Red Deer Public Market, beginning in 2010;
- (c) Engage a business consultant with expertise in public markets and arts districts to create a business plan for the development of a year-round Public Market and Arts Studio Complex.



All season market in converted City garage building

The opportunity is to relocate the current seasonal market to Riverlands while generating new year-round market businesses and arts-related businesses such as artist / artisan studios.

The buildings available on the soon to be abandoned Civic Yards site have significant potential for adaptive re-use; they are typically large and structurally sound. The ideal evolution would be for the existing Public Market to relocate onto the current Red Deer Transit or Public Works property in 2010. The Market would continue to operate seasonally, on Saturday mornings, with access to washrooms in the vacated buildings. There may be opportunities to move some vendors indoors (especially those with goods that are damaged by poor weather, such as artists) while keeping the majority of the market open air.

Simultaneously, The City can begin redesigning the building and developing a business plan for year-round business use. Small, boutique-size stores and artists studios would help generate interest in the area as a unique destination. Some food services (restaurants, specialty food stores) might also be included. The building could then be renovated, with provision for an ongoing seasonal outdoor public market area.

Major Tourism and Public Activity Centre

The Red Deer Chamber of Commerce, seeing the great potential for the Riverlands property, advanced a proposal in 2007 for a major tourist draw to be developed in the area.

That proposal took the form of a canal / riverwalk system, modelled on that of San Antonio, Texas. The Chamber Tourism Sub-Committee published the Concept for a Major Red Deer Tourism Destination Attraction in 2007 (see Appendix 1, document 39), supporting the notion of the canal project as a viable tourism draw. The intent of the Chamber is to establish Red Deer as a world tourism destination for visitors to Alberta and western Canada travelling between Calgary and Edmonton.

Subsequently, The City and the Chamber contracted with AECOM to prepare a feasibility study for the Riverwalk canal project. At the time of writing this GDAP 2008 Update, there

Major Tourism and Public Activity Centre

Recommendation 13

Create a task force in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Red Deer to develop a process for identifying an appropriate major public and visitor activity centre and creating a development process for such a facility. Consider including an open call for proposals as part of that process, perhaps with incentive concept-development funding, to generate interest from a wide spectrum of potential developers / proponents provincially and nationally.

is strong interest in a significant public / private development in Riverlands, which would act as both a local community amenity and tourist destination. The canal concept itself was seen as innovative and exciting but ultimately not authentic to the community and one with implementation challenges.

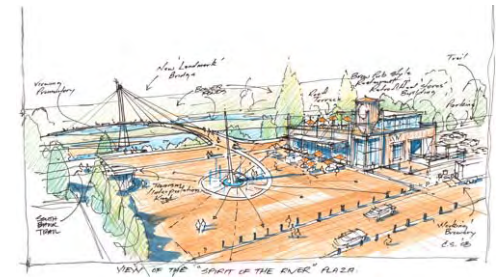
The public did express a strong interest in retaining major waterways or water features as part of the plan, and in considering options for a major tourist attraction at the centre of Riverlands.

The concept of a year-round indoor garden tentatively called The Ark introduced at the Greater Downtown Planning Week was well received by most citizens. A number of people suggested that a more authentic prairie icon could be created – such as a structure evoking a prairie grain elevator and / or rural windmill or elevator. There were also suggestions for different components or feature elements in the facility.

After reviewing public feedback, the consultants determined that provision should be made for an iconic, high-profile community and visitor facility at the centre of Riverlands. However, the exact nature of this facility (and the extent to which it would be a public, private or partnership venture) requires further study and collaborative discussions with the business sector and other levels of government. The draft plan therefore puts a ‘placeholder’ on the site – denoting that significant space should be set aside for a future activity centre.

Most recently, a December 2008 design charrette conducted with stakeholders and the Michael von Hausen design team suggested that this facility could consist of a large glassed-in public ‘garden walkway’ with a variety of active-use components connecting to that core, perhaps built in phases. A key element of the complex would be an indoor water centre, possibly with an indoor / outdoor hot pool and a privately operated spa. Private sector elements such as restaurants and boutique stores would be encouraged.

As this facility will take a number of years to plan, fund and construct, The City is



“Spirit of the River” Plaza

encouraged to invest in short-term enhancement of the site as a temporary park and parking area that encourages public use, with ‘placeholder’ signage indicating the intended future use.

Hotel and Convention Centre / Gathering Place

Red Deer’s location mid-way on the Edmonton-Calgary corridor, and its excellent existing event infrastructure (including hotels and Westerner Park), provide an opportunity to attract even greater convention and visitor business. The downtown economic study (Appendix 1, document 38) also identified business / tourist hotel facilities as an opportunity area.

With its prime location adjacent to the Taylor Drive corridor, on the riverfront and within walking distance of Historic Downtown, the proposed hotel / convention centre site is seen as highly attractive. The facility would include a hotel (with a tower design to minimize its footprint) and an affiliated convention / meeting centre that could be privately or publicly operated. A parking garage would also be part of this complex, to help meet the need for special events visitors and adjacent facilities such as the tourist centre and a concert hall.

The possible style and scale of the hotel complex should be explored through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. The RFP should identify the many ways in which the complex could be integrated with, or complementary to, the public activity centre (noted above). Many elements of the hotel complex and public activity centre could be co-developed through public-private partnerships.

Improved Street Connections

Alexander Way Intersection at Taylor Drive

The original GDAP 2000 proposed Alexander Way – a “pedestrian promenade” – to run continuously from Barrett Park through Historic Downtown, across Taylor Drive at-grade, through Riverlands, and across the river (on a new pedestrian bridge) to Bower Ponds. The 2001 Downtown Traffic Initiatives Study (DTIS) recommended against this intersection and

Hotel and Convention Centre / Gathering Place

Recommendation 14

Create a call for proposals for development of a hotel and convention centre / gathering space facility, including a parkade, adjacent to Taylor Bridge on the north end of Riverlands.

Improved Street Connections

Recommendation 15

Reassign funds previously identified (in future capital plans) for an above-grade pedestrian crossing at Taylor Drive and Alexander Way and conduct a multidisciplinary design study to build an at-grade intersection at that location.

Recommendation 16

Conduct a multidisciplinary study to redesign the intersection at Taylor Drive and Ross / 49 St. to encourage all directions pedestrian movement, and to redesign the southbound turn lane east of Taylor Bridge to increase land available for the hotel / convention centre site.

instead proposed a median fence, which was constructed in 2007 to reduce jaywalking. The DTIS recommended a pedestrian overpass be constructed. Cost was estimated at \$850,000 in 2001, then \$2 million in the Alexander Way design plan and is now likely higher. Experience with pedestrian overpasses indicate they are a significant barrier to pedestrian flow and are only well used in locations with no other options. Observations at Taylor Drive and 48 St. in 2008 indicate that citizens are still crossing, often dangerously, at the ends of the median fence, which would likely continue after construction of an overpass due to the time and effort challenges of an overpass.

The criteria used in the DTIS for recommending against an at-grade intersection relate to traffic capacity. While recognizing that traffic capacity is a valid starting point, the GDAP 2008 Update has also looked at the broader context of creating economic activity in the area through residential, commercial and special event activity. Where the 2001 study finds that an at-grade intersection is “not required” by projected volumes, an at-grade intersection would stimulate developer and public interest in the Riverlands area. (The addition of a major public activity centre in Riverlands would also create significant new volumes and ‘desire lines’ for travel to and from Historic Downtown.)

The GDAP Steering Committee feels that the at-grade connection for both pedestrians and vehicles (Recommendation 15) is crucial in developing connectivity between Historic Downtown and Riverlands. Without it, there is a danger that Riverlands will become a stand-alone district that, with its Public Market, arts studios, hotel, convention centre, and major community activity centre, would draw economic activity away from Historic Downtown.

The concept of a continuous, attractive Alexander Way corridor is also dependent on an at-grade intersection at Taylor.

Many of the design concerns noted in the DTIS could be addressed through use of a Context Sensitive Solutions approach (see Great Streets section). For example, the DTIS notes



Existing fence along Taylor Drive median

that in the current design of Taylor Drive, drivers make lane changes and turn decisions at high speed. The GDAP 2008 Update suggests that, in the area from Ross St. to 45 St., dedicated turn lanes be removed and replaced with traditional stop-and-turn intersection configurations. Such changes would slow traffic on Taylor for that short area, which is seen as ultimately positive in terms of recognition of Greater Downtown as a special destination of the continuous corridor, while enhancing safety.

The DTIS also notes that left turns from Taylor Drive onto Alexander Way would create the need for dedicated turn lanes. The GDAP 2008 Update recommends that the intersection design consider prohibiting left turns from Taylor at Alexander Way – traffic destined for Riverlands from the south could turn at 45 St., whereas traffic destined for Alexander Way from the north could access it either from Ross St. or at 45 St.

As with all design studies flowing from this GDAP 2008 Update, it is recommended that the detailed design work be undertaken by a multidisciplinary team that includes professional expertise (traffic engineering, urban planning, social planning) as well as citizen input.

Intersection Improvements at Ross / 49 St. and Taylor Drive

Even with the construction of a new intersection at Taylor Drive and Alexander Way, there is significant value to improved pedestrian access, in all directions, at the Ross / 49 St. and Taylor Drive intersection. Currently, the only permitted pedestrian crossing is east-west on the north side of Ross. This requires pedestrians wishing to travel from the Railyards / Superstore area to and from Riverlands to travel significantly out of their way, under Taylor Bridge and back on the south side.

With the future location of a major hotel and convention centre on the north end of Riverlands and a pedestrian / cyclist corridor on 53 Ave., the goal is to encourage frequent, safe and convenient pedestrian movement between the convention area and neighbouring businesses in Railyards and Historic Downtown. This could be achieved by instituting pedestrian crossing in conjunction with the traffic light sequence that allows straight (no

turns) vehicle movement, thus avoiding pedestrian / vehicle conflicts and delays.

Removal of the dedicated south turn lane from Taylor Bridge onto south Taylor Drive would also capture valuable commercial development space for the convention centre. A squared intersection, possibly with additional south (right) turn lanes for southbound Taylor Drive, would create awareness of the brief pedestrian-oriented 'zone' at this important entry to Greater Downtown.

The GDAP 2008 Update recognizes that Taylor Drive is designated a Major Continuous Corridor and that these changes are non-standard for such a route. The perspective of this plan, however, is that Greater Downtown needs to be positioned as a primary destination in the overall urban development of Red Deer. As such, the Major Continuous Corridor should be seen as leading TO the city centre, not just THROUGH the city centre. It is noted that few successful urban downtowns have a major traffic corridor cutting through them. In the original design of Taylor Drive, it was not perceived as cutting through downtown but rather skirting the edge of downtown. Now, however, with the imminent development of Riverlands as part of the continuous Greater Downtown adjacent to Historic Downtown, the city has changed and the perception of Taylor Drive in this short five-block section (45 St. to 50 St.) needs to be amended accordingly.

Bridge to Bower Ponds

Originally approved as part of the GDAP 2000, the pedestrian bridge to Bower Ponds will complete the Alexander Way east-west and parks-urban linkage.

The bridge is currently listed on The City of Red Deer's capital projects for the year 2016. As recommended in the Community Culture Vision (2008, p. 30), this schedule should be moved up. An international design competition would draw the world's most creative designers and engineers to the challenge of creating an iconic structure that not only allows pedestrian and cyclist movement but provides great views of the river and encourages cultural activities so that it is a seamless link for events happening simultaneously on both sides of the river.

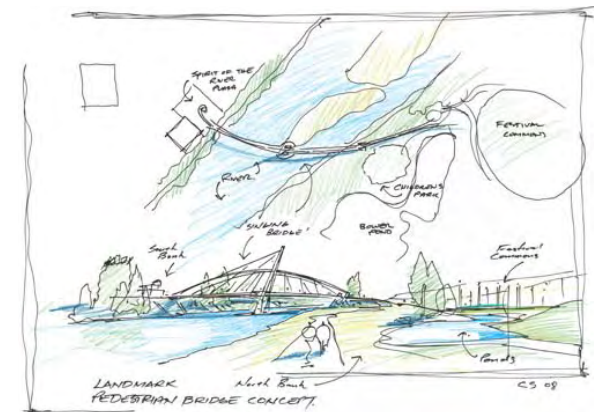
Bridge to Bower Ponds

Recommendation 17

Commission a design competition (2010) for an iconic bridge between Bower Ponds and Riverlands.

Recommendation 18

Move the capital budget for construction of the Bower Ponds – Riverlands bridge forward to the 2011 fiscal year.



Concept sketch for an iconic pedestrian bridge connecting Riverlands and Bower Ponds

A design charrette conducted in December 2008 as an extension of the GDAP process identified major public event enhancements that can be achieved through linking Bower Ponds to Riverlands. Each of those districts can support activities in the other. The charrette participants were also very enthusiastic about design concepts that show the bridge as a culturally significant ‘signature’ structure – one that not only connects areas of the city but makes a statement about the cultural significance of the river, Bower Ponds and Riverlands.

Recommendations 17 and 18 address the bridge initiatives.

Water Features

The ‘once in a lifetime’ opportunity to better connect Red Deer to its river and creeks, along with the Chamber of Commerce support for a canals system to attract tourists, has generated significant interest in using water as a theme for Greater Downtown, especially in Riverlands (and to a lesser degree in Railyards and Historic Downtown).

The potential water features include: linear fountains, sculptural fountains, waterfalls, shallow children’s wading ponds, deeper paddle boat channels or ponds (large enough to support ice skating in the winter), drinking fountains for people and even water access designed for pets and birds.

As noted below, citizens were only interested in the water features if they could be designed with low-impact technologies, so that they capture, conserve and re-use water. In keeping with its Riverlands name and the water features, the area could include a number of interpretive / educational signs and markers to help educate the public and visitors about sustainable water use.

Creative water / ice programming, including winter ice sculpture contests, were also encouraged.

The overall design for Riverlands is such that its water features can be developed in phases, as various buildings and public spaces are developed.

Water Features

Recommendation 19

Conduct a more detailed study to propose locations, technical guidelines, and artistic guidelines for a series of water features. This multidisciplinary study should have involvement from a landscape architect, Engineering, Public Works, a water sustainability specialist, and a public art specialist.



Riverlands from Bower Ponds

Green Technology Zone

The phrase ‘green technology’ refers to a simultaneous emphasis on sustainable buildings and open communications technology. There is strong support for recreating Riverlands as a district that demonstrates the best in sustainable technologies.

On the building technology front, there is support for requiring significant sustainable building and operations technology in new construction and redevelopments in Riverlands.

This might involve setting a minimal LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standard and / or giving incentives to encourage features such as low emission buildings, passive heating / cooling technologies, green roofs and more.

Given that Riverlands is also being proposed as a district with many water features (see above) and an area for the appreciation of water and ice, it would also be fitting for the entire district to have a low-impact eco-system approach to water, including storm water reduction and reuse, constructed wetlands, conservation landscaping, mini retention areas and landscape designs that minimize water usage.

On the communications technology side, there is interest in following the lead of communities like Fredericton, where free public wireless Internet access is provided by the municipality as an investment in innovation, learning and small business development. The ‘innovation infrastructure’ would encourage the development of a Red Deer College housing district. Students, small businesses, including artists and artisans (located in buildings such as a redeveloped Public Market / Arts Village), would also be attracted by such a feature. The public, including the Youth Voice group (local high school students), strongly supported this idea.

Green Technology Zone

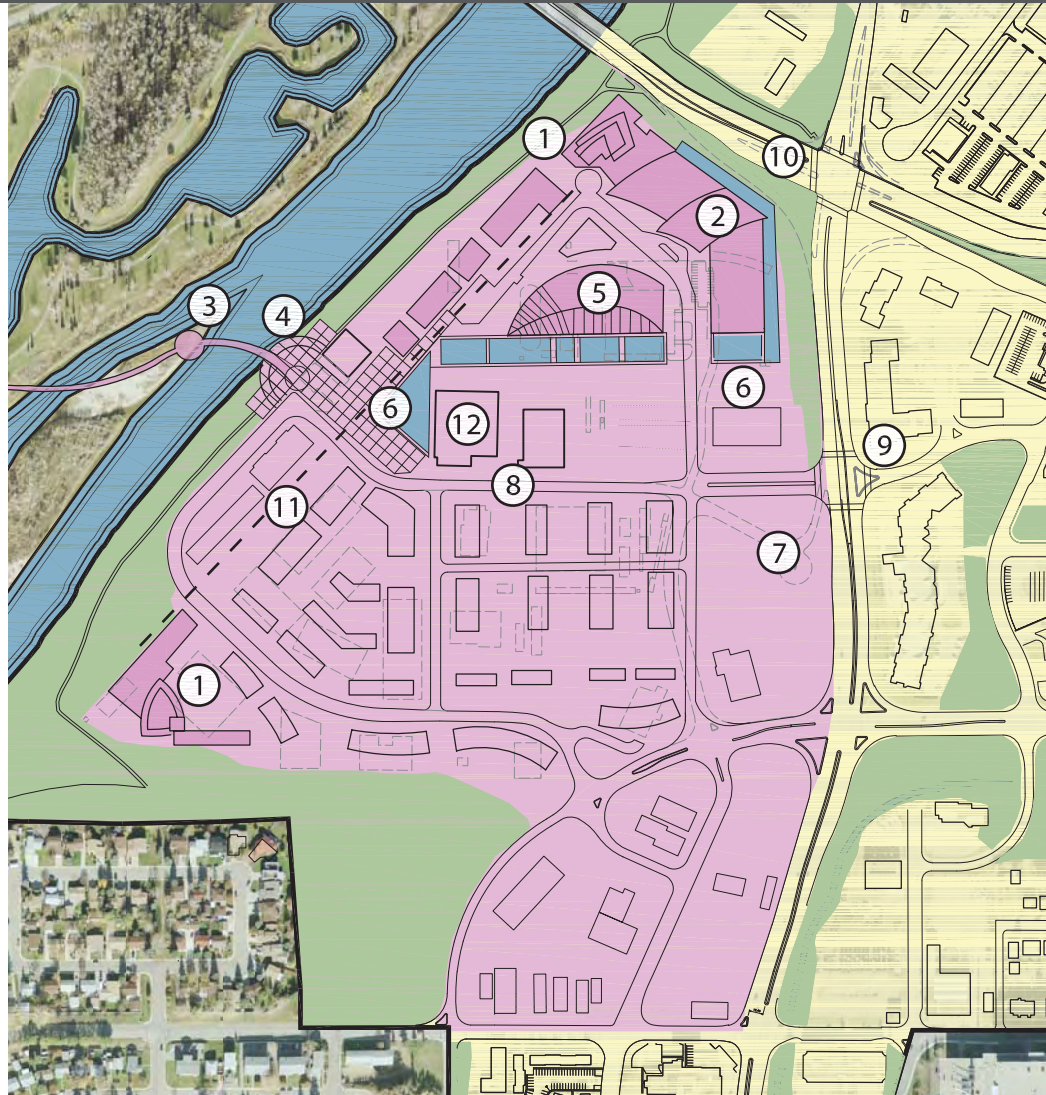
Recommendation 20

Develop design guidelines that actively encourage or require sustainable building practices in Riverlands, potentially in conjunction with tax or other development incentives.

Recommendation 21

Develop a free, municipally supported wireless connectivity zone in Riverlands. Pursue the possibility of a private developer providing this service as an element of another development project (for example, the hotel / convention centre project). Review the success of this project after 18 months and consider expanding it to other areas of Greater Downtown.

Figure 9. Riverlands: Concept Planning Initiatives



Riverlands: a diverse, sustainable, medium / high-density, mixed-use, riverfront neighbourhood built around a major community / visitor activity centre and a significant series of water features.

- ① Major signature developments at the two riverfront corner sites: hotel tower at the North and residential tower at the South, both with underground parking.
- ② New convention centre and possible future performing arts centre.
- ③ Iconic pedestrian bridge to Bower Ponds, a logo for the future of Red Deer.
- ④ Plaza promontory for river viewing from 'Spirit of the River' Plaza
- ⑤ Major community / visitor activity centre – a significant year-round facility with multiple components.
- ⑥ Water / ice art features.
- ⑦ Perimeter parking zone.
- ⑧ Alexander Way west extension.
- ⑨ Reconfigured at-grade pedestrian and vehicle crossing of Taylor Drive.
- ⑩ Reconfigured 49 St. / Taylor Drive intersection to allow pedestrian crossings and expanded hotel site.
- ⑪ Existing high-voltage overhead power lines to be buried.
- ⑫ Year-round Public Market and Arts Studios in adapted Transit and Civic Garage buildings, with retail, artisan stalls and studios.

Figure 10. Examples of Great Water Features



Julie Penrose Fountain- Colorado Springs, CO



Tuilleries Fountain- Paris, France



Centennial Plaza Park - Red Deer, AB



Bethesda Fountain Central Park- New York, NY

Railyards

Vision & Principles

Railyards is a vibrant mixed-use area with an emphasis on high-density urban living. Its attractive streets and array of services ranging from restaurants and grocery stores to a day care invite everyone from young professionals to families who made Railyards their home.

The Railyards district (previously known informally as Cannery Row) is visible on archival photographs as a collection of industrial buildings constructed in the 1960s and 1970s between the CPR railway tracks and the Red Deer River, north of the railway station and south of the railway bridge.

Railyards, similar to Riverlands, is now an area in transition. The railroad has been gone since the mid-eighties and several of the industrial businesses have left or are considering relocating, leaving the district with potential to evolve into a unique mixed-use urban neighbourhood linked to both Riverlands and Historic Downtown.



What's New

Railyards (then known as Cannery Row) was identified in the GDAP 2000 as an area with strong growth potential. It is a riverfront area and, as envisioned by the design team, has potential to be a highly attractive neighbourhood for many citizens, with a varied collection of high-density residences and the services people need in a walkable residential area.

Today, counts have shown more than 600 people a day use the Old CPR Train Bridge to access the downtown. The GDAP 2000 recommended the following initiative as a Priority Implementation Strategy:

“...the dedicated pedestrian / bike route essentially ends at the south end of the bridge. There is great opportunity to continue this trail through the district. The entire area can be given a distinct identity, and redeveloped as a mixed-use urban market area.”

Figure 11 identifies the unique planning context features of the area, including three heritage sites, the river trail and commercial anchor.

The City has planned a west extension of 55 St. (on the north side of the Saputo Inc. / historic Alpha site) to connect with 54 Ave. This reconfiguration (in 2011) will free up land currently used for access and exit roads from 54 Ave. as they go under the Old CPR Train Bridge. This land will be City-owned, and adjacent to a small triangle of underused privately owned brownfield land facing Gaetz Ave. This is a prime, elevated riverview site adjoining a park.

The Parks property north of the transformer station will be vacated in early 2009 as Parks moves to their new home. This City-owned site is prime riverfront property, and could be greatly enhanced by burying the power lines between the property and the river.

A number of other sites within Railyards are either for sale or prime candidates for adaptive re-use. These are identified in Figure 12.

In 2007, the much-needed Safe Harbour Society drug and alcohol detox centre found a home in Railyards.

The challenge in the district now is to invest in adapting its infrastructure and zoning to encourage attractive high-density development. With its unique location facing the river, adjacent to Historic Downtown, and linked to the rejuvenated Riverside Meadows community, Railyards is a district with significant potential.

Objectives

- Recognize the rail heritage of the area
- Rezone the district to allow and encourage residential mixed-use development
- Create new pedestrian and bike connections to the Waskasoo Park river trails
- Enhance property values along the river by burying overhead power lines
- Establish improved vehicle, pedestrian and cycle connections between Riverlands, Historic Downtown and Railyards

The following elements of the Railyards plan are shown on Figure 13.

Recognize Rail Heritage

The area north of Ross St. and west of Gaetz Ave. has in recent years been informally known as Cannery Row, in recognition of the can factory that was located near its centre (a part of which is now named Cannery Row Mall). Discussions during the GDAP 2008 Update, however, focused on the rail heritage of the area and the opportunity to bring greater awareness to its history. With the Old CPR Train Bridge at its north end and the Old CPR Railway Station at the south end, this district provides an opportunity for recognition of the community's rail history. Appendix 1 also notes a detailed rail history submission with further ideas worthy of exploration.

Recognize Rail Heritage

Recommendation 22

Conduct a public naming process for the district involving citizen nominations. The consultants recommend the name Railyards but public input will help establish whether this is the best name.

Recommendation 23

Develop a program of rail themed street signage and interpretive markers to build identity and awareness of the train heritage in Railyards.

Rezoning

It is important to address zoning controls for Railyards soon, given the large number of business sites that are potentially in transition. Zoning and development guidelines need to ensure that properties are not redeveloped for continued light industrial use if the intent is to move to mixed-use residential.

The current C1A zoning for the district is perhaps a carry over from its industrial past. As the area evolves, rezoning and an Area Redevelopment Plan are required. Detailed zoning recommendations for this are found in Section D.

Power Line Relocation

As noted in Recommendation 10, the current plan to bury the overhead power lines in Riverlands should include a section in Railyards as well. This would be a section of line from north of the transformer station to the edge of the water intake plant property.

This would create a section of very attractive property overlooking the river for residential development, a substantial amount of which is City-owned (Parks storage). Property values and development potential would be significantly enhanced.

The Electric Light & Power department has advised that the approval process alone for the burying of the lines can take up to three years. Action should be initiated as soon as possible to begin approval applications and budgeting.

Old CPR Train Bridge Plaza Park

There is a natural hub at the south end of the Old CPR Train Bridge, where pedestrians and cyclists can connect to routes heading south into the city centre, southwest into Railyards and Riverlands and north onto the bridge or the river trail system.

Old CPR Train Bridge Plaza Park

Recommendation 24

Design and construct a pedestrian and bicycle oriented park at the south end of the Old CPR Train Bridge. Research the potential for locating an historic steam locomotive in this park to bring greater visibility to the area's rail heritage.



Existing south end termination of old CPR bridge (view from south of bridge)

It is an ideal location for a plaza park with benches and a water feature which could cascade down the hill along the trail into the park area.

During preparation of this plan it was indicated that a local rail history group may be able to source a steam locomotive for use as a very visible historical interpretive element.

New Intersection – 53 Ave. and 55 St.

As noted earlier, the roadway plan for this area calls for 55 St. to be extended straight west from Gaetz Ave along an existing right-of-way in 2011. When this happens, 53 Ave. should be realigned as well so that it intersects 55 St. at right angles slightly to the east of its current configuration (Recommendation 25).

The new 55 St. extension must calm traffic and create a designated pedestrian crosswalk for pedestrians and cyclists crossing the street while travelling to and from the popular Old CPR Train Bridge.

53 Ave. Enhancements

53 Ave. currently runs the length of the Railyards district, ending in a cul-de-sac just as it reaches Taylor Drive.

This street is currently used for local traffic, service and delivery vehicles. As noted above, the GDAP 2008 Update recommends (Recommendation 26) that it be reconfigured at its north end to intersect at right angles with the 55 St. extension and have sidewalks, tree planting and bike paths constructed from 55 St. south to Ross St. These features will begin to establish it as a pedestrian-based commercial / shopping spine for future neighbourhood Railyards mixed-use development. Storefront commercial on all new development on 53 Ave. would face the street, with residential above.

New Intersection

Recommendation 25

Design and construct a realigned 53 Ave. intersection with 55 St., such that 53 Ave. is moved east to align with the south end of the Old CPR Train Bridge trail. Create the intersection as a pedestrian-first crossing with special pavement treatments to recognize its status as a key north-south link for pedestrians and cyclists.

53 Ave. Enhancements

Recommendation 26

Initially as a 2010 Pilot Project, reconfigure 53 Ave. as a model 'complete street' with sidewalks, a dedicated bike lane, street furniture and landscaping.

New Links to River and City Centre

The City-owned sites west of 54 Ave. (currently Parks storage and Water Treatment Plant expansion spaces) provide an opportunity to create stronger linkages to the river parks and trails.

Dedicating 2.5m on the north end of the current Parks site and the south end of the water intake property would allow for these connections, which could then continue east-west through Railyards.

As noted above, an enhanced 53 Ave. would create one south-westerly route through the area. Along the eastern edge of Railyards, on Gaetz Ave., there is also an opportunity due to the width of that avenue.

Currently, there is a well-used ad hoc pedestrian pathway that runs from the Old CPR Train Bridge through private parking lots to the sidewalk along the east side of Superstore and linking to the distinctive heritage boardwalk along the west side of the former CPR train station. To recognize and enhance this natural desire route, various options could be explored (for example, providing a proper link from the south end of the train station boardwalk to the sidewalk; assisting with additional lighting; using temporary planters and painted asphalt to help define the path, etc.). As most of this is private land, enhancements would have to be planned collaboratively with land owners.

With its history as a light industrial area, sidewalks were not routinely included as part of road construction in Railyards. This needs to be corrected, and the GDAP 2008 Update recommends (generally) constructing continuous sidewalks to both sides of all streets.

Please refer to section 3 Great Streets for additional recommendations about reconfiguring 51 Ave. (the south-east boundary of Railyards) to calm traffic, add parking and create bike lanes. The Great Streets section also contains Recommendations for a sidewalk-building program to start to establish the urban infrastructure that is necessary for families to feel comfortable living in the area.

New Links

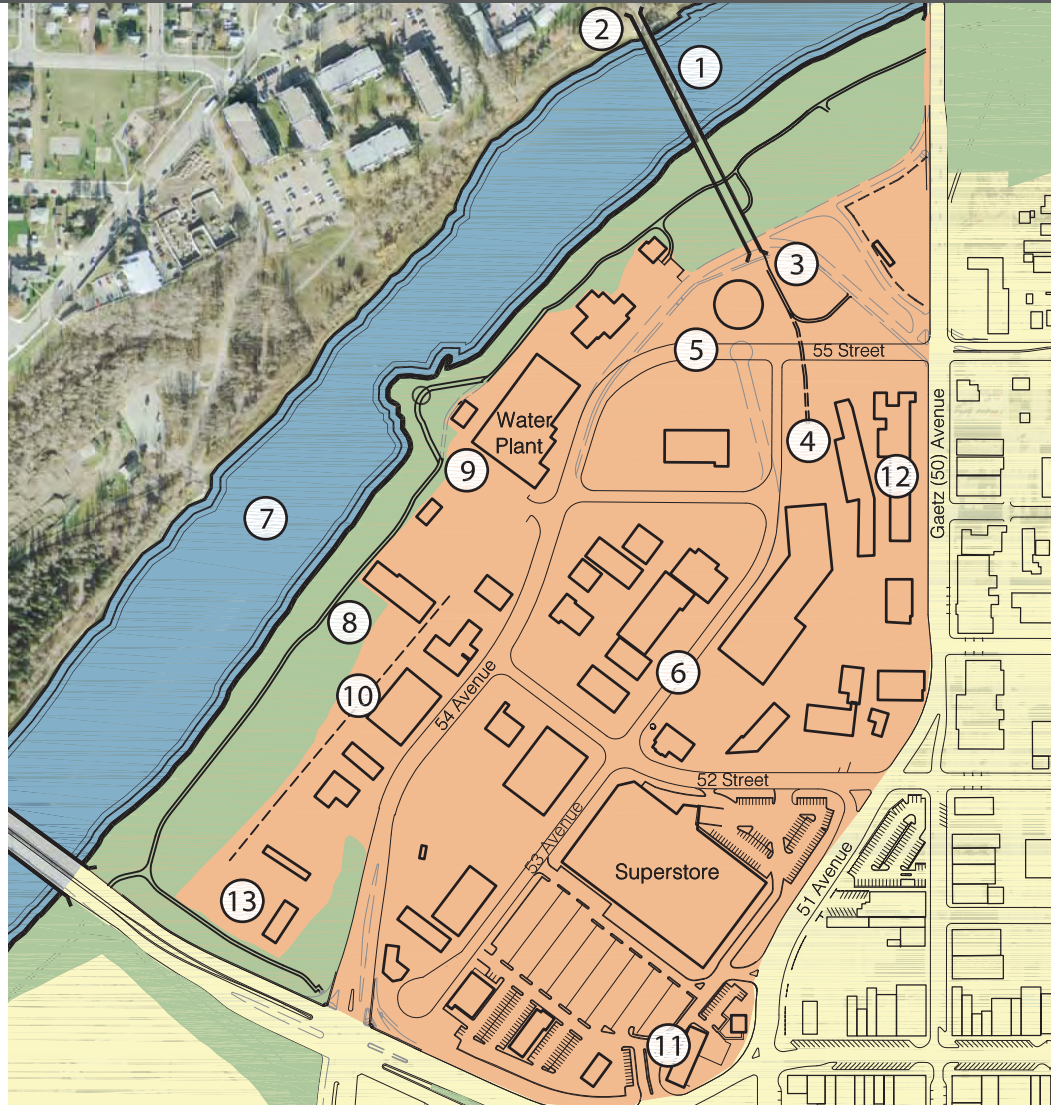
Recommendation 27

Explore options for acquiring right-of-way and constructing an attractive pedestrian route through the Cannery Row Mall area, from the Old CPR Train Bridge to the former CPR train station.

Recommendation 28

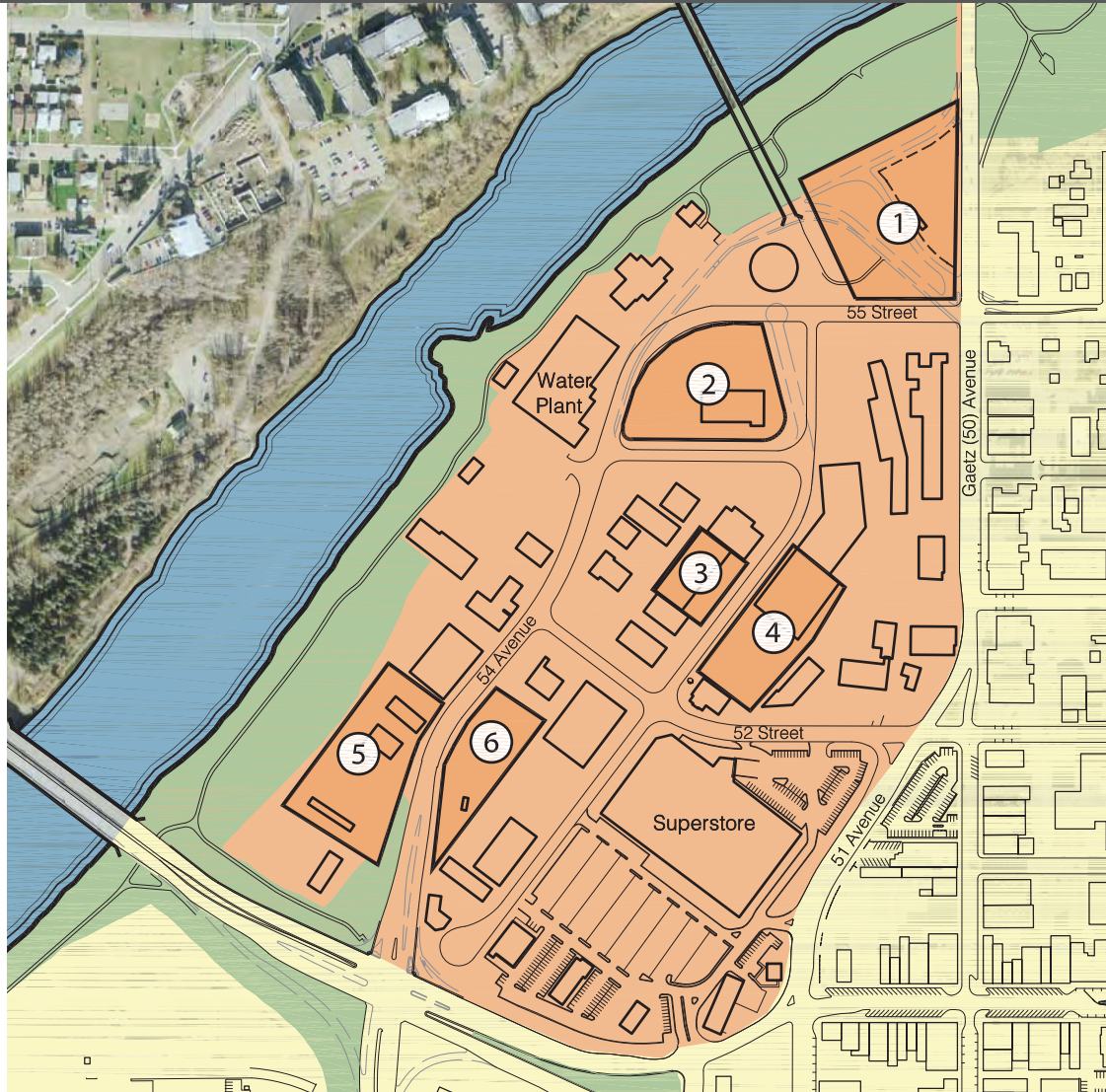
To support the development of Railyards as an attractive residential district, create attractive new links to the Waskasoo Park trails from 54 Ave. through the current City Parks and Water Treatment properties.

Figure 11. Railyards: Significant Planning Features



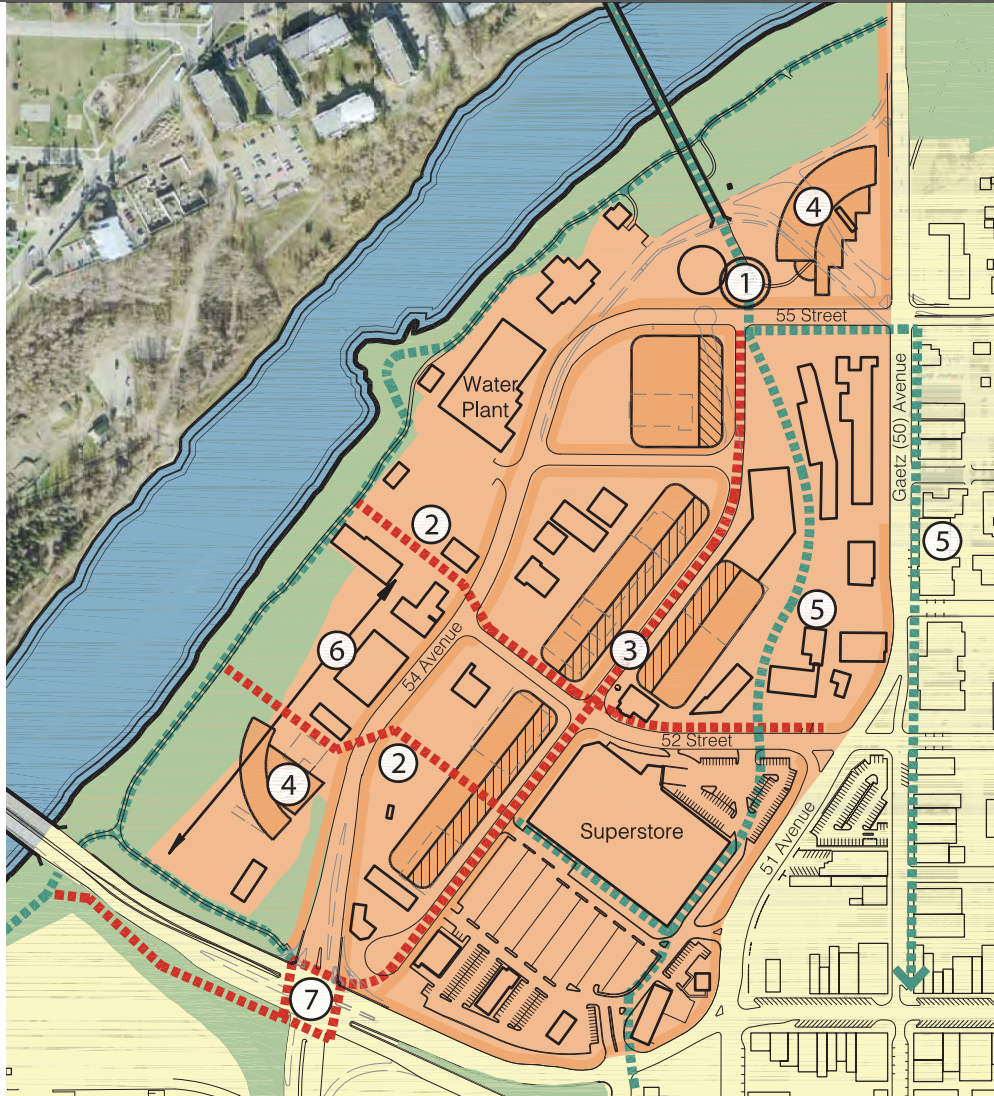
- ① Heritage site: Old CPR Train Bridge.
- ② Link to Riverside Meadows.
- ③ South landing from the train bridge.
- ④ North-South pedestrian path.
- ⑤ Future 55 St. West extension.
- ⑥ 53 Ave.: existing service road; potential to be converted to pedestrian spine for future development.
- ⑦ Red Deer River.
- ⑧ Waskasoo Trail system.
- ⑨ Water Intake Plant: new intake requires realigned trail location with interpretive site / river view potential.
- ⑩ Existing high voltage overhead power lines: consider burying.
- ⑪ Heritage Site: former CPR Train Station.
- ⑫ Heritage Site: Saputo / Alpha Dairy building.
- ⑬ Electrical transformers: permanent urban infrastructure site

Figure 12. Railyards: Development Sites 2008



- ① Property made available by the reconfiguration of 55 St., partially City-owned. An ideal site for a signature project, setting the tone for future Railyards development.
- ② Prairie Bus Lines: currently planning to move out of Greater Downtown.
- ③ Robco Cabinets: currently planning to move out of Greater Downtown.
- ④ Previous A&B Sound location.
- ⑤ City Property: Parks and Recreation to be vacated early 2009.
- ⑥ Brownfield Site.

Figure 13. Railyards: Concept Planning Initiatives



Riverlands: a well-defined area evolving to a new, mixed-use, high-density urban neighbourhood with strong links to the river trail system along an upgraded 53 Ave. pedestrian-oriented organizational street / spine.

- ① Rail heritage plaza park with enhanced pedestrian-first crossing of extended 55 St.
- ② New E-W trails connecting Riverlands to connecting to the Waskasoo Park trail system. One through the north edge of the existing Parks property and the other along the south edge of the Water Treatment Plant property.
- ③ Reconfigured 53 Ave. featuring new sidewalks, tree planting, street furniture, bike lanes and narrower vehicle access.
- ④ New signature development on two City-owned properties.
- ⑤ Pilot project (collaborative with landowners): temporary planters, painted asphalt and signage used to define established ad hoc pedestrian routes.
- ⑥ High-voltage overhead power line buried to create improved building opportunities and public access to river edge.
- ⑦ Improved Taylor Drive intersection to allow pedestrian crossing.

Significant Projects

New Pedestrian Links

Existing Pedestrian Routes to be Enhanced



B. Priorities

3. Great Streets – Transportation, Pedestrian and Public Realm

Vision & Principles

Getting to downtown Red Deer is convenient by car, by public transit, on bicycle and on foot. Each street is designed to serve multiple purposes, with an overall goal of creating a lively urban activity area.

The Red Deer station (or a rapid transit shuttle station) for the Alberta high-speed rail line is located in Riverlands or Railyards, supporting a cluster of residential developments for people who work in or make frequent trips to Edmonton and Calgary.

A variety of clear and convenient parking alternatives are available to meet the needs of shoppers, downtown residents and people who work in the area. Parking is on-street, above ground, or below ground wherever possible so that street frontages are occupied by businesses and residences. The downtown streets encourage people to move around on foot once they arrive ('park and walk').

The streets of Greater Downtown Red Deer offer citizens of all ages and physical ability not only accessibility but a wide range of well-designed, richly landscaped, safe and comfortable surroundings. Pedestrian activity is focused on street level and not pushed above or below ground.

Vehicle traffic moving through downtown (en route to destinations beyond downtown) will experience it as a special zone not unlike a playground zone with greater on-street and street-side activity. Traffic will slow slightly through the downtown core to encourage greater safety, on-street parking and retail activities.



What's New

In this update, we have combined the “Pedestrian Environment” and “Transportation and Parking” topics from the GDAP 2000 in one “Great Streets” section.

The great streets perspective is a more holistic approach to the use of our street right-of-ways for a wide variety of retail, pedestrian, parking, vehicle movement, cycling and transit functions.

We see these strengths and opportunities for improvement:

- interest in healthy living and environmental conservation support greater emphasis on active transportation (biking, walking)
- gaps in the sidewalk and trails routes
- successful corner bulbs for pedestrians at a number of intersections
- Albertans increasingly supportive of a high-speed rail line with a stop in Red Deer

Objectives

- A ‘Complete Streets’ Approach to Street Design
- New and Improved Connections
- Enhanced Streetscapes
- Enhanced Laneways
- Barrier-Free Design for Active Living

Complete Streets Design Standards

Streets in Greater Downtown serve multiple functions, from helping people move from one end of the city to another and encouraging local business, to providing safe environments for families who live adjacent to them. In some cases, individual streets – such as Ross St. – do all of the above.

Major routes such as Taylor Drive, Ross St., 49 St., Gaetz / 51 Ave., and 49 Ave. provide important vehicle corridors for people travelling through downtown, as well as being routes to the downtown. The Taylor Drive bridge, for example, carries 40,000 to 50,000 vehicles per day, a high proportion of them destined for locations other than downtown. These legitimate and important vehicle needs will continue, so the challenge is how to balance those needs with new developments downtown.

New standards in place in many cities – and being widely adopted in others – allow balance between ease of vehicle movement and key downtown activities such as retail, outdoor patios, cycling, pedestrian movement and landscaping.

The complete streets approach adopted by North American cities such as Charlotte, Minneapolis, Denver and Calgary (guidelines are in draft form) and mandated by a number of States looks at the ‘performance’ of streets more broadly than our traditional focus on vehicle capacity.

Street design standards in the downtown encourage:

- Balanced consideration of vehicle, individual (pedestrian, cyclist) and retail uses of the street right-of-way
- Continuous walkways sized to accommodate comfortable use, without impediments
- On-street parking on most streets for easy retail access and pedestrian comfort
- On-street parking during off-peak hours on major collector streets to encourage evening activities downtown and discourage fast through-traffic
- Dedicated bike lanes on many streets, with the lane ideally located between the sidewalk curb and a row of parked vehicles
- Landscaped boulevards in the middle of wide streets, with pedestrian crossing refuges embedded in them
- Mid-block crossings on some streets, to encourage pedestrians to explore both sides of a street

Complete Streets Design Standards

Recommendation 29

Develop and adopt new street design standards that integrate ‘complete streets’ analysis into all street design / traffic engineering related to the Greater Downtown. Include significant involvement of culture, business and social sector advocates in the development of the guidelines and actively consult cities that have had success with such guidelines.

Recommendation 30

Whenever developing specific street designs in the Greater Downtown, apply a matrix of design considerations and trade-offs such as that developed by the City of Charlotte and / or the Context Sensitive Solutions approach of the Institute of Traffic Engineers.

Level-of-service (L-O-S) engineering guidelines should ensure that street design consider not only vehicle L-O-S but pedestrian and cyclist L-O-S and encourage active transportation. This principle of encouragement is important because on many streets and at many intersections, current pedestrian and cyclist use is minimal due to design that serves vehicles.

The goal for vehicle movement through the downtown area is slow, steady and smooth. The Historic Downtown area, in particular, should give priority to vehicles whose drivers are seeking downtown amenities (shops or parking) rather than those making a cross-city journey. Slower traffic flows support the shoppers who are crucial to downtown business.

Feedback from residents and business owners is that traffic calming initiatives in the GDAP 2000, such as extensions or bulbs at street corners to reduce pedestrian crossing distances, have been a significant improvement and that such initiatives should be extended to more streets and intersections.

Finally, downtown streets should be energized with frequent community and business events – from a downtown business BBQ to children’s festivals. A number of streets should be designed for temporary closures – some ad hoc for special events and some on a regular basis, such as the “car free Sunday” programs that are successful in other North American cities.

New and Improved Connections

As noted in the GDAP 2000, the Greater Downtown is ringed by a wonderful park and trails system, but does not offer well-designed transitions into the urban environment. For example, the Old CPR Train Bridge route, used by over 600 pedestrians and cyclists a day, continues to terminate in an undefined cluster of informal pathways.

To quote the Community Culture Vision (2008), “projects and opportunities have the greatest power when physically connected.”

New and Improved Connections

Recommendation 31

Redevelop (initially as Pilot Projects) the following major routes to include shorter pedestrian crossings, dedicated bike lanes and more on-street parking:

- Gaetz Ave from 55 St. to 52 St. (with bike lane continuing from 52 St. to 45 St.) and from 45 St. to the base of south hill
- 51 Ave. from 52 St. to 45 St.
- Ross St. from the base of Michener Hill to 51 Ave.
- Alexander Way (48 St.), as noted elsewhere in this plan
- a Pilot Project of evening and weekend on-street parking on the east side of 49 St. from 47 St. to 55 St.

Transportation connections play an integral role in defining how a community develops. Development typically occurs in nodes adjacent to transportation corridors and connecting points, whether that transportation involves air, vehicle, bicycle or foot travel.

With consideration being given to a future high-speed rail line between Edmonton and Calgary, it is important to establish a connection to such a line in The City of Red Deer proper, and downtown in particular. The Red Deer stop on such a line would have the greatest economic benefit to Alberta if it is located in an urban zone with the infrastructure to support intensive urban development.

As noted in the Community Culture Vision (p. 11), a high-speed rail station located outside of the city would pose a “significant challenge” to the viability of downtown Red Deer, due to its power to draw economic activity to it.

Furthermore, given that a high-speed rail line would be intended to reduce the volumes of private vehicle traffic, its stations must be located in districts that have high-density development and strong public transportation connections. The rail line would be defeating its purpose if it required all its passengers to take private vehicles to its station. Downtown Red Deer (either Riverlands or Railyards) would be the ideal location for a Red Deer station or a fast, convenient shuttle service to the station.

Street connections from Red Deer’s suburbs into downtown are generally excellent. During the 2008 consultations, a few citizens mentioned concerns with the downtown one-way systems in terms of difficulty travelling from one point to another. This had been addressed in the GDAP 2000 and the subsequent Downtown Traffic Initiatives Study. In 2008, the consultants heard that the public and business owners are most interested in creating ‘friendly’ streets, with good parking on-street or in parkades (surface level parking lots create retail ‘dead zones’) and that one-way streets were not a significant concern at this time. Attractive street amenities such as sidewalk cafes, trees, planters, furniture, banners and the absence of graffiti and neglected properties were seen as higher priorities.

New and Improved Connections

High-Speed Rail Station

Recommendation 32

Collaborate with the Alberta government and private high-speed rail developers to conduct an economic-generator study examining options for a station or rapid transit connection hub in Greater Downtown.

Alexander Way

Recommendation 33

Complete the Alexander Way redevelopment – to effectively link the downtown core with Riverlands, using the completed project design amended to include a dedicated bike lane.

South Downtown Greenway

Recommendation 34

Commission a multidisciplinary study to design a bike trail / greenway route from the existing trail head near 55 Ave. and 43 St. to Taylor Drive and 45 St., then along the greenway and creek south of 45 St. to connect with the trail system at Spruce Drive and 43 St.

The renewed objectives for improved connections are therefore to:

- Designate a future location for a downtown Red Deer high-speed rail station or park-and-ride rapid shuttle service
- Create new Railyards Trails from the Old CPR Train Bridge through Railyards to Riverlands and to Historic Downtown
- Complete and enhance Alexander Way as a feature connecting street between Barrett Park in the east and Bower Ponds in the west
- Create a new South Downtown Trail
- Plan for Greater Downtown transit improvements including a small bus shuttle loop
- Fill in the ‘missing links’ in sidewalks and trails
- Reconfigure key routes through downtown (starting with Ross St., 51 Ave. and Gaetz Ave.) to create multiple shared-use corridors

These objectives are reflected in project recommendations noted in other sections of this GDAP 2008 Update, including:

Railyards Trails

Three north-south trails connecting the Old CPR Train Bridge to Riverlands and Historic Downtown:

- 53 Ave. Route – built as a pilot project initially on the existing 53 Ave. surface; then more permanent construction on road allowance after pilot
- Gaetz Ave. Route – an on-street bikeway from 55 St. to Ross St.
- Cannery Row Mall Route – a route through the Cannery Row Mall parking area, south to Superstore

Alexander Way

As noted in the Historic Downtown and Riverlands sections, Alexander Way should be completed as a major promenade from Barrett Park through to Bower Ponds. This GDAP 2008 update notes that there is new public interest in incorporating a dedicated bike lane to

Sidewalk Building Program

Recommendation 35

Create a publicly funded three-year program to construct missing sidewalks (or asphalt trails, in some locations) and widen narrow walks on the following priority basis: 2011 – Historic Downtown, 2012 – Railyards, 2013 – Riverlands. Use the Downtown Public Realms Initiative as a guide to highest priority locations. Assign costs to future development levies.

the design.

Ross St. Enhancements and Cenotaph Plaza

Given its width, Ross St. is a prime candidate for a design that integrates more land / streetscaping, a dedicated bike lane, narrower curving traffic lanes and attractive corner treatments.

During Greater Downtown Planning Week, citizens observed that the temporary closure of lanes and removal of parking for the Executive Place construction worked well for vehicles but also allowed pedestrians to better appreciate the Cenotaph war memorial. It is proposed that a plaza be constructed, extending the pedestrian area on the south side of Executive Place to include the Cenotaph, with suitable benches and landscaping. This would create a more visible entry into the Historic Downtown retail core, slow traffic and create a pedestrian refuge where citizens can notice and appreciate the war memorial.

An alternative design, to be examined in a multidisciplinary design study, would be to locate the plaza from the south edge of the Cenotaph to the south Ross St. sidewalk.

In the Community Culture Vision (2008), citizens also expressed interest in a ‘scatter’ crossing intersection (a light sequence during which no vehicles are moving and pedestrians can move in all directions, including diagonally) at Ross St. and Gaetz Ave. This GDAP 2008 Update recommends (Recommendation 6) that a multidisciplinary design study formulate a design for Ross St. between 49 Ave. and Gaetz Ave. that incorporates a one or two-way cycle lane, the Cenotaph Plaza, a scatter crossing at Gaetz and Ross, and a feature sculpture at that intersection.

Greater Downtown Transit Improvements

As the Historic Downtown, Riverlands and Railyards develop, there will be growing demand for short shuttle-style transportation around and between the areas. The distances, while walkable in many circumstances, will be greater than some people find comfortable,



Ross Street looking west

especially in inclement weather. A high-frequency, low- or no-cost bus loop service featuring smaller buses would provide the necessary connections between Greater Downtown areas. Such a service, combined with enhanced parking (such as the Civic Centre parkade), would encourage the ‘park once’ behaviour, where people might arrive downtown in a vehicle but park it and walk or hop a shuttle bus for travel within the area.

An interim measure would be to institute a free downtown transit zone – an area where people could ride a few blocks for free. This initiative would begin to make it more feasible for residents to live downtown without having to own a private vehicle. Such initiatives ultimately reduce public investment in roadways by slowing the growth of private vehicle trips.

The consultants also heard from the public that downtown transit stops are important and that their location should be considered as part of complete streets design.

South Downtown Greenway

Greater Downtown’s ‘ring of green’ is discontinuous along the southern edge. The creek is impacted by adjoining businesses and there is no continuous route for public movement, or appreciation of the creek and adjoining green space.

The intent here is to plan and acquire rights-of-way in order to create a southern ‘green link’ from Riverlands across to the Arena area and the south end of Barrett Park.

‘Missing Links’

In some areas of the Greater Downtown there are sidewalks on only one side of a roadway or none at all. This often reflects earlier light industrial histories of the areas.

The Downtown C1 Public Realm Upgrades identified many areas where sidewalks are required in order to create the new infrastructure that supports urban lifestyles and the increased emphasis on downtown residential.

Parking

Recommendation 36

Review parking policies and incentives with a view to encouraging (in descending order):

- underground parkades
- above ground parkades with attractive retail or other amenities on their street faces
- on-street parking (including parking on major corridors during off-peak hours)
- fully landscaped surface level parking.

Require and enforce significant landscaping of all surface parking lots.

Streetscapes, Laneways and Accessibility

Recommendation 37

Replace Walk / Don’t Walk signals with crossing time countdown signals as part of the regular signal improvement and maintenance schedules.

Vehicle and Bicycle Parking

While it is important to enhance options for walking, biking or taking transit for health, environmental and street capacity reasons, most people (whether working, shopping or visiting) arrive downtown by private vehicle. Convenient parking is important. As general principles, this plan suggests that surface level off-street parking should be the last resort – that it is preferable to provide parking in underground parkades, above ground parkades, or on-street. On-street parking has a streetscape advantage in that parked vehicles at the curb-side provide a degree of calm and safety for pedestrians on sidewalks. The presence of parked and parking vehicles also slows traffic in street travel lanes.

Bicycle parking is an amenity that, along with dedicated bike lanes, encourages functional bike uses such as trips to and from work, education or services. There are a number of bike racks downtown but additional racks should continue to be added (racks must be close to destinations to be effective) and developers should be encouraged to consider indoor bike lockers.

Enhanced Streetscapes

In the 1980s, Red Deer upgraded streets and sidewalks along sections of Ross St., 49 St., Gaetz and 49 Aves. The trees that were planted then, combined with the reconfigured sidewalks and lighting, now give the streets a rich and inviting atmosphere. These streetscape (landscaping, lighting, paving, street furniture, signage etc) programs should be continued as an ongoing investment. The priorities are identified in the Downtown C1 Public Realm Upgrades study.

Enhanced Laneways

Previous Red Deer downtown plans and the Downtown C1 Public Realm Upgrades have

Enhanced Streetscapes

Bicycle Parking

Recommendation 38

As recommended in the Bicycle Master Plans and Red Deer Trails Master Plan, amend zoning and development guidelines to encourage the development of more outdoor and indoor bicycle parking facilities. All new developments should include provision for bicycles.

Recommendation 39

Continue regular re-investment in landscaping, street furniture, and related enhancements in the Historic Downtown, Riverlands and Railyards.

Recommendation 40

Prohibit Plus 15 Walkways – Because they remove activity and vitality from the street, and therefore decrease street level safety, ‘Plus 15’ elevated walkways over streets should be prohibited except in situations where the connected buildings are owned and occupied by the same organization, with strong functional reasons to need inter-building connectivity.

identified that in the Historic Downtown, several back lanes are well-established pedestrian routes. A number of businesses also open onto these lanes.

These established pedestrian routes should be recognized and upgraded to support safe and comfortable public use of the spaces. Laneways also create interesting diversions for shoppers, encourage foot traffic and reflect a sense of pride when attractively maintained.

Murals, lighting, special pavement treatments and signage are just a few of the ways that lanes can be enhanced. Naming lanes also gives them a sense of identity and improves public way-finding.

Barrier-Free Design for Active Living

The pedestrian environment in the downtown should be accessible to all. This will mean extending the policy of barrier-free design to include designing for people with auditory, visual and other impairments.

In addition, continuous barrier-free pedestrian routes are crucial to initiatives such as the Primary Care Network's active living program, which encourages groups of citizens to walk downtown. In our climate, winter snow and ice are a key barrier. An improved snow clearing program that provides more continuous routes will encourage winter use of walkways.

Barrier-Free Design for Active Living

Recommendation 41

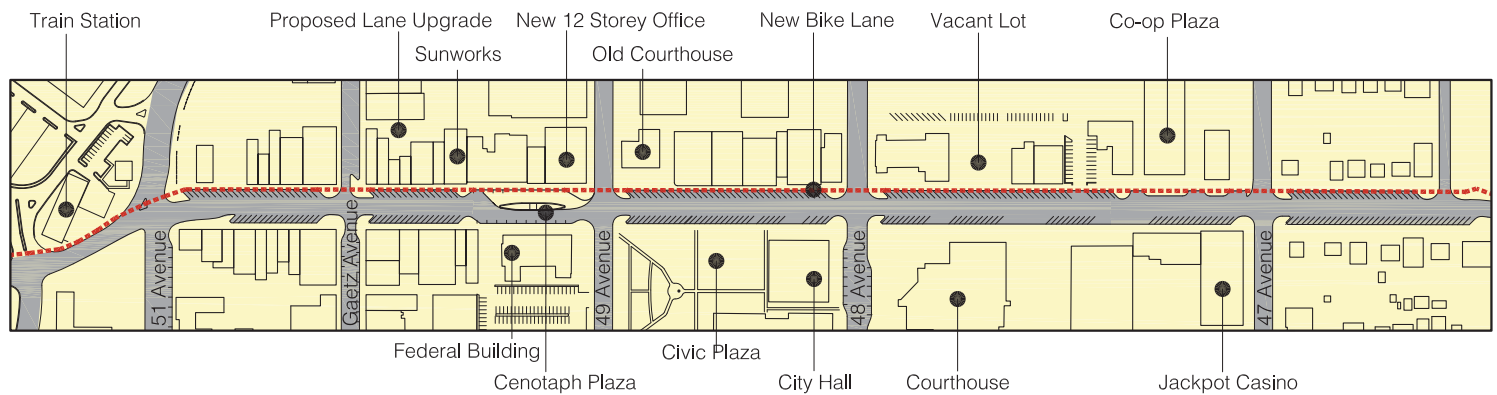
Implement accessibility improvements including curb cuts for barrier-free wheelchair access, auditory and Braille pedestrian signals and other improvements on a systematic, staged basis, starting in the Historic Downtown.

Recommendation 42

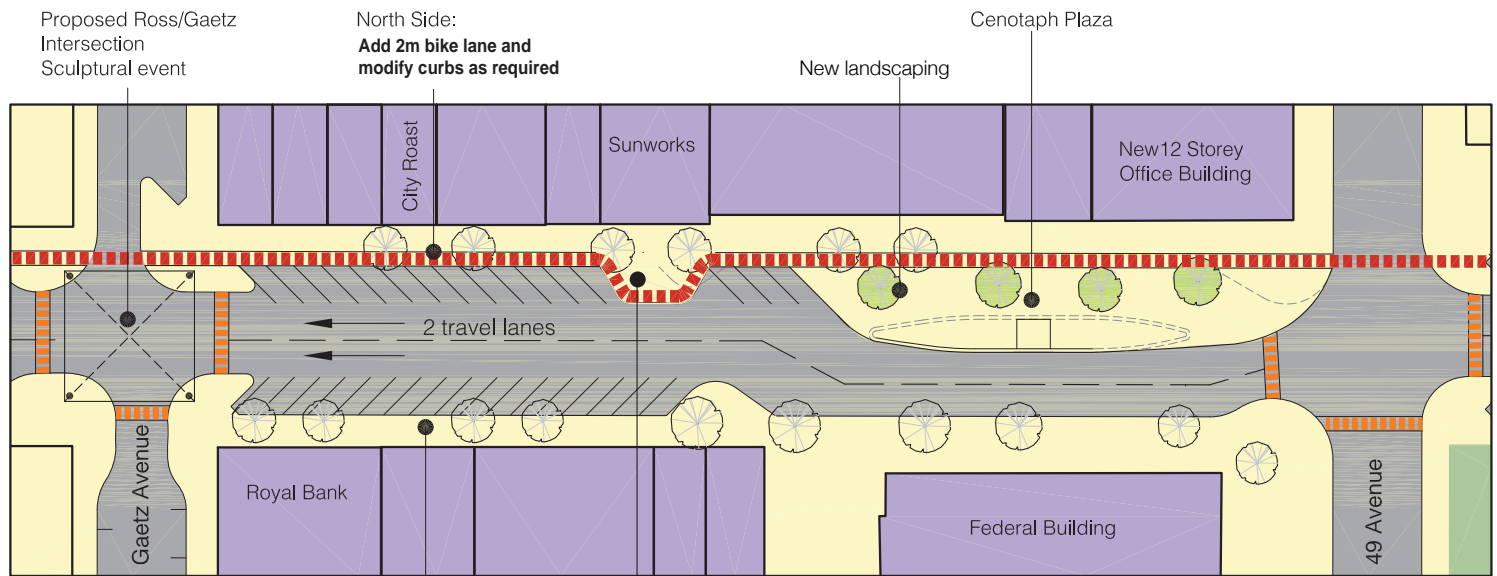
Increase snow clearing to include key continuous routes into Greater Downtown.

B. Priorities | 3. Great Streets – Transportation, Pedestrian and Public Realm

Figure 14. Great Streets: Ross Street Design Proposal



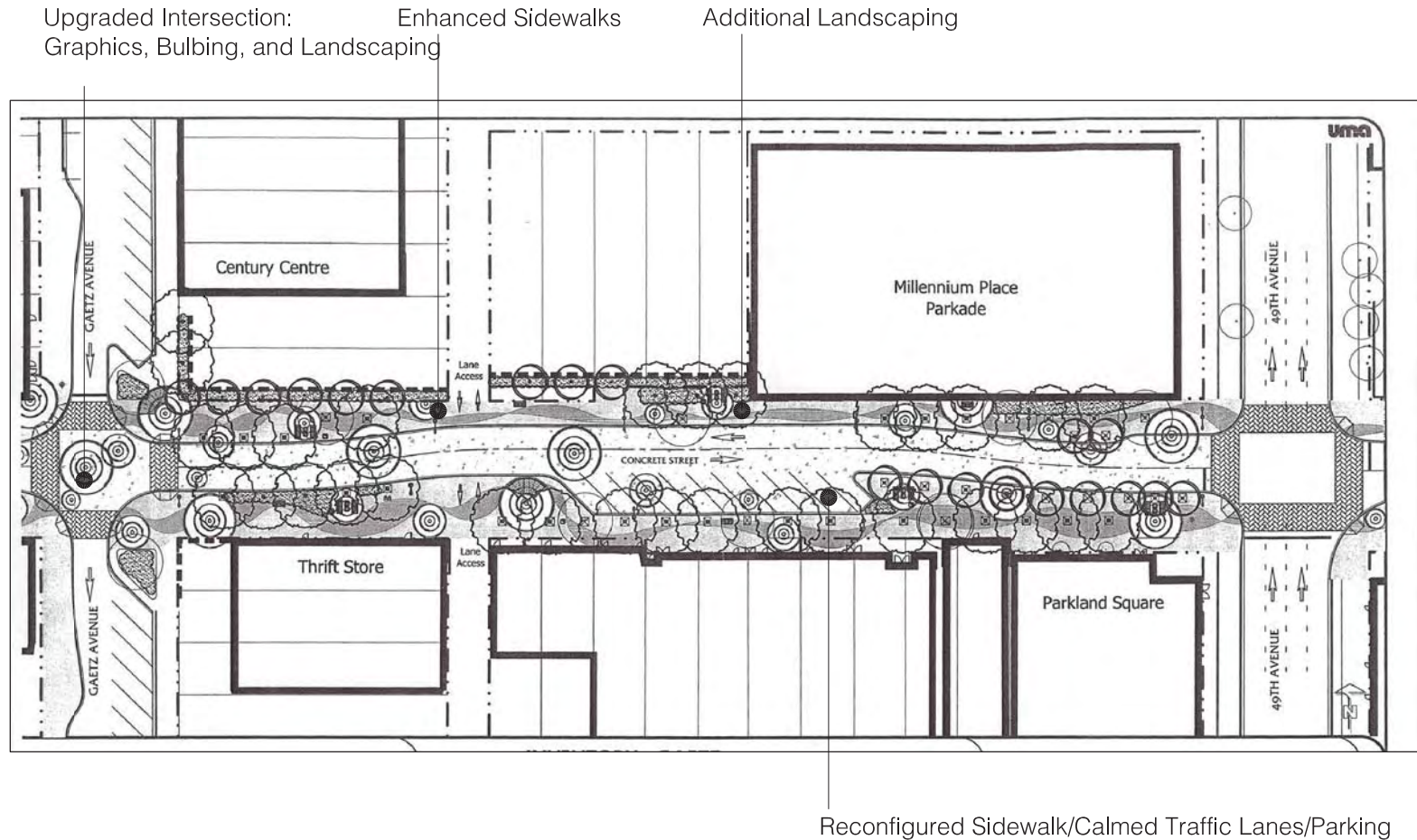
Ross Street: Overall



**Ross Street Upgrades:
Gaetz to 49 Avenue**

B. Priorities | 3. Great Streets – Transportation, Pedestrian and Public Realm

Figure 15. Great Streets: Alexander Way Design Drawing



Reconfigured Sidewalk/Calmed Traffic Lanes/Parking

*Alexander Way- Ultimate Design Figure 18
Image courtesy of City of Red Deer Alexander Way- 48 Street Promenade Preliminary Design (2004)*



C. Commentary

This Commentary section of the GDAP 2008 Update is intended to provide further guidance on elements of Greater Downtown life beyond the Priorities noted in section B. The Commentary categories follow those in the GDAP 2000 and should be read in context of the GDAP 2000. In many cases, significant progress has been made – community assets have been strengthened and a variety of programs, services and facilities are contributing to a healthy Greater Downtown. The following Commentary provides an overview of each topic area and suggestions for continued or new initiatives.

Since the GDAP 2000, the population of Red Deer has increased almost 25,000 to more than 90,000 people, with a corresponding growth in the Central Alberta regional population. The stress of accelerated growth has impacted the social structure of Red Deer, as it has many Alberta communities.

Between 2000 and 2008, Alberta experienced a very strong economy, while at the time of writing this report, the Canadian economy has slipped into a recession. This economic roller coaster is perhaps a sign of other substantial uncertainties facing us. Climate change and peak oil challenge our base assumptions of how we will sustain our economy, environment, communities and culture into the future. Throughout the public presentations and input this report received, sustainability emerged as a new concern – and in fact was the challenge most frequently mentioned by citizens. Sustainability had not been a high priority with the public at the time of the GDAP 2000.

With its large areas available for redevelopment, Red Deer's Greater Downtown has an opportunity to be a model of sustainable development. The established public infrastructure and prime land within walking distance of parks, services, recreation, entertainment, culture and work provide a great starting point for 'green' development practices.

This GDAP 2008 Update has therefore integrated recommendations related to sustainable development practices (see section B: Priorities).



C. Commentary

I. Arts and Culture

Vision: Greater Downtown is the heart of Red Deer's cultural life. Its neighbourhoods, especially Historic Downtown and Riverlands, are alive with artistic and cultural activities. Greater Downtown is a place where people connect with one another, with our built spaces and with our 'downtown parks' environment. Life in the Greater Downtown supports an authentic Red Deer personality, celebrates our diversity and encourages leadership that reflects our rural roots.

Great cultural facilities, informal gathering spaces and programs / events are interwoven in the character of Greater Downtown.

The GDAP 2008 Update coincided with the completion of the Red Deer Community Culture Vision and Outline for Action: Reframing Culture for Our Time and Place, 2008. The Community Culture Vision creates a framework for cultural and community development in Red Deer, with significant attention to opportunities in the Greater Downtown.

As such, the Community Culture Vision forms the definitive plan for culture development in the city. During the GDAP 2008 Update it was clear that many of the principles that citizens put forward in the Community Culture Vision were also compatible with, and relevant to, the downtown plan. The four Values emphasized in the Community Culture Vision are Rural Roots Leadership, Authenticity, Connections and Diversity. All of these are applicable to Greater Downtown development.

During the GDAP 2008 Update consultation process, the consultants also heard general community support for the Community Culture Vision elements that relate specifically to the downtown. These include the emphasis on a pedestrian-friendly downtown, completion of Alexander Way (Recommendation 33), planning for major cultural facilities downtown and a public market in Riverlands (Recommendation 12).

The Community Culture Vision addresses the street designs that create comfortable

community activity zones, the cultural facilities that are required for community activities, and the less structured natural and ‘agora spaces’ or gathering places that give us identity and refuge.

In addition, the Community Culture Vision supports features intended to make downtown a vibrant and comfortable place for pedestrians, including mid-block crossings and scatter crossings.

Many of the Community Culture Vision recommendations are reflected in the pertinent sections of the GDAP 2008 Update, which strongly supports the implementation of the Community Culture Vision.

During the GDAP 2008 Update consultation process, three specific cultural initiatives were proposed and broadly supported by the community: the creation of spaces for artists in Riverlands, the development of a larger concert or performing arts hall, and the development of a museum / gallery with public exhibition spaces.

The Riverlands artists’ shops and studios are recommended (see Recommendation 12) as a component of a Public Market in The City Transit garage or Civic Garage building. There may be an opportunity for creative development of some live / work spaces, where artists could have interconnected living, working and retail spaces. Red Deer College is interested in active collaboration in the development of Riverlands. Such collaboration, along with private sector involvement, could lead to studios, living spaces and teaching spaces that are highly attractive to RDC students and instructors.

A public survey during and following the Open House indicated that the preferred location for a new concert / performing arts hall is in Riverlands. An alternate location would be the current parking lot on the north-west corner of 49 Ave. and 49 St., possibly in conjunction with the now-vacant Uptown Theatre property.

Though there was some support for locating a museum / art exhibit space in Riverlands, the preferred location appears to be in Historic Downtown, on the soon to be vacated RCMP parking lot and The City property immediately east of it. In that location on Alexander Way, the facility could share programming with the Red Deer Public Library, take advantage of the parkade that is planned over the Transit terminal, and be centrally located with easy access for all citizens and visitors. Locating the museum on Alexander Way would add a significant community asset and attraction to Greater Downtown's featured pedestrian route.

In addition to support for the above noted facilities, there was widespread interest in and support for cultural programming in Historic Downtown and Riverlands, including festivals, buskers and community celebrations. It was noted that the proposed pedestrian bridge between Riverlands and Bower Ponds (Recommendations 17 and 18) will create the potential for larger and more diverse community / cultural events spanning both sides of the river.

Finally, it has been noted that The City of Red Deer cultural programming space needs will continue to grow and that programs currently operating out of the Culture Services Centre would be well suited for the adapted market / culture spaces being planned for Riverlands or integrated into the future museum / exhibition facility.



C. Commentary

2. Recreation, Parks and Open Space

Vision: Ringed by the park trails, natural areas and waterways that define Red Deer's character, our downtown comprises a thoughtfully designed blend of linked public areas (both hard-edged and landscaped), offering places for respite, play and recreation to its citizens. Greater Downtown is an attractive destination for recreation and outdoor activities for all citizens, and also provides multiple recreation facilities and programs for the children, teenagers, adults and senior citizens who live downtown.

The Waskasoo Trail System, envisioned and constructed in the 1980s, defined Red Deer as a city that loves its urban parks. Today, the importance of parks and environmental stewardship is enshrined in every strategic and development plan The City creates, with the 2008 Municipal Development Plan being the most recent.

Open spaces are a major, even defining, asset to Greater Downtown. The Greater Downtown district is ringed by green spaces and water – the river to the north-west, valley escarpment to the south, and Waskasoo Creek to the east. As noted earlier, the Community Culture Vision emphasizes the importance of linked urban and natural public connecting spaces in order to foster cultural celebration, events and interaction – from formal to casual.

Recreation assets in the Greater Downtown include playgrounds, skateboard park, curling club, two arenas, picnic areas, tennis courts, swimming pools, fitness facilities, speed skating oval, lawn bowling greens, two seniors' centres, and others.

In the GDAP 2000, the recreation assets and potential to integrate Rotary Recreation Park into the pedestrian fabric of downtown was dealt with at some length. In 2004, The City commissioned the Red Deer Rotary Recreation Park Facilities Study, which evaluated the park and its buildings and recommended a number of upgrades, most of which had been included in the GDAP. While some major facility upgrades have been carried out, the park still has much more to offer to make it a jewel in the heart of downtown and a “cultural corridor” (Community Culture Vision).

The 2006 C1 Public Realm Initiatives recommendations identifies a need for a hard-surfaced civic plaza serving as an outdoor extension to City Hall.

The GDAP 2008 Update contains several references to upgraded or new public spaces.

Rotary Recreation Park

The first concepts for Rotary Recreation Park remain sound, have been confirmed by the 2004 study and are reiterated in this update. Related to the park is a recommendation to develop the dead-end parking lot north of the park such that it could be closed periodically and support outdoor events, especially those related to the adjacent new museum site. A northern feature gateway entrance into the park would also give the area a higher profile.

In response to the recent Community Facility Needs Assessment, the department of Recreation, Parks and Culture is also proposing a unified concept plan for Rotary Recreation Park and the arena / curling rink / skateboard park area to the south, which would help provide direction for future uses of the area. The outdoor spaces in this area are a considerable asset to our growing city and the people who live and work downtown.

The GDAP 2008 Update encourages a strong focus on enhancements to the outdoor spaces to complement recent and future enhancements to recreation, social and cultural buildings in the area.

South Downtown Trail

This report again notes the potential to develop a public trail along the south boundary of the Greater Downtown along the Waskasoo Creek waterway (Recommendation 34).

One larger site of particular interest along the creek lies south of 45 St. and east of 52 Ave. This large public property has potential to become a significant park area, connecting the Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre / medical services and residential area to the south with the downtown through Centennial Plaza.

Historic Downtown

This report recommends the development of a civic plaza west of City Hall (Recommendation 7) leaving the much-loved heritage flower gardens intact. This could be integrated with the current design work being undertaken for Civic Centre (City Hall) expansion and renovations.

Railyards

In the Railyards, this report recommends creating two new pedestrian linkages east across The City properties from the river trail (Recommendation 27). Also, and carried forward from the GDAP 2000, this update recommends development of a major plaza park at the south end of the pedestrian train bridge, connecting to walkways into the area along a reconfigured 53 Ave. (Recommendation 24). That park could include train heritage interpretive elements such as a steam locomotive.

Riverlands

As noted in section B: Priorities, Riverlands is envisioned as a district for a more urbanized interface with the river. While in other areas of Waskasoo Park the emphasis is on the valley's natural assets and recreational opportunities, Riverlands will be the place where downtown meets the park. Its plazas, streetscapes and river edge features will take a more urban form, while respecting the integrity of the waterway and the needs of wildlife.

Recommendations in this report for open spaces in Riverlands reinforce those made in the GDAP 2000 as well as the 2004 Area Redevelopment Plan, and include:

- a portion of hard-edged riverfront plaza development with access down to the river's edge at points where bank slope and stability permit
- a pedestrian bridge to Bower Ponds
- a major all-season public market.

New to this update is the recommendation (Recommendation 19) for a series of water / ice activity or art events throughout the downtown, and featured in Riverlands.

As noted earlier, there has been strong support for developing a range of water / ice features throughout the downtown, which could be commissioned as major works of art. These would build on and complement Red Deer's already successful water events, ranging from natural features like the river itself and Bower Ponds to the historic railway fountain and the well-used wading pool / fountain on Alexander Way. There are opportunities to create water interpretive / learning elements (regarding water usage and conservation) in conjunction with these features.



C. Commentary

3. Commercial Opportunities and Marketing

Vision: Downtown is the centre of the city's business community. It supports an ever-evolving core of independent retail stores, residences, government agencies and services, professional firms, and cultural events. Innovative and exciting redevelopment on a number of high-profile sites has created public and business interest in Greater Downtown as a place of energy and opportunity.

In 2008, The City's Municipal Development Plan identified downtown as the first in the city's hierarchy of commercial places. It recommends the continued direction of resources to "reinforce downtown as the business, civic, administrative, social services and cultural centre of the city." This GDAP 2008 Update supports that recommendation. While this plan contains no specific business / commercial development recommendations, the broad intent of all recommendations is to continue creating a vibrant area where businesses and public sector organizations can thrive.

Downtowns are particularly important to local businesses – stores, restaurants and services founded and owned by local residents. There is a strong symbiotic relationship between healthy downtowns and healthy cities – the downtown provides fertile ground for local enterprises, which return their human and financial capital to the community.

In 2005, The City of Red Deer and the Downtown Business Association published the Greater Downtown Market Opportunities Study. This report identified and discussed a wide range of development opportunities in Historic Downtown and in Riverlands. It also identified a perceived lack of safety and parking as the leading challenges to marketing opportunities in the downtown.

The Downtown Business Association (DBA) continues to play an important role in promoting and guiding the positions of business in the downtown. DBA representatives participated in this plan's Steering Committee. At present, the geographical area of the DBA does not include Riverlands or Railyards. As Riverlands and Railyards develop, there is an

opportunity for the DBA and The City of Red Deer to collaborate on building a broader based business group that integrates those in the current Business Redevelopment Zone with others beyond it, to advance development of the entire Greater Downtown.

The GDAP 2008 Update also supports Community Economic Development and Social Enterprise as viable approaches to building fair and strong local economies that engage marginalized populations in legitimate business activities.

Historic Downtown

Additional office space has been developed and is under development downtown, reinforcing the city's centre as the prime location for government, professional services and other office-based occupations. Retail and service businesses are also a significant presence in the Historic Downtown.

Since 2000, downtown has lost a movie theatre (with a new one opened in Red Deer County), but live theatre facilities like the Scott Block and Matchbox Theatre have launched, as have several new art galleries. Several new restaurants are thriving and help ensure an evening presence of people in the downtown.

Of interest is The City's purchase in late 2008 of the Arlington Hotel site for future development. The authors of this update applaud the initiative of The City to take action when prime sites become available in the downtown, to give them more control over the future of downtown

In its marketing initiatives, it is important for The City to focus on nurturing some small-scale early successes as well as negotiating with developers on future large property projects.

Riverlands

The Riverlands section of this GDAP 2008 Update includes a feature hotel / convention centre site, adjacent to Taylor Bridge on the river, in response to the Market Opportunities

Study. Also noted earlier in the GDAP 2008 Update is support for the development of a major signature public building in Riverlands. This was first put forward in June 2008 as The Ark – a winter garden, interpretive centre, commercial and tourism draw, a community centre, a sustainable technology showcase. For this GDAP 2008 Update, The Ark remains a symbol, a place-marker for a Riverlands project not yet fully defined.

The idea of converting the existing bus barns and adjacent open land to a new location for the summer Farmers' Market, and extending it with an indoor and longer season market, received a high level of support from the public. This project has the opportunity to literally set the tone for the future of Riverlands, while being entirely 'doable' in the short term and potentially growing into studios, artist lofts and sales galleries.

Related to the public market is the potential for the immediate adaptive reuse of the existing Transit garage, Civic Garage and Purchasing building. One possibility is to ask the development community for proposals for those properties – the Purchasing building, for example, with its location at the river's edge and adjacent to the future pedestrian bridge to Bower Ponds, would be a very attractive site for a destination restaurant.

While these ideas will need to be fleshed out during further planning of the Riverlands, the current Area Redevelopment Plan for Riverlands, completed in 2004, supports major high-density mixed-use development throughout the area. Whatever the final configuration of Riverlands, it will offer significant opportunities over the next few years to both large and small scale creative developers.

Railyards

Another defined area of downtown that has captured attention in 2008 is Railyards (referred to previously as Cannery Row). Railyards has the potential to become a medium- to high-density complete community over the years, linked to the trail system, Riverlands and the Historic Downtown core.

Several prime properties are or will be available in this area (see Figure 12). The City of Red Deer owns one of those sites and a portion of another and can take a leadership role, perhaps with private sector partners, in creating signature developments.

In order to support appropriate urban form development in the area, Railyards needs to be rezoned from its current zoning and a new Area Redevelopment Plan prepared in the short term. The area has great development and marketing potential.

Section B: Priorities – Railyards provides a full discussion, Recommendations and maps related to the potential development of this area.



C. Commentary

4. Social Environment

Vision: A healthy downtown provides a safe and inviting community for a diverse range of Red Deer citizens. Downtown is a great place for citizens of all ages and backgrounds to interact.

Public feedback during the GDAP 2008 Update indicates that Greater Downtown is a healthy social environment, with some areas of concern requiring ongoing attention.

Greater Downtown is the city's most diverse area and life downtown is supported by an array of private and public services, including many human services. The Red Deer & District Community Foundation now conducts the Vital Signs annual overview of community indicators, providing an effective lens through which to view downtown social issues.

The GDAP 2000 encouraged the community to embrace diversity downtown and that encouragement is equally important in 2008. Immigration has brought an increasing diversity of people to Red Deer. Downtown areas are particularly attractive to new immigrants due to their walkability, support services and the availability of work, education, recreation and housing within close proximity.

The broad planning goals of this GDAP 2008 Update are intended to create the sort of supportive urban environment where individuals and families from diverse backgrounds, in varied circumstances, can lead fulfilling lives.

Many initiatives that were encouraged in the GDAP 2000 plan are now operating and contributing to the area's health. For example, recent initiatives to create a Child and Youth Friendly program are to be applauded – a district that is child and youth friendly is typically inviting and attractive to all citizens. The absolute numbers of children and youth in the city are increasing, so initiatives to meet their needs are important.

Schools are an important part of any community. A number of schools exist in Greater Downtown and the community should encourage community school boards and other

educational agencies to continue providing a range of positive schooling options downtown.

A policy in the GDAP 2000 that was perhaps ahead of its time was its call for community garden plots downtown. In 2008, this concept is of increasing interest to citizens as more attention is paid to the role of food in local sustainability. The Sustainable Red Deer group is actively promoting community gardens and opportunities for gardens in Greater Downtown and such initiatives should be actively encouraged.

The downtowns of all North American cities will continue to be home to many of our vulnerable citizens and this is no different in Red Deer. Good work is being done by dozens of agencies and programs to develop services and resources for citizens with social, personal, financial or health challenges. In 2008, downtown is appropriately the city's centre for a wide range of human services.

Various recent reports, City initiatives and action plans are identified in Appendix 1. These documents reference downtown policing, social and housing issues and address in more detail the social concerns raised during the GDAP 2008 Update process.

Especially of interest is a current initiative by The City of Red Deer's Social Planning department to measure the social impact of our built environment (design decisions) in order to create healthy and sustainable communities. The Social and Health Impact Assessment approach brings a valuable social perspective to our city's urban planning. The GDAP 2008 Update also supports Social Planning's continued role in reviewing development proposals that go to the Municipal Planning Commission.

The concept of 'social inclusion' also provides a perspective for developing an urban environment that supports the active involvement of all individuals in creating an equitable, supportive community.

Safety and Security

While some citizens express valid concerns about specific incidents of crime and violence in the downtown, like most other urban centres, Red Deer finds its overall crime rate decreasing.

While illegitimate and illegal activities can be a concern in downtown areas, many communities have found the greatest success in attracting legitimate activity that displaces the illegal activities, or puts them in a different context. In urban areas with high density, citizens feel supported by the presence of fellow citizens. On a street with fewer citizens, those citizens are more likely to feel vulnerable.

Nothing protects an area from negative influences and trends like a strong sense of community and of 'ownership' by those who live, work and play in the area. As noted in the GDAP 2000, a Greater Downtown community association or discussion group would help build and focus that community pride. Such a group could bring forward suggestions for improving the Greater Downtown and provide input on project planning. Ideally, community organizations are self-forming, but The City of Red Deer and Downtown Business Association may be able to act as catalysts to bring people together for this purpose.

Red Deer is home to Canada's largest city RCMP detachment, which provides a strong resource to the community. A new RCMP headquarters is under construction on 45 St. but more importantly, the RCMP City detachment is involved in a number of community policing initiatives that have direct benefits downtown, including the Coordinated Community Outreach Team, bicycle patrols, Street Ties, Crime Stoppers, a restorative justice program, Cops for Kids and others. Beginning in 2007, The City, RCMP and DBA established a working team to identify and implement strategies that address downtown safety, such as the Graffiti Program and Hotline.

In 2008, The City launched a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

incentive funding pilot project, providing matching funds for property owners' CPTED enhancements.

In recent years, The City has worked with bar owners to reduce public nuisance and illegal activities associated with late night drinking establishments, with positive results.

While negative public perceptions of downtown safety issues may not be supported by statistics, perceptions are important to the success of Greater Downtown. The GDAP 2008 Update encourages The City and DBA to continue actively seeking opportunities to publicize positive community activities downtown. Incidents of violence and crime will always draw media attention and the only effective way to overcome this negative attention is to build awareness of the many positive events.

There is no better 'solution' to negative perceptions of downtown safety than to engage as many citizens as possible – from infants to seniors – in active, fun, safe activities downtown. Initiatives that attract people to attractive public spaces downtown are the key.



C. Commentary

5. Living Downtown – Residential Options

Vision: Greater Downtown is a good place to live and work, and features a wide variety of housing options and forms. Those residential options are supported by a mix of services and supports for a diverse urban community. It is safe and convenient, and is accessible to people of all economic means.

In recent years, large increases in housing costs and rapid population growth have stressed the housing options of citizens. Housing vacancy in downtown Red Deer is very low. The area has great sites for more housing, supported by important amenities such as food stores (three major supermarkets), shops, parks and trails, recreation, work, restaurants and culture. What Greater Downtown needs is more housing.

As was the case in 2000, the GDAP 2008 Update advocates support for diverse, attainable housing options. People of all ages, backgrounds, income levels and personal situations need homes. The 'Housing First' philosophy that is at the core of much of our community's social planning notes that the stability of individuals and families starts with appropriate housing.

Several documents since 2000 have impacted the status of downtown residential areas. In 2004, Parkvale Design Guidelines were approved and added to The City's Land Use Bylaw. These ensured Parkvale would be protected as a single family neighbourhood, with architectural guidelines to protect its unique heritage character. Recommendations from the GDAP 2000 to allow a special retail zone along the north edge of Parkvale were also approved, and have proven successful.

The 2004 Riverlands Area Redevelopment Plan lays the framework for a sustainable, mixed-use, medium- to high-density complete community with riverfront housing as well as civic and cultural facilities. The 2005 Greater Downtown Market Opportunities Study confirmed the market for mid- to high-end condominiums in Riverlands. Also, the report identified the need for a greater range of housing types, and encouraged a more adventurous path for developers. As noted elsewhere, there is significant interest in developing housing types that are attractive to RDC students and artists in the Riverlands area.

The Railyards district is envisioned in this GDAP 2008 Update as a high-density residential area – providing homes for everyone from downtown professionals to the many service workers (sales people, clerks, hairdressers, servers, trades people etc.) who work downtown or find a central location convenient. New design guidelines may be required to encourage the ‘urban form’ of development in this area – development that emphasizes residential buildings right up to property lines and streets with inviting urban amenities.

The City of Red Deer has a history of taking a proactive approach to housing. The 2006 report *Ending Homelessness in The City of Red Deer* and the 2008 report *Everyone’s Home: Red Deer’s Vision & Framework on Ending Homelessness by 2018* address opportunities to provide housing for those struggling for accommodation, many of which have implications for the downtown.

In 2000, The City first introduced a comprehensive housing strategy called *The Journey Home, A Community Action Plan*, which led to the distribution of federal and provincial money to assist innovative housing initiatives, many in the downtown.

Several of The City’s more recent initiatives and action documents (including the *Community Services Action Plans 2008-2010* and housing documents noted earlier), provide direction regarding housing and social policy throughout the city but especially in our downtown.

We know that increased residential in a downtown creates a safer, healthier and more vibrant downtown. It is important that The City continually look for strategies (including financial incentives) to encourage more housing. Ideally, almost every property development in the downtown would include provision for some residential component.

Because there are, or will be, several prime City-owned properties available in the Greater Downtown, The City should look for opportunities to model mixed-use developments that integrate housing, including partnerships with private sector developers.

In the Railyards, several sites are available for development and will require an Area Redevelopment Plan to change the current zoning to allow major residential growth.

In the Historic Downtown, there are opportunities for major residential developments on properties such as the parking lot at 49 St. and 49 Ave. (with surface parking being replaced by underground parking) and the now City-owned Arlington Hotel site, as well as opportunities to add housing to commercial developments. As a general goal, almost all developments downtown should include a residential component.



C. Commentary

6. Heritage Preservation

Vision: Downtown Red Deer's built heritage is an irreplaceable asset that connects citizens and visitors to the community's stories and accomplishments. Awareness of common history improves our community's health. Reuse and restoration of existing buildings adds to the community's sustainability.

Since 2000, the landscape of Red Deer's heritage preservation community has changed significantly. The City of Red Deer Municipal Development Plan identifies the importance of protecting our built heritage. Several initiatives since 2000 have strengthened the position of heritage sites in the city. Perhaps most importantly, The City of Red Deer Heritage Management Plan was commissioned and adopted in 2006 as a planning tool by City Council, at the recommendation of the Heritage Preservation Committee. This comprehensive plan provides ongoing guidance to heritage property owners, community volunteers, heritage organizations and The City.

As well, The City has established the Heritage Archives Coordinator position to oversee the implementation of the Heritage Management Plan and serve as first point of contact for all heritage issues. Parkland Community Planning Services also has a planner designated to address heritage issues.

The Heritage Management Plan has triggered several actions, including an amendment of the Land Use Bylaw, bringing the local bylaw in line with current municipal and provincial heritage preservation criteria. An update to the city's Inventory of Historically Significant Sites has also been undertaken and many of its 'statements of significance' relate to the Greater Downtown.

Stemming from this inventory update, the property owners along 56 St. have asked to be identified as a unique historic district. This GDAP 2008 Update supports that initiative, which would be similar to the previous plan's recommendation to prepare design guidelines for Parkvale.

The criteria for accessing provincial funding for historic sites can appear onerous to property owners. However, good matching funding is available for those who choose to pursue it. Municipally, The City should identify tools that could be used to encourage owners in the adaptive reuse of their historic buildings. These could include technical advice, regulatory assistance and tax incentives.

The Main Street Program

Shortly after the GDAP 2000 was submitted, The City in partnership with the Downtown Business Association was successful in becoming a part of The Main Street Program.

Six construction and funding seasons came to an end in 2007 with a number of historic facades and signage in the downtown being upgraded. This was a project that not only improved the look of our downtown streets, but significantly increased heritage awareness in the community.

Some funds remaining at the end of The Main Street Program have been reallocated for a Statement of Significance to be completed for the downtown. Downtown is home to 83 identified heritage sites, or about 80 per cent of the entire city's inventory.

C1 Design Guidelines

The 2004 C1 Design Guidelines (incorporated into the Land Use Bylaw) identify and set development criteria for the Ross-Gaetz Heritage Area; require that the historic grid system be protected; and require that The City's Heritage Planner (through Parkland Community Planning Services) comment on Municipal Planning Commission submissions involving any heritage buildings.

As planners, we have stressed the importance of the street, lane and sidewalk grid structure of the originally surveyed railway town of Red Deer. The grid system has not been used in Red Deer for many years, having been replaced since the mid-sixties with engineering design standards using the collectors / arterial system.

This GDAP 2008 Update recommends major reconfiguration of several downtown streets to include bike trails, sidewalk upgrades and more pedestrian features. From a heritage perspective, it is hoped that these changes will be viewed as successful adaptive reuse projects rather than inappropriate alterations of an historic urban element.

Parkvale Design Guidelines

In 2004, The City approved a set of architectural guidelines for Parkvale, which protects the neighbourhood as a single-family housing area; ensures the integrity of the historic street, boulevard, and lane structure; and requires that new development enhance the significant heritage characteristics of the neighbourhood. These guidelines appear to have been successful and the GDAP 2008 Update suggests that they continue to be applied.

Finally, commentary and recommendations elsewhere in this GDAP 2008 Update support heritage elements of Greater Downtown, including enhancements of the Cenotaph with a plaza to improve its visibility to pedestrians, creation of a plaza for public gatherings on the north-east corner of the historic City Hall Park, and development of a new museum / exhibition facility on Alexander Way.



D. Land Use, Zoning and Design Guidelines

Vision: The downtown is transformed into a highly urbanized, compact and sustainable city centre, with a great diversity of building forms, land uses, facilities, activities and street life.

Red Deer will establish a dependable set of land use controls, urban design guidelines and public realm standards to attract the highest quality of urban development. The new zoning framework and street design guidelines have established a new clarity as to what the public demands of its downtown.

The short-term incentives The City implemented following the adoption of the GDAP 2008 Update were a powerful catalyst in stimulating new development.

The Riverlands and Railyards areas evolve from auto-oriented commercial / industrial areas to urban neighbourhoods of great diversity, strongly linked to the Red Deer River and the balance of the Greater Downtown.

Smart Growth

Red Deer's current Municipal Development Plan (MDP) discusses the need for The City to embrace sustainable development, otherwise known as 'Smart Growth'. The MDP specifically identifies the Greater Downtown as an area that needs to adopt land intensification and redevelopment initiatives in order to foster a "compact, efficient and sustainable urban form".

The following policies from the 2008 MDP provide clear direction for action on intensifying land use in the downtown:

- **Policy 5.10: Redevelopment and Intensification:** "The City shall undertake reviews of potential redevelopment and intensification opportunities in the established areas, including...the Greater Downtown."
- **Policy 5.17: Efficiency of Land Use:** "The City should promote intensification of the urban areas by ensuring its design guidelines and specifications encourage the efficient use of land."
- **Policy 11.4: Infill and Intensification Opportunities:** "The City shall continue to promote opportunities for infill and intensification within the Greater Downtown in order to facilitate a mixed use and compact urban form."

D. Land Use, Zoning and Design Guidelines

The GDAP 2000 contained the following policy direction with regard to the Riverlands, Cannery Row (Railyards) and Commercial Core areas:

- **Riverlands** was to be developed as a mixed-use high-density residential / commercial precinct, by undertaking a new redevelopment scheme, phased implementation, construction of public infrastructure, the relocation of the Public Works Yards and the sale of City-owned land holdings (Policies 2.8 and 9.3).
- **Railyards** was envisioned as an area that could transform to a commercial / residential / light industrial area through adopting a new vision and planning concept for the area, implementing zoning changes, improving the public realm to encourage private development and the sale of large parcels of City-owned land for high-density residential development (Policies 2.7 and 9.4).
- **The Commercial Core** (including the Historic Downtown, North Downtown and South Downtown areas) was envisioned as an area where “Land Use Bylaw changes and other incentives” should be adopted “to make residential development in these areas more attractive to developers” (Policy 9.5).

The GDAP 2000 also recommended the addition of Special Regulations / Design Guidelines to existing zoning and a number of relatively minor land use changes to facilitate specific plan objectives.

GDAP 2008 Update

The C1 and C1A zones have been in place to serve Red Deer’s central area for many years. These commercial zones cover a great deal of the downtown area, and are very flexible in terms of permitted and discretionary land uses. This flexibility could be made more effective by establishing well-defined future land use concepts and urban design guidelines to help guide and concentrate development.

There have been modifications to the C1 and C1A zones over the years, including changes to parking requirements and the recent addition of urban design and heritage preservation guidelines. For the most part, the densities and land uses allowed in these commercial zones have remained relatively unchanged for the last several decades.

D. Land Use, Zoning and Design Guidelines

During this period, several hundreds of acres of land along north and south Gaetz Ave. have been gradually and consistently rezoned to commercial to accommodate the travelling public. Over the last 15 years there has been a spike in suburban commercial rezonings as several new big box stores and power centres have appeared along south Gaetz and in Gasoline Alley, including the recent additions in Red Deer County.

This kind of commercial sprawl is common to most cities, but in every case it becomes more challenging for a city to maintain a strong, thriving downtown. This occurs even where a city's downtown has so many natural advantages, such as the case in Red Deer. Simply put, downtowns are in direct competition with suburban commercial sprawl.

Cities with strong downtowns often are those that have done a good job of limiting suburban commercial expansion while, at the same time, proactively attracting new development to the downtown through a variety of means. Red Deer has been active on many fronts in encouraging and supporting downtown revitalization.

The GDAP 2000 recommended certain zoning changes in the downtown and some were carried out – including design guidelines for the C1 District (2006) and Parkvale (2004), heritage preservation guidelines, as well as the adoption of a Riverlands ARP (2004), which included a detailed development phasing concept and zoning changes.

Recently, in many cities across North America there has been a growing appreciation for our older, inner city, urban neighbourhoods and the lifestyle they afford. They are appreciated as walkable, more sustainable, diverse areas. The Smart Growth sustainable planning movement has taken hold only in the last 10 years and is growing stronger.

Densification is now a well-accepted concept and many cities are actively encouraging higher densities through changes to zoning (with stronger design controls and amenity requirements) and adopting bylaws to support the concept. The policies in Red Deer's current MDP lend strong support to this approach.

Stimulating Development in the Core

The main aim of updating the zoning and urban design guidelines for the central downtown area (comprising Historic Downtown, North Downtown and South Downtown) will be to stimulate high-density development in the downtown core while respecting sustainable development principles and meeting high architectural and urban design standards.

To accomplish this aim the City should:

- Research successful practices in similar cities and adopt a range of incentive mechanisms and programs (housing grants, tax increment financing and time-limited tax holidays).
- Undertake a detailed land use and zoning review of the area covered by C1 zoning, and adopt changes necessary to help stimulate high-density, high-quality development.
- Consider expanding the area covered by the current R3 zone to create cohesive high-density residential blocks in the downtown core.
- Adopt public and private design guidelines for R3 zoning in the downtown that provide for a higher standard of architectural excellence and encourage a more urban scale coupled with an active street environment (allowing increased site coverage and eliminating suburban-quality property line setbacks).
- Address a variety of specific land use and design issues that have emerged through this GDAP 2008 Update, such as the proliferation of surface parking lots and the clustering of undesirable uses in certain areas. Include area property owners and other area stakeholders in the study process and review any other identified land use issues.
- Review the intent of the minimum height of buildings in the C1 district, as described by the C1 Design Guidelines. The intent of the guidelines was to allow minimum 2 storey projects in C1, not simply a minimum height.
- Review the intent of residential front yard set backs in the C1 district, as described by the C1 Design Guidelines. The intent was to respect existing single family residential setbacks on 52, 53 and 54 Sts.

Downtown Zoning

Recommendation 43

Undertake a detailed land use and zoning review of the area covered by C1 zoning, and adopt changes necessary to stimulate high-density, mixed-use, quality development.

Review that the intent of the current C1 Architectural Design Guidelines is clear and supportive of preferred urban form and density.

Recommendation 44

Consider expanding the area covered by the current R3 zone.

For R3 zoning in the downtown, adopt public and private design guidelines that provide for a more urban quality of architectural design.

D. Land Use, Zoning and Design Guidelines

In addition to the initiatives described above for the downtown core, the following actions are required for the Railyards and Riverlands areas:

- To create diverse urban neighbourhoods, the Railyards area should be rezoned from C1A to DC (Direct Control), based on the development concepts adopted through this GDAP 2008 Update.

The intent of the new zoning will be to provide for a distinctive urban neighbourhood with a high-quality pedestrian environment; medium- to high-density residential and mixed-use residential / commercial land uses; and residential development on the upper floors of ground floor commercial along the 53 Ave. pedestrian spine.

- In the Riverlands area, the existing DC(21) zoning and the current development concept contained in the 2004 Riverlands ARP should be reviewed (Recommendation 1).

The ARP should be revised as necessary to accommodate the recent updated development concepts envisioned for Riverlands (see Section B. Priorities / Key Districts; also Appendix 4: Riverfront Renaissance).

Railyards and Riverlands Zoning

Recommendation 45

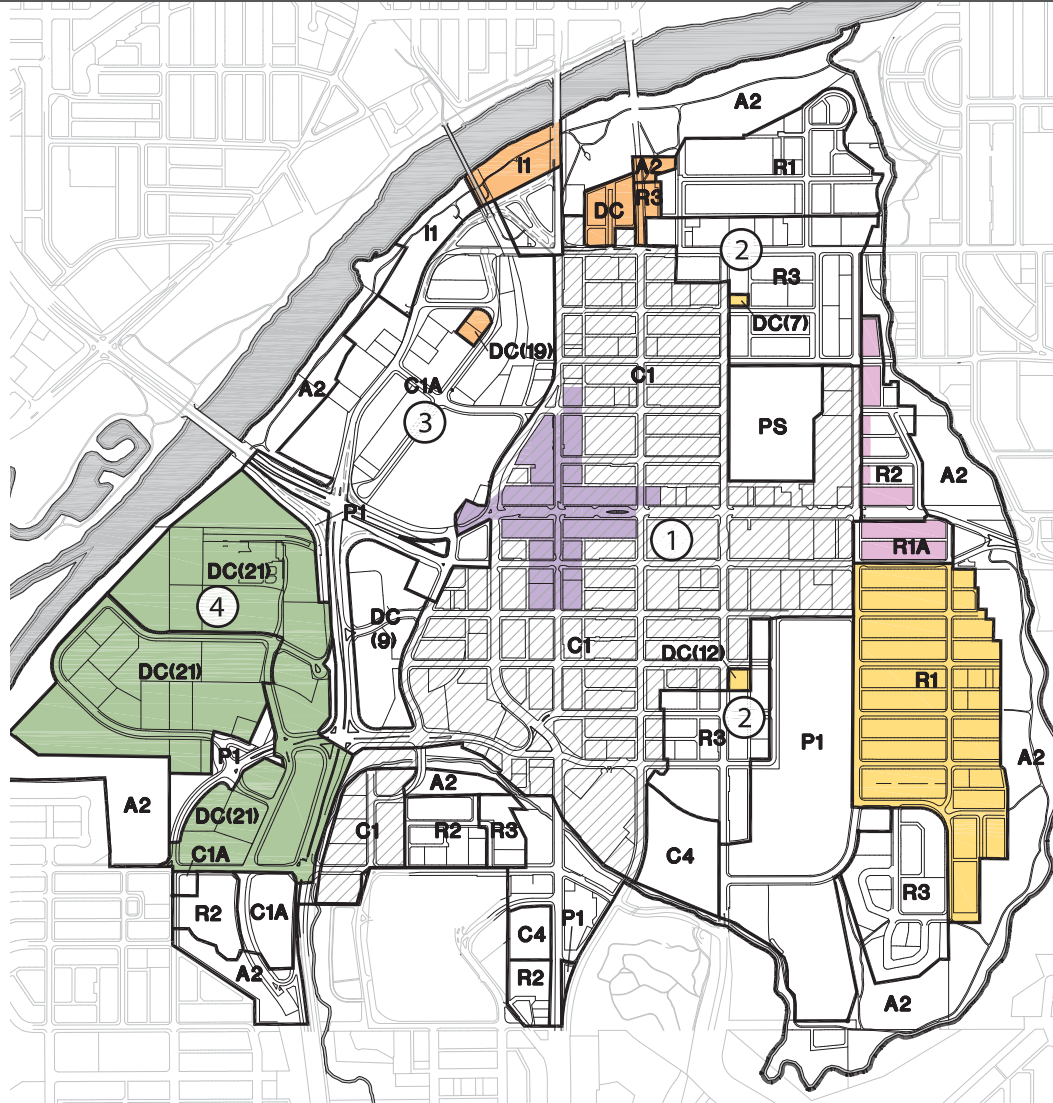
Rezone the Railyards area from its present C1A zoning to allow and encourage medium-density mixed-use development. Establish public and private design guidelines based on the planning concepts described in this document.

Recommendation 46

Review and update existing Riverlands DC (21) zoning.

D. Land Use, Zoning and Design Guidelines

Figure 16. Greater Downtown: Land Use Directions



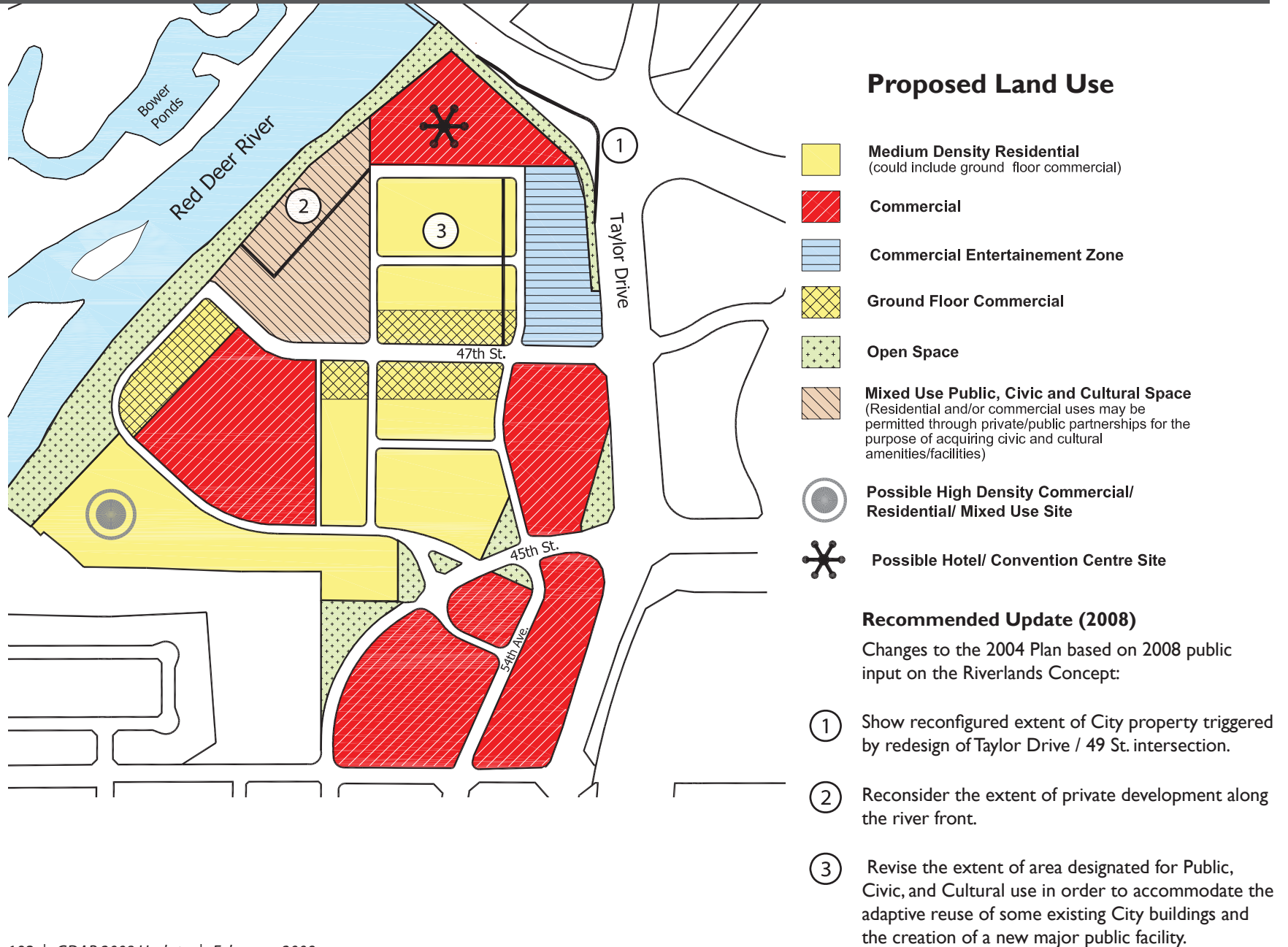
Major Land Use Bylaw Changes Since 2000

- Parkvale Design Guidelines: Adapted in 2004
- Low-impact commercial overlay
- Gaetz-Ross Heritage Area overlay
- APR for Riverlands zoning changed to DC(21) in 2004
- Minor zoning changes since 2000
- Downtown (C1) design guidelines adopted in 2006

2008 Land Use Strategies

- ① Undertake a detailed land use, zoning and guideline review of the C1 area. Adopt land use changes and incentives as necessary to help stimulate high density, high quality urban development.
- ② Consider expanding the area covered by the current R3 Zone to create cohesive, high density residential blocks in the downtown core.
Adopt public and private design guidelines for R3 zoning in the downtown that provide for a higher standard of urban architectural design excellence.
- ③ Rezone the Railyards area from its present C1A zoning to allow and encourage medium-density mixed-use development.
- ④ Review and update the 2004 Riverlands ARP and related DC (21) zoning.

Figure 17. Riverlands: From the 2004 Area Redevelopment Plan





Appendices

Appendix I

List of Reports, Studies and Resources reviewed for the Greater Downtown Action Plan 2008 Update

Reports and Documents that Preceded / Triggered the Greater Downtown Action Plan 2000

1. Vision 2020
2. City of Red Deer Strategic Plan
 - a. (update: The City of Red Deer Strategic Direction 2009-11, adopted December 2008)
3. Municipal Development Plan, The City of Red Deer (updated version adopted May 5, 2008)
4. Red Deer City Council Resolutions
5. 1994 Downtown Concept Plan
6. 1993 Downtown West Area Redevelopment Plan
7. CP Railway Right of Way Redevelopment Plan – 1992 (subsequently repealed)

Greater Downtown and Riverside Meadows Action Plans

8. Historic Downtown: Planning Initiatives, The City of Red Deer, approved August 14, 2000
 - b. Greater Downtown Action Plan and Riverside Area Redevelopment Plan: Implementation Strategy, July 2001
 - c. Summary document: Action Items from GDAP – The City of Red Deer (Excel sheets, 2005)
9. North Red Deer – Riverside Meadows Revitalization and Action Plan, Parkland Community Planning Services, May 2000

Studies / Reports Triggered by the Greater Downtown Action Plan 2000

10. Downtown Building Setback Elimination Study, Stantec Consulting, The City of Red Deer, March 2001
11. The City of Red Deer Downtown Traffic Initiatives Study, Earth Tech (Canada) Inc., The City of Red Deer, Sept. 2001
12. Red Deer Rotary Recreation Park Facilities Study, Simpson Roberts Architecture Interior Design Inc., The City of Red Deer, 2003/2004
13. C1 Design Guidelines, [Commercial (City Centre) District C1], John Hull Architect, 2004, The City of Red Deer, adopted as C1 Land Use Bylaws, 2006
14. Diverse Downtown Programming Opportunities Project, Dawna Barnes and Associates, The City of Red Deer: Recreation, Parks and Culture and Social Planning departments, June 2004
15. Riverlands Community Plan: Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) and Development Design Criteria, John Hull Architect and Urban Plans Inc. et al., The City of Red Deer, July 26, 2004
16. Alexander Way: 48th Street Promenade Preliminary Design, UMA, The City of Red Deer, December 2004
17. Parkvale Design Guidelines, John Hull Architect, The City of Red Deer, 2004
18. Downtown C1 Public Realm Initiatives, John Hull Architect and UMA Engineering, The City of Red Deer, June 2006

Reports and Documents that Impact the Downtown

Statutory Plans

19. The City of Red Deer, Municipal Development Plan, May 2008

Bylaws

20. The City of Red Deer Land Use Bylaw No. 3156/96 which includes:

- Community Standards Bylaw
- Business Revitalization Zone Bylaw
- C1 Design Guidelines

Management Plans

21. The City of Red Deer Heritage Management Plan, Donald Luxton & Associates, The City of Red Deer, Sept. 11, 2006

Action Plans

The City of Red Deer, Community Services Action Plans:

22. Community Services Action Plans 2003 – 2006: With a Vision for the Future: People

23. Community Services Action Plans 2003 – 2006: With a Vision for the Future: Places, Open Spaces and Facilities Action Plan

24. Community Services Action Plans 2008 – 2010: Supporting and strengthening the quality of life and quality of place in Red Deer. Approved by City Council March 25, 2008

Planning Standards and Guidelines

25. Neighbourhood Standards and Guidelines, adopted by City Council Dec. 16, 2002, revised April 1, 2003, updated 2008
26. Industrial Area Planning Guidelines and Standards
27. Inventories of policies, facilities, agreements or standards

Master Plans

28. Bicycle Master Plan Update Final Report, Reid Crowther & Partners Ltd., The City of Red Deer, April 19, 2000
29. Waskasoo Park Interpretive Master Plan Report, The City of Red Deer, undated
30. Waskasoo Park Special Gathering Places Master Plan Report, ISL Community Development Consultants, The City of Red Deer Community Services, Nov. 2005
31. Gaetz Lake Sanctuary Master Plan
32. Transit/Special Transportation Study 25 Year Strategy, IBI Group, The City of Red Deer, June 28, 2004
33. Red Deer Trails Master Plan Report, ISL, The City of Red Deer, Sept. 2005 Appendix 2: Trail Systems Survey Summary and Appendix C: Stakeholder Interview Summary
34. Red Deer Community Culture Vision and Outline for Action: Reframing Culture for Our Time and Place, 2008, Paul Harris, Donna Cardinal, Alan Taylor
35. (Previous Plan) Red Deer Community Culture Master Plan, Randall Conrad & Associates, The City of Red Deer, September 2001

Needs Assessments

36. The City of Red Deer Recreation, Parks and Culture Community Facility Needs Assessment, CDC, June 2008 PowerPoint Presentation thumbnails

37. “Evaluation framework for integrating social and health impact assessment methods for urban land use planning,” Social Planning department, The City of Red Deer

Business Organization Driven Plans

38. Greater Downtown Market Opportunities Study, Bruce Schollie, Schollie Research and Consulting, The City of Red Deer and The Red Deer Downtown Business Association, November 2005

39. Concept for a Major Red Deer Tourism Destination Attraction, Western Management Consultants, Tourism Development Sub-committee, Red Deer Chamber of Commerce, June 2007

40. Canal Review – Riverlands ARP, Steering Committee Briefing, PowerPoint thumbnails, The City of Red Deer, March 2008

Community Driven Plans

41. Resource Team Report for the Red Deer Main Street Project, The Main Street Program, March 2002

42. Red Deer Growing Smarter: Design Elements and Ideas for New Residential Neighbourhoods, Parkland Community Planning Services, Nov. 2002

43. Crime Prevention and Policing in Red Deer, Converge Consulting Group, The City of Red Deer

44. Phase 1: Crime Prevention and Policing in Red Deer

45. Phase II: Crime Prevention and Policing in Red Deer: Community Consultation
Outputs

46. Downtown Policing Forum Follow-up Report, Aug. 2005

47. Ending Homelessness in the City of Red Deer, Jennifer de Peuter and Marianne Sorensen, Tandem Social Research Consulting, Red Deer Housing Committee, March 2006

48. Future Directions, Red Deer at 300,000. Richard Parker, RKP Consulting / The City of Red Deer, December 2006

49. Building a More Welcoming & Inclusive Community: How the City of Red Deer and Red Deer College plan to work towards the inclusivity of international newcomers to the community, Dr. Richard Roth and Red Deer College students, The City of Red Deer and Red Deer College, February 2007

Miscellaneous Documents

50. Heritage Statements of Significance for Municipally Designated Properties, John Hull Architect et al., April 2004

51. City of Red Deer and Red Deer County Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP) Information Sheet.

52. Joint Planning Initiative (JPI): Vision and Policy Workshop, Tuesday, June 17, 2008

53. Everyone's Home: Red Deer's Vision & Framework on Ending Homelessness by 2018, Mayor's Task Force, February, 2008

Greater Downtown Action Plan 2008 Working Documents & Citizen Submissions

54. GDAP 2008 Steering Committee: Meeting Minutes and presentations
55. GDAP 2008 Update Planning Week Workshops & Events, June 2008
56. Bike Access into and Through the Greater Downtown, with maps and coloured photos, Don Wales, June 2008
57. Moving People by Rail Themed Community, alternate proposal of major theme for the Riverlands/Downtown Area, Paul Pettypiece, June 2008
58. The Alberta Central Heritage Model Rail Project, with maps and photos, Paul Pettypiece
59. Alfresco Urban Village, Futuristic Downtown Concepts, by Alfred Jonas, June 2008
60. Red Deer RiverWalk response from Red Deer River Naturalists, March 19, 2008
61. Riverlands Sustainability Concepts, email from Sustainable Red Deer, October 27, 2008



Appendices

Appendix 2

List of Consultations

The following is a summary of consultations (in-person, phone and email) held with stakeholders; the listing does not include meetings with individual citizens.

Downtown Business Association

Riverwalk Canals Committee

The City of Red Deer City Council

The City of Red Deer Development Services division

The City of Red Deer Community Services division

Parkland Community Planning Services

Youth Voice

Heritage Preservation Committee

Primary Care Network

Red Deer College

In addition, the GDAP 2008 Update consultants were in communication with a wide variety of designers, planners and administrators in other communities and with specialized organizations.



Appendices

Appendix 3 - Implementation Quick Start – 2009 Workplan

Recognizing that detailed workplans need to be developed for the many projects and initiatives in the GDAP 2008 Update, the summary on the following page is a recommended series of steps that can be initiated in 2009. Some require special budget allocations, and rough estimates for 2009 costs are given where available. The assumption is that the new Greater Downtown Development Manager would draft a thorough implementation workplan for the years 2010 and beyond.

Implementation Quick Start – 2009 Workplan

Recommendations	Initiative	2009 First Steps	Lead
1	Make changes to legal planning framework	Repeal 2000 Bylaw Initiate ARPs for Riverlands, Railyards (\$300,000)	City Council City Manager
2, 3	Greater Downtown Development Manager (GDDM)	Assign special 2009 budget (\$150,000) Develop position description and recruit	City Council City Manager / H.R.
10	Bury power line	Initiate regulatory approvals and initiate budgeting	Electric Light & Power
3	Awareness-building	Conduct a series of seminars / workshops with staff and stakeholders (\$25,000)	City Manager / Communications
	Riverlands infrastructure & properties	Conduct an inter-department review of key infrastructure needs and identify City properties available for sale	new GDDM position
12	Riverlands Market plan	Using a multidisciplinary approach, initiate development of a business plan for creation of a Riverlands public market / arts venue as adaptive re-use of City garage(s) (\$75,000)	new GDDM position
12	Public Market: Building Upgrades	Prepare architectural design drawings, complete working drawings and construct initial upgrades required for the adaptive transition of the Transit Garage to Public Market (\$200,000). This would include a site study of the full area considered for public reuse plus detailed design of the Market building.	new GDDM position / Steering Committee
6	Cenotaph Plaza and Ross St. improvements	Using a multidisciplinary approach, initiate a design study for Cenotaph Plaza, Ross St. reconfiguration, and enhancements to the Ross / Gaetz intersection (\$150,000)	new GDDM position
33	Alexander Way and Taylor crossing	Initiate an update of the existing Alexander Way detailed design to incorporate changes recommended in the GDAP 2008 Update (\$75,000)	new GDDM position
25, 26	Railyards pilot project	Using a multidisciplinary approach, develop a plan for implementing, in 2010, a pilot project to test complete streets designs on 53 Ave.	new GDDM position

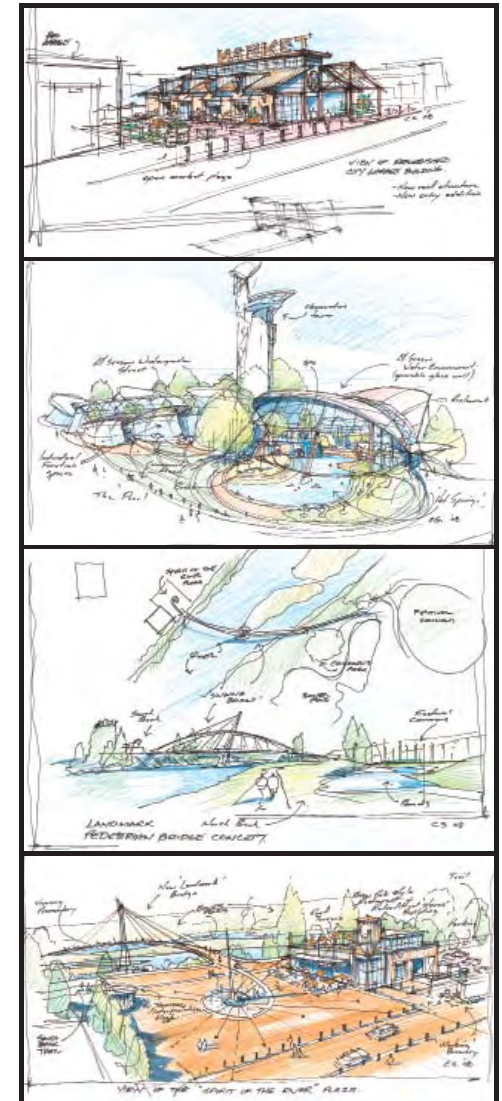


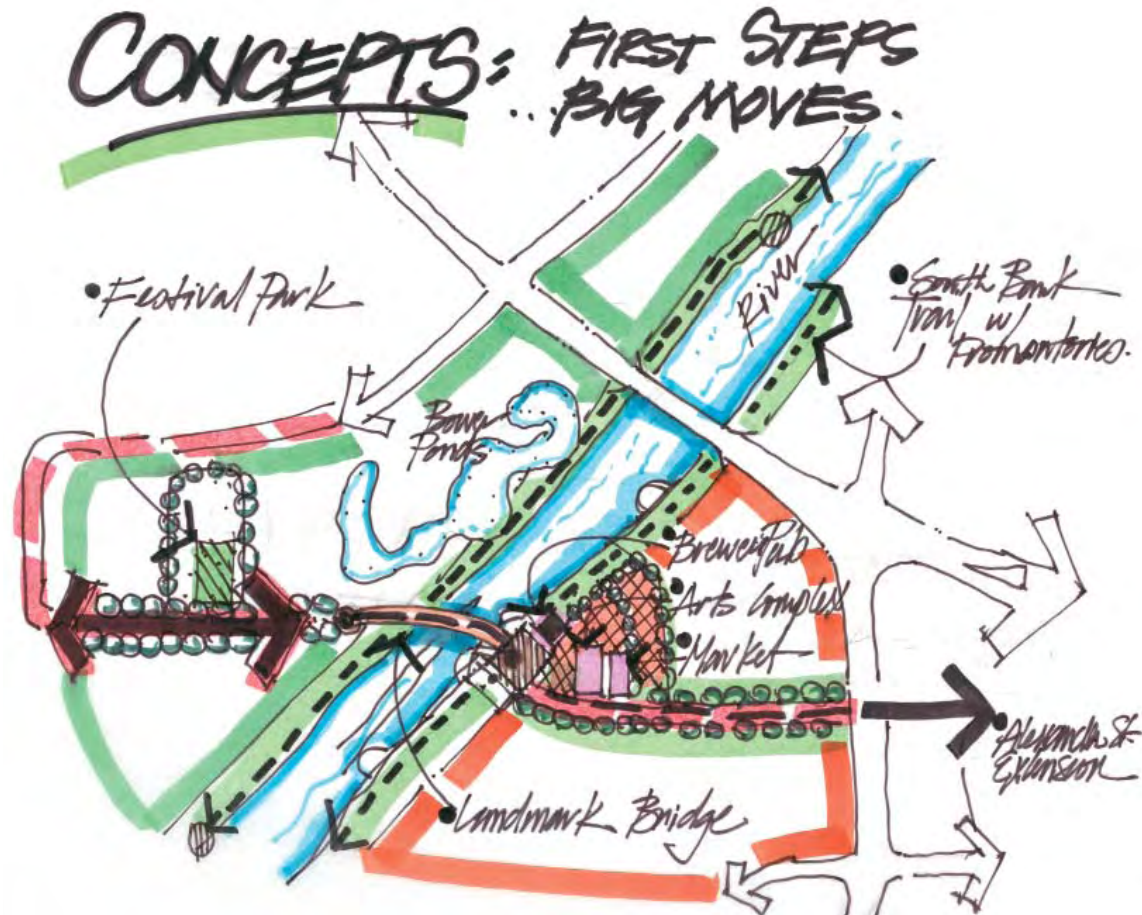
Appendices

Appendix 4 - Riverfront Renaissance: Riverlands and Bower Ponds Design Charrette December 12-13, 2008

In December of 2008, members of the Greater Downtown Action Plan Steering Committee and representatives of City departments joined with the GDAP consultants and the Michael von Hausen design team to explore features of the proposed Riverlands urban plan, as well as connections to Bower Ponds.

The following is an overview of the ideas discussed. These concepts are intended to provide further direction to the Greater Downtown Action Plan, the Riverlands Area Redevelopment Plan, and potential future uses of Bower Ponds.





Overview

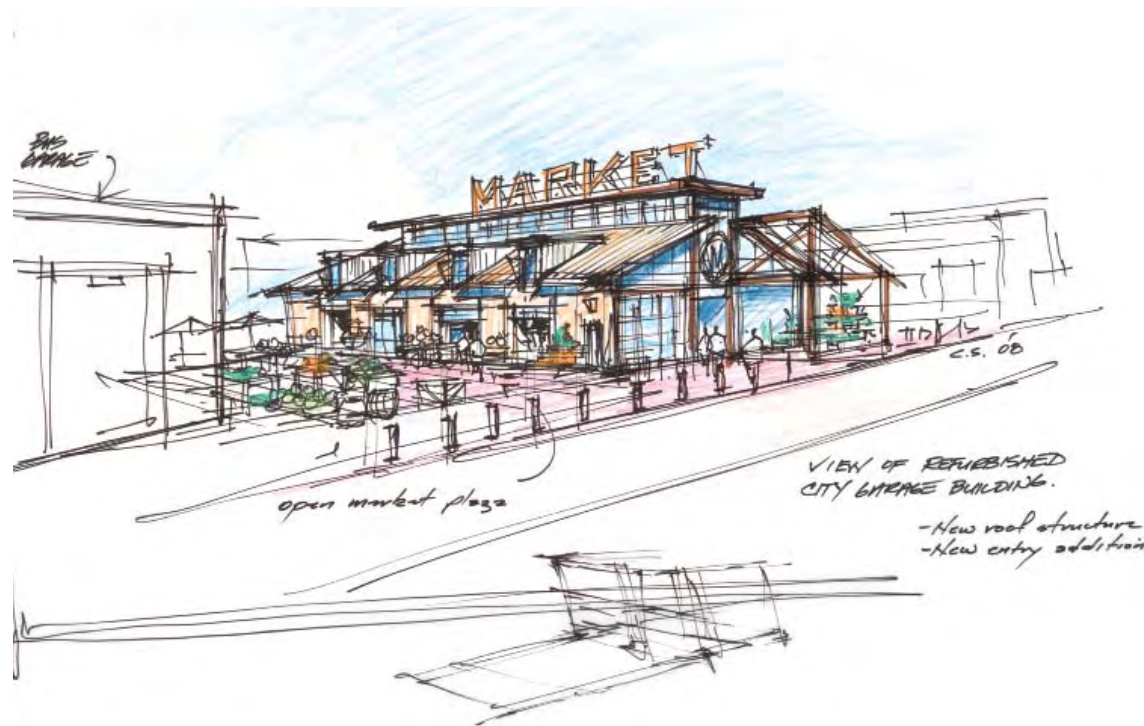
The Red Deer River has the potential to be a unifying element at the centre of our city, rather than a divider. The planned addition of a pedestrian bridge from Riverlands to Bower Ponds creates a new unity – a great park featuring lots of water, green spaces, nature corridors, and more urbanized public gathering spaces.



Riverfront Parks at the City Centre

Once united by an attractive pedestrian bridge, the Bower Ponds and Riverlands areas become a key community asset – a riverfront park and activity area located at the centre of our city. Readily accessible from both the north and south sides of the river, this united public activity zone has greatly increased potential for Red Deer as the city grows. The combined areas become large enough, with diverse enough amenities, to host major festivals and events with multiple indoor and outdoor venues.

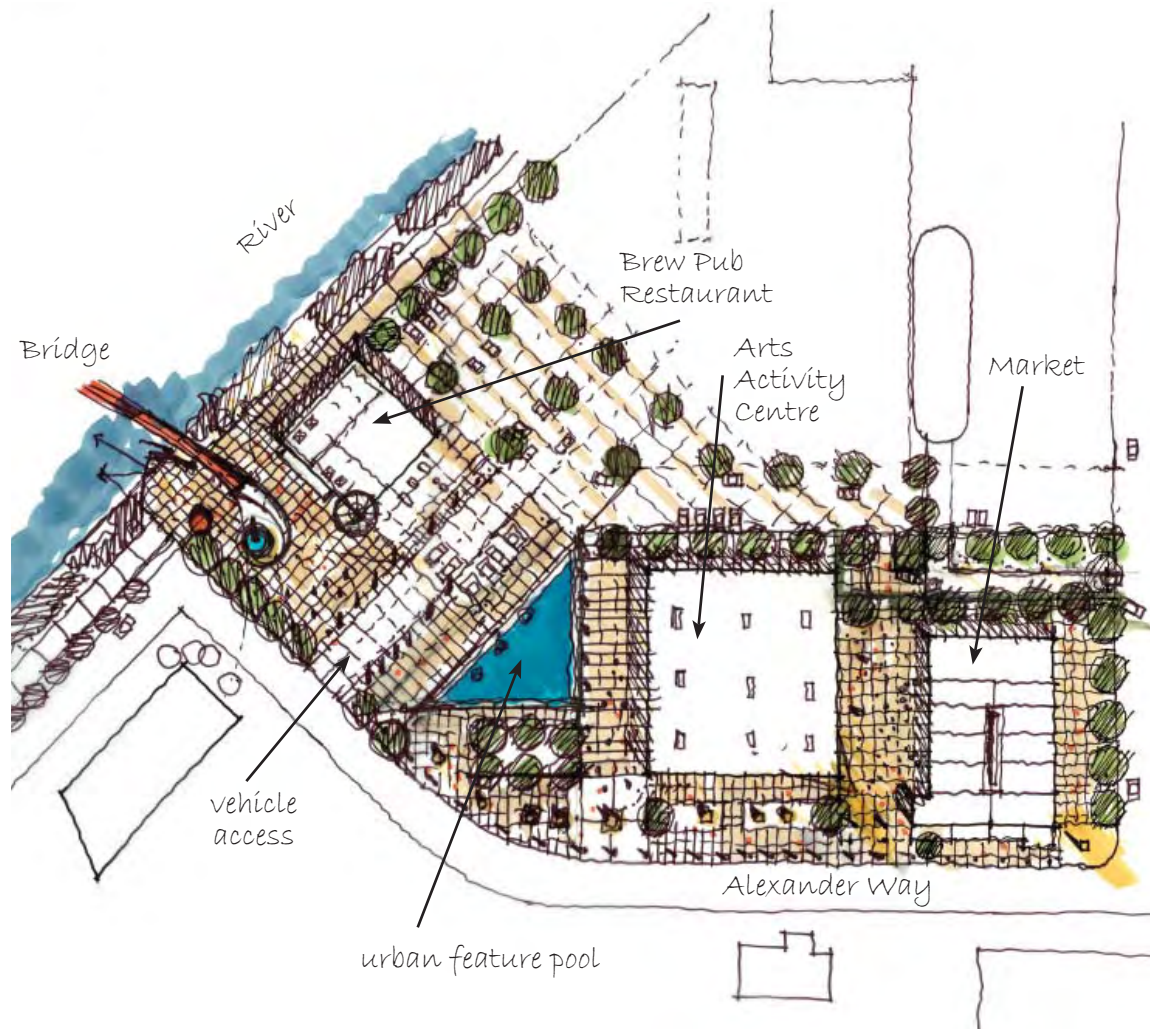
Crowds can easily flow from one side of the river to the other – in some cases, people may park on one side and walk to an event on the other. The potential for commercial amenities like restaurants and a hotel on the Riverlands side supports activities on the Bower Ponds side.



Market and Community

Imagine Red Deer's Public Market relocated to a renovated Civic Garage building in Riverlands. Retaining its weekend outdoor atmosphere from spring through fall, it also adds weekday and winter market capabilities. Growing organically, the Market building is a collection of indoor and outdoor spaces where the community gathers to buy and sell local goods, but also to socialize and relax.

An immediately 'doable' step, the Market facility has the potential to act as a catalyst for the transformation of Riverlands.

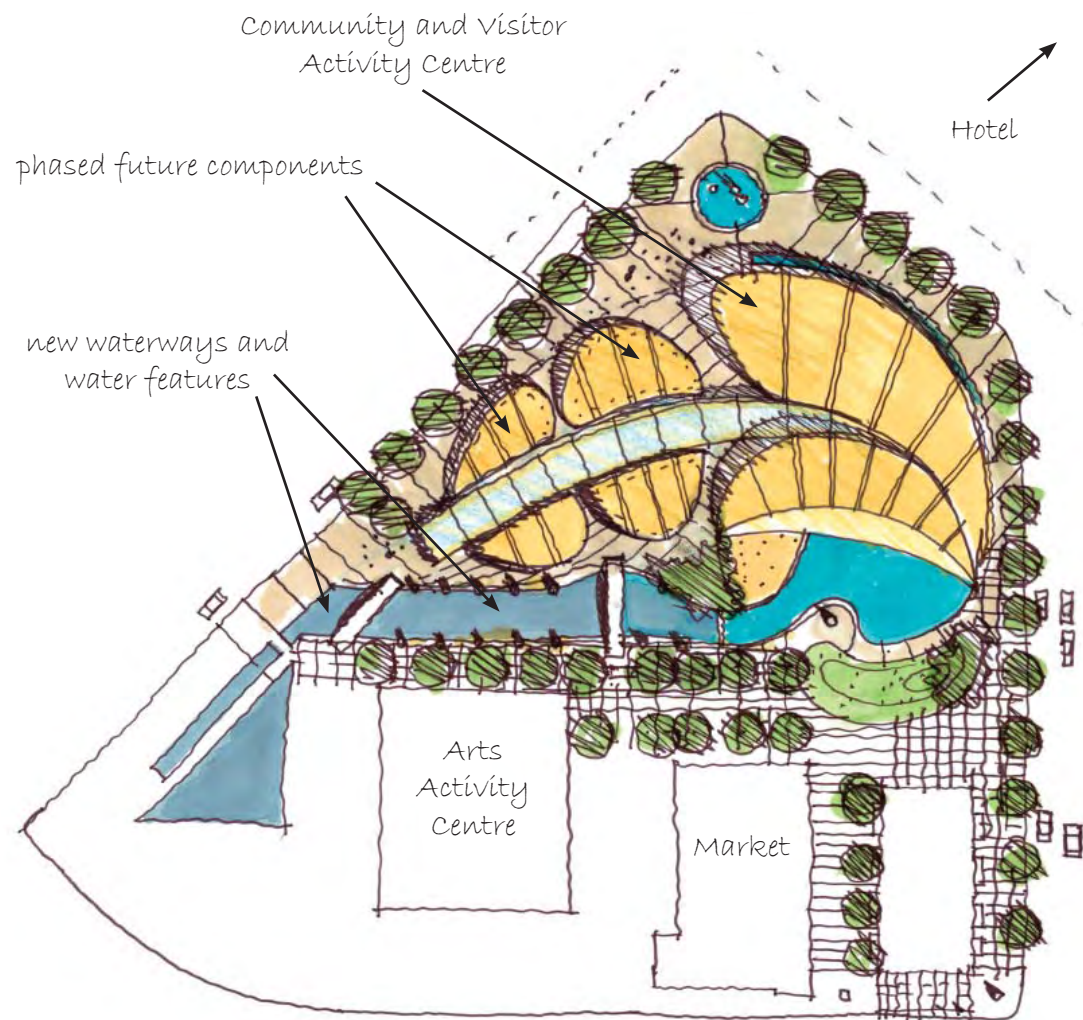


Open Space

The areas around the Market building (current Civic Garage) and arts activity centre (current Transit Garage) have as much potential as the buildings themselves. As flexible spaces for market stalls, outdoor cafes, buskers and displays, the plazas create one continuous flowing people-friendly space. An urban style pool with fire pots attracts evening viewing.

Bollards divide the spaces for vehicles and pedestrians, without disrupting the unity of the site. A brewery pub in the current Stores building is a magnet for people wanting to visit over great food and beverages while watching people in the plaza, the river, or activities on Bower Ponds across the river.

Parking is attractive and convenient in the landscaped open spaces north-east of the brew pub. These spaces will eventually be taken over by the new community and visitor activity centre and parking will be provided in a central parkade as part of the hotel / convention centre complex.



Riverlands Centre

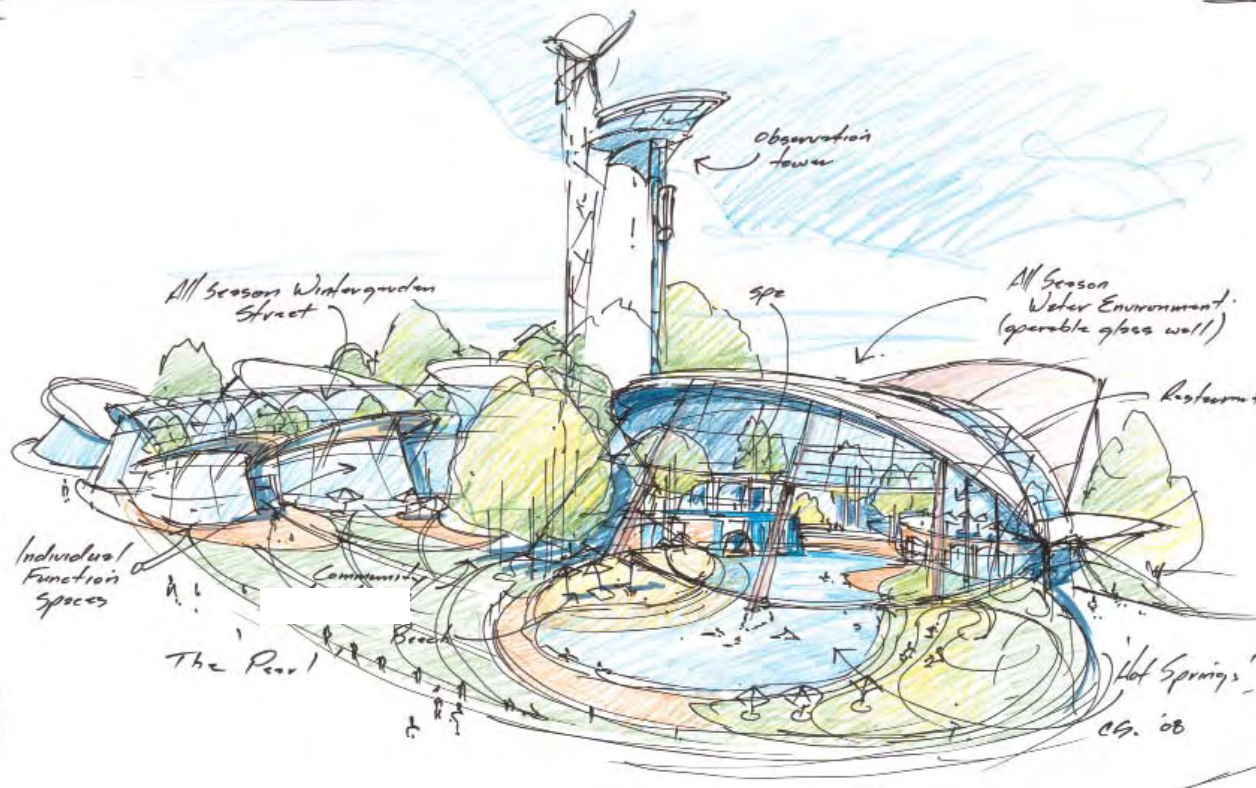
A Community and Visitor Activity Centre

At the centre of Riverlands will be a great active living facility. Designed and potentially built as components, the centre will feature a long central spine or stem – a glassed corridor with indoor plants where people can gather, walk, and enjoy their community in all seasons.

As a first phase, at the east end, Riverlands Centre will feature a combination indoor – outdoor heated pool for play and relaxation. Other community activity centres will be added as pods connected to the central stem.

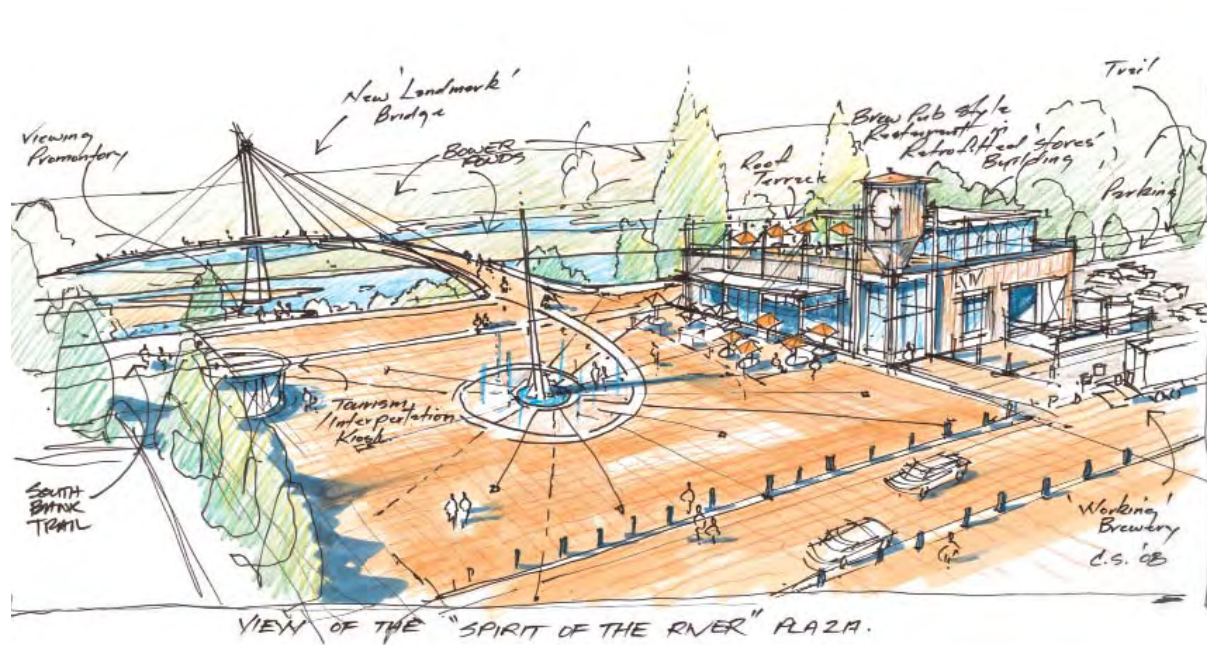
To the north, the new hotel / convention complex will provide a steady stream of visitors to the facility. The pool facility might include a private spa affiliated with the hotel.

Proximity and convenient connections to the Market, the Arts building, and outdoor plazas will also ensure that this centre is at the hub of activity in Riverlands.



Prairie Oasis

Located in the first phase of the community and visitor activity centre, a 'Prairie Oasis' activity pool would feature heated waters that flow from indoors to out, with retractable glass walls on the southern exposure. An indoor sand beach would add to the 'vacation' ambiance in all seasons.



Spirit of the River Plaza

Where downtown Red Deer meets the Red Deer River will be one of the community's great gathering spaces – the Spirit of the River Plaza.

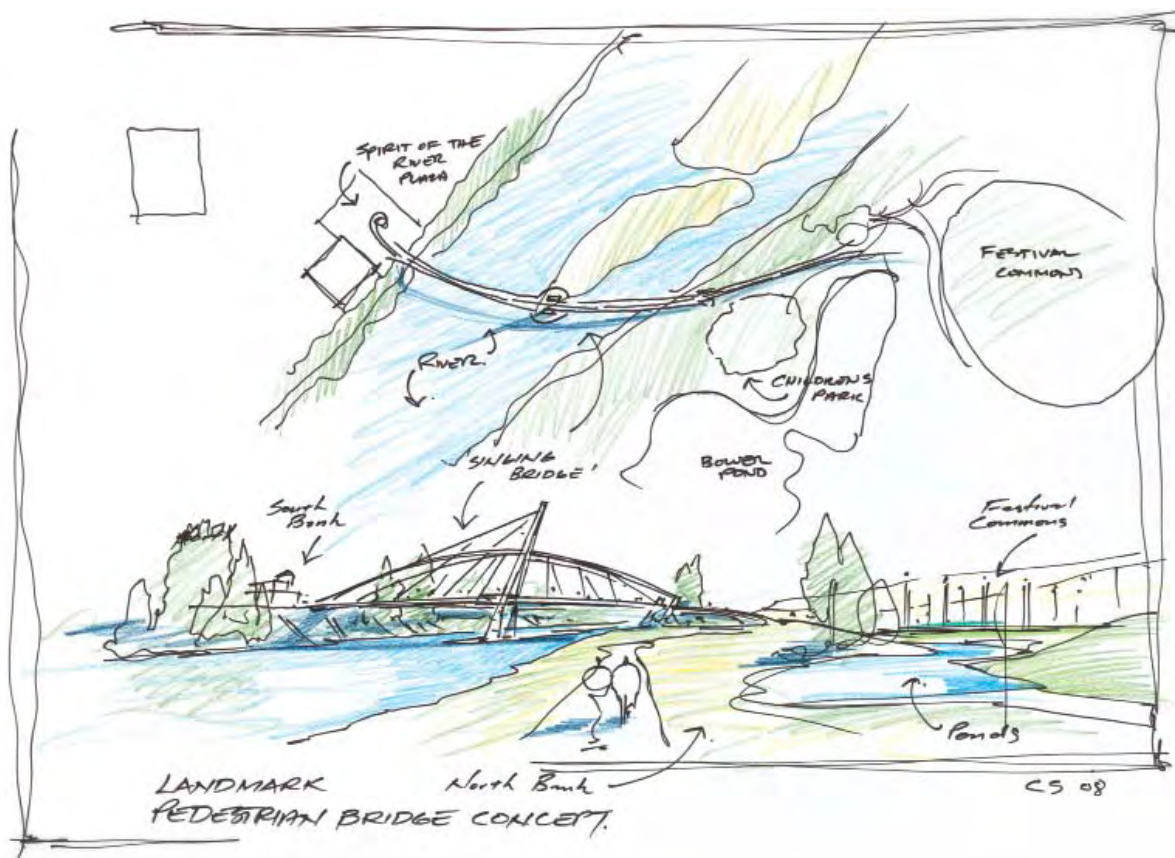
People from downtown, from the Riverlands Centre, from the hotel complex and from the residential areas in Riverlands will congregate in the great plaza where Alexander Way meets the new bridge to Bower Ponds. This festive square will feature a river history interpretive kiosk as well as a central sculptural element evoking the river and the iconic pedestrian 'singing bridge' (see next page).

The brewery pub adjacent to the square, as well as the Market and Arts centre just east, will ensure that it is an active community meeting space.

During special events on both sides of the river, people will use the Spirit of the River Plaza as a meeting place – gathering here while enjoying days and evenings at Bower Ponds or in Riverlands.

Vehicles will move freely near the plaza with bollards identifying vehicle routes but the emphasis will be on comfortable pedestrian movement.

The point where the plaza meets the singing bridge will provide a great view of Bower Ponds. The plaza will connect seamlessly with the very popular riverwalk promenade that extends up and downstream near the bank of the river – a more urban style leg in the Waskasoo Park trail system.



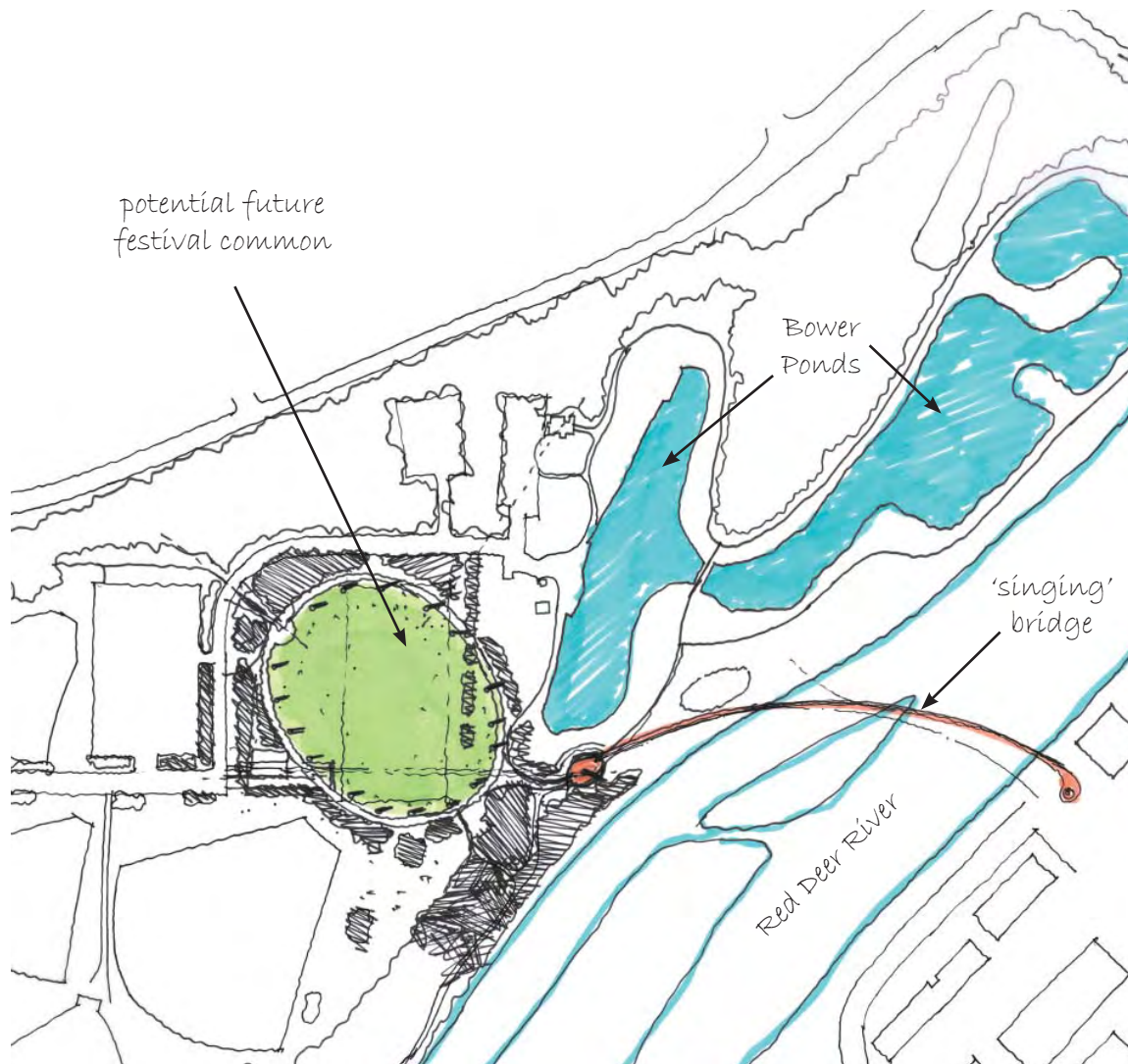
A New Landmark

Red Deer's Waskasoo Park is noted by citizens as our #1 community asset. Now, it is time to more boldly draw attention to this great gem at the centre of the city.

An iconic 'singing' bridge across the river from Riverlands to Bower Ponds will add exciting new energy to the city. It will create great new functional possibilities for events on both sides of the river, while making a strong statement about our city's connections to culture and nature.

The bridge will sing the praises of Waskasoo Park. It will also literally sing – with tuning pickups attached to its high tension cables, the bridge will play nuanced tones that vary with the weather, the amount of traffic on it, the wind and other factors.

It will be an experience – a uniquely Red Deer experience.



New Connections, New Opportunities

With the addition of the iconic 'singing bridge' from Riverlands to Bower Ponds, the entire park district on both sides of the river becomes a much more active and interconnected element of the city. Festive events from weddings to music events to cultural celebrations can now flow from one side of the river to the other. People can participate in activities on one side, then walk across to enjoy a meal or get their car on the other side.

In the future, with new sport fields being constructed elsewhere in the city, the current football field may be transformed into a Festival Common – a multipurpose oval parks area. Every day, it will attract those who simply want to walk, jog or ski in a comfortable and safe environment. On special occasions, it will host larger gatherings for music, dance, and other cultural activities – often in conjunction with events that flow onward to involve the Bower Ponds pavilion, the Cronquist House, and across the river to Spirit of the River Plaza and the Riverlands Centre.



Appendices

Appendix 5- Recommendations

B. Priorities | I. Implementation Strategies

Implementation Strategies

Recommendation 1

Repeal the 2000 Greater Downtown Action Plan Bylaw and adopt the GDAP 2008 Update as a concept plan; initiate new Area Redevelopment Plans for Riverlands and Railyards.

Recommendation 2

Establish a senior management position responsible for overseeing the implementation of Greater Downtown projects, with authority for guiding downtown initiatives. This position will supervise the current Downtown Coordinator position and report to the City Manager.

Recommendation 3

Allocate a budget to the Greater Downtown Development Manager to (a) initiate a rotating series of innovative street design, streetscape, and public space Pilot Projects for a period of five years, (b) create a series of learning opportunities related to urban planning and downtown living, and (c) create a downtown events catalyst fund to stimulate innovative community activities in the Greater Downtown.

Recommendation 4

Use Requests for Proposals and Design Competitions to solicit the best options for the major development elements of the GDAP.

Recommendation 5

Develop a volunteer Downtown Design Review Panel consisting of architects, urban planners and citizen advocates, funded and coordinated by The City of Red Deer. Establish standard processes for collaboration between the design panel and developers.

B. Priorities | 2. Key Districts | Historic Downtown

Great Public Places

Recommendation 6

Conduct an multidisciplinary design study for Ross St. from 49 Ave. to Gaetz Ave., incorporating a Cenotaph plaza, enhanced Ross-Gaetz pedestrian crossings (examining potential for a scatter crossing) and a major Ross-Gaetz sculptural element to signify the centre of downtown. Consider a design competition for the sculptural element(s) and research potential for arts grant funding and corporate / private sponsors.

Recommendation 7

Create a Civic Plaza west of City Hall and east of the historic City Hall Park flower gardens, as part of upgrades to City Hall and the building of the City Hall annex structure.

Recommendation 8

Upgrade laneways (back alleys) in a few blocks of the city centre from service corridors to part of an enhanced pedestrian and retail realm. This could include naming (including consideration of suggestions from the public) – using the word “Lane” exclusively for alleyways.

Heritage and Public Art

Recommendation 9

Commission at least one high profile water / ice art sculpture in a prominent location downtown.

B. Priorities | 2. Key Districts | Riverlands

Infrastructure

Recommendation 10

Invest in relocating the overhead high-voltage power lines underground through Riverlands and Railyards. Conduct a review of utility services needed to support the planned redevelopment of Riverlands and Railyards.

Riverwalk

Recommendation 11

Develop an attractive 'riverwalk' in Riverlands featuring an urban style river's edge design, providing connectivity between public plazas, natural areas, and private developments in the area. Include a plaza at the point where Alexander Way will connect to the new Riverlands – Bower Ponds bridge.

Public Market and Arts Studio Complex

Recommendation 12

Develop a Public Market and Arts Studio complex in the current Civic Garage or Transit building. This can proceed in stages: (a) Assess the relative suitability of the Transit and Civic Garage buildings for use as a Public Market and Arts Studio Complex; (b) Implement minor renovations to facilitate temporary seasonal usage of one of the buildings and its grounds for the Red Deer Public Market, beginning in 2010; (c) Engage a business consultant with expertise in public markets and arts districts to create a business plan for the development of a year-round Public Market and Arts Studio Complex.

Major Tourism and Public Activity Centre

Recommendation 13

Create a task force in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Red Deer to develop a process for identifying an appropriate major public and visitor activity centre and creating a development process for such a facility. Consider including an open call for proposals as part of that process, perhaps with incentive concept-development funding, to generate interest from a wide spectrum of potential developers / proponents provincially and nationally.

Hotel and Convention Centre / Gathering Place

Recommendation 14

Create a call for proposals for development of a hotel and convention centre / gathering space facility, including a parkade, adjacent to Taylor Bridge on the north end of Riverlands.

Improved Steet Connections

Recommendation 15

Reassign funds previously identified (in future capital plans) for an above-grade pedestrian crossing at Taylor Drive and Alexander Way and conduct a multidisciplinary design study to build an at-grade intersection at that location.

Recommendation 16

Conduct a multidisciplinary study to redesign the intersection at Taylor Drive and Ross / 49 St. to encourage all directions pedestrian movement, and to redesign the southbound turn lane east of Taylor Bridge to increase land available for the hotel / convention centre site.



Bridge to Bower Ponds

Recommendation 17

Commission a design competition (2010) for an iconic bridge between Bower Ponds and Riverlands.

Recommendation 18

Move the capital budget for construction of the Bower Ponds – Riverlands bridge forward to the 2011 fiscal year.

Water Features

Recommendation 19

Conduct a more detailed study to propose locations, technical guidelines, and artistic guidelines for a series of water features. This multidisciplinary study should have involvement from a landscape architect, Engineering, Public Works, a water sustainability specialist, and a public art specialist.

Green Technology Zone

Recommendation 20

Develop design guidelines that actively encourage or require sustainable building practices in Riverlands, potentially in conjunction with tax or other development incentives.

Recommendation 21

Develop a free, municipally supported wireless connectivity zone in Riverlands. Pursue the possibility of a private developer providing this service as an element of another development project (for example, the hotel / convention centre project). Review the success of this project after 18 months and consider expanding it to other areas of Greater Downtown.

B. Priorities | 2. Key Districts | Railyards

Recognize Rail Heritage

Recommendation 22

Conduct a public naming process for the district involving citizen nominations. The consultants recommend the name Railyards but public input will help establish whether this is the best name.

Recommendation 23

Develop a program of rail themed street signage and interpretive markers to build identity and awareness of the train heritage in Railyards.

Old CPR Train Bridge Plaza Park

Recommendation 24

Design and construct a pedestrian and bicycle oriented park at the south end of the Old CPR Train Bridge. Research the potential for locating an historic steam locomotive in this park to bring greater visibility to the area's rail heritage.

New Intersection

Recommendation 25

Design and construct a realigned 53 Ave. intersection with 55 St., such that 53 Ave. is moved east to align with the south end of the Old CPR Train Bridge trail. Create the intersection as a pedestrian-first crossing with special pavement treatments to recognize its status as a key north-south link for pedestrians and cyclists.

53 Ave. Enhancements

Recommendation 26

Initially as a 2010 Pilot Project, reconfigure 53 Ave. as a model ‘complete street’ with sidewalks, a dedicated bike lane, street furniture and landscaping.

New Links

Recommendation 27

Explore options for acquiring right-of-way and constructing an attractive pedestrian route through the Cannery Row Mall area, from the Old CPR Train Bridge to the former CPR train station.

Recommendation 28

To support the development of Railyards as an attractive residential district, create attractive new links to the Waskasoo Park trails from 54 Ave. through the current City Parks and Water Treatment properties.

B. Priorities | 3. Great Streets – Transportation, Pedestrian and Public Realm

Complete Streets Design Standards

Recommendation 29

Develop and adopt new street design standards that integrate ‘complete streets’ analysis into all street design / traffic engineering related to the Greater Downtown. Include significant involvement of culture, business and social sector advocates in the development of the guidelines and actively consult cities that have had success with such guidelines.

Recommendation 30

Whenever developing specific street designs in the Greater Downtown, apply a matrix of design considerations and trade-offs such as that developed by the City of Charlotte and / or the Context Sensitive Solutions approach of the Institute of Traffic Engineers.

New and Improved Connections

Recommendation 31

Redevelop (initially as Pilot Projects) the following major routes to include shorter pedestrian crossings, dedicated bike lanes and more on-street parking:

- Gaetz Ave from 55 St. to 52 St. (with bike lane continuing from 52 St. to 45 St.) and from 45 St. to the base of south hill
- 51 Ave. from 52 St. to 45 St.
- Ross St. from the base of Michener Hill to 51 Ave.
- Alexander Way (48 St.), as noted elsewhere in this plan
- a Pilot Project of evening and weekend on-street parking on the east side of 49 St. from 47 St. to 55 St.

New and Improved Connections

High-Speed Rail Station

Recommendation 32

Collaborate with the Alberta government and private high-speed rail developers to conduct an economic-generator study examining options for a station or rapid transit connection hub in Greater Downtown.

Alexander Way

Recommendation 33

Complete the Alexander Way redevelopment – to effectively link the downtown core with Riverlands, using the completed project design amended to include a dedicated bike lane.

South Downtown Greenway

Recommendation 34

Commission a multidisciplinary study to design a bike trail / greenway route from the existing trail head near 55 Ave. and 43 St. to Taylor Drive and 45 St., then along the greenway and creek south of 45 St. to connect with the trail system at Spruce Drive and 43 St.

Sidewalk Building Program

Recommendation 35

Create a publicly funded three-year program to construct missing sidewalks (or asphalt trails, in some locations) and widen narrow walks on the following priority basis: 2011 – Historic Downtown, 2012 – Railyards, 2013 – Riverlands. Use the Downtown Public Realms Initiative as a guide to highest priority locations. Assign costs to future development levies.

Parking

Recommendation 36

Review parking policies and incentives with a view to encouraging (in descending order):

- underground parkades
- above ground parkades with attractive retail or other amenities on their street faces
- on-street parking (including parking on major corridors during off-peak hours)
- fully landscaped surface level parking.

Require and enforce significant landscaping of all surface parking lots.



Streetscapes, Laneways and Accessibility

Recommendation 37

Replace Walk / Don't Walk signals with crossing time countdown signals as part of the regular signal improvement and maintenance schedules.

Enhanced Streetscapes

Bicycle Parking

Recommendation 38

As recommended in the Bicycle Master Plans and Red Deer Trails Master Plan, amend zoning and development guidelines to encourage the development of more outdoor and indoor bicycle parking facilities. All new developments should include provision for bicycles.

Recommendation 39

Continue regular re-investment in landscaping, street furniture, and related enhancements in the Historic Downtown, Riverlands and Railyards.

Recommendation 40

Prohibit Plus 15 Walkways – Because they remove activity and vitality from the street, and therefore decrease street level safety, 'Plus 15' elevated walkways over streets should be prohibited except in situations where the connected buildings are owned and occupied by the same organization, with strong functional reasons to need inter-building connectivity.



Barrier-Free Design for Active Living

Recommendation 41

Implement accessibility improvements including curb cuts for barrier-free wheelchair access, auditory and Braille pedestrian signals and other improvements on a systematic, staged basis, starting in the Historic Downtown.

Recommendation 42

Increase snow clearing to include key continuous routes into Greater Downtown.

D. Land Use, Zoning and Design Guidelines

Downtown Zoning

Recommendation 43

Undertake a detailed land use and zoning review of the area covered by CI zoning, and adopt changes necessary to stimulate high-density, mixed-use, quality development.

Review that the intent of the current CI Architectural Design Guidelines is clear and supportive of preferred urban form and density.

Recommendation 44

Consider expanding the area covered by the current R3 zone.

For R3 zoning in the downtown, adopt public and private design guidelines that provide for a more urban quality of architectural design.



Railyards and Riverlands Zoning

Recommendation 45

Rezone the Railyards area from its present CIA zoning to allow and encourage medium-density mixed-use development. Establish public and private design guidelines based on the planning concepts described in this document.

Recommendation 46

Review and update existing Riverlands DC (21) zoning.