

**Planning Revitalization of the Fringe:**  
A Case Study of Edmonton's Downtown East

by

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## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

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I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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## ABSTRACT

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In cities across Canada, there are many examples of central areas within, adjacent to or just outside of downtowns that remain underdeveloped. There is great opportunity to redevelop these areas into vibrant, sustainable, dense neighbourhoods that can reduce the demand for greenfield development as our cities grow. There is a great deal of research on large sites that are completely void of development, and similarly on revitalizing areas that have a built up physical form. What is lacking in the research is information on how to approach the revitalization of areas that are physically underdeveloped, but are not a blank slate. As considerable physical redevelopment is necessary, this complicates the already complex process of revitalization as it is neither simply a major redevelopment project nor a community revitalization exercise.

The purpose of this research is to begin to fill this gap in the literature through the study of one specific case: Edmonton's Downtown East. Downtown East, located immediately east of downtown Edmonton in Alberta, represents a central area that is physically underdeveloped and in need of revitalization, with 40% of the land in the area laying vacant. This research seeks to determine what the most appropriate vision is for Downtown East.

A qualitative, mixed-method approach was used to derive a vision for the Downtown East based on the history and context of the area.

Findings of this research are structured around a detailed history and context of the area, including a review of significant redevelopment initiatives since the 1970s. From these findings, a discussion of the paths and barriers to revitalization in this area follows. Finally, recommendations are made for the Downtown East. A vision formed from the collective responses of key informants is put forward. Some strategic starting points for implementing this vision are then recommended based on the findings and discussion in earlier chapters. Recommendations are made for further research regarding the implementation of a vision, as this research revealed that one of the largest barriers to revitalization of the Downtown East was an effective approach to implementation of revitalization initiatives.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

List of Tables.....	viii
List of Figures.....	ix
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 Edmonton, Alberta</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>1.2 Downtown East</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>1.3 Research Problem</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>1.4 Thesis Organization</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>2.1 Areas of Decline: The Target of Revitalization</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>2.2 To renew, revitalize or gentrify?</b> .....	<b>13</b>
2.2.1 Renewal .....	14
2.2.2 Gentrification .....	15
2.2.3 Revitalization .....	16
<b>2.3 Revitalization as a Concept</b> .....	<b>16</b>
2.3.1 How should we conceptualize revitalization? .....	16
2.3.2 Revitalization as a planning tool.....	17
2.3.3 Understanding Revitalization as a Product of Many Important Parts .....	18
2.3.3.1 <i>Sense of Place</i> .....	19
2.3.3.2 <i>Sense of Community</i> .....	19
2.3.3.3 <i>Human Ecology and Environmental Psychology</i> .....	20
2.3.3.4 <i>Urban Ecology and Green Infrastructure</i> .....	21
2.3.3.5 <i>Urban Design</i> .....	22
2.3.3.6 <i>Affordable Housing</i> .....	23
<b>2.4 Revitalization in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: New Challenges and Opportunities</b> .....	<b>23</b>
2.4.1 The Sustainability Paradigm .....	24
2.4.2 Catching up to the standard or setting a new standard? .....	27
2.4.3 Creative thinking for the new urban world .....	28
2.4.3.1 <i>Regent Park, the changing practice of renewal</i> .....	28
2.4.3.2 <i>Community Gardens</i> .....	29
2.4.3.2.a <i>MOBY Case Study</i> .....	29
2.4.3.3 <i>Chicago Green Roof Program</i> .....	30
2.4.3.4 <i>The East Village, Calgary's Downtown East</i> .....	31
<b>2.5 Summary</b> .....	<b>33</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODS</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>3.1 Case Study Research</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>3.2 Data Collection</b> .....	<b>38</b>
3.2.1 Observation / Visual Survey .....	38
3.2.2 Document Search .....	39
3.2.3 Newspaper Search.....	41
3.2.4 Semi-Structured Key Informant Interviews .....	42
<b>3.3 Data Analysis</b> .....	<b>45</b>
3.3.1 Qualitative Analysis .....	45

<b>CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>4.1 Current Environment in Edmonton .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>4.2 History of Downtown East .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>4.3 Framing Downtown East .....</b>	<b>51</b>
4.3.1 The Civic Centre Downtown .....	51
4.3.2 The River Valley .....	53
4.3.3 McCauley Neighbourhood.....	54
<b>4.4 Downtown East Presently .....</b>	<b>56</b>
4.4.1 The physical fabric .....	57
4.4.1.1 <i>Current Uses and Zoning</i> .....	57
4.4.1.2 <i>Vacant space and parking lots</i> .....	61
4.4.1.3 <i>Historic Buildings</i> .....	62
4.4.1.4 <i>Land Ownership</i> .....	64
4.4.1.5 <i>In the works – Upcoming uses</i> .....	65
4.4.1.5.a <i>City Market Affordable Housing</i> .....	65
4.4.1.5.b <i>Valleyview Properties</i> .....	66
4.4.1.5.c <i>Boyle Renaissance</i> .....	67
4.4.1.5.d <i>Ukrainian Canadian Archives and Museums of Alberta</i> <i>(UCAMA)</i> .....	68
4.4.2 The Community .....	70
4.4.2.1 <i>Community of Care: Social Agencies and Supports</i> .....	70
4.4.2.2 <i>Low Income and Quality of Life</i> .....	72
4.4.2.3 <i>Transient Population</i> .....	73
4.4.2.4 <i>The Chinese Community</i> .....	73
<b>4.5 Visions of Change .....</b>	<b>74</b>
4.5.1 Chinatown Plan 1979.....	75
4.5.2 Jasper East Block .....	78
4.5.3 Old Towne Market.....	80
4.5.4 Area Redevelopment Plans .....	84
4.5.4.1 <i>1981 Boyle Street McCauley ARP</i> .....	85
4.5.4.2 <i>1994 Boyle Street McCauley ARP</i> .....	88
4.5.5 Downtown East / The Quarters.....	91
4.5.6 Commonalities and differences in visions over time.....	95
<b>CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>5.1 Barriers to Revitalization .....</b>	<b>102</b>
5.1.1 Perceptions of Downtown East .....	103
5.1.2 Fragmented Land Ownership, Downtown Parking and Speculation .....	104
5.1.3 Planning for the Present.....	105
5.1.4 Disconnection from Surroundings.....	106
5.1.5 A community out of balance .....	107
5.1.5.1 <i>Housing</i> .....	107
5.1.5.2 <i>Social Agencies</i> .....	109
5.1.5.3 <i>Vacant Land</i> .....	110

<b>5.2 Paths to Revitalization</b> .....	<b>111</b>
5.2.1 Community Building .....	111
5.2.2 Utilize existing features (Proximity to downtown, heritage buildings, river valley views and proximity) .....	112
5.2.3 Safety .....	114
5.2.4 Visioning .....	116
<b>CHAPTER 6 RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>118</b>
<b>6.1 Vision for Downtown East</b> .....	<b>118</b>
6.1.1 Approaching revitalization from within the framework of sustainability	118
6.1.2 The vision.....	119
<b>6.2 Getting to the vision of a revitalized downtown east</b> .....	<b>121</b>
6.2.1 Removing Barriers .....	123
<i>6.2.1.1 Changing the Perception</i> .....	123
6.2.1.1.a Street Trees .....	123
6.2.1.1.b Community Gardens.....	125
<i>6.2.1.2 Turning Speculators into Developers</i> .....	126
<i>6.2.1.3 Reconnecting to surrounding areas</i> .....	127
6.2.2 Creating an overseer of the vision.....	131
6.2.2.1 <i>Community Capacity</i> .....	132
6.2.2.2 <i>Development Corporations</i> .....	132
<b>6.3 Summary</b> .....	<b>133</b>
6.3.1 Limitations .....	137
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
<b>Appendix I – Visual Overview of the Downtown East</b> .....	<b>138</b>
<b>Appendix II – Semi-Structured Interview Guides</b> .....	<b>154</b>
<b>Appendix III – Information Letter</b> .....	<b>163</b>
<b>Appendix IV – Script for Verbal Consent</b> .....	<b>164</b>
<b>Appendix V – Thank You Letter</b> .....	<b>165</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>166</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

---

<i>Table 2.1</i>	<b><i>A Typology of Inner-City Neighborhoods</i></b> .....	<b>13</b>
<i>Table 3.1</i>	<b><i>Quantitative Style versus Qualitative Style</i></b> .....	<b>36</b>
<i>Table 3.2</i>	<b><i>Newspaper Search Results</i></b> .....	<b>42</b>
<i>Table 3.3</i>	<b><i>Interviewees by Category</i></b> .....	<b>44</b>
<i>Table 4.1</i>	<b><i>Zoning in the Downtown East</i></b> .....	<b>59</b>
<i>Table 4.2</i>	<b><i>Municipal Government Act Sections Pertaining to Area Redevelopment Plans</i></b> .....	<b>85</b>
<i>Table 4.3</i>	<b><i>Significant Plans and Schemes for the Downtown East since the 1970s</i></b> .....	<b>96</b>
<i>Table 5.1</i>	<b><i>Essential elements for a vibrant Downtown East as identified by Informants</i></b> .....	<b>120</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

---

Figure 1.1	<b>Location of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada</b> .....	3
Figure 1.2	<b>Aerial View of Central Edmonton</b> .....	4
Figure 2.1	<b>The Rivers District</b> .....	32
Figure 4.1	<b>New Developments in Central Edmonton</b> .....	48
Figure 4.2	<b>Building Footprints in Downtown East in the 1970s and 2000s</b> .....	50
Figure 4.3	<b>Edmonton’s Civic Centre adjacent to Downtown East</b> .....	52
Figure 4.4	<b>View of the North Saskatchewan River Valley from Downtown East</b> .....	54
Figure 4.5	<b>Context Map showing Boyle Street McCauley in relation to other neighbourhoods</b> .....	54
Figure 4.6	<b>Downtown East Plan Boundary</b> .....	57
Figure 4.7	<b>Current Zoning in Downtown East</b> .....	58
Figure 4.8	<b>Vacant Lots in Downtown East</b> .....	62
Figure 4.9	<b>Historic Buildings in Downtown East</b> .....	64
Figure 4.10	<b>Rendering of Boyle Renaissance</b> .....	68
Figure 4.11	<b>Lodge Hotel Under Construction in 2008</b> .....	69
Figure 4.12	<b>Rendering of UCAMA</b> .....	70
Figure 4.13	<b>Chinatown Plan Area</b> .....	76
Figure 4.14	<b>Edmonton’s Chinatown</b> .....	77
Figure 4.15	<b>Built Form Alternatives for Jasper East Block</b> .....	79
Figure 4.16	<b>Concept Plan for the Old Towne Market</b> .....	82
Figure 4.17	<b>Artist’s Rendering of the Old Towne Market</b> .....	83
Figure 4.18	<b>Physical Framework of Downtown East</b> .....	93
Figure 4.19	<b>Development Scenarios for The Quarters</b> .....	95
Figure 5.1	<b>Market Housing on the Southern Edge of Downtown East</b> .....	108
Figure 5.2	<b>2005 Municipal Census – Dwelling Unit by Structure Type and Ownership</b> .....	109
Figure 5.3	<b>Photographs of Vacant Lots in Downtown East</b> .....	110
Figure 5.4	<b>Generalized Existing Land Uses</b> .....	114
Figure 5.5	<b>Kernel density distribution of violent crime incidents, Edmonton, 2003</b> .....	115
Figure 6.1	<b>Image and Modified Image of Downtown East Illustrating the Effect of Street Trees on Perception</b> .....	125
Figure 6.2	<b>Points of Entry into the Downtown East from Surrounding Areas</b> .....	128
Figure 6.3	<b>Paths and Potential Node in Downtown East</b> .....	129

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

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As concerns related to environmental sustainability become more main stream, the way in which planners approach city building is changing. This shift is occurring in tandem with shifts in political and social thoughts. People are making different lifestyle choices and governments are making policy decisions that are geared towards a sustainable form of development. The result we are seeing in our cities is a slow shift away from sprawl and significant reinvestment in mature areas of our cities. While we have sought to reinvest in mature areas for decades, in a variety of ways, such as redevelopment schemes, community revitalization and so on, it is more recently that motivation to reinvest has stemmed from environmental concerns and a desire to develop sustainably. This shift in motivators is significant as it impacts both the way in which revitalization and redevelopment is approached and what the end result is.

In cities across Canada, there are many examples of central areas within, adjacent to or just outside of downtowns that remain underdeveloped. As Cities across the country look for ways to curb sprawl, such areas are receiving increasing attention from municipal governments. There is great opportunity to redevelop these areas into vibrant, sustainable, dense neighbourhoods that can reduce the demand for greenfield development as our cities grow. There is a great deal of research on large sites that are completely void of development, and similarly on revitalizing areas that have a built up physical form. What is lacking in the research is information on how to approach the revitalization of areas that are physically underdeveloped, but are not a blank slate. As considerable physical redevelopment is necessary, this complicates the already complex



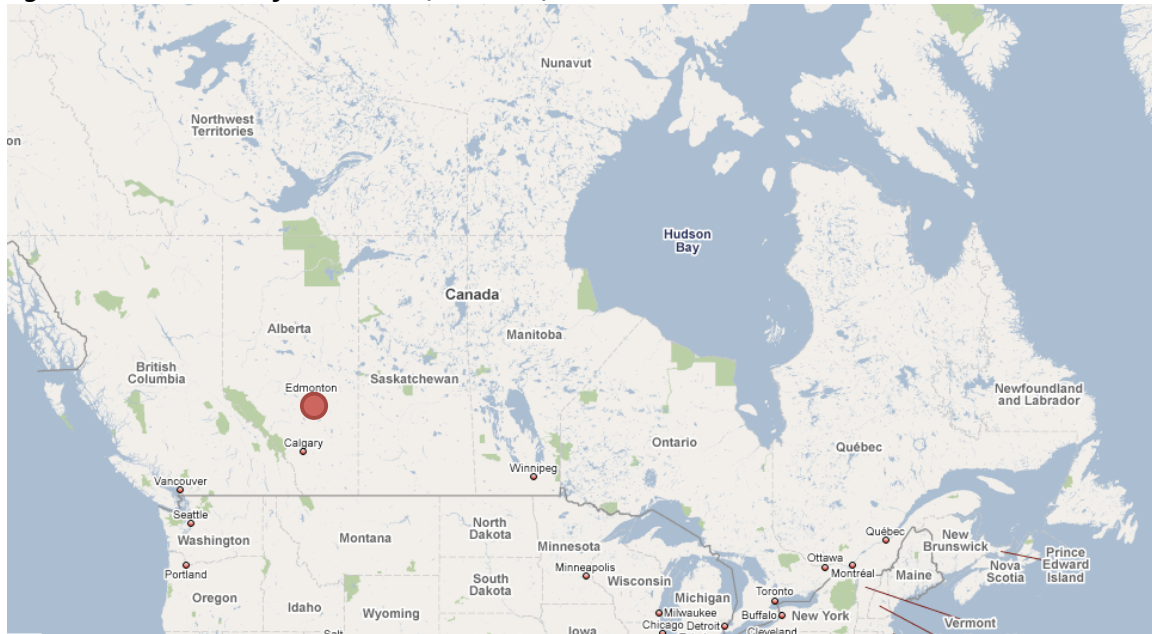
process of revitalization as it is neither simply a major redevelopment project nor a community revitalization exercise. By studying a case where this circumstance exists, the hope is to begin to fill this gap in the research. The Downtown East of Edmonton, Alberta is one such case where this circumstance exists. It is an area of approximately eighteen city blocks directly east of Edmonton's downtown and approximately 40% of the land is vacant. At the same time, there is existing infrastructure and several historic buildings that remain from Edmonton's early days as a city at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, when the Downtown East was the core of the City. It is not an empty site awaiting redevelopment, but rather a scattered array of buildings that scarcely constitute a neighbourhood.

### **1.1 EDMONTON, ALBERTA**

Edmonton is Canada's sixth largest city. With a metropolitan population of just over one million people, the city is just behind Calgary and Ottawa in population. It is larger than both Winnipeg and Quebec City in population by roughly 300,000 people.

The capital city of Alberta, it is also the northernmost city in North America with a population greater than one million. Figure 1.1 below shows the location of Edmonton relative to the rest of Canada.

**Figure 1.1 Location of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada**



In recent years, Edmonton has experienced rapid growth, due to a booming economy. The strong economy is largely based in the oil and gas industry. Historically, Edmonton's economy has experienced booms and busts and these fluctuations have had significant impacts on the development of the City. During the last boom of the 1970s and 1980s, the downtown underwent significant redevelopment, with many older buildings being demolished and replaced with office towers. Unrestrained by geographic boundaries, the city has developed in a sprawling manner and has few medium or high density residential areas. In recent years, however, the city has witnessed many major redevelopment projects and the current City Council is encouraging intensification and sustainable development. In some cases these initiatives have been led by the City and in other instances have been proposed by private developers. While the City of Edmonton's Strategic Plan predicts an increase in population of 51% from 2008 to 2040, it has not indicated there is a need to expand its boundaries. (City of Edmonton, 2008a) This will,

however, require redevelopment and revitalization of areas within Edmonton. One of the most obvious places for this reinvestment is also an area that has persisted for decades as an area in decline and is the focus of this research. Below is an aerial photograph of Edmonton's central area. The white dashed line outlines the area of focus for this thesis and will be referred to as Downtown East, as it is immediately east of Downtown Edmonton. Originally, it was Edmonton's downtown, though it has not been for many decades as the core of the city shifted west many years ago.

**Figure 1.2 Aerial View of Central Edmonton**



## **1.2 DOWNTOWN EAST**

Downtown East in Edmonton has been declining since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. In the 1960s, the Planning Department in the City of Edmonton began studying this area and proposing plans for its renewal. During this time, the physical structures in this area were

rundown and in need of maintenance. The quality of life was also considered to be low. When the economy began booming in the 1970s, many of the run-down buildings in this area were demolished in preparation for redevelopment. A new Chinatown was planned for the area to accommodate the community that was being displaced as a result of the development of Canada Place on the northwest corner of Jasper Avenue and 97 Street. Background Studies were underway for the first Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) for the Boyle Street McCauley community, within which the Downtown East falls. Before much of the planned redevelopment could take place in the Downtown East however, the economy changed significantly in Alberta and the redevelopments were never built. The result was a struggling community left with a neighbourhood full of large holes in its physical fabric. Appendix I of this thesis contains photographs of the Downtown East as it exists today showing many properties still vacant from the demolitions of the 1970s. Downtown East as it stands today is in a somewhat unique situation; it is neither exclusively a physically well-developed area in need of community revitalization nor a clean slate primed for a major redevelopment project. Instead, it is an unusual mix of the two; the area has a patchwork of buildings worth preserving scattered amongst poorly maintained surface parking lots where a vulnerable population experiences a low quality of life. It is doubly disadvantaged, as it is not able to merely focus on community revitalization nor is it able to start entirely from scratch. There are approximately 2400 people who call the area home. (City of Edmonton, 2009) There are also a number of buildings on the municipal historic register throughout the area. There is a gap in the research dealing with these types of areas in Canadian cities. A close study of Downtown East Edmonton can assist in filling this gap. Many attempts have been made and have

largely failed. An examination of the many approaches taken to revitalizing this area and the reasons why they did not succeed can offer lessons to other Cities with similar areas. As municipalities turn increasingly to redevelopment and intensification to grow, a better understanding of how to intensify and revitalize in a variety of circumstances is needed.

### **1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Once we have determined an area is in need of revitalization, we must make decision about how we should revitalize. As will be outlined in the review of the literature in the following chapter, there is a lack of literature regarding shoulder areas to downtowns, such as Downtown East in Edmonton, where considerable physical redevelopment is required as a part of revitalization. Unlike Greenfield development, a complex set of factors influence how areas such as these should and could be redeveloped.

A useful starting point for revitalization is the establishment of a vision of what the area should and could be like in the future. In their book *Cities as Sustainable Ecosystems: Principles and Practices*, Newman and Jennings state “a long-term vision is the starting point for catalyzing positive change, leading to sustainability.” They state further that “a vision based on sustainability will help align and motivate communities, governments, businesses, and others around a common purpose, and will provide a basis for developing a strategy, an action program, and processes to achieve that vision.” (2008) If a vision is such a powerful tool for both instigating and guiding revitalization in cities, then a useful question when considering the revitalization of Downtown East is:

*What is the most appropriate vision for Edmonton’s Downtown East?*

This basic research question establishes the purpose of this research. To answer this question, there are two other questions that must be answered first:

*Why have prior visions for Downtown East failed to revitalize the area?*

*What are the relevant factors and their relevant importance in determining a vision for Edmonton's Downtown East?*

The Downtown East is complex and has had many years worth of planning activities aimed at revitalizing it according to a variety of visions. Like many other central, declining areas in cities across Canada, these areas are mature and complex, and as such, the solutions for leading them to vitality can be complex also. As described in Chapter 2, Cities and their citizens are becoming increasingly concerned with creating sustainable cities. Also, while Downtown East may be suffering from a below average quality of life (City of Edmonton, 2006a) and at one time would have been (and nearly was) subjected to slum clearance and relocation, this approach to revitalization is no longer considered desirable or effective as you are only moving the problem and not improving quality of life for the existing community. The need for an affordable, supportive community where capacity can be built and the need to capitalize on opportunities to create environmentally sustainable neighbourhoods are important factors when approaching areas such as the Downtown East in Edmonton.

#### **1.4 THESIS ORGANIZATION**

This thesis is organized into five main sections; a literature review, methodology, findings, discussion, and recommendations. In Chapter 2 Literature Review, the concept of revitalization as discussed in the literature is analyzed. This analysis reviews the types of revitalization that have been practiced and studied over time. It reviews important

elements that shape revitalization and are an integral part. Finally, it discusses where revitalization stands in today's cities and where it might and should be going.

Revitalization efforts have had varied success in cities and the methods for achieving revitalization have changed over time. It is important to have an understanding of this complex process before considering its application in one specific case study.

The following chapter, Chapter 3 Methodology, will describe the research methods used in studying the case of Edmonton's Downtown East including how data was collected and analyzed.

Chapter 4 of this thesis, Findings, provides an overview of the history of the Downtown East, a description of the surrounding contexts and their relationship to the Downtown East, and reviews past planning attempts to revitalize the area and investigates why each was not successful and what was learned from them. This Chapter establishes an important base of information from which the discussion and recommendations in the next two chapters are formed.

Chapter 5 takes the information described in Chapter 4 and takes a step back from specific histories of the Downtown East to analyze and discuss why this area has continued to experience declining quality of life and quality of the built environment. Following this, potential paths to revitalization are identified at a high level based on the data presented in Chapter 4, particularly from information gleaned from interviews with key informants. Chapter 5 Findings, in essence describes barriers and paths to the revitalization of Downtown East.

Chapter 6 Recommendations offers a vision for guiding the revitalization of Downtown East. Further, this chapter contains recommendations for how to achieve this

vision. While it does not offer a detailed, comprehensive plan for implementation, it does offer some strategic starting points and recommends areas of research that require further investigation but are beyond the scope of this research.



## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

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A clear definition of revitalization as a term applied to urban planning is elusive. Revitalization programs implemented by municipalities often include a description of the elements included in the program and goals of the program, however, a definition of the term is absent (Energy Pathways Inc., 1996; City of Edmonton, 2006b).

The Canadian Oxford Dictionary defines “revitalize” simply as “imbue with new life and vitality” (Barber, Ed., 2004). The central goal of revitalization is evident within the term. It is striving to make an urban area vibrant once again.

The following chapter dissects the concept of revitalization to better understand it as an urban planning tool that may be applied to urban areas such as Edmonton’s Downtown East. This is done through four main sections. The first section examines areas of decline as the target of revitalization. The second section considers the various forms of revitalization including urban renewal and gentrification. The third section examines revitalization as a concept including how it is commonly applied as an urban planning tool and relevant concepts that often factor into revitalization schemes such as urban design, mixed income, and urban ecology in an attempt to better understand the process of revitalization. The last section will contextualize revitalization. This section will discuss the contemporary factors that frame the concept of revitalization and shape how it is, can, and should be applied to Canadian neighborhoods, particularly Edmonton’s Downtown East.

## 2.1 AREAS OF DECLINE: THE TARGET OF REVITALIZATION

In order to find a solution, we must first understand the problem. What problem do revitalization schemes seek to solve? Typically, revitalization schemes are applied to areas of decline, most often found in downtowns or the inner city. 50 years ago, downtowns were unquestionably the heart of the city with an unparalleled ability to attract “high-order activities” (Filion & Gad, 2006). Since then, the nature of downtowns has been less certain. Both downtowns and the inner city have now been drawn into competition with suburbs for vitality. Joel Garreau has gone as far as suggesting that we should abandon our traditional notion of downtown and focus on the edges of our cities as new centres (1991). Many are not prepared to give up on the potential of downtowns and inner cities (Filion & Gad, 2006) and there is much theory addressing these areas and how to effect change. Canadian cities have experienced varied success in maintaining vibrant downtowns and inner cities. Additionally, they have experienced varied success in revitalizing areas that have not remained vibrant.

In the past, planners have identified neighborhoods for redevelopment that some viewed as vital and vibrant areas, and not in need of redevelopment schemes (Jacobs, 1961). In some such instances, the redevelopment negatively affected the area. Now, Cities such as the City of Edmonton commonly use quality of life indicators to determine which neighborhoods should be targeted for revitalization. The City of Edmonton describes quality of life in the following manner:

Quality of life can mean many things to different people. To most people, a good quality of life means feeling safe, living in high quality affordable housing, and having access to education and employment. Quality of life goes beyond the demographics of a community, (e.g. economic status, age, household composition and education), and includes subjective characteristics to a neighbourhood: is it clean; does the neighbourhood

provide economic opportunities; are there stores in the neighbourhood; is transportation available to those who do not have vehicles; are residents healthy; and, are there accessible recreation and social programs for children and their families? (2006b)

While this definition of quality of life relies on many qualitative measures, the City uses quantifiable quality of life measures to generate a ranking to determine which areas should be targeted for revitalization.

This is one of many models to help evaluate neighborhoods and identify them for targeted revitalization. Ley & Frost provide a helpful typology that breaks down inner city neighborhoods of decline, stability, revitalization, and massive redevelopment based on an evaluation of various conditions, predominantly quantitative in measures (2006).

While we may intuitively assign a value to a neighborhood such as vibrant, declining or stagnant, or as Lehrer describes, desirable or despairing (2006) it is helpful to evaluate a neighborhood on measurable characteristics to ensure that planning is not being carried out based on assumptions or impressions, but rather the true nature and circumstances of a neighborhood. This has been requisite in planning since the failure of major urban renewal projects that began in the 1950s and the subsequent reaction, most notably by Jane Jacobs, which challenged the basis on which planners were identifying and redeveloping neighbourhoods (Jacobs, 1961; Sewell, 1993)

Table 2.1 **A Typology of Inner-City Neighborhoods**

	<b>Decline</b>	<b>Stability</b>	<b>Revitalization</b>	<b>Massive Redevelopment</b>
<i>Population</i>	Continuing loss of population	No significant losses or gains	Little Change	Gain in population
<i>Socio-Economic Status</i>	Decreasing	Stable	Increasing	Increasing
<i>Family Status</i>	Increasing proportion of non-family units and elderly	Maintenance of population mix	Maintenance of population mix	Loss of families, gain of singles
<i>Ethnicity</i>	Varies: can be influx of deprived ethnic group or breaking down of traditional community	Sometimes strong ethnic community	Sometimes loss of ethnic groups	Seldom important
<i>Community Organization</i>	Poorly organized, unstable	Varies	Increasingly well-organized	Usually unorganized
<i>Physical Conditions</i>	Worsening	Stable	Improving	Improved housing, possible environmental problems
<i>Housing and Land Costs</i>	Increasing much less than metro average	Increasing at same rate as metro average	Increasing more rapidly than the metro average	Increasing more rapidly than metro average
<i>Tenure</i>	Increasing tenancy	Varies, but often high ownership	Little change	Tenancy
<i>Non-Residential functions</i>	Loss of commercial-industrial functions with no replacement	Maintaining a mix of functions gaining others	Maintaining a mix of functions	Losing some commercial functions, but gaining others
<i>Pressure for Redevelopment</i>	Low	Low	Strong, but controlled	High

Source: Ley & Frost (2006).

## 2.2 TO RENEW, REVITALIZE OR GENTRIFY?

Understanding the evolution of the approach to areas of decline is important. In addition to giving context and background, it establishes a trajectory of thought. Improved success in handling areas of decline suggests that theory is evolving in an appropriate direction (Gibson, 2004). A realization that this evolution of thought must be carried further is essential for the progression of revitalization towards the successful

achievement of its goal. This will be discussed in great detail in the latter half of this review, but first the roots of revitalization must be understood. It is important to note that the term revitalization can be used as a broad term which encompasses urban renewal, gentrification and current programs implemented by Cities to target areas of decline (Ley, 1985). This is an equally valid use of the term; however, it will be used in this review to mean the most recent strategy for making declining or stagnant areas vital once again.

### **2.2.1 Renewal**

Urban Renewal developed in response to the Industrial City. During the Industrial Revolution, cities underwent a major transformation. During this time of rapid change, thinkers such as Le Corbusier, Ebenezer Howard, and Frank Lloyd Wright created utopic visions for a new urban form (Sewell, 1993). Le Corbusier's modernist vision for the city, full of simple, ordered, minimalist skyscrapers for clean and simple living was eventually adopted in some form in the mid-twentieth century. Urban Renewal Projects funded by the government entailed massive redevelopment. Large built-up areas were demolished and replaced with new, modern buildings intended to offer an appropriate environment for modern living. Toronto's Regent Park is a classic example of these renewal schemes. The uniform buildings were representative of the uniform approach to declining areas. This was an environmental deterministic approach as it assumed that through altering the physical environment, social issues would be addressed. Over time, this approach to areas of decline proved ineffective. The over simplification of the problem Renewal sought to resolve became apparent. Critics of these large scale projects began to surface and resistance to the demolition of neighborhoods developed. The most vocal and influential critic of this approach to urban

planning was Jane Jacobs. Her 1961 book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* offered a scathing critique of planning practices, particularly urban renewal. She advocated for the preservation of neighborhoods that were, at the time, considered slums. She argued that these 'slums' were in fact vibrant, vital areas of the city. Urban Renewal in the form and process that it was taking ceased as it met increased resistance (Sewell, 1993).

### **2.2.2 Gentrification**

Jane Jacobs' identification of the value in 'slums' in the early 1960s helped to usher in a new form of approaching areas of decline. Gentrification replaced Renewal as the dominant form of revitalization. While gentrification is a bottom up process, it has been recognized, controlled and influenced by government to varying degrees. Gentrification is not as dramatic as renewal schemes and requires the cooperation of residents. David Ley ties the term gentrification back to its British origins and class connotations of the gentry (1985). Gentrification refers to the phenomena of middle class citizens repopulating the inner city and remodeling and renovating the houses. It does not imply the large scale redevelopment of renewal. A major criticism of gentrification is the resulting displacement as housing is renovated and value increased, original residents are priced out of the area. What becomes a thriving, vital area has merely displaced the issues present in the neighbourhood when the gentrification process began. While the quality of life in the area is improved, from a metropolitan perspective the problems have not been addressed, only shifted. While this form of neighbourhood revitalization may have a place as a planning tool, it is only a viable option in areas where there is existing urban fabric to work with. In the case of Downtown East, on which this thesis will focus,

gentrification is not an option. The urban fabric in this area has been destroyed and a substantial amount of new development must occur before it can be stitched back into the City.

### **2.2.3 Revitalization**

It is important to note that both redevelopment and gentrification still occur, and in some instances are appropriate and effective. Over the course of many successes and failures, redevelopment and gentrification have evolved within their own models to be more sensitive and effective in targeting areas of decline. While revitalization is common practice in Canada's urban centres, it does not replace gentrification or redevelopment.

## **2.3 REVITALIZATION AS A CONCEPT**

In this third section of the review, the fundamental approach to revitalization, and how it is constructed as an idea will be analyzed.

### **2.3.1 How should we conceptualize revitalization?**

Urban environment is not merely physical form (as redevelopment schemes focused on), nor is it only comprised of social indicators such as household income or property value (as is commonly used in measuring gentrification (Ley, 1985)). The urban environment is a product of the dynamic interaction of disparate elements such as individual lifestyle, policy, infrastructure, urban ecology, culture, economy, urban design, poverty and so on. The artful interplay of these elements determines a neighbourhood's state and its capacity for revitalization (Zielenbach, 2000, p. 19). Revitalization should be conceived as a deliberate alteration of these disparate elements in order to achieve a desired net effect in the targeted urban area.

The goal of revitalization is also essential in understanding the process. As Zielenbach points out, there are typically two main categories under which the goals of revitalization schemes fall; individual based or place based. In the first instance, improved conditions for the neighbourhood residents are the primary concern. The emphasis is on building community capacity. The second category, place-based revitalization, puts greater emphasis on economic factors of an area and initiatives are targeted at increasing property value and attracting investment to the area. The initial nature and residents of the area are not of primary concern.

In the case of Edmonton's Downtown East there is opportunity to seek a balanced approach that considers both individual- and place-based goals. The area is severely under-populated and physically underdeveloped, leaving room for intensification in the area while retaining existing residents and improving their quality of life.

### **2.3.2 Revitalization as a planning tool**

Neighborhood revitalization as a concept is complex, imperfect, and dynamic. To put such a thing into practice, the concept of revitalization must be distilled and simplified into an operable process. The goals and desired outcome must be clear and a path to them must be confidently pursued.

While some literature addresses the complexity of revitalization and the multitude of variables that affect it and make each example unique, others declare that "it is no longer a mystery how to start a downtown revitalization process" (Leinberger, 2005, pg. 3) and go so far as to provide a number of straightforward steps to revitalization. In planning practice, the latter tends to be more in line with the process of revitalization.



Revitalization can be an effective planning tool as it has the ability to “generate tangible results from the planning process in a relatively short span of time” (Hodge, 2003, p. 250) by targeting a specific area.

### **2.3.3 Understanding Revitalization as a Product of Many Important Parts**

To maximize the effectiveness of revitalization schemes, a comprehensive understanding of the process should be established first.

The lack of an effective model or framework of revitalization is evidenced by the heavy reliance on case studies in the planning literature (Charney, 2005. Energy Pathways Inc., 1996. Gibson, 2004. Ley, 1985. National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, 1966.). Rather than approaching revitalization from a theoretical perspective, practitioners and theorist rely on successful examples of revitalization to apply to newly targeted areas of decline. The literature, in this way, recognizes that each area of decline is unique. It does not recognize that these areas are unique combinations of many of the same components in varying degrees of importance.

The following sections describe some important components that can influence revitalization including sense of place, sense of community, human ecology and environmental psychology, urban ecology and green infrastructure, urban design, affordable housing, mixed income, and mixed use.

### *2.3.3.1 Sense of Place*

As homogeneous suburban development continues to be the dominant form of development in Canada, sense of place is becoming a greater issue in planning theory and practice (Lehrer, 2006). Sense of place is not exclusively derived from the physical environment. It is widely agreed upon that sense of place is derived from the interplay of the physical environment, human behaviours or culture, and psychological processes. (Stedman, 2003, p. 671) Some theorists have discussed the potential of downtowns for creating sense of place in a way that new suburban development cannot (Faulk, 2006). This may stem from the notion that sense of place is derived from the “unusual composition of spaces and forms – natural or man-made” (Jackson, 1994, p. 151 in Stedman, 2003, p. 674) that typifies urban centres. This unique ability of downtowns or the inner city should be recognized and capitalized on in the revitalization process. According to Raco, sense of place has become a central element in marketing an area under a revitalization initiative, or regeneration programme, to help attract private investment and visitors in England. (2003)

### *2.3.3.2 Sense of Community*

If goals of revitalization are individual based as outlined in the earlier section ‘the concept of revitalization’, creating a sense of community is an essential part of the revitalization process. While new development may occur in the area, say for example a large condominium development, that would improve economic indicators in the area it does not necessarily follow that quality of life for existing residents has improved. Without a sense of community, members may have little to no interaction.

### 2.3.3.3 Human Ecology and Environmental Psychology

The role of nature in our cities is becoming increasingly understood and valued as an integral part of our cities. While increased green space in cities is often advocated from an environmental perspective, literature is increasingly indicating that there is a close relationship between green space and human physical and mental health.

Physical health issues in recent literature have been increasingly tied to the urban environment. In 2006, building on ideas presented by Jacobs (1961), the Canadian Institute for Health Information authored a report aimed at improving health of Canadians by making explicit the relationship of urban areas and health.

Issues of mental health and their relationship to the presence or absence of green space in cities have also begun to be explored. Within the field of environmental psychology, many studies have been conducted that point to the positive influence of green space on psychological well being. The work of Frances Kuo has been particularly enlightening. Her studies have found that exposure to green space increases ability to cope with stress (Kuo & Sullivan, 2001) and even reduced incidents of domestic violence in the inner city (Kuo, 2001). Her studies used two identical urban renewal projects in Chicago. One project had no vegetation around it while the other had some, allowing her to compare the psychological factors of the two sets of residents. The concluding statement of the study as published in the journal of *Environment and Behavior* provides compelling reasons to consider environmental psychology when approaching the revitalization of an area, particularly when schemes include residents of a declining area: “This study suggests that, in poor inner-city neighborhoods, planting a few trees may

help provide individuals and families the psychological resources needed to ‘take arms against a sea of troubles.’ ” (Kuo, 2001)

#### *2.3.3.4 Urban Ecology and Green Infrastructure*

An ecologically based approach to city building, one that begins with an understanding of cities as a part of nature, engages nature and natural processes to help sustain the city. (Girling & Kellert, 2005)

The above section outlines the positive relationship of nature and humans in the city. In this section, nature in the city will be examined from an ecological perspective. As theory surrounding sustainable development evolves, planners are beginning to understand the city as an entity constructed within nature rather than over nature. Methods for introducing nature and natural processes back into the urban fabric are becoming more common and in some cases statutory. In areas of the German city of Stuttgart, for example, buildings are required to have green roofs. In the City of Chicago in the United States, a rebate program has been established for the installation of green roofs after the green roof on City Hall, implemented by Mayor Richard Daley, proved both ecologically beneficial and publically popular. Interventions such as green roofs and tree planting fall under the term “green infrastructure”. Lynda H. Schneekloth provides the following description of green infrastructure and its importance in the urban environment:

The “green infrastructure” of a city is comprised of natural and designed systems and elements of the city that function in ways analogous to natural processes in managing air, water, microclimatic and energy resources. The most obvious part of this infrastructure are trees, open spaces of vacant lots, lawns and parks, and stream corridors, that is, all places that have water-pervious surfaces and/or soil to support plant material. Because it imitates natural systems, “green structure” is holistic and includes waterways and microclimatic systems that vegetation, land and

water bodies create – essentially those parts of the system that are ecologically based. (2003)

Green infrastructure can help to improve air quality, reduce the heat island effect, reduce heat loss, assist in stormwater management, increase biodiversity, and increase recreational opportunities. (Schneekloth, 2003; Girling & Kellert, 2005) In revitalizing an area, green infrastructure should be considered as an essential element of an area in the same way transportation infrastructure may be considered.

#### *2.3.3.5 Urban Design*

In recent years, city builders have once again become concerned with urban design as an important consideration in creating great cities. This comes after a period of time where some felt that we have lost sight of a once well-understood theory of urban space. Urban design is a broad term that is used in many ways, however, it is “essentially an ethical endeavor, inspired by the vision of public art and architecture and reified by the science of construction.” (Watson, 2003) While urban design may be rooted in art and building science, its impacts can be far reaching, including the human social aspects of cities:

Urban designers promote spatial enclosures which are positively defined and which accommodate a mixture of people and activities. Creating these inclusive nodes may be a positive step towards reducing the potential conflicts arising from different interpretations and expectations of urban space, and in promoting an urbansism of tolerance and social cohesion. (Mandanipour, 2003)

Due consideration should be given to urban design elements in the process of revitalization to capitalize on its ability to create great places that foster positive social interaction and cohesion.

### *2.3.3.6 Affordable Housing*

Revitalization is often considered successful in its ability to transform an area, but inevitably some of its initial goals are sacrificed. Most commonly, the sensitive inclusion of the original residents in the revitalized area falls by the wayside. (Freeman, 2006. Ley, 1985). Revitalization may still be considered successful if it is conceptualized as a place-based process rather than individual-based. (Zielenbach, 2000)

As put by Richard Harris, “housing occupies 30 per cent of the land area of Canadian towns and cities. As a result, houses help define the character of cities”. (2006) Perhaps an even more powerful way to understand the important role of housing in cities is to contemplate the fact that everyone does, or should, have a place to call home that they return to day after day.

## **2.4 REVITALIZATION IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY: NEW CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

While the goals, processes and outcomes of revitalization initiatives may be multi-faceted and case-specific, in revitalization’s most broad definition we can say it is concerned with livability. While livability continues to be a major concern and goal for Cities and their citizens, a shift is underway. Sustainability has been brought to the forefront in recent years and is enjoying a spotlight in popular media, academia and politics. To achieve ecological, social, and economic sustainability, sustainability must become the framework within which everything else operates. Considering revitalization schemes from within the framework of sustainability presents considerable challenges and equally exciting opportunities. In order to better understand how revitalization may

be conceived of and achieved within the framework of sustainability, an overview of the sustainability paradigm and how it has developed should be outlined.

#### **2.4.1 The Sustainability Paradigm**

In the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a number of issues arose that began to challenge the theories that had been accepted by planners, society, and individuals. The negative impacts of modern urban development and industry began to manifest themselves: new paradigms surfaced. Two fundamentally different schools of thought began to take shape at this time and new theories that challenged the dominant paradigm were developed under each. Concern regarding the urban form arose from both an anthropocentric perspective (Jacobs 1961) and for the first time, an environmental perspective.

The environmental impacts of industrialization were not immediately apparent, and it took a number of decades to recognize that natural resources had limits, and that our new consumer culture was pushing those limits. The environmental movement developed in response to this. As theory on environmental issues developed, a distinction was made between environmental reform to maintain the environment for human purpose and reform for the sake of the environment. Terms such as renewable resources, while showing increased sensitivity towards the environment, still conceptualize nature as a resource for human consumption. In this sense, nature is not valued intrinsically, but rather instrumentally. (Callicott 2003) In 1972, philosopher Arne Naess coined the term 'deep ecology'. (Katz, Light & Rothenberg, 2000) The theory of deep ecology recognizes the natural world as having intrinsic value. It positions the natural environment as the context for all other things, including humans and society. This reorientation of views departs from the dominant anthropocentric views. (Katz, Light &

Rothenberg, 2000) Presently, environmentalism is influenced by both deep ecology and by ‘shallow ecology’. Understanding the environmental perspective here is important as it has been a major driver behind the sustainability paradigm. While environmentalists and ecologists may advocate a sustainable agenda (Register, 2002; Todd & Todd, 1994), the theoretical underpinnings are fundamentally different than those of a social perspective. (Callicott 2003)

In the 1960s, Jane Jacobs began a powerful movement in planning that led to a shift in paradigm. Jacobs proposed that cities were not about science and rational planning, but rather they were about community and quality of life. (1961) Since that time, many new theories and models have been developed to attempt to address how cities are planned. Concerns such as community participation, creating sense of place, and quality of life have come into the foreground as a result of this influential critique of modern planning. Theories regarding these concerns have developed under social planning.

As environmental planning and social planning have evolved in tandem, a need to reevaluate the relationship between nature, the built form, and the individual has arisen. As these two schools of thought have developed over time, it has become apparent that the North American standard of sprawling development cannot be sustained indefinitely.

The concept of ‘sustainable development’ has had an immeasurable impact on the theory and practice of urban planning. The term ‘sustainable development’ was initially defined by the Bruntland Commission in 1987 as “to ensure that it meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” This definition, along with the sustainable triangle, which balances social, economic and



environmental issues, offered a new framework to guide and shape theories on urban planning. The three pronged concept of sustainability has allowed formerly disparate paradigms to join together under one overarching theme. This has encouraged exploration of the interrelationship of society, the environment, and the economy in ways that had not yet been considered. According to Fishler & Wolfe, planners' most commonly used definition of sustainability is "the resolution of conflict between the needs of the environment, of the economy, and of people, along with the intergenerational responsibility of providing for the need of future populations." (2006) While this definition may be flawed in implicitly placing the environment, people and the economy in conflict with each other, it none the less suggests that all three must be considered in a balanced manner. It also references the Bruntland Commission's definition by addressing the needs of the future population. Within this broad frame, many other concepts fit. The unifying element of theories developed under this new approach is that they are all underpinned by the common goal of balanced sustainability.

There are many contemporary theorists who attempt to holistically address the identified need to move towards a sustainable urban form. Concepts of sustainable communities, eco-cities, green cities, and such have been discussed and developed at great length in recent literature. One of the pioneering theorists to bring together notions of sustainability and apply them to cities is Richard Register. Register has taught, wrote and developed forums for dialogue on the issue of sustainable communities. Many others now continue the dialogue on sustainable cities. (Roseland, 1997; Kahn, 2006; Portney, 2003; Todd & Todd, 1994) In practice, Smart Growth principles now guide many planners, whether by choice or, increasingly, by government mandate (Ministry of Public

Infrastructure Renewal, 2006; City of Edmonton, Smart Choices, 2004). Many Smart Growth principles such as intensification and walkability point to revitalization as an opportunity to realize the goals of Smart Growth and in turn, sustainability. Kevin Hanna sees sustainability as fundamentally a planning-related issue, as many of our environmental, social and economical issues stem from or occur in an urban environment. “Sustainability can have variable definitions and interpretations, but at its core it is about sustaining human and ecological well-being. At the level of city sustainability is, by necessity, planning- and design- focused.” (Hanna, 2006 p. 353) Through this definition, we begin to see how urban planning and design can play an important role in achieving sustainability.

#### **2.4.2 Catching up to the standard or setting a new standard?**

While it may seem an appropriate goal for neighborhoods in decline to ‘catch up’ to healthy, livable neighborhoods, these declining neighborhoods, particularly when they are largely physically underdeveloped, may be ideally suited to set a new bar by striving for livability within sustainability. With the current focus on intensification in North American cities through initiatives such as smart growth, transit oriented development and brownfield developments, centrally located neighborhoods are increasingly being looked to as places for creative solutions. This ambitious task of not only improving quality of life and economic indicators, as traditional revitalization strives for, but also making a new model for sustainable urban development may set off alarm bells for some. The large scale redevelopment schemes of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century sought create a new urban form that was intended to address and improve certain urban issues and in the end concentrated the issues within the new model and only exacerbated the issues they sought

to resolve. In this instance, however, the public was not consulted, the physical urban form was very new and experimental, and the motivations arose from a problem that the designers did not fully understand. In designing a sustainable, livable community for an area in decline, the tested methods of revitalization may still be employed. One major lesson learned from the failure of these major redevelopments was that placing a vulnerable population in a visually distinct, unusual, isolated urban area is not helpful to that population. Community consultation is an essential step if existing residents are to be included in the revitalized area.

### **2.4.3 Creative thinking for the new urban world**

As it is now widely recognized that our current construction and use of cities is unsustainable, many creative thinkers are theorizing and implementing models of urban forms that are more sustainable than today's status quo. Before considering what an appropriate vision for Edmonton's Downtown East may be, some cases from which inspiration may be drawn will be reviewed briefly here. Of the following cases, the degree to which they directly relate to the Downtown East varies. In all cases, however, they are examples of creative approaches to urban issues.

#### *2.4.3.1 Regent Park, The changing practice of renewal*

Regent Park offers a clear example of why planners should proceed cautiously with large-scale redevelopment. Regent Park was built over 50 years ago in downtown Toronto. An example of a major redevelopment project, its failure in its goal to provide affordable housing with an improved quality of life has earned it a reputation of being "notoriously ill-planned". So much so, in fact, that in 2005, a revitalization project was initiated to completely rebuild Regent Park to include a mix of housing tenure, a mix of

uses, a smaller block pattern and environmentally sustainable building design. (Shippling, 2007) Through better, proven urban design, the new Regent Park will replace all of its existing social housing totaling 2083 units and will contribute additional affordable housing units, while introducing a mix of tenure and uses. (Toronto Community Housing Corporation, 2009) The important lesson that can be learned from the redevelopment of Regent Park is that while an isolated concentration of social housing proved to be an ineffective community design, the redesign did not eliminate social housing, but rather supplemented it with a healthy, diverse and sustainable mix. Rather than displacing affordable housing, it takes a holistic approach in finding ways to improve quality of life in Regent Park.

#### *2.4.3.2 Community Gardens*

Community gardens have many benefits for a community and can change the character and function of an area through a positive intervention. What is particularly creative and appealing about community gardens is that they are sustainable in multiple facets. They are not only ecologically sustainable in the way that they reintroduce nature and food sources into urban settings, they also contribute to social sustainability. The following case of a recently developed community garden in Vancouver, British Columbia provides an example of how a community garden can contribute to the social dimension of a sustainable city.

##### *2.4.3.2.a My Own Back Yard (M.O.B.Y.) Community Garden Case Study*

In 2003, the land underneath the SkyTrain at Commercial Avenue and 11 Avenue in Vancouver, British Columbia was “bedeviled by drug users” (McMartin, 2006) and crime. Due to its location, it was not suitable for many types of development and sat as a

paved vacant lot. Then, in 2005, a group of community members transformed the City-owned lot into a community garden. While this transformation in and of itself is not remarkable, the approach they took is. The garden was consciously used as a tool to improve quality of life and reduce crime in the area. Through an exceptionally inclusive approach, everyone in the neighbourhood was welcome in the M.O.B.Y. community garden, including recovering drug addicts from a near by treatment facility. The name of the garden is representative of its inclusive attitude, as it is a direct rebuttal to the N.I.M.B.Y. (Not-in-my-back-yard) attitude so prevalent in our neighbourhoods. Community residents feel that the garden has had a significant positive impact on the neighbourhood. (McMartin, 2006) In addition to the benefits of urban agriculture and urban ecology, the garden has contributed towards the social sustainability of the community thanks to the open approach of the founders of the garden. It is a poignant example of the potential positive social effects of community gardens.

#### *2.4.3.3 Chicago Green Roof Program*

In 2001, a green roof was constructed on top of Chicago's City Hall under direction by Mayor Richard Daley. It was the first green roof in Chicago. Now, Chicago is leading the way in greening rooftops in North American Cities. Today it has over one hundred green roof projects underway. In 2006 the City increased its grant program from the previous year and is offering up to \$5000USD to assist with the installation of residential or small commercial green roofs. The Mayor of the City of Chicago is credited with taking the initial steps for implementing the Chicago Green Roofs. In an online article on the project by the American Society of Landscape Architects, the following statement is listed as the "client statement":

The City of Chicago Department of Environment (DOE) initiated the City Hall Rooftop Garden Pilot Project as part of the Urban Heat Island Initiative with the United States Environmental Protection Agency. The rooftop garden was designed to test its cooling effects and its ability to sustain a variety of plants in three different depths of growing media. Monitoring of the plants, birds and insects is underway. Results from monitoring the cooling effects during the garden's first summer showed a roof surface temperature reduction of 70 degrees and an air temperature reduction of 15 degrees. (Yocca, n.d.)

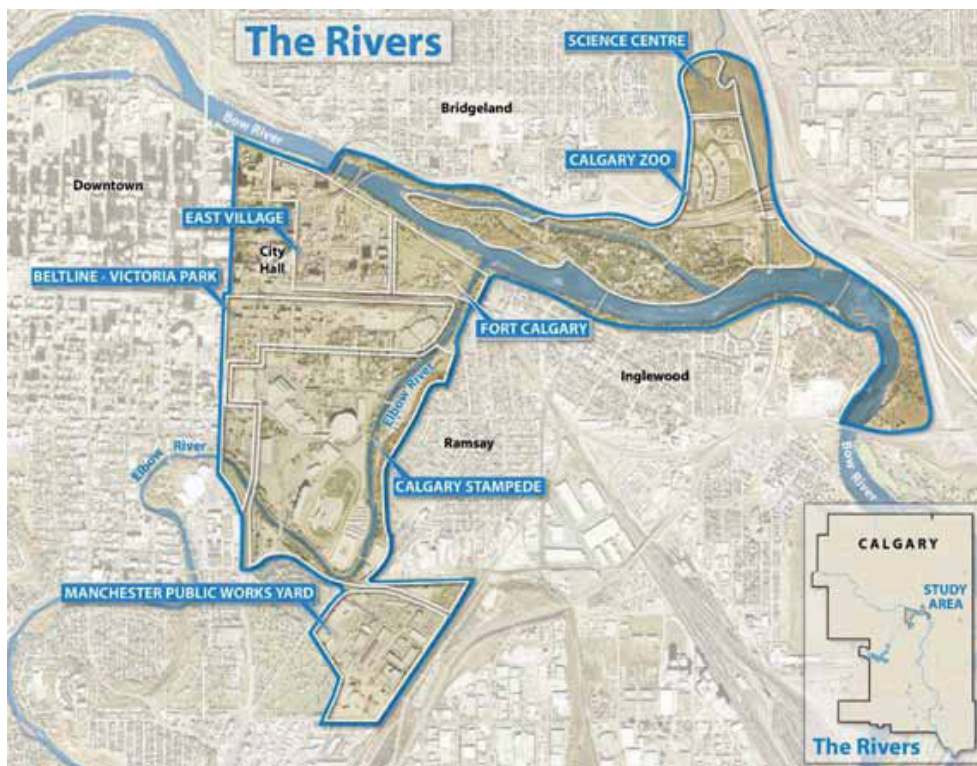
The green roof at City Hall has acted as a catalyst for the development of other green roofs. The monitoring of benefits shows residents and business owners that there are economic benefits to the gardens as well, and this educational component helped to spawn interest beyond grants, initiative, and enforcement from by the City. Chicago's example of green roofs is providing the planning profession with a measured example of how a small intervention to physical infrastructure can make a large impact. The green roofs are improving energy use, reducing the urban heat island effect, improving the aesthetic of the city and in some instances, increasing amenity space. The combination of acting as a role model proving it can be economical and offering an incentive system for private industry has been a successful model for changing standards and practices in the city of Chicago. This success can be applied in the Downtown East in Edmonton. When approaching the revitalization of Downtown East, the City should explore what appropriate incentives might be for desired elements of the vision for the Downtown East.

#### *2.4.3.4 The East Village, Calgary's Downtown East*

Calgary and Edmonton together make up two thirds of the population of Alberta, each home to approximately one million people in their metropolitan areas. In addition

to sharing a province and similar populations, the cities share many other similarities, including an underdeveloped area with low quality of life to the east of their downtowns which has persisted in decline for decades. In 2005, the City of Calgary adopted a new Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) for the East Village in an attempt to stimulate the revitalization of Calgary’s Downtown East. Following this Plan, the City actively sought ways to kick start the redevelopment required to revitalize the East Village. In 2007, the City of Calgary adopted the Rivers Community Revitalization Plan. The Rivers District, shown in Figure 2.1 below, encompasses the East Village and a significantly expanded area.

*Figure 2.1 The Rivers District*



The purpose of this Plan is to guide \$135 million in infrastructure upgrades and development through a newly formed Development Corporation, the Calgary Municipal Land Corporation, in order to kick start the revitalization of this area. The Corporation

has already overseen the construction of a new “River Walk” along the Bow River. This approach to revitalizing the East Village takes advantage of a new tool available to Municipalities in Alberta, the Community Revitalization Levy (CRL). A CRL is similar to Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) used in the United States to finance public infrastructure upgrades in an area in need of revitalization to stimulate private investment. The cost is recovered through a special tax applied to property owners who redevelop in the area. The City of Calgary identified that the situation in the East Village was so severe that it required intervention from the City before they could expect to see enough faith from the private sector that the area was changing to make an investment of private dollars in the area.

## **2.5 Summary**

This chapter has reviewed a wide spectrum of literature, all related to the process of revitalization in some way. Setting the base from which revitalization can be understood and discussed, neighbourhood decline is examined as areas experiencing decline are the target of revitalization. Then, the various forms of revitalization including major redevelopment and gentrification were analyzed to understand more accurately what type of revitalization is being discussed later in this thesis. In Edmonton’s Downtown East, several forms of revitalization have been attempted over the decades, and a number of specific attempts are reviewed later in Chapter 4 of this thesis. The literature discussed in this Chapter as it relates to types of revitalization will help to understand the theoretical underpinnings of each attempt at revitalization in the Downtown East. Following this was an examination of revitalization as a concept including how it is commonly applied as an urban planning tool and relevant concepts



that often factor into revitalization schemes such as urban design, mixed income, and urban ecology. This examination provides a starting point from which the paths and barriers to revitalization of Edmonton's Downtown East can be understood. Breaking down the issue of revitalizing this declining area into components helps to identify the unique strategic points where an intervention can have the greatest impact in successfully revitalizing the area, rather than applying a generic model of revitalization. This section of the literature review serves to establish a basis from which the research questions *What are the relevant factors and their relative importance in determining a vision for Edmonton's Downtown East?* and *Why have prior visions for Downtown East failed to revitalize the area?* can be examined and answered later in this thesis. Finally, this Chapter's review of contemporary factors that frame revitalization establishes an important context from which revitalization of the Downtown East is discussed and within which a vision for the Downtown East is proposed. The sustainability paradigm is outlined as an essential framework in which a vision for revitalization of the Downtown East must be developed, laying the theoretical groundwork for answering the main question of this research: *What is the most appropriate vision for Edmonton's Downtown East?* Examples of creative approaches to urban revitalization within this paradigm are put forward to begin to provide some tangible examples from which the Downtown East can glean certain elements and lessons. Now that this relevant literature has been discussed, a close examination of Edmonton's Downtown East and its revitalization can follow, based in a combination of relevant literature and primary and secondary research related specifically to the Downtown East.

## CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODS

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This chapter will provide a review of the methodology employed in this thesis and its position within contemporary social science research methods. The primary research question *What is the most appropriate vision for Downtown East?* presupposes a case study method of research. As will be described in greater detail later in this chapter, case study research lends itself to a qualitative method of research over a quantitative method. While there are many strengths and weaknesses associated with both qualitative and quantitative research respectively, the choice of one method over another is often dictated by the nature of the research problem. The research questions will likely be more appropriately answered by one of these methods over the other. (Walliman, 2005) In this instance, qualitative data collection and analysis of the case allows an interpretive, flexible approach to answer this research question and supporting questions.

Table 3.1 below, adapted from W. Lawrence Newman's book *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches (4<sup>th</sup> ed.)* briefly summarizes key differences between these two approaches to social research. As will become apparent in this chapter, the research in this thesis is well aligned with a qualitative style. The analysis of few cases, or in this research one case, and the thematic analysis of information are particularly relevant factors that help define this research as qualitative. While there are certain places where secondary quantitative research has been employed to substantiate the thematic analysis in this thesis, such as measures of quality of life and low income based on information from Statistics Canada, the predominant method of this research is qualitative in nature.

**Table 3.1 Quantitative Style versus Qualitative Style**

QUANTITATIVE STYLE	QUALITATIVE STYLE
Measure objective facts	Construct social reality, cultural meaning
Focus on variables	Focus on interactive processes, events
Reliability is key	Authenticity is key
Value free	Values are present and explicit
Independent of context	Situationally constrained
Many cases, subjects	Few cases, subjects
Statistical analysis	Thematic analysis
Researcher is detached	Researcher is involved

As the nature of this research is qualitative, several methods have been used to obtain information on the area. The numerous perspectives provided by the various sources of information help to create a comprehensive picture of the area and allow a more accurate analysis and proposed recommendations for Downtown East. In general, methods for collecting and analyzing data related to the case of Downtown East used in this thesis include both historic and field research. (Neuman, 2000) Historical research is was particularly important in answering the research question *Why have prior visions for Downtown East failed to revitalize the area?* while a combination of historical and field research styles were used in collecting and analyzing data to answer the questions *What are the relevant factors and their relative importance in determining a vision for Edmonton's Downtown East?* and *What is the most appropriate vision for Downtown East?*

A literature review is an important first step in introducing and positioning social research as “a specific research project is just a tiny part of the overall process of creating knowledge.” (Neuman, 2000) Prior to researching the case of Downtown East, a

literature review was undertaken to establish a context for this research within the broader planning literature related to revitalization, and specifically, revitalization of central urban areas both over modern planning history and in a contemporary context. This review of the literature identified a gap in the research related to areas sharing characteristics with Edmonton's Downtown East. This literature review also attempts to show the path of prior theory and practice related to revitalization leading up to today to understand how the current case of Downtown East is linked to this broader history.

### **3.1 CASE STUDY RESEARCH**

A case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case. A single leaf, even a single toothpick, has unique complexities – but rarely will we care enough to submit it to a case study. We study a case when it itself is of very special interest. We look for the detail of interaction with its contexts. Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstance (2000)

The quote above, found in the introduction of Robert E. Stake's book "The Art of Case Study Research", succinctly describes the rationale behind the choice to focus on the single case of Edmonton's Downtown East in this thesis research. While there are other similar cases, such as Calgary's East Village, which equally warrant study, Downtown East was selected as a case worth exclusive study. The primary reason for this is that despite many decades worth of attempts at revitalization, the area has persisted in decline, implicitly indicating that methods of revitalization that were successfully applied elsewhere were not effective here. This warrants an in depth examination of the unique circumstances of Downtown East in order to understand what the most appropriate vision is to guide its revitalization. According to Newman, case study research helps in the generation of new thinking and theory, however, he also warns of

the difficulty in generalizing to other cases. (2000) While this may present a potential limitation to the contribution of this research to broader planning practice and literature, it does not outweigh the benefits of studying such a case in depth. As put by Ragin:

Most quantitative data techniques are data condensers. They condense data in order to see the bigger picture. . . . Qualitative methods, by contrast, are best understood as data enhancers. When data are enhanced, it is possible to see key aspects of cases more clearly. (1994, p. 92)

By studying a single case in detail, there is an opportunity to uncover key aspects that may not be identified through a quantitative method of research.

### **3.2 DATA COLLECTION**

Four different methods data collection were utilized in this research to gather information on Edmonton's Downtown East. This approach, sometimes referred to as 'mixed method', helps to evaluate the case study of Downtown East from multiple perspectives, and minimize the limitations of individual methods. (Ritchie, 2003) A visual survey of the area, a newspaper search, a document search, and semi-structured key-informant interviews were all used as methods of collecting data for this thesis. The following sections describe each of these methods and how they were utilized in this research.

#### **3.2.1 Observation / Visual Survey**

Upon identifying Edmonton's Downtown East as the case study for my research, I visited the area to take a visual survey. According to Walliman, observation "can be a quick and efficient method of gaining preliminary knowledge or making a preliminary assessment of its state or condition." (2005) Photographs from this preliminary visual survey can be found in Appendix I. While I was already familiar with the area and have

traveled through it in the past, this survey allowed me to see the current state of the area and to observe it from the perspective of a social science researcher. This visit gave me a better knowledge of what building and functions are in the area and the physical condition of the buildings and infrastructure amongst other things. Throughout the remainder of my research, I continued to observe the area to become familiar with it and identify important features and functions as well as deficiencies. As this research is focused on an existing area, observation also allowed me to stay up to date on the area and any changes occurring there. While the area was partially chosen because it remains stagnant even during a booming economic period, it is undergoing some changes. An affordable housing project was under construction in the area when my research began and I have been able to watch this project be completed and residents move in. I have also been able to observe that the commercial space on the main floor of this project has not been successfully leased despite being available and advertized for some time. Observation alone, however, was not enough to research a thorough response to the research questions, particularly the supporting research question relating to past planning initiatives.

### **3.2.2 Document Search**

The next step in collecting data involved a document search. All government documents relating to the study area including background studies, statutory plans such as the 1994 and 1981 Boyle Street McCauley Area Redevelopment Plans and the City of Edmonton's Municipal Development Plan, and provincial legislation related to planning were reviewed. The documents reviewed ranged in date of publication from 1966 to 2008. These documents were collected by a variety of means. In some instances,

documents were available online. Current plans from the City of Edmonton and the provincial legislation were obtained this way while in Waterloo, Ontario. Other documents, particularly older ones, were obtained by visiting the City of Edmonton's Planning and Development Library in November 2007. Collectively, the documents obtained are helpful in many ways. Some documents contain empirical data on the residents of Downtown East establishing a demographic profile of the area. Collectively, the documents establish a hierarchy under which planning for the area must occur, beginning with the provincial legislation, which dictates the tools for implementing revitalization initiatives in an area, down to community opinion and involvement as summarized in some City documents. They establish a timeline for the area, showing when significant developments occurred, such as the creation of the civic centre directly to the west of the area, when plans were made to revitalize the area, when they were implemented and how, and if they were successful. Through the analysis of these documents, the recent history of the area can be established. As primary sources of information related to the Downtown East, these documents provide useful historic information on the Downtown East. While many of the key informants interviewed as part of this research have been involved with the area for many years, and in some cases have been involved with past planning initiatives, the documents themselves are an important source. "Because memory is imperfect, recollections are often distorted in a ways that primary sources are not." (Neuman, 2000) As such, these documents serve to confirm or refute certain statements made by key informants during interviews in addition to creating a timeline and history of the Downtown East since the late 1970s.

### **3.2.3 Newspaper Search**

The document search is useful in establishing the history, regulatory structure, and demography of the area. In order to research the less tangible elements relating to the area and construct a historical narrative, however, another method was employed. A newspaper search was conducted to understand stigma, associations, opinions and culture relating to downtown east. The qualitative and anecdotal nature of many news articles provides a source of information that enriches the more factual information contained in documents and plans related to the Downtown East. Upon conducting the newspaper search, another benefit that surfaced was the identification of key informants for interviewing. The newspaper search was conducted in October 2007 through the University of Waterloo's library system using the database 'Factiva'. The Edmonton Journal was searched using a variety of search terms. These terms were determined based on terms identified in the planning documents obtained online and in articles found. This area of the city is referred to under a number of different names and the various revitalization schemes in the past have taken on different names. The table below outlines the search terms used and the number of results and relevant results that each term returned.



**Table 3.2 Newspaper Search Results**

SEARCH TERMS	NO. OF ARTICLES RETURNED
Boyle Street	75
Downtown East	52
Jasper East	14
Old Towne Market	2
Jasper East Village	1
The Quarters Downtown	18
East Village	29
Jasper Avenue East	8
Edmonton Main Street Project	1
East Jasper Village	1

The newspaper search provided a useful chronology of events in the Downtown East. Perhaps the most useful outcome of the newspaper search was the generation of a preliminary list of key informants to be interviewed.

#### **3.2.4 Semi-Structured Key Informant Interviews**

Interviews were selected as a research method in order to obtain specific information related to the revitalization of Downtown East that was not readily available in other forms of data such as redevelopment plans and newspaper articles. Key informant interviews were selected as key informants can provide a depth of information that other sources cannot. While face-to-face interviews may be expensive slow and take a long amount of time, the ability to probe for further information, control the sequence of questions, ask open ended questions and complex questions made it an attractive form of data collection over a questionnaire or telephone interview. (Neuman, 2000)

The interview stage of the research began in October 2007 with the preparation of a submission to the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. The submission included semi structured interview guides for four categories of potential interviewees; planners and architects, developers, community outreach workers, and politicians. According to Lindlof, “different informants can offer a variety of insights because they have had unique experiences in the scene.” (1995) In order to obtain a balance of informed perspectives on the Downtown East, multiple categories of informants were targeted. The interview guides included questions organized into four categories; the interviewees position and relationship to the area of study, downtown east as it exists at present, revitalization as a concept, and the last section consisted of questions relating to the revitalization of Downtown East. The common structure of the interviews allowed the interviews to be cross-referenced at the data analysis stage of research, as is common in this type of research. (Lindlof, 1995) Copies of these interview guides are attached in Appendix II. A target of 10-15 interviews was set in order to ensure a representative range of opinions was obtained. Ethics approval was received from the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo in the fall of 2007.

Potential interviewees were contacted beginning in December 2007, with the first interview taking place January 1, 2008. A snowball technique was employed to identify additional key informants. Interviews were contacts by email with an information letter attached inviting them to participate in the study. This letter is contained in Appendix III of this thesis. When necessary, a follow up phone call took place to schedule an interview. Interviews were completed in October 2008 with a total of 10 key informants

interviewed at a place of convenience for the interviewee. While four categories of interviewees were established, several interviewees fell under more than one of these categories. The table below shows the breakdown of interviewees by group, where interviewees that fall into more than one category have been counted under each category.

**Table 3.3 Interviewees by Category**

INFORMANT	ARCHITECT/PLANNER	COMMUNITY REP.	POLITICIAN	DEVELOPER
Jane Batty			*	
Anna Bubel	*	*		
Gene Dub	*			*
Michael Farris		*		
Duncan Fraser	*			
Barry Johns	*			
Doug Kelly				*
John Kolkman		*		
Jim Taylor		*	*	
Armin Preiksaitis	*			
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

All interview participants provided verbal consent to have their interview audio recorded. This allowed me to review the recordings and take down detailed notes on the interviews, forming the basis of my analysis of the data. In addition, verbal consent was obtained for the use of all non-attributed and attributed quotations and references contained in this thesis in the manner approved by the Office of Research Ethics in the fall of 2007. The form used and approved for obtaining verbal consent is appended to this thesis as Appendix IV. Following the interview, a letter was sent by email to each interviewee, thanking them for their participation in the study. A copy of this letter can be found under Appendix V.

### **3.3 DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **3.3.1 Qualitative Analysis**

Unlike the large amounts of data which are often collected for qualitative analysis, which can readily be managed with the available standard statistical procedures conveniently incorporated in computer packages, there are no such standard procedures for codifying and analysing qualitative data. (Walliman, 2005, p. 310)

The first step in the analysis of the data collected for this research was a review of the documents related to Downtown East. Aspects related to vision, implementation, success and failure of the plans, and specific elements aimed at instigating revitalization were noted. Key documents that contained information important to the research questions or which have had an impact on the Downtown East were then summarized. These summaries are included in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

The process of sorting and analyzing data collected from the interviews involved a greater level of analysis. Once all interviews were completed, the response to each interview question was recorded on a chart. Participants were listed in columns with each question listed in a row. The ability to listen to the interviews multiple times through the audio recording ensured that the full response to each question was noted. With this raw data a process of successive approximation was undertaken to assist in the analysis of the data. Successive approximation is a qualitative form of data analysis that shares similarities with some types of coding. (Neuman, 2000) The data collected was cycled through numerous times, moving it from vague concepts and themes and concrete details to a comprehensive analysis containing generalized themes related to key interview topics.

For some topics, this took several iterations, while others were able to be done in one pass. For example, in response to the interview question “Do you believe the area is in need of revitalization?”, 100% of interviewees responded “Yes”, resulting in a straightforward analysis in determining the need for revitalization based on interview responses. This uniform response is further supported by quality of life indicators for the neighbourhood contained in City of Edmonton documents. An example where several iterations were required for a topic is the topic of a Vision for Downtown East. Through several iterations, multiple interview questions were reduced to one topic. Complex responses to these questions were eventually sorted into a number of common themes, with some more commonly expressed than others. This is important in the analysis of qualitative data because, as stated by Walliman, “the unwieldy mass of information that normally provides the basis for analysis, even when coded, clustered, summarized, etc., cannot be easily understood when presented as extended text.” (2005, p. 310)

Once common themes were identified and organized from the interview data, data from the other sources, including documents, newspaper articles, and visual survey were used to support themes or provide alternative perspectives on them. These themes are discussed in chapter 5 of this thesis and form a discussion based in paths and barriers to revitalization. Chapter 6 of this thesis takes responses to interview questions to form a vision for the Downtown East. It goes further to make recommendation on how to take advantage of paths and overcome barriers to revitalization. These recommendations are based both in the data collected and analyzed in this thesis and the literature reviewed in chapter 2, reintroducing the broader academic literature and theory to the analysis of the case of Edmonton’s Downtown East.

## **CHAPTER 4** FINDINGS

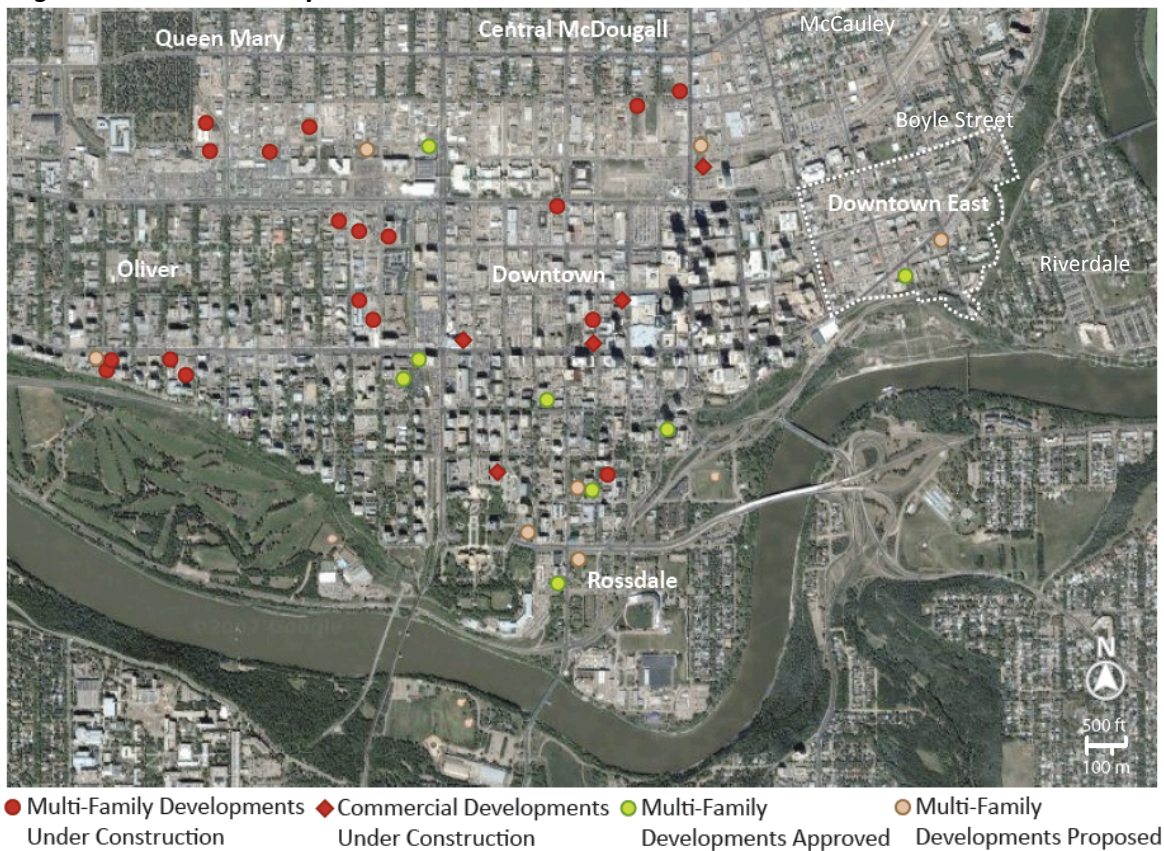
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This chapter provides an overview of the history of the Downtown East, a description of the surrounding contexts and their relationship to the Downtown East, and reviews of past planning attempts to revitalize the area. When reviewing past planning attempts, a brief discussion of why each was not successful and what was learned from them is also undertaken in order to better understand the factors that form the barriers and paths to revitalization described later in Chapter 5. This Chapter establishes an important base of information from which the discussion and recommendations in the next two chapters are formed.

### **4.1 CURRENT ENVIRONMENT IN EDMONTON**

After many years of slow growth, as Edmonton entered the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, a strong economy began to spawn development at a scale comparable to that which Edmonton experienced in the 1970s and early 1980s. For a number of years now, cranes have been a common feature of Edmonton's skyline. A great deal of reinvestment in the downtown has also occurred, with numerous new high rise towers being built. Figure 4.1 shows new multi-family developments and office buildings under construction, approved, and proposed in Edmonton's central area in September 2008. Multi-family developments mapped on this figure total 34 developments. (Colliers International, 2008) One new office building has recently been completed downtown, while four are currently under construction and seven are proposed. (Colliers International, 2008)

**Figure 4.1 New Developments in Central Edmonton**



The underlying factors that support this development boom in Edmonton are not static, and many of these factors are in the process of shifting. While much development is still underway around the City, the global economy has impacted Alberta and in December 2008, the unemployment rate went up by 0.7% from the previous month and was 1.1% higher than in December 2007. (Stats Canada, 2009) The City of Edmonton’s Chief Corporate Economist, however, remains positive about the economy in Edmonton, stating that “Edmonton’s GDP is forecast to grow in 2009, but not at the same rapid pace as in previous years.” (P. Tsounis, 2009) He states further that the slow down of the rapid pace will be of benefit to the City and its residents, and that the continued demand for energy resources puts Edmonton in a more secure position than other areas around the country. (2009) Edmonton has historically been subject to booms and busts in its

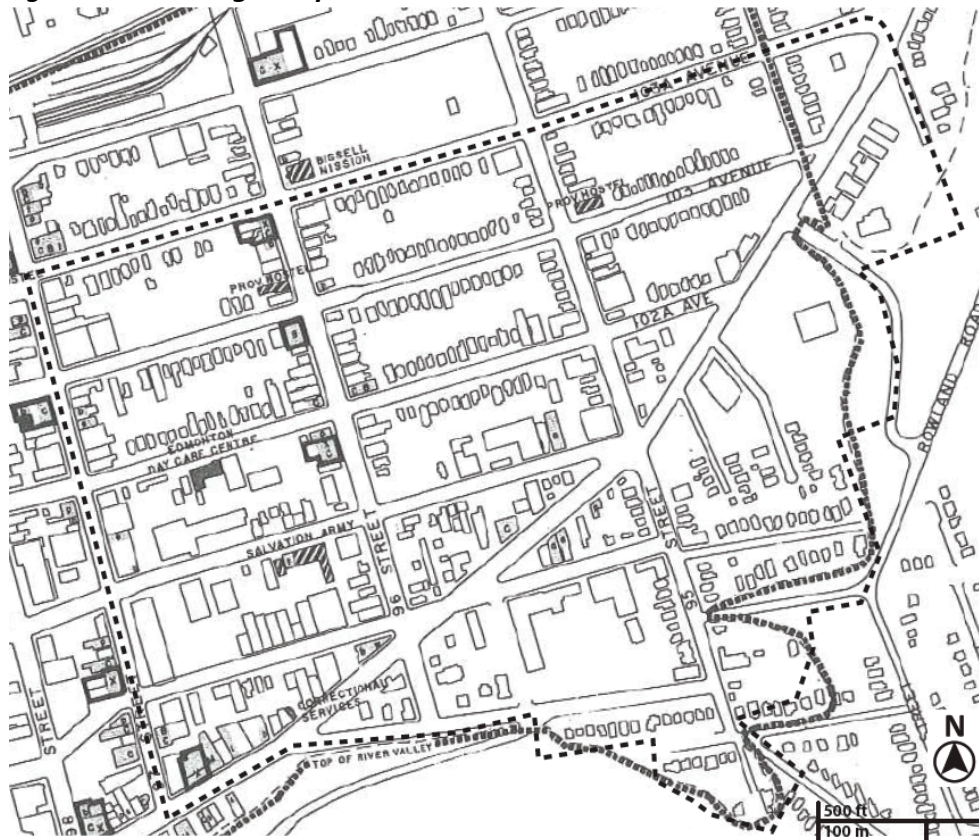
economy and these swings have had manifestations in the physical form of the City. While the boom of the 1970s is visible in the downtown through the architectural style of many of its skyscrapers, its impact on the Downtown East was equally significant, if less identifiable through a dated style. Much demolition took place in the area in the 1970s in preparation for redevelopment that did not occur as the economy changed. Many lots are still vacant as a result of the demolition that took place during that economic boom.

#### **4.2 HISTORY OF DOWNTOWN EAST**

Downtown East is one of the oldest settled areas in the City of Edmonton. By the 1960s, the area had developed a reputation of containing “a large portion of Edmonton’s skid row” (City of Edmonton, 1965) and the City’s planning department had begun to turn its attention to revitalizing this area. While this area was experiencing social and economic decline by this time, it did not have the high percentage of vacant land that it does today. Figure 4.2 shows two maps. The first map is modified from *The Boyle Street Study* published by the City of Edmonton’s Rehabilitation and Redevelopment Branch in 1971. This map shows the building footprints at that time. When contrasted against the second map that shows building footprints as of 2009, the significant demolition that has occurred in this area since the 1960s is apparent. According to Anna Bubel, community planner for the 1994 Boyle Street McCauley Area Redevelopment Plan, the planning work that was done in the 1970s resulted in a great deal of demolition to prepare for urban renewal that never materialized. (personal communication, 2008) There was also a great deal of demolition to the west of Downtown East in the civic centre of Edmonton, however, in that area the land was redeveloped. Many of the towers downtown date to the 1970s.



Figure 4.2 Building Footprints in Downtown East in the 1970s and 2000s



The downtown market has been an important feature of Edmonton for more than a century. In 1965 the City Market, maintained and operated by the City of Edmonton until 1998, was relocated to from its place in front of City Hall to the east side of 97 Street at 102 Street. The market operated here until 2000 when it was relocated 7 blocks west on 104 Street. The market has been successful in its new location and form. The market now takes place on the street for two city blocks that are closed to traffic on Saturdays. The market was no longer profitable in its location in the Downtown East, and it moved in 2000 in an attempt to stay operational. While the move has been an enormous success for the Market, it is a loss for the Downtown East.

#### **4.3 FRAMING DOWNTOWN EAST**

Downtown East is framed by three distinct parts of Edmonton; the civic centre, the North Saskatchewan River Valley, and the McCauley neighborhood. Each one of these distinct areas framing Downtown East represents important areas that shape the character of the City of Edmonton as a whole. These three areas and their significance are described individually below. In addition to these three areas, Downtown East is located within the Boyle Street neighbourhood, which extends to the northeast. To the southeast is the residential neighbourhood of Riverdale, which is one of the few residential communities in Edmonton that is located down the slope in the river valley.

##### **4.3.1 The Civic Centre of Downtown**

Directly to the west of Downtown East lies the cultural and institutional heart of the city. A six block area visible in Figure 4.3 represents a concentrated group of important buildings.

**Figure 4.3 Edmonton's Civic Centre adjacent to Downtown East**



At one time, these building were envisioned as a catalyst for the revitalization of Downtown East. While these buildings and their immediate surroundings are successful, they have had little positive impact on the adjacent area. In many ways, the massing, scale, and orientation of the buildings directly adjacent to Downtown East serve to further isolate the area, creating a wall along 97 Street. Canada Place for example takes the entire length of the block between Jasper Avenue and 102 Avenue and has no building entrances or active street frontages. While there are windows on the main level of this building, it is effectively a blank street wall that acts a dividing wall between the downtown to the west and Downtown East to the east of Canada Place. Downtown Edmonton struggled for many years in a fashion consistent with urban cores across North America, as cities decentralized and suburban development took precedence. In the mid



1990s, the City began to recognize that for downtown Edmonton to become a vibrant city centre, a significant residential population must be introduced to the core that had been historically lacking. In order to achieve this, the City offered financial incentives for developers to build residential buildings in the downtown. (J. Taylor, personal communication, 2008) According to Edmonton's Municipal Census, in 1991 the total population of downtown was 5,395. In 2005, the population of downtown had nearly doubled to 9,027. (2006c) Partially a result of this significant increase in residential population, Edmonton's downtown has experienced significant redevelopment and revitalization in the past decade. Downtown now has three new grocery stores that have opened in recent years.

#### **4.3.2 The River Valley**

The North Saskatchewan River Valley is a major urban park. Well protected and largely undeveloped, it is an important amenity space for Edmontonians. An extensive trail system runs through the valley and connects the green space to the city. It is not only an important local asset, but a regional asset as well. There are plans currently underway to enhance and preserve the River Valley creating a continuous 18,000 acre, internationally recognized park. (River Valley Alliance, 2007) As part of this plan, the newly redesigned Louise McKinney park, located directly south of Downtown East, plays an important role in connecting the River Valley system with the urban fabric of Edmonton. In addition to providing high quality amenity space adjacent to the Downtown East, there are spectacular, unobstructed views from Jasper Avenue of the River Valley. Figure 4.4 shows River Valley Views from the promenade just south of Jasper Avenue within Downtown East.

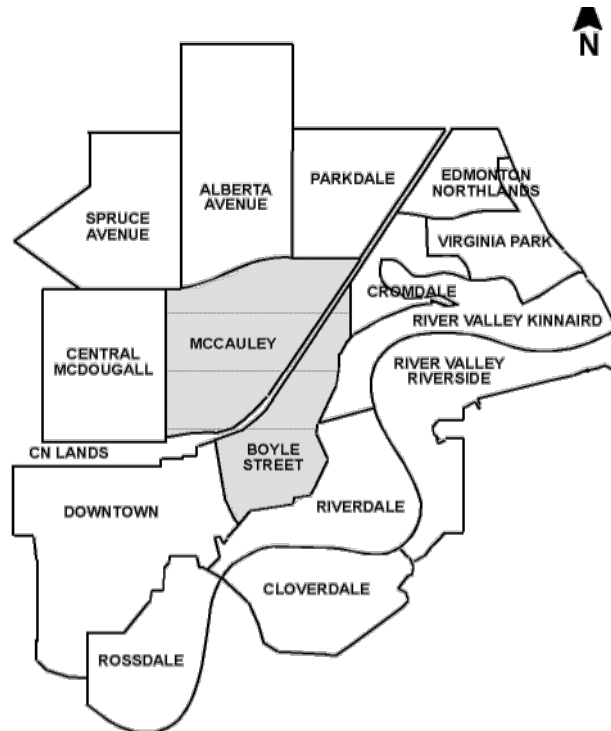
*Figure 4.4 View of the North Saskatchewan River Valley from Downtown East*



### **4.3.3 McCauley Neighborhood**

While the McCauley neighborhood has been targeted for redevelopment and up until recent years has been considered together with the Boyle Street neighborhood in the City of Edmonton’s documents and Plans, it is distinct from Downtown East in many regards. Figure 4.5 shows the McCauley neighbourhood in relationship to Downtown East

*Figure 4.5 Context Map showing Boyle Street McCauley in relation to other neighbourhoods*



McCauley is much more developed than Downtown East and is composed primarily of low density residential development. It covers a much larger area than Downtown East and has a larger population of over 4000. (City of Edmonton, 2006c) It is also home to Little Italy and Chinatown, both of which are important cultural centres, unique in the city. While Chinatown has remained in the same general area of the City, it has shifted over the years. In the 1970s, prior to the construction of many of the civic and arts buildings to the west of 97 Street, Chinatown occupied that space. (A. Preiksaitis, personal communication, 2008) As construction began and Chinatown lost its home, a plan was generated to re-place Chinatown in Downtown East. The plan, entitled *Chinatown Plan, Edmonton 1979* was completed by Ui + Ross Architects in 1978, and is described in detail later in this Chapter. Edmonton's sister city, the Chinese town of Harbin donated the gate to Chinatown which was placed at 102 Street and 97 Avenue as this was to be the entrance into Edmonton's new Chinatown. Despite the detailed 1979 plan, Chinatown eventually relocated primarily in the McCauley neighborhood. For a period of time, Edmonton's Chinatown was identified as two disconnected parts; Chinatown North and Chinatown South. Chinatown South was the result of planning efforts in the late 1970s and 1980s and today Downtown East has a significant number of Asian immigrants, many of whom live in the Edmonton Chinese Seniors Lodge located at 95 Street and 102 A Avenue. In addition to the residential population, there are many commercial and institutional uses targeted at the Chinese community in Downtown East.

Little Italy is also an important part of McCauley. The Italian Centre and Italian businesses attract people from all over Edmonton. In recent years, McCauley residents have taken back Giovanni Caboto Park located in the centre of the neighbourhood and it

is now well used and maintained. It hosts many celebrations year round. Little Italy is located along 95 Street in the McCauley neighbourhood.

While quality of life indicators may still suggest that the McCauley neighbourhood is amongst the most in need of revitalization in Edmonton (City of Edmonton, 2006a), the community capacity and success of planning interventions in McCauley has been far greater than in the Downtown East (J. Kolkman, personal communication, 2008; A. Bubel, personal communication, 2008) As such, strengthening the connection to the McCauley neighbourhood to the north of Downtown East may have a positive influence on Downtown East.

#### **4.4 DOWNTOWN EAST PRESENTLY**

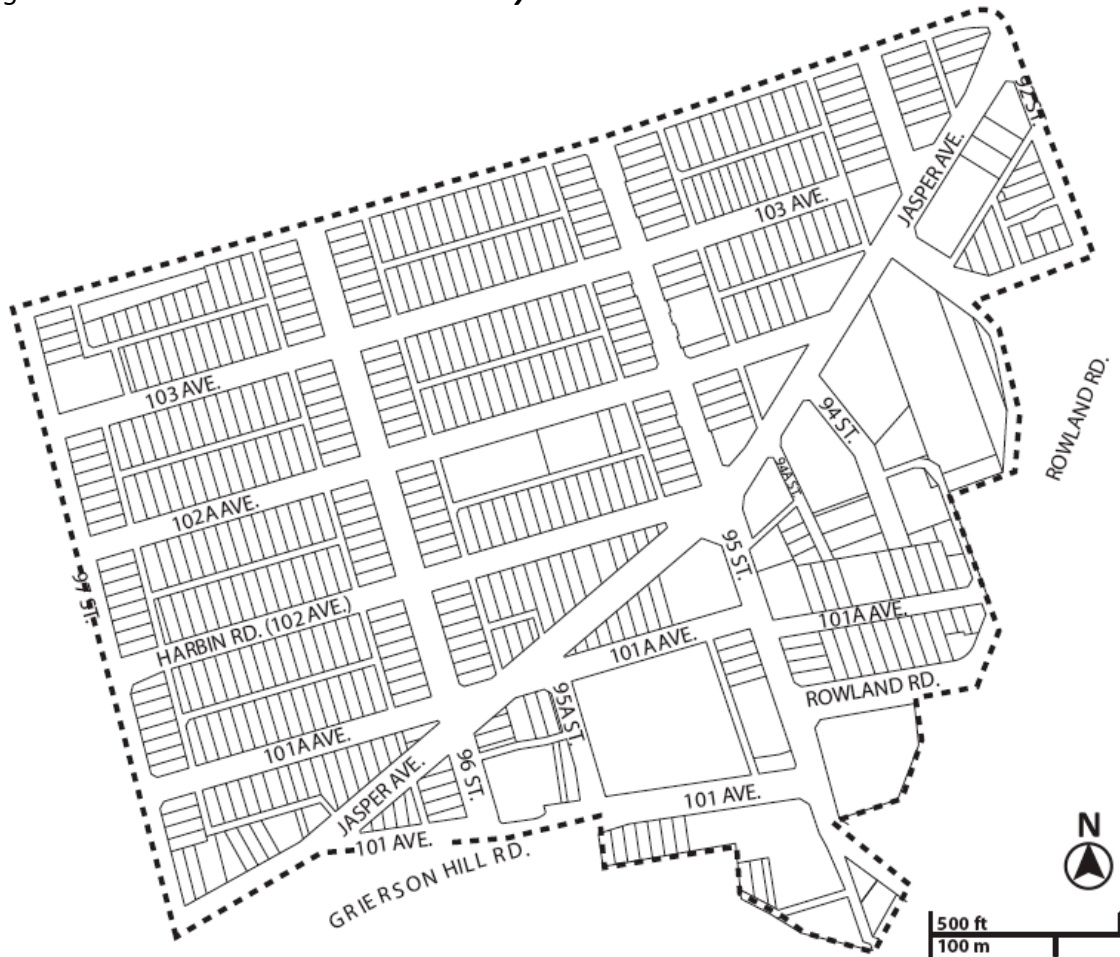
This section will examine the Downtown East as it presently exists and functions. As discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the underdeveloped nature of Downtown East may present some unique opportunities to achieve both place-based and people-based revitalization, as defined by Zielenbach. (2000) As there is both a need for community revitalization to improve quality of life of current residents in the Downtown East, and a need to redevelop in order to create a physical environment in which a community can exist, this section reviews both the physical fabric of Downtown East and the community of Downtown East to establish the base from which revitalization is being sought.

#### 4.4.1 The Physical Fabric

##### 4.4.1.1 Current Uses and Zoning

Downtown East, as identified in Figure 4.6, is a 40 hectare area made up of 18 city blocks.

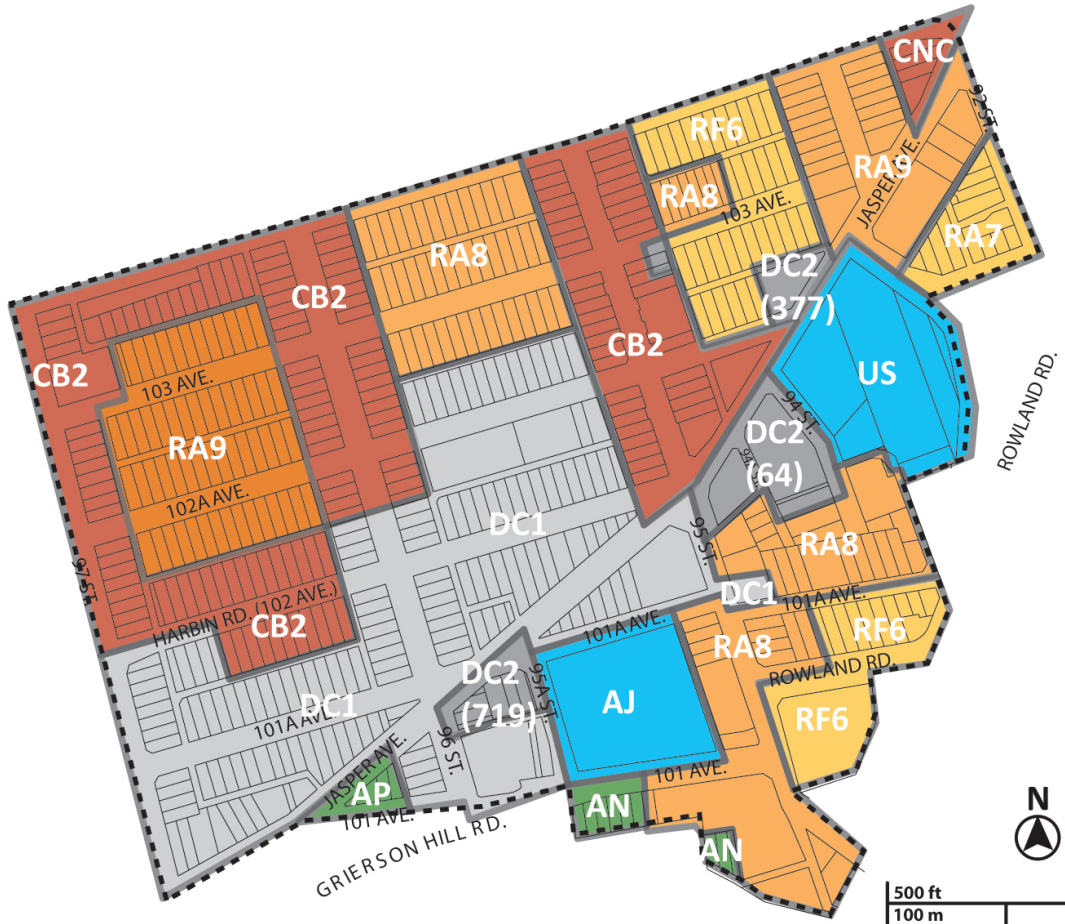
Figure 4.6 **Downtown East Plan Boundary**



Current zoning is identified in Figure 4.7, followed by an explanation of the zones in Table 4.1. As visible in the zoning map, the area is currently zoned predominantly for residential and commercial uses, with direct control zoning in the southern portion of the area.



Figure 4.7 Current Zoning in Downtown East



**Table 4.1 Zoning in the Downtown East**

Zone Map Label	Name of Zone	General Purpose Statement
A	Metropolitan Recreation Zone	The purpose of this Zone is to preserve natural areas and parkland along the river, creeks, ravines and other designated areas for active and passive recreational uses and environment protection in conformance with Plan Edmonton and the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan.
AJ	Alternative Jurisdiction Zone	The purpose of this Zone is to provide for lands that do not require a Development Permit when operating under the jurisdiction of federal legislation, provincial legislation or the <i>Constitution Act</i> , and to prescribe land uses and regulations for these lands if the legal status of these lands change and they become subject to this Bylaw.
AN	River Valley Activity Node Zone	The purpose of this Zone is to allow for limited commercial development within activity nodes in designated areas of parkland along the river, creeks and ravines, for active and passive recreational uses, tourism uses, and environmental protection in conformance with Plan Edmonton, the Ribbon of Green Master Plan, and the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan.
AP	Public Parks Zone	The purpose of this Zone is to provide an area of public land for active and passive recreational uses.
CB2	General Business Zone	The purpose of this Zone is to provide for businesses that require large Sites and a location with good visibility and accessibility along, or adjacent to, major public roadways.
CNC	Neighbourhood Convenience Commercial Zone	The purpose of this Zone is to provide for convenience commercial and personal service uses, which are intended to serve the day-to-day needs of residents within residential neighbourhoods.
DC1	Direct Development Control	The purpose of this Provision is to provide for detailed, sensitive control of the use, development, siting and design of buildings and disturbance of land where this is necessary to establish, preserve or enhance: a. areas of unique character or special environmental concern, as identified and specified in an Area Structure Plan or Area Redevelopment Plan; or b. areas or Sites of special historical, cultural, paleontological, archaeological, prehistorical, natural, scientific or aesthetic interest, as designated under the Historical Resources Act.
DC2 (64)	Site Specific Development Control	To provide a Site Specific Development Control District for a site near Chinatown as defined in the Boyle McCauley Area Redevelopment Plan Bylaw, ensuring that the architecture of the development reflects a Chinese character and that the mix of uses is both functional and supportive of the Chinese character of the area. The District also recognizes that the site includes an existing building and that the District is separated by a roadway into two parcels. The development criteria of the redistricting is based on development plans approved by the Development Appeal Board on November 21, 1984 (reference D.A. #84-07212-2).
DC2 (377)	Site Specific Development	To provide a Site Specific Development Control District to accommodate a mixed use development containing primarily apartment housing with a limited range of commercial uses and

	Control	daytime child care services located on the ground floor only, while ensuring that development is sensitive to surrounding development.
DC2 (564)	Site Specific Development Control	To establish a Site Specific Development Control Provision to accommodate a 12-suite downtown low-rise apartment flat on a limited site with regulations to address compatibility with adjacent development.
DC2 (719)	Site Specific Development Control	The purpose of this Site Specific Development Control Provision is to accommodate the development of a 16 storey high quality, sustainable, mixed use building consisting of a 14 storey residential tower above a 2 storey office/ commercial podium with underground parking that corresponds with the scale of development as envisioned in The Quarters Downtown as approved by Council on September 26, 2006, and provides on-site amenities and off-site improvements that recognize the unique locational characteristics of the site.
RA7	Low Rise Apartment Zone	To provide a Zone for Low Rise Apartments.
RA8	Medium Rise Apartment Zone	The purpose of this Zone is to provide for Medium Rise Apartments.
RA9	High Rise Apartment Zone	The purpose of this Zone is to provide for High Rise Apartment Buildings.
RF2	Low Density Infill Zone	The purpose of the Zone is to retain Single Detached Housing, while allowing sensitive infill at a slightly higher density, including Secondary Suites under certain conditions.
RF5	Row Housing Zone	The purpose of this Zone is to provide for relatively low to medium density housing, generally referred to as Row Housing.
RF6	Medium Density Multiple Family Zone	The purpose of this Zone is to provide for medium density housing, where some units may not be at grade.
US	Urban Service	The purpose of this Zone is to provide for publicly and privately owned facilities of an institutional or community service nature.

Source: City of Edmonton

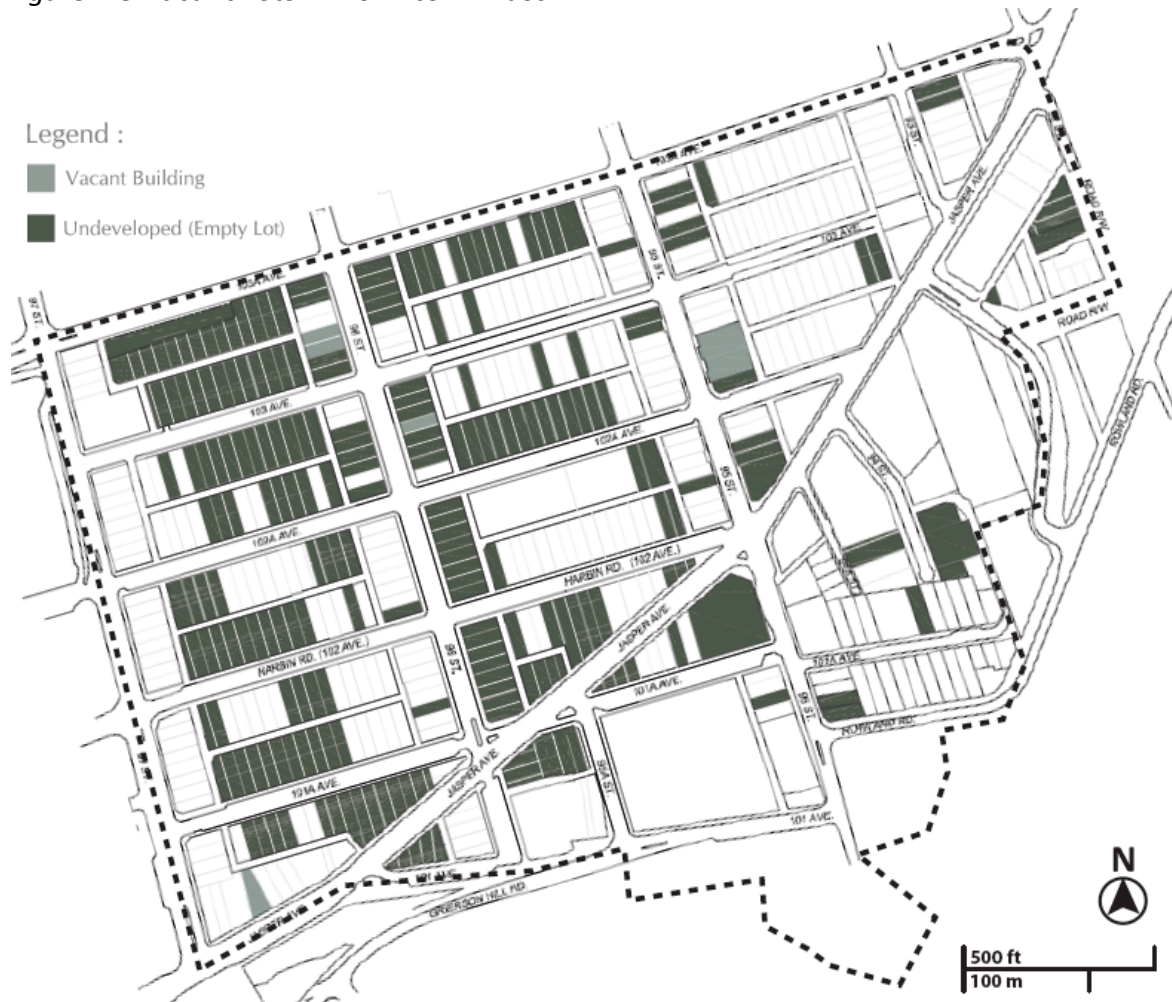
The City is in the process of developing new zoning for the area as a part of The Quarters project, described in detail later in this chapter. The proposed zoning, yet to be adopted by Council, consists of an Overlay for the entire Quarters area and DC1 zones for the five distinct areas contained within the Vision and Urban Design Plan for the area. These new land use zones and their implications for Downtown East will be discussed later in the Section regarding The Quarters later in this Chapter.

#### *4.4.1.2 Vacant space and parking lots*

During the very first public consultation for the City of Edmonton's newest initiative for the area, The Quarters, Don Stastny, an architect from Portland retained by the City to develop a vision for the area was quoted as saying "I don't know of any place in the world where you have a city the magnitude of Edmonton with that much fallow ground lying next to downtown." (Kent, 2006) While this statement was felt to lack sensitivity by those in attendance, as it did not acknowledge the approximately 2,400 residents who call the area home (John Kolkman, personal communication, 2008), it points to a plain observation of the area; there is a high proportion of vacant land in this area.

Despite zoning in Downtown East that allows for intense land use in many areas and decades worth of studies and plans aimed at encouraging redevelopment, a high percentage of the land in this area is presently vacant. Figure 4.8 shows vacant lots in Downtown East. Vacant lots shown include surface parking.

Figure 4.8 Vacant Lots in Downtown East



#### 4.4.1.3 Historic Buildings

Edmonton is a young city. It has recently celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The majority of the city's infrastructure and structure has been built post-WWII. When Edmonton was first being settled in the early 1900's, Downtown East was the core of the city, particularly the area along Jasper Avenue, which at the time served as an important route in the city. A number of brick buildings were erected in the area, including the Gibson Block, a flat iron building at the corner of Jasper Avenue and 96 Street. Many of

these buildings housed important services for a great number of years in Edmonton's early days, such as the W.W. Arcade hardware store on the corner of Jasper Avenue and 97 Street, or the Gem Theatre along that same block. When the Hudson Bay Company arrived in the city, they located on land to the west of Downtown East. They also sold off lands to the west of their site. Additionally, the parliament building and the highlevel bridge, which joins the north and south bank of the North Saskatchewan River, were also built to the west of Downtown East along 109<sup>th</sup> Street. Subsequently, the core of the city shifted west and to this day is centered around the Hudson's Bay Company Building, which has recently become the downtown campus for the University of Alberta. Office towers began to fill the area around the Bay Building in the 1970s while the Downtown East was overlooked. From this time onwards, Downtown East was overlooked for development. Many buildings in the area fell into disrepair and were eventually demolished, leaving the large areas of vacant land that are found there today. A positive outcome of this general neglect, however, is that several significant historic buildings were left intact. Along Jasper Avenue, beginning at the corner of 97<sup>th</sup> Street and moving eastwards, is a series of historically significant buildings. Together, they form a continuous historic streetscape. Two of these buildings, the Brighton Block and the Lodge Hotel are currently undergoing renovations and together will house the Ukrainian Canadian Archives and Museum of Alberta. Figure 4.9 shows the location of historic buildings in Downtown East.



Figure 4.9 Historic Buildings in Downtown East



#### 4.4.1.4 Land Ownership

While the City of Edmonton is currently in the process of accumulating lands in Downtown East along 96 Street for their most recent revitalization scheme, property ownership in the area remains quite scattered. This has been an obstacle to the area’s revitalization in the past. In 2003, Carma Development undertook a land consolidation study in the area to examine potential for development in the area and was unable to successfully purchase enough adjacent properties to make developing in the area feasible. (D. Kelly, personal communication, 2008) As a result, new development in the area continued to remain absent despite efforts by the City to encourage redevelopment in the

area. According to Doug Kelly, the former Senior Vice President of Carma Developers, many land owners using their properties for surface parking were unwilling to sell because surface parking is such a profitable use in the area due to the proximity to the downtown core.

#### *4.4.1.5 In the works – Upcoming uses*

While Downtown East is generally stagnant or declining, there are pockets of redevelopment occurring within the area. A number of historic buildings, some of which are described above, have been restored or adaptively reused. Notable examples are the Gibson Block, Goodridge Block, and Hecla Building; a women's shelter, upscale restaurant with subsidized housing above, and a condominium building respectively.

##### *4.4.1.5.a City Market Affordable Housing*

In addition to these reused structures, some new construction has also taken place in the area. Local architect and developer, Gene Dub, completed an affordable housing project in 2008 along the western edge of Downtown East. The site is historically significant as it is the former location of the downtown farmers market that was a vibrant market for many years until it moved to 104 Street in an outdoor street format in the early 2000s. The affordable housing project was built over the old city market building that has been preserved to allow commercial uses along 97 Street. While the residential component of this redevelopment has been successful, the commercial space has been difficult to lease and currently remains vacant. (G. Dub, personal communication, 2008)



#### 4.4.1.5.b Valleyview Properties

On April 16, 2008, City Council approved the rezoning of a site located on the south side of Jasper Avenue and the west side of 96 Street to a (DC2) Site Specific Development Control Provision, Bylaw 14888. The proposed redevelopment is for a mixed-use high-rise building. The general purpose statement contained in the DC2 is as follows:

The purpose of this Site Specific Development Control Provision is to accommodate the development of a 16 storey high quality, sustainable, mixed use building consisting of a 14 storey residential tower above a 2 storey office/ commercial podium with underground parking that corresponds with the scale of development as envisioned in The Quarters Downtown as approved by Council on September 26, 2006, and provides on-site amenities and off-site improvements that recognize the unique locational characteristics of the site.

While it has been contested whether this development is consistent with the most recent Vision for Downtown East, some have indicated that this scale of development is necessary to catalyze the area and help increase confidence in the reinvestment potential of this area. Donn Logan and Wayne Attoe, in their chapter *The Concept of Urban Catalysts* (2003) define an urban catalyst as “an urban element that is shaped by the city (its “laboratory” setting) and then, in turn, shapes its context.” They carry on to say that “the important element is that the catalyst is not a single end product but an element that impels and guides subsequent development.” In an interview with developer and architect Gene Dub, he expressed that despite concerns that high-rise development may not be appropriate on the south side of Jasper Avenue, redevelopment of this scale would have a positive effect for encouraging redevelopment in the Downtown East. He felt that several large scale projects will have to occur in this area to help change perceptions of

the area and encourage further redevelopment. Some interviewees expressed skepticism regarding the eventual construction of this project, as this area has suffered from false starts on development many times in the past. (J. Kolkman, personal communication, 2008)

#### 4.4.1.5.c Boyle Renaissance

Boyle Renaissance, while technically outside of the boundary of Downtown East, is a project underway by the City of Edmonton that could have a tremendous impact on the Downtown East. Adjacent to the north of Downtown East, the Boyle Renaissance project consists of two and a half city blocks contained between the Light Rail Transit tracks to the north, 95 Street to the east, 103A Avenue to the south, and 96 Street to the west. On the City of Edmonton's project website, they state that the project is a response to concerns about what might happen to the people in Downtown East as the area is revitalized. They state that:

Boyle Renaissance will bring established agencies together to integrate their services “in place”, in a way that best meets the needs of the people in the area. That includes providing the proper mix of housing, as well as services. Supportive housing, seniors housing, and continuing care facilities for area residents – up to 900 units could be constructed to meet the shelter needs for the people in the area. (2008b)

Figure 4.10 shows a rendering of the development concept for Boyle Renaissance.

Figure 4.10 Rendering of Boyle Renaissance



#### 4.4.1.5.d Ukrainian Canadian Archives and Museum of Alberta (UCAMA)

Ukrainian Canadians represent a significant portion of immigrants in Alberta. In the 1970s, several members of the Ukrainian Canadian community established UCAMA. Its current facility, located in the McCauley neighbourhood in Edmonton is no longer meeting their needs. Their new home will be in two of the historic buildings Jasper Avenue between 96 Street and 97 Street. After many decades of failed attempts to revitalize this string of buildings, with the Goodridge Block at the west edge of the block being the only building to have undergone a major renovation and restoration, the buildings are currently undergoing conversion into the new facility for UCAMA. Figure

4.11 below shows the structure in place on the Lodge Hotel that is stabilizing the façade while the building undergoes significant construction.

**Figure 4.11 Lodge Hotel Under Construction in 2008**



This new use will be a destination within Downtown East that can help attract people to the area. UCAMA estimates up to 50,000 visitors a year to the Museum and Archives and expects to play a positive role in the revitalization of this area. (Ukrainian Canadian Museum and Archives of Alberta, 2008) While the facades of these two buildings are being predominantly maintained, the overall look of UCAMA will bring a new character to the area. Figure 4.12 shows an architectural rendering of the new UCAMA facility.

**Figure 4.12 Rendering of UCAMA**



#### **4.4.2 The Community**

Downtown East is home to approximately 2,400 residents. As the boundary of Downtown East has newly been identified by the City of Edmonton, neither municipal nor census data for this area exclusively is available. Downtown East represents a little under half of the Boyle Street neighbourhood, where in 2005 the population was 6,749. In the Boyle Street neighbourhood as a whole, the most populous age bracket is 20-30 year olds and the majority are men. In 2005, over 50% of the residents of Boyle Street were single and 57% lived in single person households. Over 90% of residents rent their homes. (City of Edmonton, n.d.)

When asked to describe the community of Downtown East, most interviewees referred to one or a combination of four things; social agencies, modest or low incomes, transient population, and the Chinese community. Each of these aspects of the community of Downtown East and how they shape the area are described in the following four sections.

##### **4.4.2.1 Community of Care: Social Agencies and Supports**

There are a significant number of social agencies located within or offering services within the boundaries of Downtown East. The Alex Taylor school building just

south of Jasper Avenue is home to E4C, formerly known as the Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation. This organization is a major charity organization that provides a variety of services throughout Edmonton. While the E4C serves individuals throughout Edmonton, they have a strong presence in the area. In addition the E4C head office being located in Downtown East, the Crossroads Outreach Office, Kids in the Hall training program, Women's Emergency Aid Centre (WEAC) and a several affordable housing buildings that are run by E4C are all located within the area. (M. Farris, personal communication, 2008) WEAC has been located in the historic Gibson Block, a flat iron building located at the northwest corner of Jasper Avenue and 96 Street since the early 1990s.

The Salvation Army also has their Prairies and Northern Territories Divisional Headquarters in Downtown East at 96 Street and 101A Avenue. This location includes their Community & Family Services, Emergency Disaster Services, and Addictions & Residential Centre (ARC). According to the Prairies and Northern Territories Divisional Headquarters website, <http://ab.salvationarmy.ca>, ARC includes a Single Men's Residence, a Men's Supportive Residence, the Anchorage Addiction Treatment Program for men and women, Keystone Apartments for men in recovery and the Cornerstone Apartments for women in recovery.

The Edmonton People in Need Shelter Society (PINSS) has several rooming houses located throughout the area (M. Farris, personal communication, 2008). The Inner City Agencies Foundation describes PINSS as a community based charitable organization whose mission is to improve the well being and enhance the quality of life of those individuals in the community with chronic severe mental illness that provides



housing, meals, nursing and personal care, medical and psychiatric services, medication dispensing and monitoring, outreach services, money management, educational and vocational programs and services amongst other services. (n.d.)

#### *4.4.2.2 Low Income and Quality of Life*

As part of the City of Edmonton's Community Services Department's Neighbourhood Revitalization Project in 2006, a Quality of Life index was prepared and neighbourhoods in the City were ranked according to this index. Receiving a score of 32, the Boyle Street neighbourhood, which encompasses the Downtown East, qualifies as a priority neighbourhood for revitalization. Information for Downtown East exclusively is not readily available, however, the residents of Downtown East account for roughly one third of the Boyle Street population of 6,749 as counted in the City of Edmonton's Municipal Census in 2005. This municipal census offers some interesting data when city averages are compared against the Boyle Street averages. According to Ley and Frost's typology of inner city neighborhoods, depicted earlier in this thesis as Table 2.1, tenure is an indicator of quality of life in an inner city neighbourhood. In the City of Edmonton, 38.22% of residents rented their homes in 2005. By comparison, 89.19% of residents in Boyle Street rented. According to the 2005 Municipal Census, while only 2.5% of Edmontonians were unemployed, the number of people living in Boyle Street who were unemployed was more than double the city average at 5.5%. In 2001, the average household income in Boyle Street was \$31,429 with 31% of the population making between \$10,000 and \$19,999 a year. (City of Edmonton, n.d.)

#### *4.4.2.3 Transient Population*

According to the counts undertaken by the Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing in 2006, there were 2618 homeless people in the city. This number was up significantly from the first count undertaken in 1999, which identified 836 homeless in the city that year. Of the 2618 homeless identified in 2006, 844 were living in emergency accommodation. Many of the emergency shelters in Edmonton are located in or near Downtown East. In addition to the shelters, which provide a place to sleep, there are also hotel bars in Downtown East that serve as a social club for Edmonton's transient population, particularly the portion of the population with an alcohol addiction. (G. Dub, personal communication, 2008) The concentration of shelters, services, and social spaces serving Edmonton's transient population in Downtown East lend support to comments by interviewees regarding the presence of a visible transient population in Downtown East.

#### *4.4.2.4 The Chinese Community*

Downtown East has been an area where new immigrants have settled for decades. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, the area immediately west of Downtown East had a high concentration of new Chinese immigrants. As this area was redeveloped into Canada Place, the City and the Chinese community worked to find a new area to settle in. In 1979, the Chinatown Plan was created and the Chinese City of Harbin was adopted as Edmonton's sister city. At this time, the gate was constructed at 97 Street and 102 Avenue and was intended to be an entrance feature to the new Chinatown. Despite significant investment by the City and by members of the Chinese community, a second Chinatown developed further to the north along 97 Street and eventually the City formally recognized this area as Chinatown. While Chinatown is now formally located in



the McCauley neighbourhood, several buildings that were built by the Chinese community remain in the Downtown East area and represent a significant portion of the community in the area. The Chinese Elders Mansion, the Harbin Gate, and several Chinese businesses are located in Downtown East. The Chinese population represents an important part of the community of Downtown East.

#### **4.5 VISIONS OF CHANGE**

In the 1960s, the Downtown East had shifted from its position as the heart of the city, to an area of the city containing “a large portion of Edmonton’s skid row”. (City of Edmonton, 1965, p. 1) It was in the 1960s that the planning and development department in the City of Edmonton first turned its attention to this area and began actively trying to revitalize the area. In the decades since then, this area has been subjected to several revitalization and redevelopment schemes. Within the small successes and significant failures of these plans are lessons about revitalization of Downtown East and similar areas within other major Canadian cities. The remainder of this chapter will review plans and redevelopment schemes that have been designed for parts or all of downtown east over the past 55 years. The successes and failures of these plans will be discussed in order to understand both what has shaped downtown east and what lessons can be learned to guide future attempts at revitalizing this area. This section will seek to answer the research question “*Why have prior visions for Downtown East failed to revitalize the area?*” as an important step in answering “*What is the most appropriate vision for downtown east?*”

First, major redevelopment schemes that have occurred in the area will be examined followed by the impact of two Area Redevelopment Plans (ARPs) that

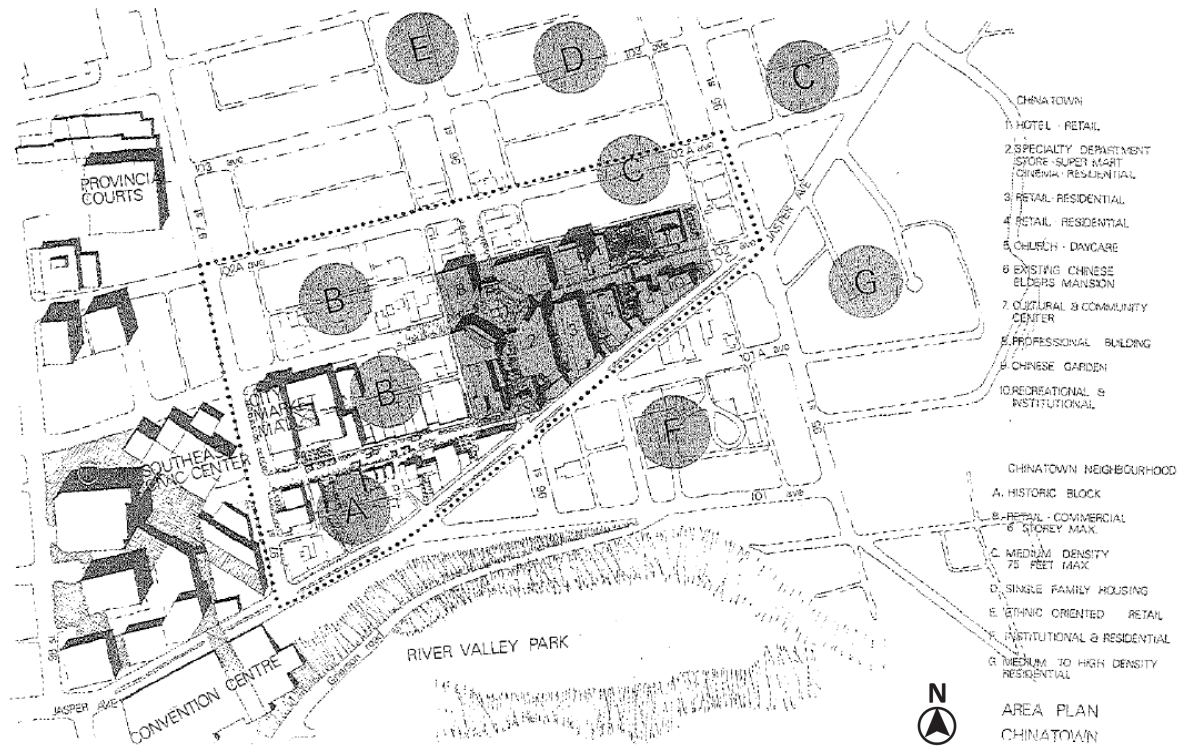
Downtown East has fallen within. Lastly, the City of Edmonton's most recent plan for the Downtown East, The Quarters, will be examined in detail and its potential for revitalizing the area will be discussed.

Three significant schemes are examined below; the Chinatown Plan 1979, the Jasper East Block, and the Old Towne Market.

#### **4.5.1 Chinatown Plan 1979**

Downtown East has been home to recent immigrants for as long as it has been settled. For over a century, there has been a concentration of Chinese businesses and residents in the Boyle Street neighbourhood. (Ui + Ross, 1978) In the late 1970s, the City of Edmonton began actively planning for the “orderly and viable redevelopment of Edmonton’s Chinatown”. (City of Edmonton, 1978) In 1978, a working paper was undertaken by the City to provide a base of information base for developing a Plan for Chinatown. It inventoried the area and found a significant concentration of “residents of Chinese extraction” (City of Edmonton, 1978) and commercial and retail operations that were tailored to the Chinese community in the six blocks between 97 and 95 Streets and Jasper Avenue and 102A Avenue. The working paper also concluded that approximately 75% of the buildings in that area were in need of minor repairs. Later that same year, Ui + Ross Architects completed the *Chinatown Plan 1979*. This plan took the results of the working paper and design study trip to a variety of Chinatowns across North America and formulated a master plan for Chinatown. This Plan redefined the boundaries of Chinatown to include the area shown in Figure 4.13. The remainder of the area that was identified in *Working Paper #1: The Future of Chinatown* is referred to as “Chinatown neighbourhood” and only has vague descriptors associated with the area.

Figure 4.13 Chinatown Plan Area



The need for the plan arose from the displacement of the historic Chinatown that was on the west side of 97 Street when Canada Place was built. (A. Preiksaitis, personal communication, 2008) The success of this plan today is somewhat mixed. The Harbin Gate was put into place along 97 Street at the entrance to 102 Avenue, renamed Harbin Road. Also, buildings such as the Chinese Elders Mansion or the Edmonton Chinatown Multi-Cultural Centre were constructed after the plan was put in place. Despite the success of attracting a number of Chinese businesses and residents to the area identified in Figure 4.13 above, the community and the City both recognize that Chinatown has established itself, with no formal direction, further north along 97 Street. Figure 4.14 shows 97 Street today at 107A Avenue where the main portion of Chinatown is located.

Figure 4.14 *Edmonton's Chinatown*



While the Chinatown Plan 1979 left a visible mark on the Downtown East, the success of the plan was minimal in comparison to what it envisioned. Over a period of time, land economics encouraged small businesses that wanted to be a part of Chinatown to locate further North where it was more affordable to lease space. Eventually, there was such a concentration of Chinese businesses in that area that the City formally acknowledged it as ‘Chinatown North’ and put in streetscape improvements that recognized the cultural nature of the area. Speculative land owners and fragmented ownership made it difficult for Chinatown to develop according to plan, and as such it naturally moved to the north.

#### **4.5.2 Jasper East Block**

As described above, the Chinatown Plan was completed in the late 1970s, while planning activities were already underway for the Boyle Street McCauley ARP. Shortly before the adoption of the ARP in 1981, architect Stephen Ui developed a scheme for the Jasper East Block on behalf of the property owners. This scheme varied considerably from what the planning department had conceived of as part of the ARP that was underway. The proposed zoning contained in the ARP was altered to reflect this shortly before the ARP went to Council for approval. Three months after the adoption of the Boyle Street McCauley ARP, a study by Hanscomb and Roy was undertaken for the City Planning Department entitled *Jasper East Block Restoration Feasibility Study*, which took inventory of the history and current state of the string of historic buildings along Jasper Avenue between 96 and 97 Street. The report recommended the retention of four building facades along Jasper Avenue. Leading from the outcome of this study, the City of Edmonton's Urban Design Unit, Central Area Planning Section in the Planning Department undertook the *Jasper East Block Urban Design Study*. This study was completed in 1982 and contained Urban Design Guidelines for the triangular shaped block bordered by 101 A Avenue, Jasper Avenue, 96 Street and 97 Street. Figure 4.15 shows the two alternatives for the suggested built form of the Jasper East Block.



Figure 4.15 Built Form Alternatives for Jasper East Block

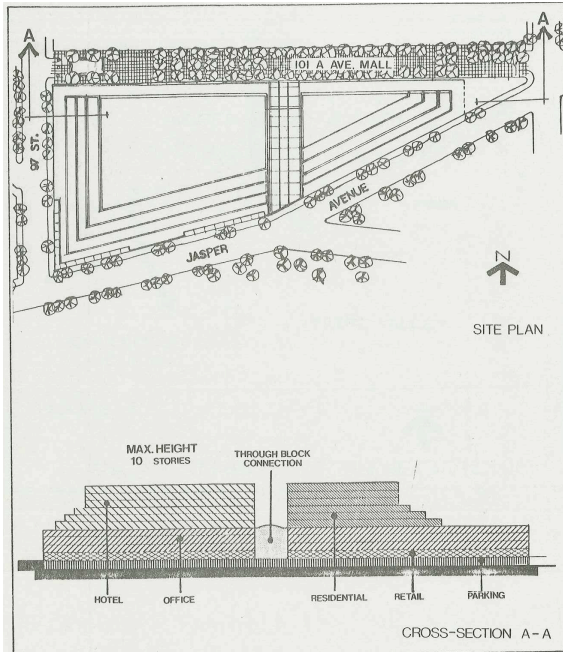
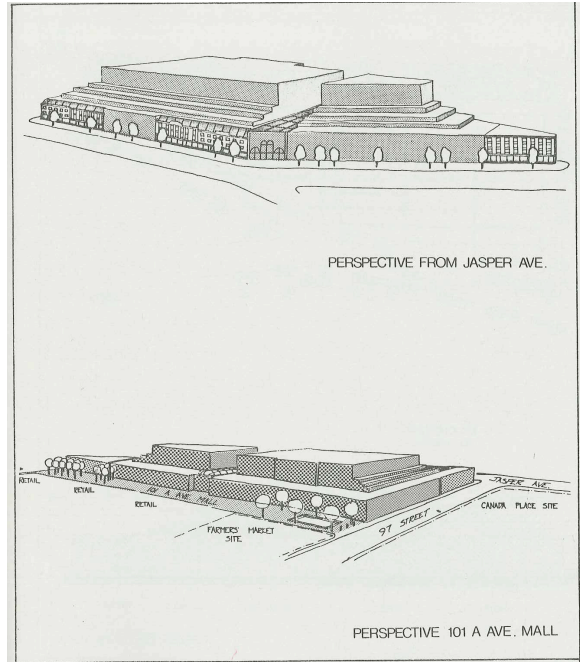


FIGURE 8

SUGGESTED BUILT FORM - Urban Design Guideline No. 3.2.13



- ALTERNATIVE 1

Urban Design Guideline No. 3.2.13

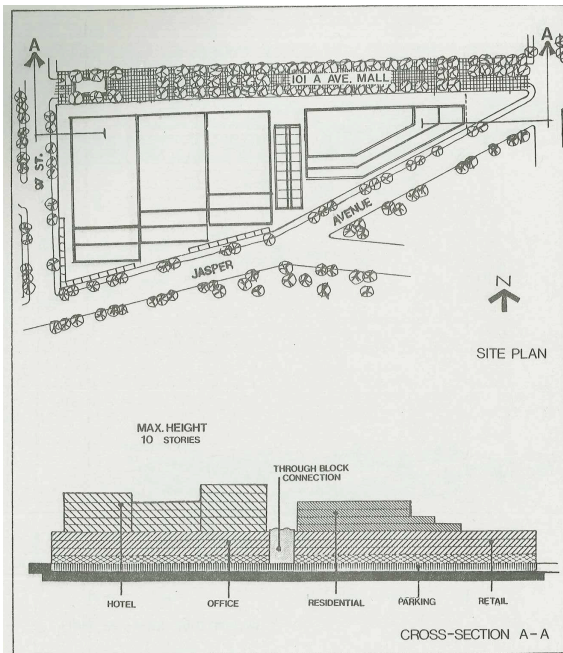
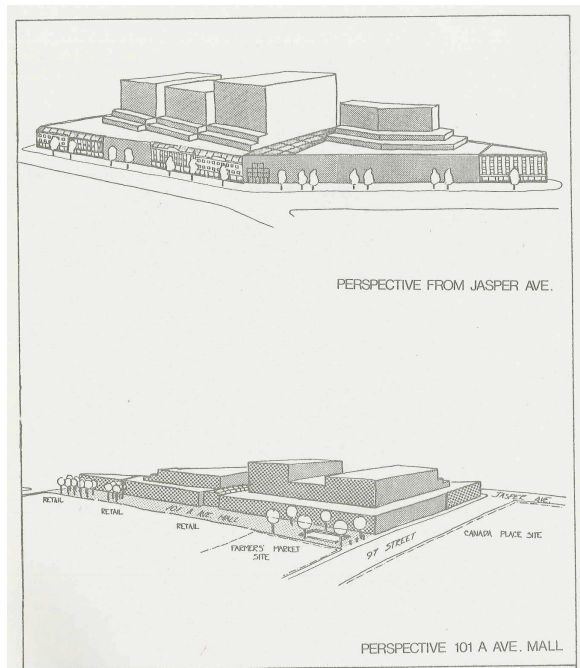


FIGURE 9

SUGGESTED BUILT FORM - Urban Design Guideline No. 3.2.13



- ALTERNATIVE 2

Urban Design Guideline No. 3.2.13

The purpose of the study was to establish parameters for the comprehensive redevelopment of the block, as the ARP has applied a DC3(C5) Temporary Holding District to the block, which did not address the interests of the owners or the City. (City of Edmonton, 1982) According to the study, the objectives were to:

1. Preserve and retain the historic building facades.
2. Integrate new development in a complementary way with historic building facades and surrounding developments.
3. Provide a transition in scale and density eastwards from the downtown.
4. Provide well-defined pedestrian linkages between Jasper East Block and other activity nodes.

The intention of this plan was to capitalize on synergies with surrounding developments that were proposed for the area, some of which came to fruition, some which did not, and include Canada Place, the Convention Centre, 101A Avenue Mall, the Farmer's Market and Chinatown. (City of Edmonton, 1982) Despite all the planning work, much like the Chinatown Plan, this development did not come to fruition. In fact, the Jasper East Block experienced less success than the Chinatown Plan 1979. While it is unclear why the redevelopment did not go ahead, the timing coincides with a dramatic shift in the economy and many developments and plans in the City did not go ahead as planned during these years.

#### **4.5.3 Old Towne Market**

After the false start for the Jasper East Block, in 1987 the newly created non-profit Edmonton Downtown Development Corporation (EDDC) prepared a Concept Plan and Feasibility Study for a larger area, 11 acres total, of the Downtown East bordered by Jasper Avenue to the south, 97 Street to the west, 102 Avenue to the north and 96 Street to the east. The plan consisted of a major mixed-use redevelopment project that included

a new public market, specialty retail outlets, housing and cultural facilities. Fragmented land ownership, which is still a barrier to redevelopment today, was identified as an issue in the implementation. To address this, the Old Towne Market Corporation was created in 1993 and worked with the local, provincial and federal governments to acquire the land in this area to allow the comprehensive redevelopment of the site. In the same year, the Edmonton Downtown Development Corporation completed the restoration of the Goodridge Block, also known as the W.W. Arcade Building, as Phase I of the Old Towne Market Plan. Located at the corner of 97 Street and Jasper Avenue, this building was restored to accommodate a restaurant on the main floor and affordable housing on the upper floors. Today, it contains one of the nicest restaurants in the City of Edmonton, the Hardware Grill. The restaurant's name and décor pays homage to the building's history as the W.W. Arcade Hardware store that was its use for many years. Phase II of the Old Towne Market plan included the Public Market Building, the Market Square, and Parking/Access/Loading. The estimated project costs for the public market building was approximately \$12-14 million dollars (EDDC, 1993). Figure 4.16 below shows the Concept Plan by Kasian Kennedy Architecture Interior Design and Planning Inc. from the *Concept Plan: Phase II Old Towne Market Project Public Market Building* by the EDDC in 1993. This plan shows proposed phasing for the Old Towne Market. The plan was inspired by the success of the Forks in Winnipeg, which was developed through a corporation and Grandville Island in Vancouver. (EDDC, 1993; A. Preiksaitis, Personal Communication, 2008) The influence of James Rouse's Festival Market Place trend as a means of revitalizing an area is obvious in this scheme.



Figure 4.17 shows an artist's rendering of the Old Towne Market concept where similarities to the Forks are apparent.

Figure 4.16 Concept Plan for the Old Towne Market



CONCEPT PLAN  
PHASING PLAN I, II, and III  
AUGUST 1993

OLD TOWNE MARKET  
EDMONTON DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Kasian  
Kennedy

Architecture  
Interior Design  
and Planning

2006, 2707-110  
Street  
Edmonton,  
Alberta  
T6E 2E3  
Tel: (403)  
482-6657  
Fax: (403)  
482-6656

Figure 4.17 Artist's Rendering of the Old Towne Market



Ultimately, Phase II never went ahead as the project never successfully attracted and retained a developer. (Merrett, 2001, p. 168) By the late 1990s, the Old Towne Market Corporation was dissolved. In Kathryn Chase Merrett's book *A History of the Edmonton City Market*, she states that by this time, "the orthodoxies of city planning had changed, and the notion that a megaproject such as the Old Towne Market scheme was an appropriate way to achieve urban renewal had few champions, even within the city and the EDDC". Armin Preiksaitis points at municipal politics and competing visions for what Downtown East should be as a major element contributing to the downfall of this scheme. Jan Reimer, Edmonton's Mayor from 1989-1995 oversaw the restoration of the Gibson Block, the flat iron building pictured in Figure 4.17 above of the Old Towne Market scheme. The building was restored to house the Women's Emergency Accommodations Shelter (WEAC). Jan Reimer has served as provincial coordinator of

the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS), representing 41 women's shelters in Alberta, since 2002. (Status of Women Canada, 2009)

The failure of the Old Towne Market scheme offers lessons in the importance of having a vision that all stakeholders buy into. It is not enough for planners or a development corporation to subscribe to a vision, ultimately land owners, developers, and politicians must also subscribe in order to make a vision come to fruition.

#### **4.5.4 Area Redevelopment Plans**

A number of relevant redevelopment schemes and their impacts on the Downtown East have been described above. In addition to these schemes aimed at revitalizing this area of Edmonton, this area has also been subject to two Area Redevelopment Plans (ARP); the 1981 Boyle Street McCauley ARP and the 1994 Boyle Street McCauley ARP.

According to the Municipal Government Act in Alberta, a municipality can designate an area as a redevelopment area for several reasons found in Table 4.2 below. The Act also defines what must be contained in an ARP for a designated area. ARPs are statutory plans that are adopted by Council as a bylaw. In 1981, the first ARP for the Boyle Street McCauley neighborhoods was adopted. This ARP followed a series of studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s that examined these neighborhoods, particularly Boyle Street, as blighted areas in need of redevelopment.

**Table 4.2 Municipal Government Act Sections Pertaining to Area Redevelopment Plans**  
*Area Redevelopment Plans*

- 634 A council may
- (a) designate an area of the municipality as a redevelopment area for the purpose of any or all of the following:
    - (i) preserving or improving land and buildings in the area;
    - (ii) rehabilitating buildings in the area;
    - (iii) removing buildings from the area;
    - (iv) constructing or replacing buildings in the area;
    - (v) establishing, improving or relocating roads, public utilities or other services in the area;
    - (vi) facilitating any other development in the area,
  - (b) adopt, by bylaw, an area redevelopment plan,
  - (c) in accordance with this section and Division 6, provide for the imposition and collection of a levy to be known as a “redevelopment levy”, and
  - (d) authorize a designated officer, with or without conditions, to perform any function with respect to the imposition and collection of that redevelopment levy.

1995 c24 s95

*Plan contents*

- 635 An area redevelopment plan
- (a) must describe
    - (i) the objectives of the plan and how they are proposed to be achieved,
    - (ii) the proposed land uses for the redevelopment area,
    - (iii) if a redevelopment levy is to be imposed, the reasons for imposing it, and
    - (iv) any proposals for the acquisition of land for any municipal use, school facilities, parks and recreation facilities or any other purposes the council considers necessary,
  - and
  - (b) may contain any other proposals that the council considers necessary.

1995 c24 s95

**4.5.4.1 1981 Boyle Street McCauley ARP**

The 1981 Boyle Street McCauley Area Redevelopment Plan was in development long before it was adopted as a statutory plan by the City of Edmonton. It represented the culmination of a series of studies, including the *Boyle St McCauley Planning Process: Proposal Outline, Working Paper No. 1* from 1977, the *Boyle St McCauley Working*



*Paper No. 2: Planning Issues and Objectives* from 1978 and the *Boyle St McCauley Background Study* completed in 1981. These three reports were undertaken for the explicit purpose of forming an effective ARP for the two neighborhoods, while earlier reports were more exploratory in nature with a greater focus on issue identification than finding ways to improve the area. The *Boyle St McCauley Background Study* is a wealth of information on the Boyle Street and McCauley neighborhoods at the time of writing. It clearly identifies the long history of decline in the area.

The preparation of the 1981 ARP involved extensive consultation with the community as is evidenced in the background documents. Within the background document, the following Land Use Objectives are described as generally providing “the policy direction and main thrust of the Plan”:

To propose a Plan for future physical development in the area which will ensure its compatibility, as much as possible, with the social and residential functions of the communities:

- To evolve land use plans which will deal with the problems of conflicting land uses.
- To ensure that the transportation system through the area can be developed to fulfill its City-wide role with the least negative impact on the local communities.
- To ensure the possibility of phasing out heavy industrial uses along the railway track and their redevelopment to residential uses.
- To determine the most suitable form and location for City-wide and local commercial functions.
- To propose plans for the preservation of buildings or street-scapes of historical or architectural merit, and determine ways to restore them to a viable role within the area.

The social objectives of the Plan are described in the *Background Study* as follows:

To promote the social well-being of residents of Boyle Street and McCauley with particular attention to the housing, health, employment, recreational and other social development needs of the residents of the two communities:

- To encourage the development of community programs and social services tailored to the particular needs of the people of the area.
- To ensure the development of a residential environment which provides a choice of housing types for the residents in the area.
- To preserve, as much as possible, the present low-cost accommodation in the area and to determine methods of upgrading and maintaining it in a livable condition while retaining its low-cost feature.

When compared against the most recent revitalization initiative for the Downtown East area, The Quarters, what stands out most about this Plan for Boyle Street McCauley is its pragmatic approach and lack of a unified vision for the area. This may be in part due to the scope of the Plan, which covers two neighborhoods, as opposed to a portion of one neighbourhood. A unified vision for the area may not be appropriate or effective in this instance.

It is important to consider the economic environment in which the Plan was formed. The process of developing the ARP was begun in the height of the economic boom in Alberta. While not explicitly discussed in the Plan and related reports, it an influential factor that shaped the ARP. This is in sharp contrast to the following 1994 Boyle St. McCauley ARP that was created in a very different economic environment.

In considering the most recent Plan affecting Downtown East, it is important to recognize that the plan was developed in the height of another economic boom. Lessons should be taken from past experiences with planning for revitalization within the economic cycles to which Alberta is prone.

Shortly after the adoption of the Boyle Street McCauley ARP in 1981, the economic climate in the city changed dramatically and the plan had little impact on the Downtown East area, as there was no longer such demand for redevelopment in the City.

#### *4.5.4.2 1994 Boyle Street McCauley ARP*

As described in the section above, the 1981 Boyle Street McCauley Area Redevelopment Plan was written in a time of economic prosperity in the province. Thirteen years later, the economic climate in Edmonton was quite different. In the late 1980s, the 1981 Area Redevelopment Plan was no longer an effective guide for revitalizing the Boyle Street and McCauley neighbourhoods. As a result, a new Area Redevelopment Plan was created. The Plan is self-described as a departure from previous Area Redevelopment Plans in the City of Edmonton. Its new approach to neighbourhood revitalization involved two key distinguishing features. The first feature was the inclusion of social and economic revitalization in the Plan, where traditionally only physical revitalization was addressed. The second differentiating feature is the strong emphasis on community development. The 1994 ARP was a “community driven exercise” (City of Edmonton, 1994) that while adopted by the City of Edmonton, was the product of heavy community participation. According to Anna Bubel, she was contracted by the community to create the ARP with the community, making the 1994 ARP a bottom up approach rather than a top down approach led by the City. This is reflected in the plan. The vision statement for the 1994 Boyle Street McCauley ARP is as follows:

We envision a vital, safe community where everyone works together toward the social and economic well-being of Boyle Street and McCauley. The basis of this well-being is the opportunity for all ethnic, income and household groups to participate fully in community life. Residents take pride in their neighbourhood and have hope for the future.

The Plan outlines community goals under six categories that are intended to “guide the development of the strategies, objectives and initiatives in the subsequent chapters of [the] Plan towards this vision”. The six categories are housing, community

economic development, community/social services and recreation, transportation and the physical environment, crime and safety, and neighbourhood land use development. Evident from the organization of these categories is the strong community focus. The Downtown East area falls under three distinct areas in the generalized development concept of the 1994 ARP. The majority of Downtown East is identified as Boyle Street W. Mixed Use Area, which is described on the Generalized Development Concept map as “low scale commercial buildings with possible additional apartment housing 95, 96, and 97 streets with higher residential and residential/commercial buildings in the interior of blocks”. Within the Boyle Street W. Mixed Use Area, Jasper East Area and Chinatown South are also identified in the southwest corner. The remaining portions of the Downtown East area are identified as Low-Medium Density Residential and Medium-High Density Residential.

Chapter 7: Neighbourhood Land Use Development of the 1994 ARP describes each sub-area of the plan in detail. It describes the Boyle Street West Mixed Use Sub-Area (Area 4) as an area of transition from Downtown Edmonton that had failed to achieve its development potential. The ARP points out the failure of two major redevelopment schemes, the Old Towne Market and Chinatown, as examples of how despite intervention from public and private sectors the area persists in its underdeveloped state. The ARP offers four reasons why the downtown has not expanded into this area as has been encouraged and expected. These four reasons are the high commercial and retail vacancy rates in Downtown Edmonton, the overwhelming amount of developable commercial space (which far exceeded demand in 1994), the ability of the Downtown to expand to the north and west, and the combined effects of private land



consolidation, building demolition and surface parking lots that have worsened an already negative image of the area.

The land use concept for this area is modest in scale and vision. Anticipating a continued lack of expansion of the downtown into this area, the plan sets a flexible concept that calls for a variety of residential and mixed-use buildings with maximum heights ranging from four to 15 storeys. Objectives for the area include the provision of additional housing for low income individuals, preserving the heritage characteristics in the area, and to enhance connectivity of the area to the downtown, the river valley and Chinatown North.

As part of this ARP, the land was rezoned in Boyle Street and McCauley. To reflect the shift in policy from the 1981 ARP, land in the area was downzoned. This was done to help eliminate speculation on land and the negative impacts that it was causing in the area. According to John Kolkman, this down zoning was successful in other parts of the ARP area, particularly in some low-density residential areas in McCauley, that experienced compatible infill development after the adoption of the plan and new zoning. (personal communication, 2008) While this ARP has had some moderate success in the revitalization of areas within the ARP boundary, it has not been successful in stimulating redevelopment in Downtown East. Presently, this ARP still applies to the Downtown East area, although a draft ARP for The Quarters has been created and is awaiting approval by Council. If it is adopted by Council, the Boyle Street McCauley ARP will be amended to remove the Downtown East area from the plan, no longer applying to this area.

#### **4.5.5 Downtown East / The Quarters**

In 2003, Doug Kelly, former Vice-President of Carma Developers Ltd. found himself at a social function with Edmonton's Mayor, Steven Mandel. Having recently unsuccessfully attempted a land consolidation in downtown east, Mr. Kelly was concerned with the state of this area and the barriers to development it faced. (D. Kelly, personal communication, 2008) In a conversation with the Mayor, they discussed this struggling area and the need for the City to dedicate resources to the revitalization of this underdeveloped area. Shortly thereafter, the Mayor formed the Mayor's Advisory Committee for Downtown East. The Special Projects Office in the Planning & Development Department in the City of Edmonton then established a boundary for the Downtown East area. Duncan Fraser, Senior Planner in the Special Projects Office indicated that he established the boundaries for the area based on careful rationale. (personal communication, 2008) The western edge of the boundary was determined by the eastern edge of downtown, which falls along 97 Street. The southeast edge of Downtown East was defined by the break in the slope, as Downtown East is located at the crest of the North Saskatchewan River Valley. The most difficult edge to define was the northern boundary. Mr. Fraser indicated that the change in uses from predominantly vacant land, parking lots, and aging housing stock to the south, to the primarily institutional uses to the northwest and more vibrant housing to the northeast created a logical border along 103A Avenue. A map showing this boundary can be found earlier in this chapter as Figure 4.6.

This area represents the area most in need of redevelopment and revitalization. The remainder of the Boyle Street neighbourhood is considerably more developed with a far lower proportion of vacant land.

Once the area was defined, the City hired a consultant to develop a vision for Downtown East that would guide redevelopment in the area and provide a framework for an Urban Design Plan, an Area Redevelopment Plan, and new zoning. The City hired StastnyBrun Architects Inc. to conduct the visioning for the area. After an extensive public consultation in which over 800 citizens participated (City of Edmonton, 2006d), the Vision for Downtown East was developed. On August 29, 2006, Edmonton City Council approved the Vision for Downtown East.

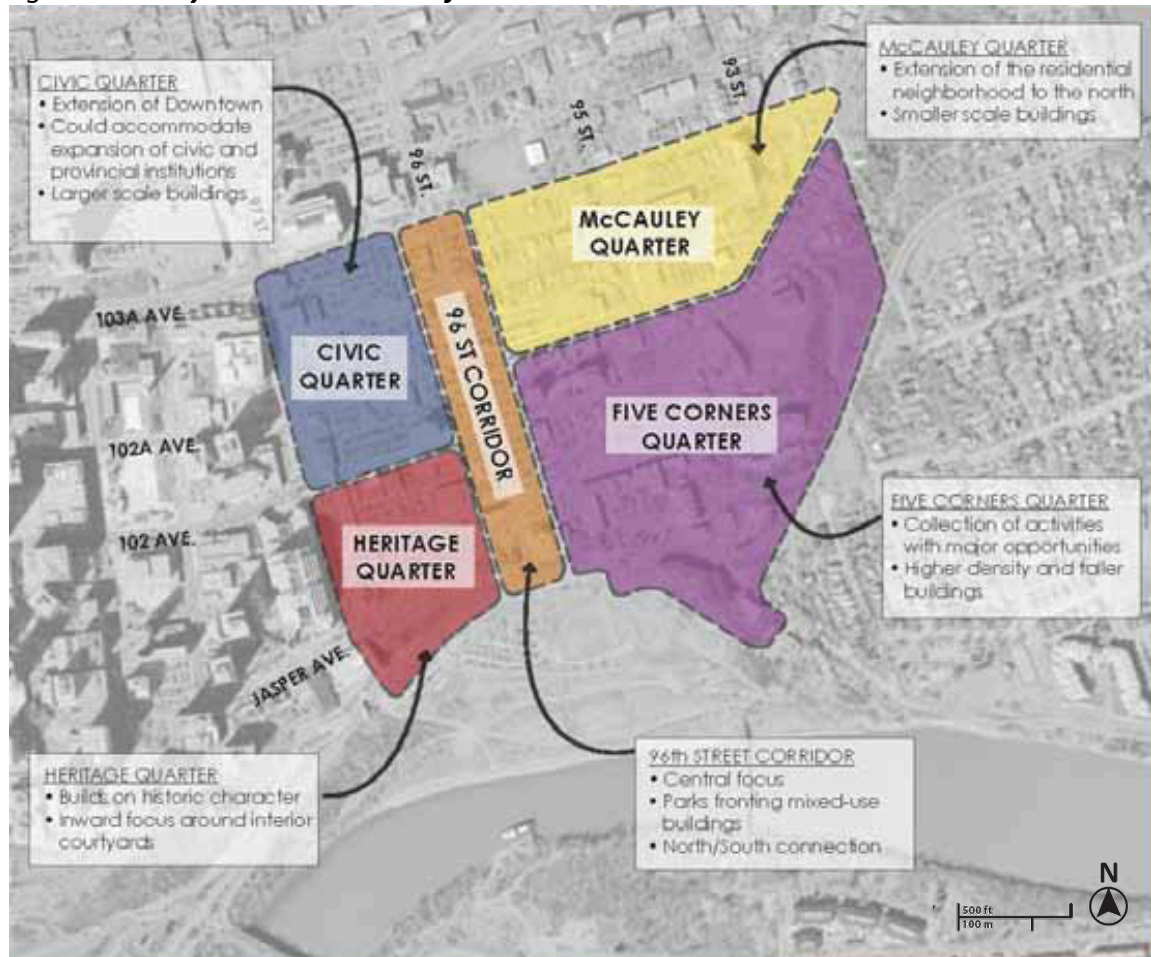
The Vision for Downtown East contains an overall design concept, an implementation strategy, and design and development guidelines. The vision statement for Downtown East is as follows:

Downtown East will be a vibrant, healthy community comprised of five distinct areas, each with its own character, activities, and feel, structured around a unique linear park system running through the neighbourhood that provides a defining element for the community. The neighbourhood is well connected to the downtown core and river valley, yet has a distinct image that identifies it as a unique place in the city. Streets are improved with limited through traffic, making the streets safe and inviting for pedestrians and bicyclists. Large city blocks are broken into smaller more inviting and walkable pieces. Activity abounds. There is a mix of parks, shops, employment, services, and housing. There is a diversity of ages, incomes, and cultures. Open space is surrounded by businesses and housing, creating a safe and inviting amenity year round. Downtown East is a place where community is important and pride and investment in the neighbourhood is evident.

In addition to a vision statement for the area, the document lists six guiding principles for the area that were emphasized by the public throughout the public throughout the development of the vision. These guiding principles relate to form,

circulation, open space, community, economy, and assets. From the vision statement and guiding principles, a physical framework for the area was established as shown in Figure 4.18.

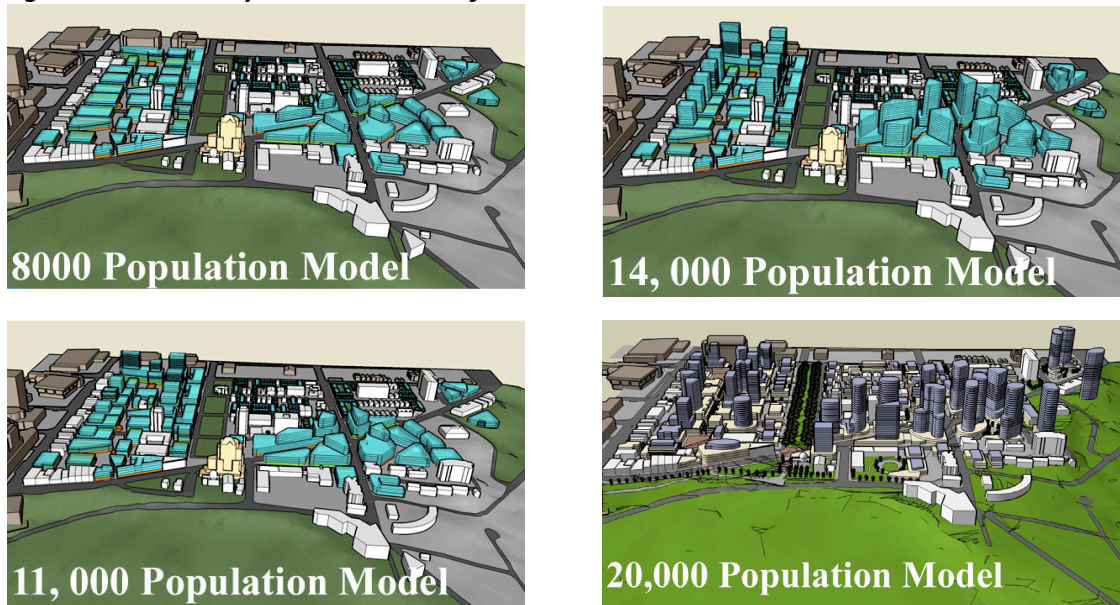
**Figure 4.18 Physical Framework of Downtown East**



Equipped with a vision to guide the revitalization of the Downtown East, the City of Edmonton continued to move the project forward. The City released a Request for Proposals for the next stage of the project, including an Urban Design Plan for the area. The project team retained for this stage consisted of Edmonton-based firms O’Neil O’Neil Procinsky Architects, EIDOS Consultants, and Armin A. Preiksaitis & Associates Ltd.

Over the course of the year, the interdisciplinary team worked to develop the Urban Design Plan, new zoning, Area Redevelopment Plan and necessary amendments to existing Plans. The Urban Design Plan takes the Vision for Downtown East and develops it further to a high level of detail. It contains suggestions for urban design elements such as street furniture, lighting, and built form for each of the Quarters and the Armature. Detailed design suggestions for areas such as the armature and a new mid-block pedestrian walkway are also included. Figure 4.19 below shows development scenarios, or built form testing, developed for The Quarters as part of the design plan. The Plan envisions a significant increase in population. While a population increase in this area is necessary to make it a functioning community, the significant increase in density proposed in the Plan of up to 20,000 people is attributed in part to the creation of a sustainable neighbourhood through the efficient use of land. The Urban Design Plan contains many sustainable design guidelines. The implementation tool used to secure these sustainable features is incentive zoning. A bonusing system is incorporated into the DC1 – Direct Development Control District that allows developers additional density in exchange for sustainable building features, affordable housing, or elements that support sustainable transportation, such as end-of-trip facilities.

**Figure 4.19 Development Scenarios for The Quarters**



Seven documents that collectively constitute the planning work for The Quarters are anticipated to be approved by City Council in the spring of 2009. The plan for The Quarters is a very ambitious plan that is only achievable over the course of many years. The maximum projected population for The Quarters is more than double the entire population of Downtown Edmonton in 2005. (City of Edmonton, 2006)

#### **4.5.6 Commonalities and differences in visions over time**

Six key plans and schemes that have been developed with the purpose of revitalizing all or part of the Downtown East since the 1970s have been reviewed in this Chapter. In order to better understand the relationships between these plans and how they have shaped the Downtown East over the years, this section will compare the plans and schemes, specifically from the perspective of common elements and notable differences in the approach and outcomes of these plans. The table below provides a high-level summary of the plans and schemes including when they were adopted by City

Council, what the main thrust was and what the outcome was. From this table, a more detailed discussion follows.

**Table 4.3 Significant Plans and Schemes for the Downtown East since the 1970s**

Plan/ Scheme	Year	Main Thrust of the Plan	Outcome
<b>Chinatown Plan 1979</b>	1980	The purpose of this Plan was dually to provide a new home for Chinatown and to revitalize the Downtown East	This Plan had some limited success and the influence of the Plan is still visible in Downtown East today. It is undisputed, however, that Chinatown relocated predominantly to the north of Downtown East in the McCauley neighbourhood along 97 Avenue.
<b>1981 Boyle Street McCauley ARP</b>	1981	This ARP represents the City of Edmonton’s first attempt to utilize a statutory ARP to revitalize both the Boyle Street neighbourhood and the McCauley neighbourhood. As this Plan covers a large area, the main thrust of the Plan is much more general and includes balancing the needs of the community with the needs of greater Edmonton, particularly transportation needs. Other areas of focus include protecting the community against “undesirable commercial uses” and encouraging the development of lower cost housing.	The sub-areas of the 1981 Boyle Street McCauley ARP that covered the Downtown East area were written to accommodate the Jasper East Block and the Chinatown Plan. The remainder of the area within the Downtown East was intended to be mixed-use medium to high density development. As described above in this table, the Old Towne Market Scheme and Chinatown Plan had limited success in the area. Overall, the 1981 ARP had little impact on this area.
<b>Jasper East Block</b>	1982	The purpose was to establish parameters for the redevelopment of the block on the north side of Jasper Avenue between 97 Street and 96 Street. The study focused on preserving and retaining the historic building facades while integrating new development with the facades and surrounding developments. Additionally, the study sought to establish an appropriate transition in scale and density eastwards from the downtown and provide well-defined pedestrian linkages between Jasper East Block and other activity nodes.	This study never manifested into a redevelopment of the block between 97 Street and 96 Street. While the factors behind the fate of this scheme are not clear, it corresponds with a major downturn in the economy.

Old Towne Market	1987	The primary purpose of the Old Towne Market scheme was to revitalize the Downtown East in a fashion consistent with the festival market trend, popular during the 1990s. The first step in this initiative was a Feasibility Study completed in 1987. The Concept Plan for Phase II, consisting of the Public Market Building was completed in 1993.	While the first phase of this process was successful, witnessing the redevelopment of the westernmost heritage building in Downtown East along Jasper Avenue in 1993, the subsequent phases of the Old Towne Market never went ahead.
1994 Boyle Street McCauley ARP	1994	The 1994 ARP sought to replace the 1981 ARP as the Plan was no longer relevant or effective. Unlike the 1981 ARP, the 1994 ARP was a community driven exercise. It sought to revitalize the area not only physically, but socially and economically also.	The 1994 ARP is still in place today. While there is evidence of the success of the plan in guiding revitalization in part of Boyle Street and McCauley, it is widely agreed that the plan has had little impact on the Downtown East.
Downtown East / The Quarters	2009	The Quarters initiative represents the City of Edmonton's most recent attempt to revitalize this part of the city. The vision for the area establishes five distinct areas that collectively form a unique, vibrant, mixed-use area.	While it is too early to determine the impact of this initiative on the revitalization of Downtown East, it is worth mentioning that much like past plans described above, the economic climate in which the Plan was created varies significantly from the climate in which it will be implemented.

The plans and schemes within or encompassing the Downtown East that have been reviewed in this Chapter can be grouped into three distinct periods of time with periods of inactivity separating them. The first period encompasses three plans and coincides un-coincidentally with the boom of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

In the flurry of development activity that took place in Edmonton during the economic boom of the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Downtown East of Edmonton was not unaffected by the development activity that went along with the economic boom. As redevelopment pressure rose in the downtown, both private developers and planners began to look at the declining Downtown East with renewed interest. Within a span of three years, three redevelopment plans were established for the area. The Chinatown Plan was developed by the City of Edmonton in direct response to the need to find a new



location for the existing Chinatown as the land on which it was located was being redeveloped into large civic and federal buildings. The Chinatown Plan 1979 envisioned a significant transformation of the character of the Downtown East. The Jasper East Block, on the other hand, was developed in response to a desire by a group of private land owners to capitalize on the economic boom through the redevelopment of Edmonton's most historic streetscape. The scheme envisioned a major redevelopment with little more of the original buildings retained than their facades. The timing of the creation of the first Boyle Street McCauley ARP was such that both the Jasper East Block and the Chinatown Plan were reflected in the policies of the 1981 ARP. Unfortunately, the fate of all three plans were subject to the major downward shift in the economy that happened in the late 1980s and none of the three plans were realized according to their vision. The Chinatown Plan was the only plan to have some moderate success in the area, and this may partially be attributed to the external factors of the displacement of the original Chinatown on the west side of Downtown East. As the redevelopment to the west went ahead, Chinatown residents and businesses had no choice but to relocate and some followed the plan. In this sense, the success of the plan was not by virtue of the plan itself. The ARP and Jasper East Block did not have comparable external factors to encourage implementation when the economy was not able to support the same level of redevelopment.

A period of relative inactivity followed these three initiatives. For nearly a decade, no new plans for redevelopment were brought forward as development in Edmonton during the 1990s was slow at best. Recognizing that the factors affecting the success of revitalization had changed, two new attempts at revitalizing the area emerged.

While both initiatives from the 1990s were a departure from the type of revitalization initiatives that were attempted in the 1980s, they were also distinct from one another. Both initiatives recognized that the private development industry could not be leaned on to play a major role in revitalization of the area. As a result, both initiatives explored alternative approaches to revitalization. The community of Boyle Street McCauley sought to create an ARP that was more reflective of the current circumstances and developed a new ARP that was rooted in building community capacity and the social aspects of revitalization. In another approach, the newly formed Edmonton Downtown Development Corporation sought to implement the Old Towne Market scheme through alternative forms of funding. A tri-level government partnership was explored as a means to fund the redevelopment scheme. While the approach to implementation was distinct from initiatives in the 1980s, the Old Towne Market major redevelopment more consistent in end form with the major redevelopment plans from the early 1980s and the initiative did in fact begin in the late 1980s. It is, however, distinct from previous initiatives in its approach to implementation. Both initiatives achieved partial success, however, neither had anywhere near the impact they had strived for on the Downtown East. While the 1994 ARP continues to act as the ARP guiding redevelopment in the Boyle Street and McCauley neighbourhoods, any impact on the Downtown East has been minimal. Neither initiative offered the magic bullet for the revitalization of the Downtown East.

By 2005, Alberta's economy had again reached a boom. With the boom came redevelopment interests similar to those of the 1980s. In the decades that have passed since the beginning of the 1980s, planning practices have changed considerably and the

newest approach to revitalizing the Downtown East is a distinct from previous attempts. Excluding the ARPs, previous attempts were more aligned with the major redevelopment plans as described in the literature review of this thesis (Chapter 2). They involved major redevelopment projects and relied on methods such as theming to encourage the revitalization of the area. While the new initiative, The Quarters, does envision substantial redevelopment by private developers, consistent with plans in the 1980s, the built form and process is different. For example, where the Jasper East Block would have created a super block in the Downtown East, The Quarters seeks to break the grid pattern of the streets into smaller blocks to encourage pedestrian activity in the area. The plans for the area have been crafted to maintain a strong vision for the area, but also to attract developers to this area over other areas in the City. Incentive zoning and a flexible ARP have been designed to attempt to overcome one of the major barriers to revitalization that has plagued this area for decades. They attempt to offer enough incentive to developers to build quality developments there, getting beyond mere land speculation to development. Land speculation is now a well-recognized barrier to the revitalization of Downtown East. At the time of past plans, this phenomena was not clearly identified as a barrier and as such was not directly targeted in the schemes. While all the initiatives for the revitalization of Edmonoton's Downtown East share similarities with one another, each was formed from a unique combination of factors including economic climate, creator, exact geographic area, popular planning practices, and broader societal concerns such as social inclusion or environmental sustainability. While we have begun to consider what has shaped past initiatives in the Downtown East and what has

influenced their successes and failures, the following Chapter will review these issues form common barriers and paths to the revitalization of Downtown East.

## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

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The previous chapter examined Downtown East as it exists today and the factors that have shaped it through time. On a case-by-case basis, attempts at revitalization have been analyzed and the question “*why have past attempts to revitalize Downtown East failed*” has been discussed relative to each attempt. Now that we have established an understanding of how the area came to be, we will examine what is preventing it from becoming the vital vibrant area that civil servants, politicians and citizens alike have been trying to make it for decades. We will take a step back and consider the area holistically through a discussion of the recurring barriers to revitalization in this area and answer the question “*why have past attempts to revitalize Downtown East failed?*” through a different lens. While specific reasons for each project have been described, common themes emerged for all past attempts at revitalization that begin to explain at a broader level why Downtown East has continued to decline, despite periods of economic prosperity and significant development pressure at the city scale.

The barriers to revitalization outlined below were repeatedly raised by key informants at various points the interviews and are mentioned in planning documents dating back to the 1960s. Once the barriers have been outlined and discussed, paths to revitalization will be considered.

### 5.1 BARRIERS TO REVITALIZATION

In the following section, five major barriers to revitalization of the Downtown East will be discussed: perceptions of Downtown East; fragmented land ownership,

downtown parking, and speculation; planning for the present; disconnection from surroundings; and, a community out of balance.

### **5.1.1 Perceptions of Downtown East**

When initially setting out to research the area, casual conversations and observations suggested that the perception of Downtown East was discouraging reinvestment in the area. All key informants spoke either explicitly or implicitly about the negative perception, or stigma, associated with Downtown East. Some informants directly identified this as a barrier to redevelopment. When asked what were the obstacles to revitalization in Downtown East, Gene Dub, architect, developer and owner of several properties in Downtown East, replied as a matter of fact that it was “the stigma attached to the area”. (G. Dub, personal communication, 2008) He then described his experience trying to lease commercial space in Downtown East, indicating that in an attempt to attract antique dealers, he was faced with the argument by the dealers that seniors, their main clientele, would not venture into Downtown East. Doug Kelly, the recently retired Senior Vice-President of a large development company in Edmonton, indicated that the stigma attached to the area presents marketing challenges for Downtown East. According to Kelly, the stigma associated with Downtown East makes developers and property owners hesitant to invest in and develop property in the area. (personal communication, 2008) The recognition of the impact of perception on this area is not new. In the 1994 Boyle Street McCauley Area Redevelopment Plan, the delayed expansion of downtown into this area and failure of the Old Towne Market scheme and Chinatown Plan was attributed in part to the “the area’s poor image”. (1994, p. 72) Interestingly, the Plan suggests that this “poor image” is reinforced by the “speculative

pressures such as private land consolidation, building demolition and surface parking lots” (p.72) which will be discussed next in this thesis as another significant barrier to the revitalization of the Downtown East.

### **5.1.2 Fragmented Land Ownership, Downtown Parking, and Speculation**

While planning efforts in the Downtown East have been unsuccessful in encouraging redevelopment, planning efforts have been of interest to land speculators. Since the first planning efforts of the Urban Renewal Department at the City, land speculators have been buying property in the hopes of making their fortune once the area starts redeveloping and demand for land and property values both go up. (A. Preiksaitis, personal communication, 2008; D. Fraser, personal communication, 2008) Many of these speculative land owners are not developers and as such, are not interested in developing the land. (A. Preiksaitis, personal communication, 2008; J. Kolkman, personal communication, 2008) Additionally, as put by John Kolkman, “there are property owners that are making a nice living off their parking lots. They see development downtown as an opportunity to raise parking prices.” Kolkman pointed out that the operation of surface parking lots in Downtown East is very profitable for property owners and requires very little investment and maintenance. He felt that these property owners would need a great deal of incentive to change the use of their land. A lack of knowledge of what those incentives might be presents a significant barrier to revitalization. Both Armin Preiksaitis and Anna Bubel cited the need to consult with property owners in the Downtown East and understand what would turn them into developers or partner with developers in joint ventures to develop their properties. (personal communication, 2008)

It may seem surprising that there is not greater development pressure in the Downtown East, even during periods of economic prosperity. However, as mentioned previously in this paper, Edmonton is not constrained by geographic barriers and as such has developed outwards with low densities. Even within the downtown core, there are still many large surface parking lots awaiting redevelopment. Because land throughout the city is available, there is less development pressure on the Downtown East. Additionally, there is often less risk associated in redeveloping sites that are located in more established neighbourhoods as there is greater certainty for the developers regarding the context of their development. In the Downtown East, many land owners do not want to be the first to invest, but rather wait until there is some evidence that the neighbourhood is changing before they develop.

### **5.1.3 Planning for the Present**

A number of plans for the revitalization of Downtown East have suffered from changes in the economy. Plans that were created during booms in the economy failed in implementation partially because of major shifts in the economy as they were adopted and entered the implementation stages. (A. Preiksaitis, personal communication 2008) When speaking about the 1994 Boyle Street McCauley Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP), John Kolkman stated that “the adoption of the ARP in 1994 coincided with a few really tough years in the City of Edmonton; we had a downturn in the...economy. We had double digit unemployment for a few years.” (personal communication, 2008) Rapid shifts in the economy may render plans useless that could have been implemented under the economic climate in which they were written. As the economy in Alberta can shift rapidly and significantly, plans must either be flexible enough to accommodate these



shifts or find paths to revitalization that are not affected by the economy. While it is too soon to tell for certain, a similar circumstance to the 1994 Boyle Street McCauley Area Redevelopment Plan may occur with The Quarters plan.

#### **5.1.4 Disconnection from surroundings**

Barry Johns described Downtown East as a “forgotten part of the city”. (personal communication, 2008) Gene Dub expressed this notion more specifically with regard to its relationship to the downtown stating that “it is an area that we should be responding to its close relationship to downtown much more” implying that at present, it is disconnected. When discussing a vision for Downtown East, both Gene Dub and Barry Johns as well as Michael Farris and John Kolkman explicitly mentioned the importance of connectivity to surrounding areas for the Downtown East. Anna Bubel stressed the importance of involving surrounding communities in the revitalization process.

There are several ways in which the Downtown East is disconnected from its surroundings. The biggest disconnection is from downtown. Much of this can be attributed to the creation of a strong edge along 97 Street where downtown turns its back to the Downtown East. The blank street wall created by Canada Place along the west side of 97 Street spans two blocks from Jasper Avenue to 102 Avenue. When the Winspear Centre was developed one block north of Canada Place, it was designed to face Edmonton’s civic square, Churchill Square, to the west and turned its back to 97 Street, with the building set back from the street and surface parking located adjacent to 97 Street. Similarly, the law courts located between 102A Avenue and 103A Avenue on the west side of 97 Street run the length of two city blocks and are predominantly accessed from the west. This string of development along the western side of 97 Street creates a

strong eastern edge for the downtown, and isolates Downtown East from it. This does not leave many opportunities for reconnecting to the downtown, however, some opportunities for reconnecting to the downtown are discussed in the next chapter. One of the guiding principles of The Quarters initiative is to strengthen connections to the surrounding areas including downtown and the river valley. While previous plans have not addressed this issue, the newest plan recognizes the need to connect this area in order to succeed in its revitalization.

### **5.1.5 A community out of balance**

When asked for his opinion of Downtown East, Duncan Fraser, the Senior Planner for The Quarters initiative described in the previous chapter, stated that the area was out of balance. There are three obvious ways in which the area is out of balance: the area leans heavily to one side of the scale of market vs. social housing; the number of social agencies in an around the Downtown East is very high in comparison to any other area in the City, and; there is a disproportionate amount of vacant land and parking lots in the area.

#### *5.1.5.1 Housing*

With a lack of market housing, ownership, and other building of any type, there is reluctance on the part of developers to be the first to build market housing in the area. The exception to this statement is the recently built market housing along the southern edge of Downtown East. This market housing sits on the edge of the river valley and has spectacular views. Functionally, they are enclaves that do not contribute to the community in Downtown East, but rather they function independently from it. As Figure

5.1 illustrates, these developments isolate themselves from the neighbourhood through fences, gates and design of the building.

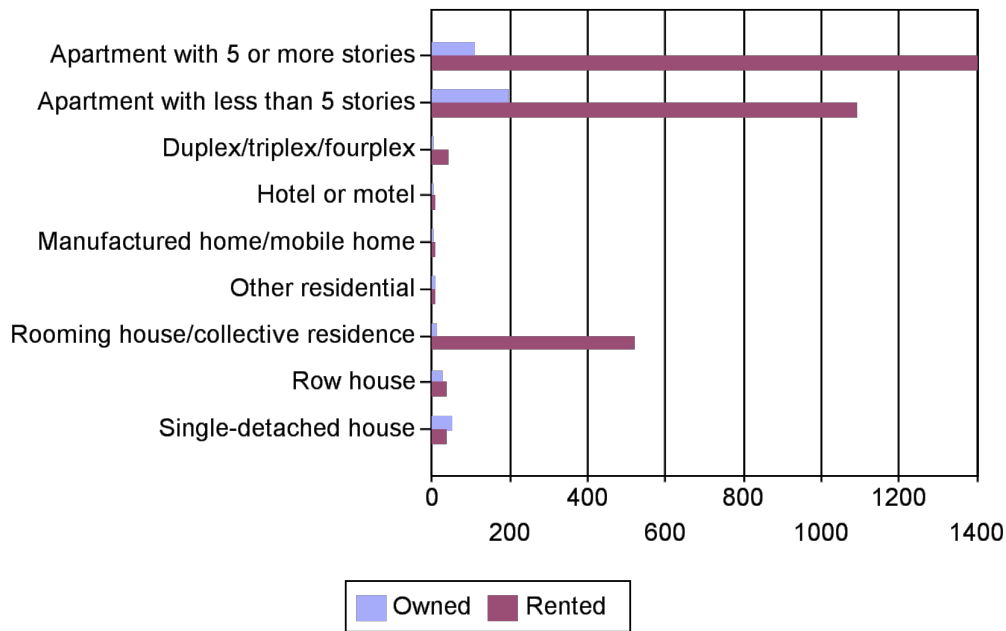
*Figure 5.1 Market Housing on the Southern Edge of Downtown East*



These housing developments on the bank of the river valley are functionally so separate from Downtown East that in many interviews, they were not mentioned at all. In fact, as the City of Edmonton moved further ahead with its newest planning initiative, The Quarters, the boundary was altered to exclude these developments. The motive for this was twofold. First, these developments fall under the City neighbourhood boundary of Riverdale, when the remainder of the Downtown East is a part of the Boyle Street neighbourhood. This would have required that both neighbourhood boundaries be amended to accommodate The Quarters plan boundary. This prompted a closer review of this portion of the project area, upon which it was decided that this area was not in need of revitalization, as the buildings were quite new and functionally did not contribute to the area. The southern boundary was adjusted to reflect the neighbourhood boundaries rather than the break in the slope. Housing in the larger Boyle Street neighbourhood, which encompasses Downtown East, has been over 90% rental since 1986. Figure 5.2

below shows the breakdown of rental and ownership according to housing type in Downtown East.

**Figure 5.2 2005 Municipal Census – Dwelling Unit by Structure Type and Ownership**



It is important to note that along the eastern portion of Jasper Avenue in Boyle Street, outside Downtown East, there are several residential high-rise buildings that account for many of the units in the apartments with 5 or more stories. It is also worth noting that with only approximately 2,400 residents in Downtown East, and approximately 5,750 in all of Boyle Street, there are over 500 residents that are housed in rooming houses. In addition to this 500, many other residential units in Downtown East are social housing. (M. Farris, personal communication, 2008)

#### 5.1.5.2 Social Agencies

As described in detail in Chapter 4, there are a large number of social agencies located in Downtown East, as well as social housing run by these and other organizations.

This institutional use of land is disproportionate with other areas of Edmonton and is not balanced. The high proportion of social agencies in the area acts as a deterrent to investors considering locating their businesses or building market housing in the area.

#### *5.1.5.3 Vacant Land*

Downtown East is a centrally located area where development has been occurring for over 100 years. As outlined in Chapter 4 of this thesis, the Downtown East is composed of approximately 40% vacant land. A large portion of the vacant land is being used for surface parking and is either paved or gravel. These large holes in the urban fabric make Downtown East uninviting to walk through and visit. Figure 5.3 below shows four different vacant parcels in the Downtown East.

**Figure 5.3 Photographs of Vacant Lots in Downtown East**



## **5.2 PATHS TO REVITALIZATION**

From the discussion of barriers to revitalization above, we begin to understand why this area and other similar areas persist in a declining state despite attempts at revitalization. Now that a basic understanding of these barriers has been established, a discussion related to paths to revitalization can be better framed. The paths to revitalization described in the section below.

### **5.2.1 Community Building**

The use of community economic development as an important factor in the revitalization of downtown east was raised by a number of interviewees. (A. Bubel, personal communication, 2008; A. Preiksaitis, personal communication, 2008)

Community Economic Development (CED) is “a collaborative and comprehensive strategy for the revitalization of marginalized communities and distressed neighbourhoods, combining social and economic objectives”. (Hanley and Morin, 2004)

Specifically, this is achieved through local groups who gather local resources such as people, finances, expertise, or property, and establish local alliances and broader partnerships to empower communities and develop their neighbourhood through activities such as the construction, rehabilitation or management of housing, job training, business support or initiatives, or commercial and industrial projects. (Hanley and Morin, 2004)

This approach to revitalization falls under the “people-based” approach to revitalization as opposed to the “place-based” approach (Zielenbach, 2000) as described in the literature review at the beginning of this thesis. This is an important focus for the

Downtown East as it has a population that has a relatively low quality of life when compared to other communities in Edmonton. (City of Edmonton, 2006a)

While the social aspect of revitalization is important for the Downtown East, it should be noted that it is complicated by the lack of physical infrastructure to build community within. Building community should be an important part of the revitalization of Downtown East, however, building buildings is also a necessary part of the revitalization of this area. This may mean that the focus of a CED effort in the Downtown East may be focused on construction projects more so than other common aspects such as job training or commercial ventures. In the longer term, once the physical fabric of the Downtown East has been reestablished, a CED organization could take a different focus.

Several key informants indicated that they felt there was no need for physical displacement of existing residents of the Downtown East through the revitalization process. (B. Johns, personal communication, 2008; M. Farris, personal communication, 2008; G. Dub, personal communication, 2008; J. Kolkman, personal communication, 2008; A. Bubel, personal communication, 2008) As the population is so low in the Downtown East relative to a typical area its size, there is a unique opportunity to create a revitalized neighbourhood with a mixed demographic where existing residents live in a community that has a balanced mix of incomes.

### **5.2.2 Utilize existing features (Proximity to downtown, heritage buildings, river valley views and proximity)**

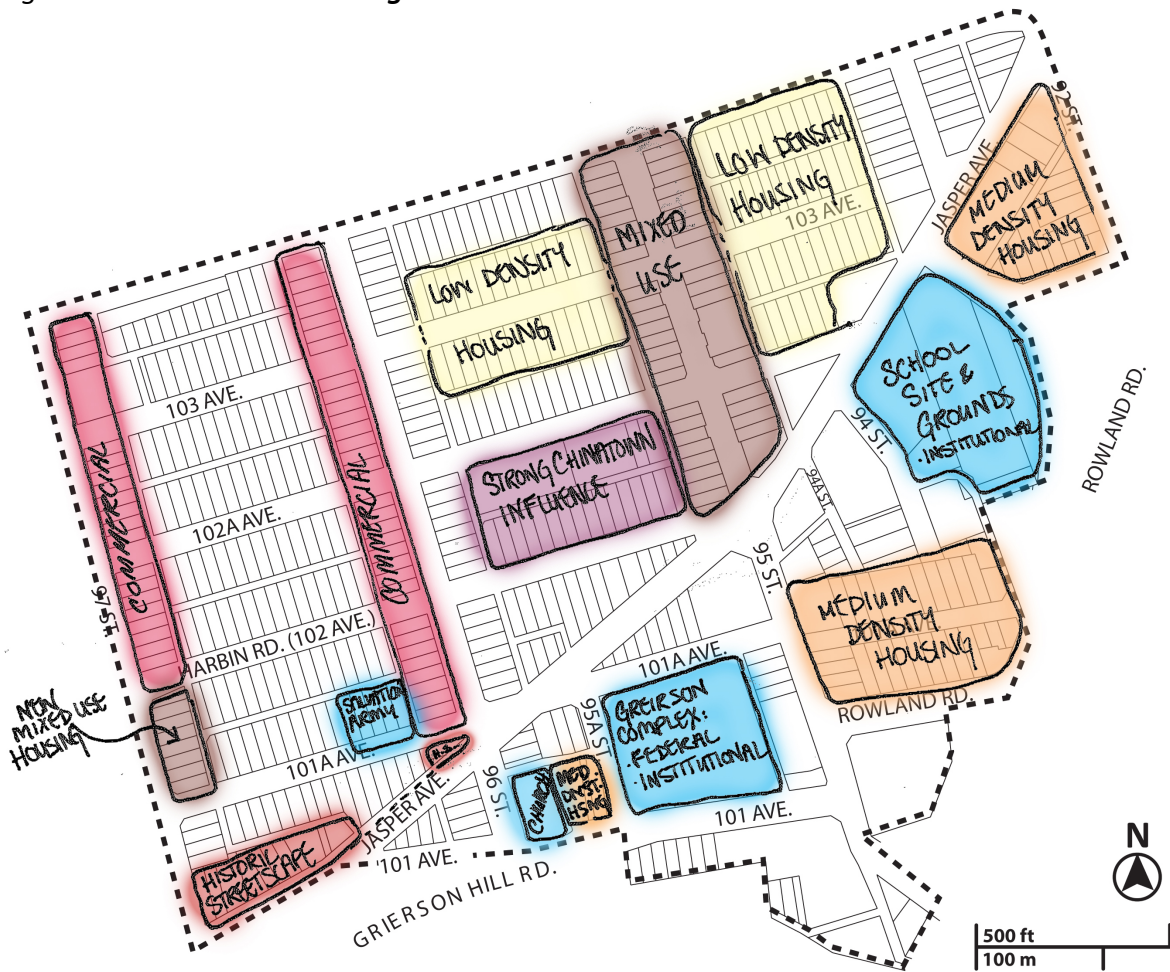
In his writing on equitable approaches to local development, Norman Krumholz states the importance of building on strengths. Commenting on Cities pursuing

revitalization, he states “instead of giving tax abatements and other public inducements to all large developers without discrimination, cities must find a market niche where they have natural advantages.” (Krumholz, 2003, p. 231) At the neighbourhood level, this statement is very applicable to Downtown East. As has been discussed in detail already throughout this paper, Downtown East suffers from many problems and has for decades. In pursuit of viable paths to revitalization, it is important to recognize that Downtown East also has many advantages it can build on. As mentioned by Anna Bubel, this area is not a Greenfield area, despite how some revitalization efforts have treated the area. (personal communication, 2008) It is located in the heart of Edmonton and is surrounded by some of the most important defining elements of the city, as described at the beginning of Chapter 4. Within Downtown East as well, there are features that can, should and are being enhanced in an attempt to revitalize the area. When asked what should be preserved or enhanced in Downtown East, interviewees most commonly responded that the historic buildings, especially along Jasper Avenue between 97 Street and 96 Street should be preserved. The multicultural history of the area, which is still reflected in elements such as the Gate at Harbin Road, the Chinese Elders Mansion, and stores catering to particular cultures, was also commonly cited as a strength or “natural advantage” that Downtown East possesses.

Figure 5.4 shows generalized land uses in the Downtown East in 2008. It is important to recognize the existing pattern of the community when developing a vision for the future of the area.



Figure 5.4 Generalized Existing Land Uses



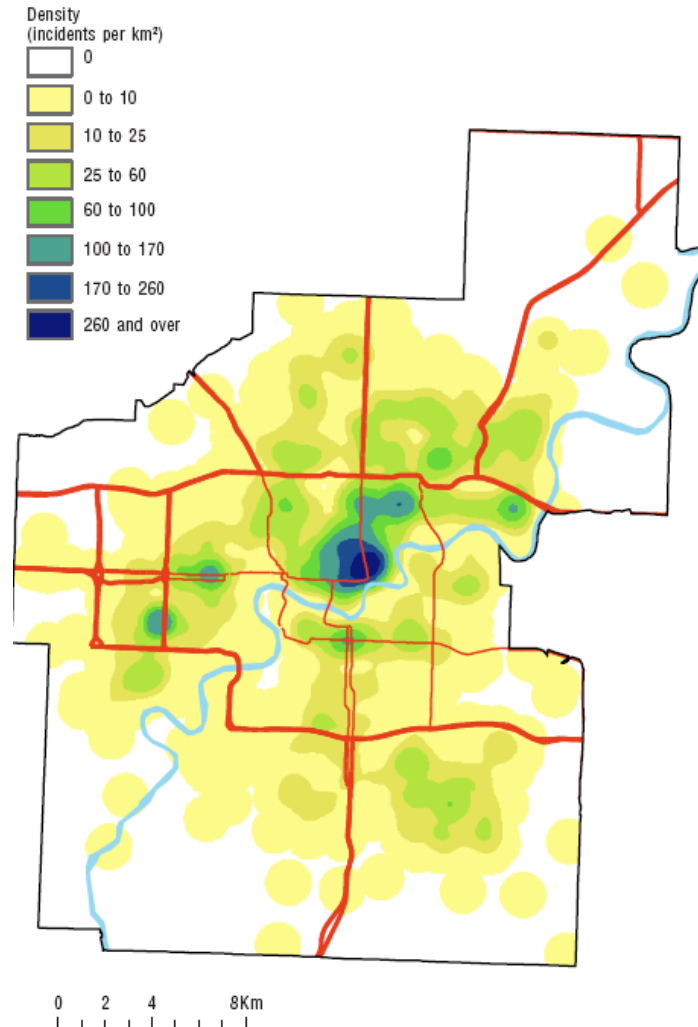
### 5.2.3 Safety

“There is a perception and somewhat of a reality that Downtown East is not a safe place.” (J. Kolkman, personal communication, 2008) This sentiment, shared by many of key informants, is easily verified in a glance at Figure 5.5 below.

This map, taken from the study entitled “Neighbourhood Characteristics and the Distribution of Crime: Edmonton, Halifax and Thunder Bay” and published by Statistics Canada in 2008, graphically illustrates the number of reported violent crime incidents in Edmonton in 2003. The darkest blue represents the highest concentration of violent

crimes and is centred on 97 Street, the westernmost edge of Downtown East, which is the red line crossing through the darkest blue.

**Figure 5.5 Kernel density distribution of violent crime incidents, Edmonton, 2003**



Both perceived and real issues of crime and safety are a barrier to the revitalization of Downtown East. Despite the City of Edmonton Police Headquarters location on the north side of 103A Avenue and the Law Courts between 103A Avenue and 102A Avenue on the west side of 97 Street, the area has high crime rates. The implementation section of many past plans has called for increased policing in the area and lower tolerance for illegal activities in the area. (City of Edmonton, 1981; City of

Edmonton, 1994) Improving safety in the Downtown East is an important step in achieving revitalization.

#### **5.2.4 Visioning**

In the Oregon model of community visioning, there are four stages based on four key questions. These questions are:

1. Where are we now?
2. Where are we going?
3. Where do we want to be?
4. How do we get there?

(Newman & Jennings, 2008, p. 11) This provides a useful model for how to generate a vision that can guide the revitalization of an area. The fourth point, “How do we get there”, is one that previous revitalization efforts in the Downtown East have not addressed adequately and the lack of success of the plans has been the cost. During the development of the current plan for Downtown East, The Quarters, the project team investigated many possible answers to the fourth question. The vision for The Quarters is ambitious, long term, and allows for major redevelopment in the Downtown East. Its answer to question three is a population of tens of thousands with high rise structures and busy streets. Its answer to question four is focused on means of attracting large scale redevelopment in the area through incentive zoning. Density bonusing is provided in exchange for a package of amenities that are part of the vision for The Quarters. What The Quarters does not focus on is the intermediary years between now and its 50 year vision. In the process, an opportunity to improve quality of life for current residents and achieve smaller scale revitalization in the interim may be missed. A second concern

related to the focus on attracting large scale redevelopment, is that while this type of development may have the greatest ability to act as a catalyst for further revitalization, it is dependant on economic growth and a market supportive of new high rise structures. As described in Chapters 4 and 5, this dependency on a strong economy has been the demise of a number of revitalization plans for Downtown East. While Edmonton has seen numerous new high rises built over the past several years and many more currently under construction, there was a period of time during late 1980s and 1990s where there were no new high rises built in Edmonton. In order for a sustainable and long term vision for Downtown East to be successful, its answer to the question “How do we get there?” must be flexible and contain methods that foster small scale and incremental revitalization. The fragmented land ownership and high land values mean that large scale redevelopment is not a likely option in the near future. Therefore, paths to a long term vision of a revitalized Downtown East must be multifaceted and not rely on the current economic circumstances. Despite these limitations, the vision must be strong, clear, and compelling in order to catalyze stakeholders into coordinated action. Therefore, a far reaching and ambitious vision is called for. A sustainable vision that is not based in trends of contemporary thinking in planning will help to keep the vision relevant over time as it is pursued. The fate of the Old Towne Market Scheme provides a good illustration of the importance of a sustainable vision. Based in the festival market place movement as an approach to revitalization, when the approach fell out of fashion, the proponents of the Old Towne Market vision were hard pressed to find support. (Merrett, 2001)

## **CHAPTER 6** RECOMMENDATIONS

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We have now examined the literature pertaining to revitalization of downtowns and inner cities, we have reviewed the history of Downtown East, the physical fabric, the community, plans and redevelopment schemes and both how they have impacted the area and why they have failed. Based on this information, the barriers and paths to revitalization of the Downtown East have been discussed. This Chapter will recommend a vision for the area based on the information in previous Chapters and will discuss ways of implementing the vision.

### **6.1 VISION FOR DOWNTOWN EAST**

#### **6.1.1 Approaching revitalization from within the framework of sustainability**

“The often-unrecognized natural processes occurring within cities provide us with an alternative basis for urban design.” (Michael Hough, 2003)

It is not often within the centre of a major Canadian city, where densities are typically highest in the city, that there is an area so underdeveloped as the Downtown East in Edmonton. This circumstance presents a unique opportunity to plan for necessary redevelopment under a new paradigm in city building. While concern over the environment has existed for decades, the need to build our cities in a sustainable way has never been as widely understood and accepted as it is today. While the shift towards a framework of sustainability in city building is still underway, there is little argument anymore over the direction of the shift. Downtown East has an opportunity to be a model for Canadian cities of sustainable living in a high-density urban form.

Studies completed for The Quarters indicated that significant infrastructure upgrades will be required to the Downtown East as it redevelops in order to support increased population in the area. When undertaking these necessary upgrades, green infrastructure that is underdeveloped in this area should be considered as an integral part of the plan for upgrades. Moving the infrastructure systems of Downtown East closer to the systems of nature has long-term environmental and economic benefits, but certain elements may also have social benefits contributing to the physical, psychological and emotional well being of the people in the area. Additionally, there are many opportunities that can be explored in the Downtown East to achieve social sustainability. A diversity of incomes, cultures, ages, and family types can all be accommodated in the Downtown East. As there is much new construction required as part of the revitalization of Downtown East, the City of Edmonton can allow for and require a range of housing types within the area to attract a balanced diversity of residents to the area.

### **6.1.2 The Vision**

When discussing a vision for Downtown East with key informants during interviews for this thesis, a number of elements of a vision were discussed. The table below shows the elements that interviewees expressed as essential to a future vibrant Downtown East and the frequency of which they were raised. These elements combined form the foundation a vision for Downtown East.

**Table 5.1 Essential elements for a vibrant Downtown East as identified by Informants**

Element	Frequency
Predominantly Residential Use	High
Affordable	High
A strong sense of place	High
Connectivity to surroundings	High
Shaped by community economic development	High
The vision for 'The Quarters'	High
Sustainability	High
Community Centre	High
Include 'soft services'	High
Good public transportation	High
Mixed Use	High
Walkable	High
Human Scale	High
Ownership	High
Take influences from surrounding areas	High
Multicultural	High
Family Friendly	High

Based on the responses of key informants listed above, within a framework of sustainability, an appropriate vision for Edmonton's Downtown East could be something like the following:

This predominantly residential neighbourhood provides a unique urban living experience in central Edmonton. While distinct from its neighbouring areas, it has a synergistic relationship with downtown to the west, the North Saskatchewan River Valley to the south, and the multicultural McCauley neighbourhood which encompasses both Chinatown and Little Italy to the north. The welcoming and diverse community of Downtown East offers an alternative to living in downtown that is more affordable while still centrally located. People from all parts of the City are attracted to its bustling commercial node at the terminus of 102 Avenue at the intersection of Jasper Avenue and 95 Street, which is dominated by businesses run by neighbourhood residents. This node has a strong connection to downtown along the Jasper Avenue corridor. Coming and going from the area, neighbourhood residents and visitors alike pause to enjoy the many community gardens and park spaces tucked in and around a range of housing types from townhouses to highrises. These gardens and parks provide gathering places for the community and opportunities to strengthen their connection to nature without leaving the city's central area. Despite a large population, there is an intimate sense of community, strengthened by the interaction that takes place as residents work, live, play, and garden within the Downtown East and adjacent

neighbourhoods. The proximity to the river valley means it is also used heavily by area residents for recreation and for connecting with the natural environment. The central location of Downtown East facilitates people walking, bicycling, or taking public transit to, from and within the area. Active streetscapes throughout the area encourage people to walk.

## 6.2 GETTING TO THE VISION OF A REVITALIZED DOWNTOWN EAST

Perhaps one of the most interesting outcomes of the key informant interviews was an unexpected response to the research question “*Why have prior visions for Downtown East failed to revitalize the area?*” The way in which interviewees discussed past attempts and current attempts to revitalize the Downtown East, interviewees rarely voiced criticisms of the plan or vision or scheme itself, but rather spoke to elements related to the implementation of the vision. Most commonly, interviewees indicated that there was no reason (or incentive) for developers to build in the Downtown East. There are still many parcels of undeveloped land in Downtown Edmonton and in other locations. With options available to developers, a vision alone was not enough to prompt the reinvestment and redevelopment necessary to revitalize the Downtown East. In one instance, flawed implementation was cited directly as the cause of failure of past attempts at revitalization. (A. Preiksaitis, personal communication, 2008) In no case did any key informant indicate that the past redevelopment schemes, visions or plans were bad plans or inherently the cause of their own lack of success. Consistently, interviewees cited external factors related to implementation as the reason.

While the initial scope of research for this thesis was limited to an exploration of an appropriate vision for Downtown East, the research findings have pointed to a need to better understand the implementation of a vision. This key finding warrants further



exploration and could provide valuable models for not only Edmonton's Downtown East, but also similar shoulder areas suffering from decline in major Canadian cities.

Further research is warranted, however, as a part of this research, this finding will be discussed within the context of the research question "*What are the relevant factors and their relative importance in determining a vision for Downtown East?*" Based on findings described in Chapter 4 and 5, factors dealing with aspects of implementation should be considered of high importance when determining a vision for Downtown East.

Therefore, while a vision for Downtown East has been established above, recommendations for important aspects to consider in the implementation of a vision follow. These recommendations are based on information shared in key informant interviews and research, particularly the research that was discussed in the literature review at the beginning of this thesis. The recommendations are not intended to be a comprehensive roadmap for the implementation of the vision, but rather are intended to provide a starting point for further research regarding the successful revitalization of such areas as Edmonton's Downtown East. A strong vision, as described earlier in this chapter, is an essential starting point. However, as pointed to by the key informants interviewed for this thesis, a good vision alone is not enough. An implementation plan that can navigate around or remove barriers to the vision and capitalize on strengths of the area is essential to the successful revitalization of areas such as the Downtown East in Edmonton.

## **6.2.1 Removing Barriers**

A number of barriers to revitalization were outlined in Chapter 5 of this thesis. This section will outline ways of removing barriers to revitalization to allow the vision for Downtown East to come to fruition.

### *6.2.1.1 Changing the Perception*

As discussed in earlier chapters of this thesis, the Downtown East has a negative perception, or stigma, attached to it that makes people reluctant to visit or live there and developers hesitant to invest there. Changing this perception of Downtown East to a more positive image would remove one of the major barriers to redevelopment and revitalization of the area. Perception is a difficult concept to quantify and is largely subjective. Within planning literature and practice, however, there are some design elements that are cited as having a positive impact on perception and improving the urban experience. This section will explore two potential ways of changing the perception of Downtown East with strategic interventions that do not require a major financial investment by the City and could make a large impact over the short term. The planting of street trees in Downtown East and the conversion of vacant lots into community gardens are examined as two potential strategic interventions.

#### **6.2.1.1.a Street Trees**

In Allan B. Jacobs' "Making Great Streets", he defines elements necessary for making great streets. A quick survey of the list shows that the Downtown East is very short on most of the criteria. One hopeful comment for moving the Downtown East toward a revitalized community filled with great streets is in his description of street trees as an important element of a great street. Jacobs states that "given a limited budget, the

most effective expenditure of funds to improve a street would probably be on trees.”

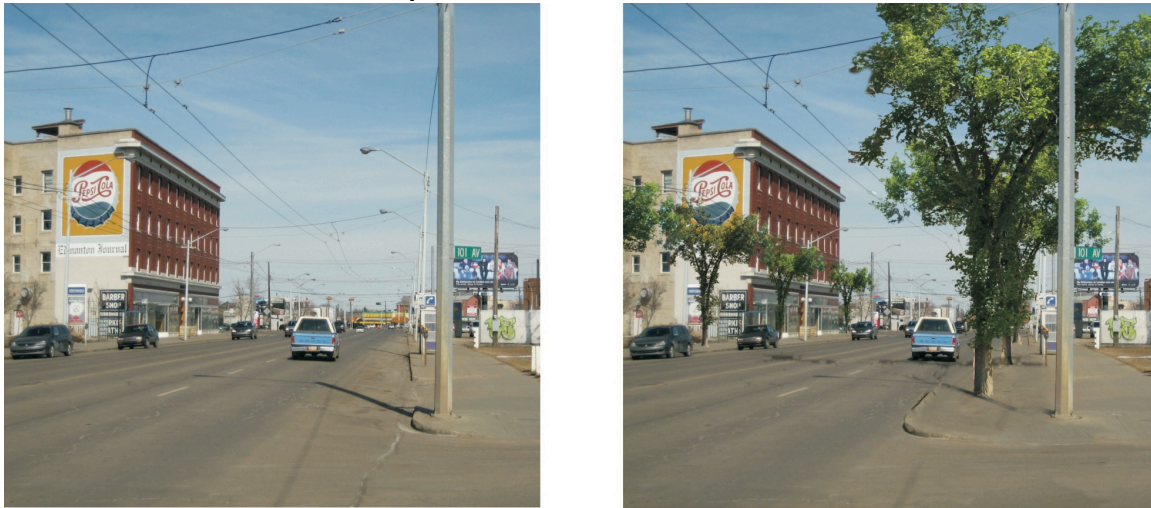
(2003, p. 6.3-7)

The “Greening of Detroit” non-profit organization, established in 1989 has been successful in transforming neighbourhoods in Detroit through tree planting. They describe the benefits of trees in the following way:

Trees contribute to the image of a livable city, and to feelings of belonging and stability for its residents and visitors. Not only do trees add beauty to the neighborhood, but they provide numerous benefits to the environment, as well. New trees slow stormwater runoff, helping to prevent pollutants from reaching [water systems]. Trees also help control air pollution and noise pollution, and help to lower energy costs in the community by providing shade in the summer and protection against cold winds in the winter. New trees can also stimulate economic development, attracting new business and tourism, making retail areas more attractive to shoppers, and increasing homeowners' property values.

This quote addresses not only the important ecological benefits of nature in our neighbourhoods, but also the social and economic benefits it can have. An image of downtown east below in the left side of Figure 6.1 shows how barren and uninviting the landscape of downtown east is, as it currently exists. In the image to the right in Figure 6.1, this same image has had trees imposed onto the photo. These two figures illustrate how a simple intervention can have a strong visual impact in the area and impact perceptions of the area by making it look less stark and masking poorly maintained buildings with natural beauty.

**Figure 6.1 Image and Modified Image of Downtown East Illustrating the Effect of Street Trees on Perception**



Planting street trees in Downtown East may make a vital contribution towards the revitalization of the area, however it will not be enough on its own. At the beginning of Allan B. Jacobs discussion of what makes a great street, he clearly states that the combination of key elements are required for a great street, not one or two elements in and of themselves. While street trees will improve the aesthetic, air quality, and street definition to name a few, their presence alone will not revitalize the Downtown East. Street trees should, however, be budgeted for in infrastructure upgrades planned by the City of Edmonton.

#### 6.2.1.1.b Community Gardens

Wendell Berry (1977) has pointed out that in the preindustrial period, the ‘governing metaphor’ for the human relationship with nature was pastoral agriculture, whereas now it is the machine, symbol of mechanistic means. In the Neotechnic era the governing metaphor might well be the garden.

This quote from John Tillman Lyle’s book “Regenerative Design for Sustainable Development” published in 1994 offers a metaphor within which we can consider sustainable development in our cities.

Privately owned land being used as surface parking lot in the Downtown East is profitable for the owner of the land. These private owners will likely not change the use of their land unless there is significant profit to be made. In attempting to make a short term change to the perception of the area, therefore, changing the uses of these parking lots is not a viable option. The City, however, owns land in the area and has a vested interest in improving the quality of life in the Downtown East. Opportunities to use vacant land owned by the City should be explored. Using City lots as temporary community gardens can improve the aesthetic of the area, build community, improve safety and change perceptions of the area without costing the City of Edmonton significant investment, as the community would be responsible for developing and maintaining the lot. Before large scale redevelopment takes place and begins to catalyze further reinvestment and redevelopment in the area, nature and community capacity can be utilized as a relatively inexpensive resources to transform the area.

#### *6.2.1.2 Turning Speculators into Developers*

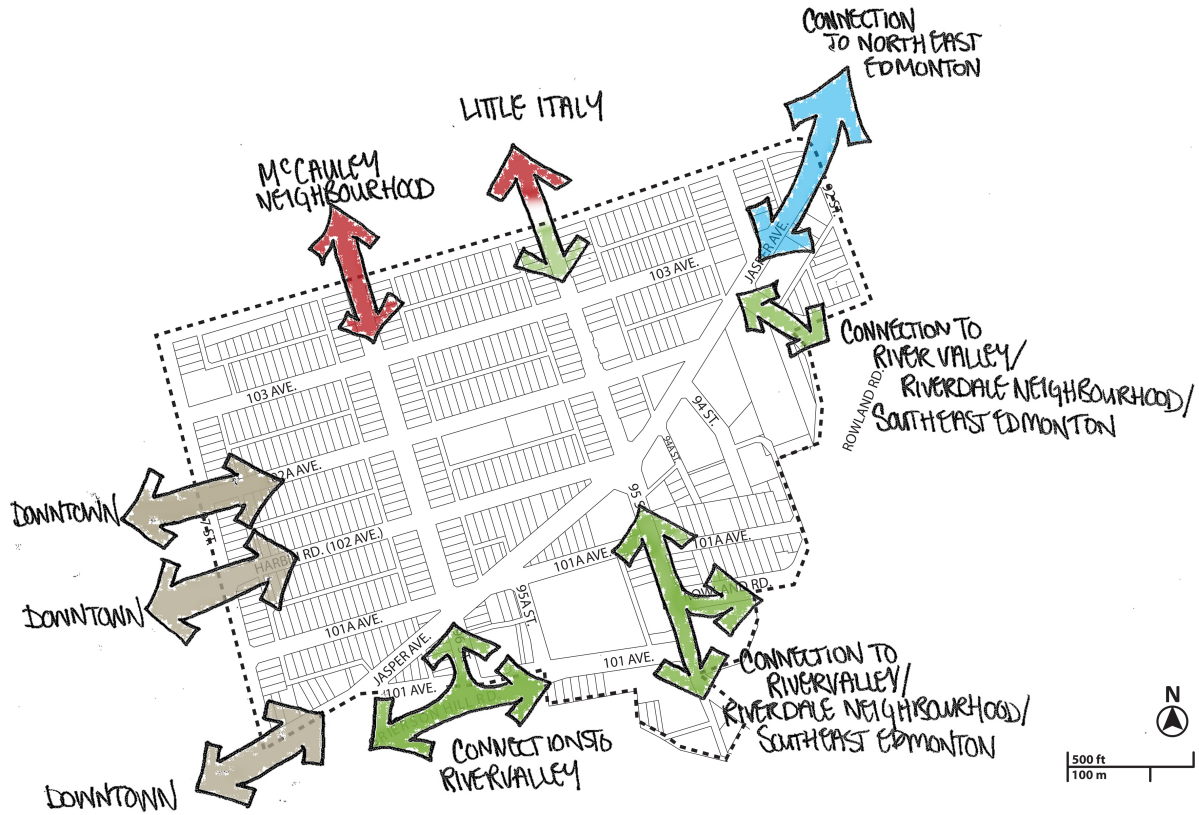
Many land owners in the Downtown East are speculators. Urban planning activities over the past 50 years have encouraged speculative land owners to buy land that they expect will appreciate in value significantly as the revitalization plans unfold. The unfortunate outcome of this pattern has been that the land has been fragmented and sits in the hands of speculators waiting to make their fortune and not developers. (A. Preiksaitis, personal communication, 2008; J. Kolkman, personal communication, 2008; A. Bubel, personal communication, 2008) Past attempts at revitalization have sought to consolidate land for redevelopment, purchasing land from speculators. This is very expensive for the City or a corporation to do. In some cases, such as the Old Towne Market scheme

undertaken by the Edmonton Downtown Development Corporation, despite purchasing a consolidated block of land, they were not able to develop the project in the end. A less cost intensive method for the City would be to work with land owners to help turn them from speculators into developers.

#### *6.2.1.3 Reconnecting to surrounding areas*

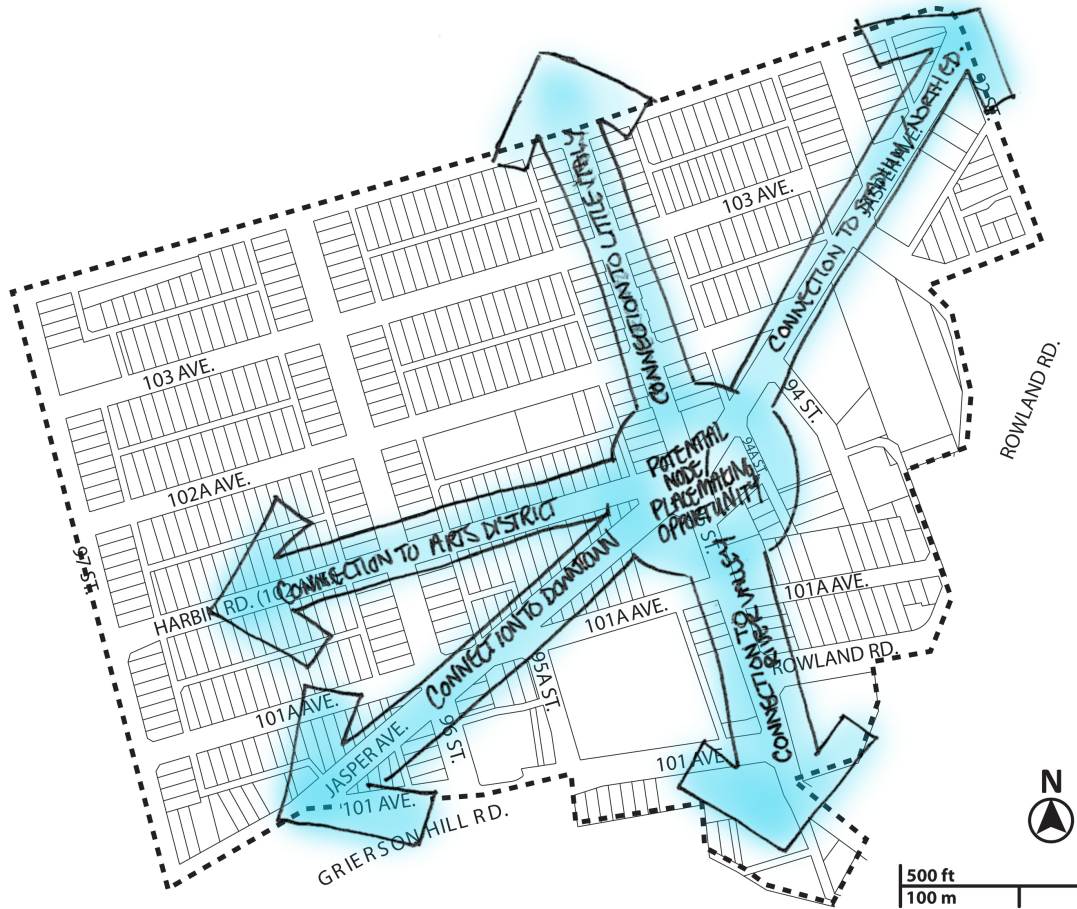
Reconnecting Downtown East to its surrounding areas may seem straightforward, however, despite physical connections that are in place, such as roadway networks, the Downtown East remains disconnected. The connection implies movement back and forth between the Downtown East and its surroundings. This does not necessitate building roadways, but rather creating destinations, streetscaping and buildings that connect the urban fabric from this area to other areas. Figure 6.2 shows points of entry into the Downtown East and indicates where they connect to outside of the area.

Figure 6.2 Points of Entry into the Downtown East from Surrounding Areas



In attempting to reconnect to surrounding areas, the concepts of paths and nodes and their interrelationship may be of use. Kevin Lynch suggests that the one's image of the city is composed of five main elements; paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. He describes paths as “the channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally, or potentially moves.” Lynch describes nodes as “points, the strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter, and which are the intensive foci to and from which he is traveling.” (1960) A node could be nothing more than an intersection of streets. Figure 6.3 shows illustrates a number of paths that lead to a node in Downtown East.

Figure 6.3 Paths and Potential Node in Downtown East



While this intersection presently does not offer many reasons for people to stop at this location, it does represent the convergence of a number of paths connecting to important districts surrounding Downtown East. The creation of a place at this node could help attract people into the Downtown East from a variety of surrounding locations and therefore strengthen the connections to the surrounding districts by leading people in and out of the area. This node occurs along Jasper Avenue, which is downtown Edmonton’s main street and acts as a major feeder road into downtown from both the east and the west. This node also connects to Little Italy to the north. The urban design plan for The Quarters envisions this corner as a scramble intersection surrounded by a circus



of buildings, such as Oxford Circus or Piccadilly Circus in London. However the redevelopment surrounding this intersection takes place, if it is considered a unique place designed with commercial uses at the ground floor of the buildings, such as restaurants, cafes, or retail shops that will attract people to the node and make them linger there, it could contribute toward the reconnection to surrounding areas. The City's primary focus for the implementation for The Quarters is on the construction of the linear park on the east side of 96 Street, described in the plan as the 'Armature'. While the intersection shown in Figure 6.3 above as a potential node is treated as a special "pulse point" in the plan, it's implementation is not first priority in the plan. The Armature will provide an amenity in the Downtown East, however, it will not serve as a connection to and from surrounding areas. A number of interviewees commented that the Armature, while an interesting idea, leads from nowhere to nowhere. If an important part of revitalizing the Downtown East is to reconnect it to its surrounding areas, beginning revitalization efforts with aspects that will strengthen connections to surrounding areas is a logical step.

Another way to reconnect the area to its surroundings may be through a means that was described earlier as a mechanism for changing perceptions of the area; community gardens. Community gardens created on City-owned parcels of land in the Downtown East could be advertized to nearby residents of Downtown, and the McCauley, Boyle Street and Riverdale neighbourhoods who may not have yards. As there are not many residents in the Downtown East, this could dually help to support the gardens and connect the areas.

Both the City and this thesis have identified the Downtown East as a priority area badly in need of revitalization, and as such have focused on this area somewhat in

isolation. An important lesson can be taken from the City of Calgary's approach to the revitalization of its East Village, an area described in detail in Chapter 2 of this thesis and sharing many similarities with the Downtown East in Edmonton. In the case of Calgary's East Village, the East Village was studied and an Area Redevelopment Plan with a vision for its revitalization was created. Once this ARP was in place however, the City of Calgary broadened its approach and created a corporation responsible for strategic projects in an area expanded from just the East Village. This allowed the City to ensure that connections to the area were strengthened and edges softened while simultaneously focusing on infrastructure upgrades and developments in the East Village. This approach can be useful in the Downtown East to ensure that it is redeveloped in such a way that it does not continue to be an enclave forgotten by the rest of Edmonton and that it is well connected to the rest of the City.

### **6.2.2 Creating an overseer of the vision**

When asked why past attempts at revitalization have not succeeded, City of Edmonton Councillor Jane Batty pointed to a lack of follow through on plans resulting from a lack of a commitment from stakeholders. (personal communication, 2008) An important aspect of implementing a vision of a revitalized Downtown East is ensuring that there is a person, organization or group in place that have an interest and commitment in seeing the vision for Downtown East come to fruition and will not change or lose interest based on political term or project duration. Depending on the goals of the vision, the overseer could come from a variety of places. Two potential sources for an overseer are discussed below.

### *6.2.2.1 Community Capacity*

Building community capacity has been discussed in the previous chapter as an important part of the revitalization of Downtown East. At present, the Downtown East does not have strong community leaders (A. Bubel, personal communication, 2008). However, if through the process of revitalization, community members are empowered and deepen their connection to the neighbourhood, they may develop the capacity and interest to become the overseers of the vision. This could result in a formal group, such as a community league, taking charge or it could simply be a motivated resident of the area. The current Boyle McCauley ARP includes many policies aimed at building community capacity. While these policies have not been successful in Downtown East, some policies have resulted in significant capacity being built in the McCauley neighbourhood. According to Anna Bubel, the McCauley community was responsible for taking back their community park that was unsafe and unsightly and have turned it into a well-used place of celebration where the community regularly holds events in the summer months. (personal communication. 2008) The challenge with this approach is finding motivated members of the community that can champion this approach. As has been discussed throughout this thesis, there is a lack of community in the Downtown East.

### *6.2.2.2 Development Corporations*

As mentioned above, while there is a residential population living in Downtown East at present, there is little sense of community or community capacity. Consequently, relying on the community to oversee the implementation of a vision for Downtown East may not be the most effective alternative. Another option for providing an overseer is a

development corporation. In the mid-1990s, the Edmonton Downtown Development Corporation concentrated many of its efforts in the Downtown East, and in many cases had positive impacts on the area. However, its most ambitious plan for the Downtown East, the Old Towne Market, was never fully realized. The only evidence of this redevelopment scheme is the restored Goodridge Block at the northeast corner of 97 Street and Jasper Avenue. Eventually, due to politics (A. Prieksaitis, personal communication, 2008) the Edmonton Downtown Development Corporation shrunk and no longer has as large an interest in the Downtown East. While development corporations may have potential to be politically sensitive and controversial, this does not mean that a development corporation for the Downtown East area could not be an effective overseer of a vision for revitalization. The composition and structure of the development corporation would have to be carefully chosen, however. As mentioned previously, the City of Calgary has had some recent success in their use of a Development Corporation to revitalize the East Village.

### **6.3 SUMMARY**

This thesis set out to answer the question “*What is the most appropriate vision for Downtown East?*” This research question was studied to fill a gap in the literature on revitalization of areas that are neither predominantly in need of community revitalization nor predominantly in need of physical redevelopment, but rather are in desperate need of both. In order to arrive at an answer to the question regarding an appropriate vision for Downtown East, two supporting questions were asked, researched and explored:

*Why have prior visions for Downtown East failed to revitalize the area?*

*What are the relevant factors and their relevant importance in determining a vision for Edmonton's Downtown East?*

As Canadian Cities turn increasingly to intensification to accommodate population growth, research relating to revitalization and intensification becomes increasingly necessary. Chapter 2 of this thesis provided a review of the concept of revitalization as discussed in literature. First, common methods for identifying neighbourhoods in decline were established, as these are the targets of revitalization. Once established, three main types of revitalization were reviewed, including urban renewal, gentrification and revitalization in its contemporary form. From this, important elements that shape revitalization and are an integral part of revitalization were reviewed to understand revitalization at a fine grain, including elements such as urban ecology and sense of place. After reviewing these elements of revitalization in some detail, a discussion of where revitalization stands in today's cities and where it might and should be going took place. This discussion established an important direction for the vision proposed for Downtown East in this last chapter of the thesis. As revitalization efforts have had varied success in cities and the methods for achieving revitalization have changed over time, this review of the literature provided an important basis for understanding the complex process of revitalization in order to effectively consider its application in one specific case study.

Following this literature review, the methodology used for this thesis research was summarized. Forms of data collection including document searches and key informant interviews were outlined. Data analysis methods were also described.

The overview of the history of the Downtown East and description of the surrounding contexts and their relationship to the Downtown East began Chapter 4. The

information provided there is essential for understanding the historical, geographical and social context of the Downtown East. Following this was a review of past planning attempts to revitalize the area and investigation of why each was not successful and what was learned from them. This Chapter establishes an important base of information from which the discussion and recommendations in the next two chapters were formed. This Chapter also begins to provide an answer to the research question *Why have prior visions for Downtown East failed to revitalize the area?* While reasons for the failures of various plans and schemes for this area vary, a review of the reasons provided valuable insight for understanding the barriers and paths to revitalization that were identified in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 builds on the information described in Chapter 4, taking a step back from specific histories of the Downtown East to analyze and discuss why this area has continued to experience declining quality of life and quality of the built environment. Barriers and potential paths to revitalization are identified at a high level based on the data presented in Chapter 4, particularly from information gleaned from interviews with key informants. Barriers that were identified include a negative perception and stigma associated with the Downtown East, fragmented land ownership, surface parking lots serving downtown, land speculators, short-sighted planning, a disconnection with the areas surrounding the Downtown East, and imbalances in community elements such as housing and proportion of social agencies located in the area. Paths to revitalization identified in this research include community building, capitalizing on existing strengths of the area, improving safety, and developing a strong and achievable vision towards which disparate stakeholders can collectively strive for.

Finally, a vision for the Downtown East is proposed. This vision is based on the collective responses of key informant interviews on interview questions related to a vision for Downtown East and from within the framework of sustainability. Further, this Chapter contains recommendations for how to achieve this vision. While it does not offer a detailed, comprehensive plan for implementation, it does offer some strategic starting points and recommends areas of research that require further investigation but are beyond the scope of this research.

It is the intent of this research to contribute to both the practice of planning and planning literature through the close examination of the case study of Downtown East. A contribution to the contemporary planning practice has been made by providing some insights on the revitalization of the Downtown East, from which, it is hoped that some of these insights can help to inform or shape the approach to revitalization of other similar areas in Canadian urban centres. Currently, a gap exists in planning literature on the revitalization of areas that are physically underdeveloped, but in which a population with a low quality of life resides. This research is a small step in filling this gap. It identifies and studies one such case in depth, adding to our understanding of such areas. In addition, much of the research relating to urban revitalization predates a common acceptance of the sustainability paradigm. As such, much of the literature relating to urban revitalization does not position itself within this paradigm. As planning practice moves towards developing plans that are environmentally and socially sustainable, supportive academic literature that considers revitalization within this framework is needed to help practitioners make informed planning decisions.

### 6.3.1 Limitations

While it is hoped that the research contained in this thesis has contributed to both planning practice and literature, it is important to note the limitations of this study. This thesis attempted to answer the research question “*What is the most appropriate vision for the Downtown East?*” to begin to fill a gap in the research on underdeveloped, but not entirely vacant central areas in Canadian cities and how we can successfully revitalize these areas while pursuing a more sustainable urban form. The research question, however, only addresses the first of many steps in revitalizing these areas. While a vision sets out a direction for the following steps to strive towards, it leaves many issues unaddressed. While some steps beyond the scope of this research have been addressed in this chapter, further research on implementation is warranted and necessary as municipalities and academics seek solutions for areas similar to Edmonton’s Downtown East.

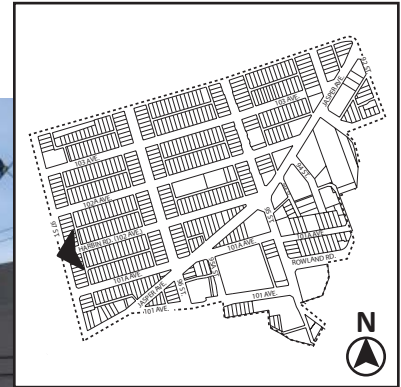
Another limitation of this study is the focus on a single case study. While the Downtown East warrants such close examination, a study comparing numerous such areas would help to separate out elements that transcend location versus elements that are location specific. A greater understanding of common elements amongst such areas would help create a common set of tools to approach the revitalization of these areas.

Additionally, while a number of key informants who interact regularly with residents of the Downtown East were interviewed, the residents of Downtown East were not consulted directly as part of this research. If future research were undertaken on the Downtown East, consulting residents would strengthen the ability of the research to put forward recommendations that are inclusive and reflective of the current community.

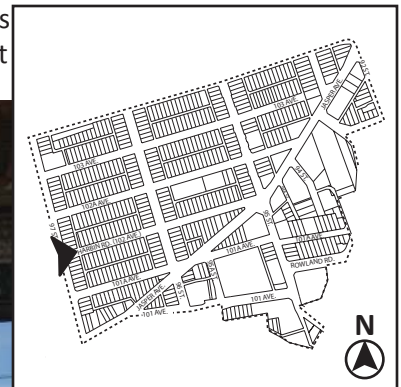


# APPENDIX I VISUAL OVERVIEW OF THE DOWNTOWN EAST

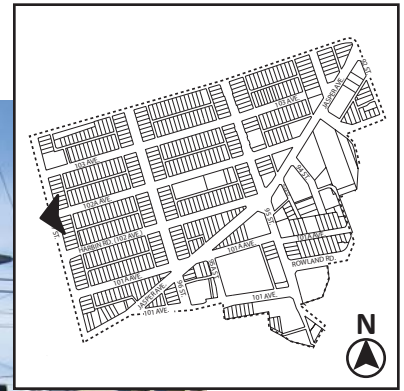
Looking west into downtown from 97 Avenue at 102 Street, standing at the western edge of the Downtown East



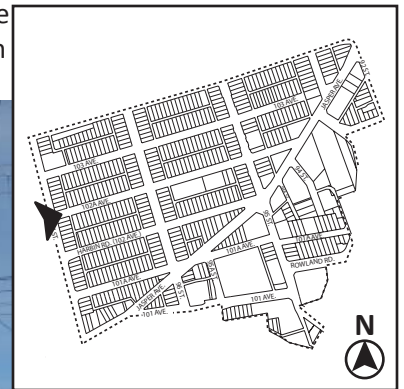
Looking east into Downtown East from 97 Street at 102 Avenue, the built form is in stark contrast to the view above taken from the same location but facing west



Looking west towards downtown from 102A Avenue

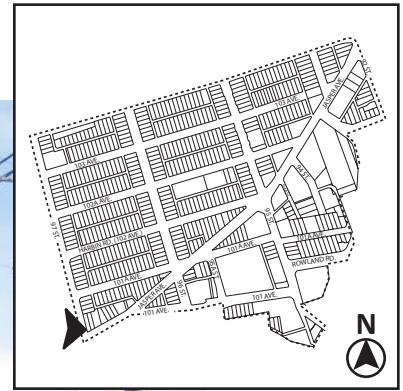


Looking east into the Downtown East taken from the same location as the above image, these two images show a sharp change in built form between downtown and Downtown East

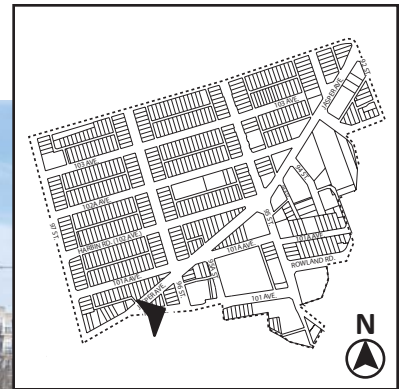




Looking east from 97 Street towards the Goodridge Block, Jasper Avenue and the North Saskatchewan River Valley

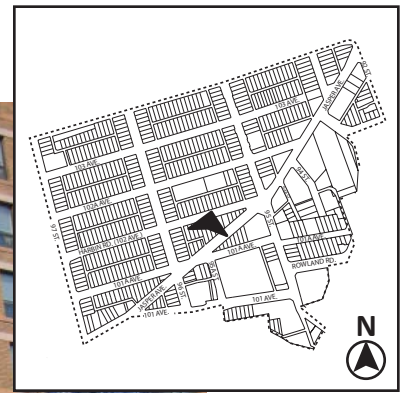


Looking east along the promenade which overlooks the North Saskatchewan River Valley, including Louise McKinney Park

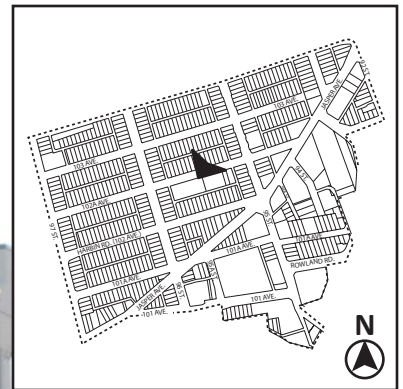




View of the Edmonton Chinatown Multi-Cultural Centre on 102 Avenue

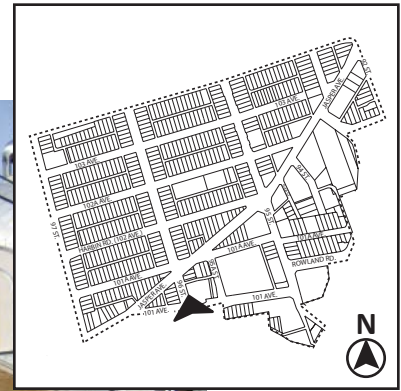


Edmonton Chinatown Care Centre located on the south side of 102A Avenue

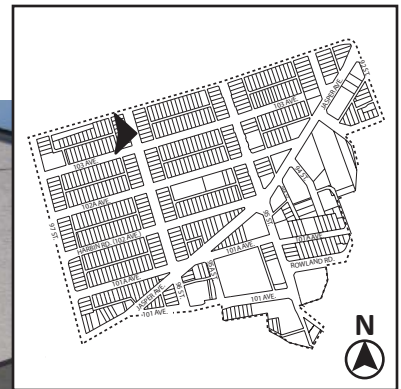




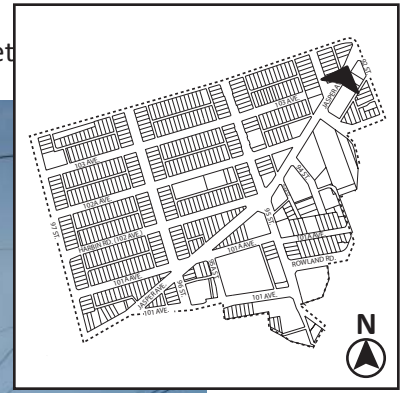
Looking north towards the Greek Orthodox Church and the Gibson Block with Downtown Edmonton visible in the background



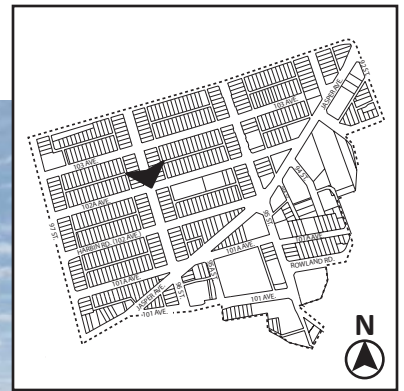
View of a pub and subsidized housing on the east side of 96 Avenue



View from the northeast corner of the Downtown East looking straight down Jasper Avenue. The highrise apartment buildings visible here in the Boyle Street McCauley neighbourhood take advantage of river valley views.

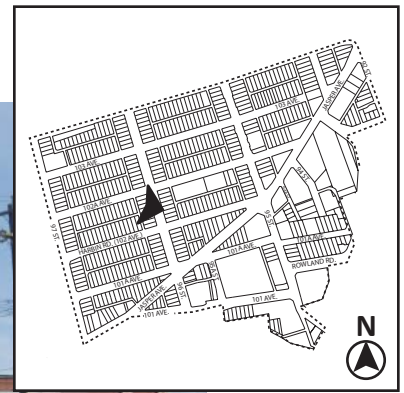


View looking south down 96 Street from 102A Avenue

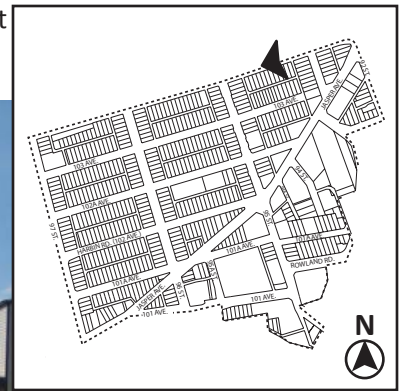




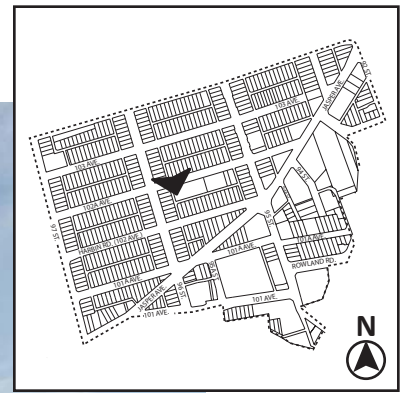
Looking southeast from 96 Street



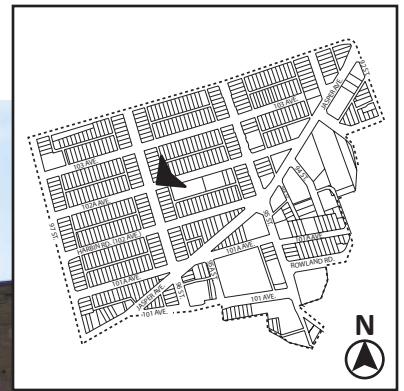
Looking west towards downtown from down 103A Avenue from Downtown East



Looking south across several vacant lots on the east side of 96 Street

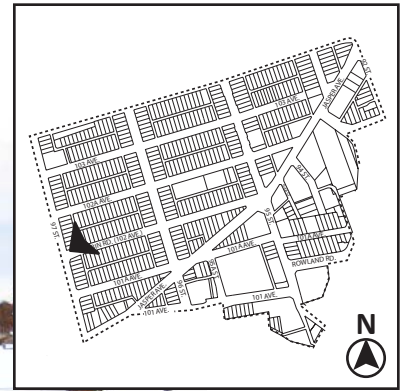


Looking towards the Mount Royal Hotel and Hotel Bar on the west side of 96 Street

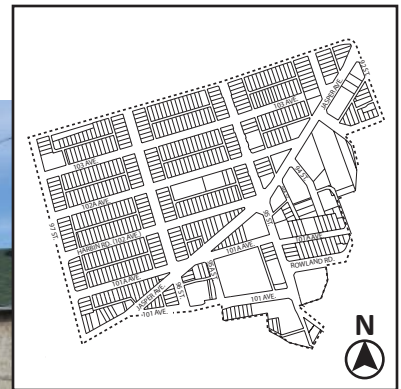




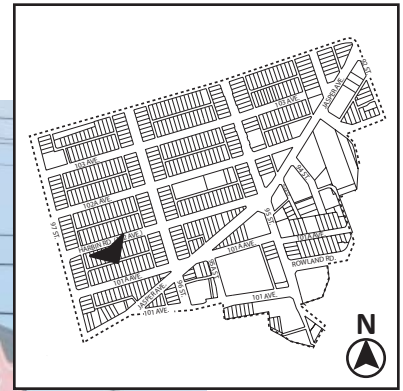
View from Downtown East looking through the Harbin Gate on 102 Avenue towards Canada Place and Downtown



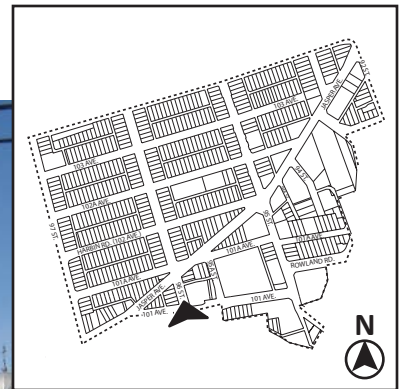
A surface parking lot typical to Downtown East



View of public art on the side of the Salvation Army building visible from a distance across parking lots

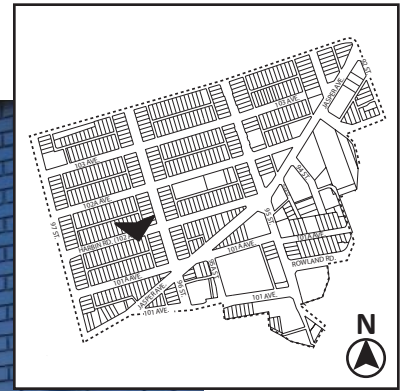


Looking north down 96 Street past the Gibson Block on the left

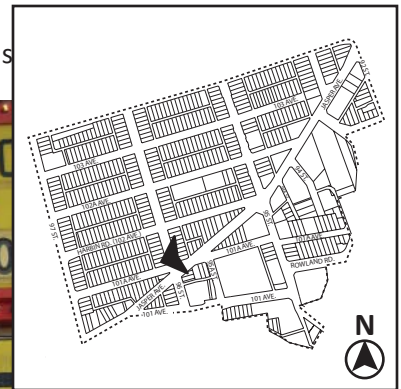




Blank facade of the Salvation Army's Addictions & Residential Centre

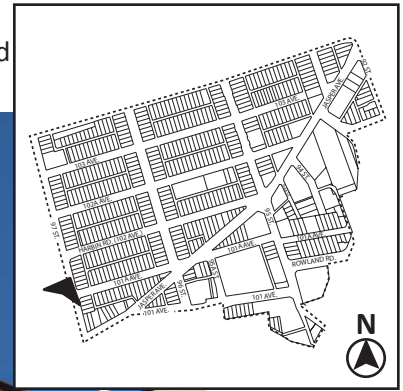


A business frontage on the west side of 96 Street, across the street from the Gibson Block, which currently houses the Women's Emergency Accommodations Centre

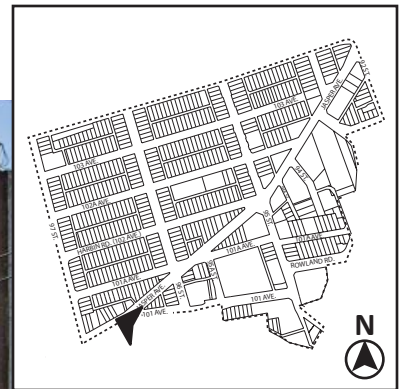




The City Market sign left in tact on the former site of the Downtown Farmer's Market, with a new affordable housing project under construction visible behind

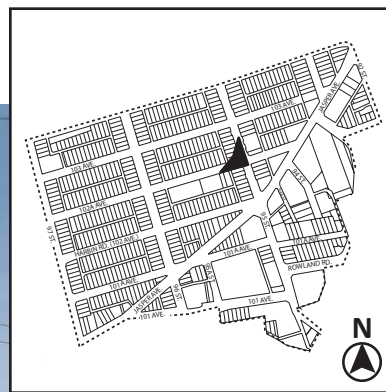


Looking north towards the historic streetscape that runs from 97 Street to 96 Street on Jasper Avenue. Canada Place is visible in the background.

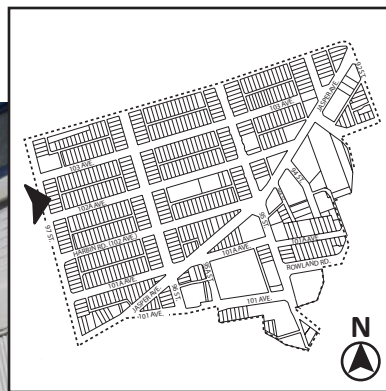




The Camelot Sports Bar & Lounge located along 95 Street



The old Army and Navy Building along the east side of 97 Street, which housed the Red Strap Art Market for a number of years, now stands empty again



Example of typical housing stock in the northern portion of Downtown East

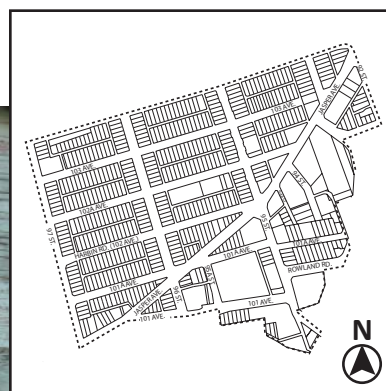


Example of typical housing stock in the northern portion of Downtown East

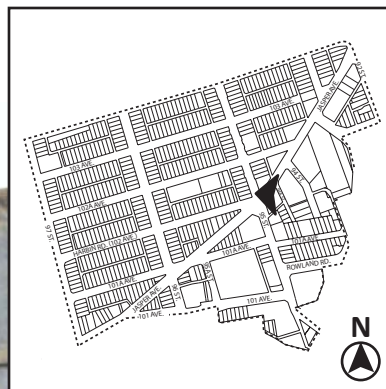




A building in Downtown East

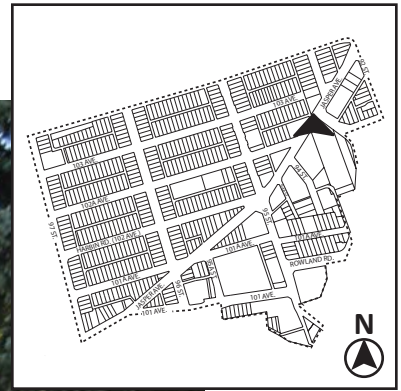


The Edmonton Auto Spring Works building showing signs of graffiti and flaking paint

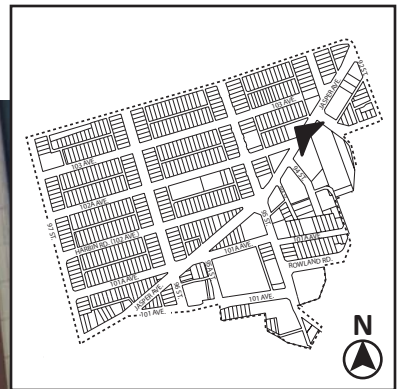




View of park and Pioneer Place high-rise apartment building in the background



New commercial building along Jasper Avenue, also home to the City of Edmonton's Special Project Office for The Quarters





## APPENDIX II SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDES

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### **Semi-Structured Interview Guide FOR COMMUNITY GROUP REPRESENTATIVES**

*For Planning Downtown Revitalization: The Case of Edmonton's Downtown East*  
Student Investigator: Katrina Szekely, M.A. Candidate  
University of Waterloo, School of Planning

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*These questions form the basis of the interview. Follow-up questions will be asked when necessary.*

---

**A.** *The following questions surround your expertise and relationship to the area of study:*

- What is your job title? Can you give me a brief description of what your job entails?
- In what capacity have you been involved with the area of Downtown East in Edmonton?

**B.** *The following questions are about downtown east:*

- What is your opinion of Downtown East?
- How would you describe the community in Downtown East?
- How would you describe the physical environment of Downtown East?
- In your opinion, what has shaped Downtown East?
- Do you believe the area is in need of revitalization? Why/why not?
- As these maps illustrate, the City has created a new boundary to define downtown East that does not follow the traditional neighborhood boundary of Boyle Street. Why do you think that is? What do you think of the newly defined area?
- What can you tell me about the history of Downtown East?
- Can you describe the local community of Downtown East?
- What is the quality of life in downtown east (housing, living standards, safety, ...)?
- In your experience with the area, has it changed over time? If so, how?

**C.** *The following questions surround the concept of revitalization:*

- What is your definition of revitalization?

- What is your opinion of revitalization? redevelopment?  
(Prompts: is it positive, destructive, helpful...?)
- What makes revitalization successful?
- What makes revitalization unsuccessful?

*D. The following questions relate to the revitalization of Edmonton's Downtown East:*

- In your opinion, how successful have past attempts at revitalization in the area (such as the Boyle McCauley ARP or Old Towne Market) been?
  - Why/why haven't they been successful?
- In your opinion, what should be done in the area?
- If you believe redevelopment should occur in the area, how should it occur?
- Who should be involved in the decision making process for the revitalization of Downtown East?
- What is your opinion of the City's most recent vision for Downtown East?
- What, in your opinion, must happen for Downtown East to experience successful revitalization?
- What, in your opinion, would be the most appropriate vision for Downtown East?
- What do you think are important or vital elements of the area that should be preserved? Why?
  - How might these elements be maintained through the process of revitalization?
- What do you think are important or detrimental elements of the area that should be mitigated or eliminated? Why?
  - What might some solutions be to negative elements in the area?
- What do you think is missing from the Downtown East that would be beneficial or positive for the community or city?
- What should happen to the local population of Downtown East?
- What will happen if nothing is done?
- If Downtown East is revitalized what should it look like?
- How might the current residents be affected by revitalization?

## **Semi-Structured Interview Guide FOR DEVELOPERS**

*For Planning Downtown Revitalization: The Case of Edmonton's Downtown East*  
Student Investigator: Katrina Szekely, M.A. Candidate  
University of Waterloo, School of Planning

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*These questions will form the basis of the interview. Follow-up questions will be asked when necessary.*

---

**A.** *The following questions surround the interviewee's expertise and relationship to the area of study:*

- What is your job title? Can you give me a brief description of what your job entails?
- In what capacity have you been involved with the area of Downtown East in Edmonton?

**B.** *The following questions are about the downtown east:*

- What is your opinion of Downtown East?
- How would you describe the community in Downtown East?
- How would you describe the physical environment of Downtown East?
- In your opinion, what has shaped Downtown East?
- Do you believe the area is in need of revitalization? Why/why not?
- As these maps illustrate, the City has created a new boundary to define downtown East that does not follow the traditional neighborhood boundary of Boyle Street. Why do you think that is? What do you think of the newly defined area?
- What can you tell me about the history of Downtown East?
- Would you invest in Downtown East? Why/why not?
- What incentives would make you invest in Downtown East?
- What kind of development do you think is appropriate for downtown east? (high density / low density, commercial, residential, industrial, mixed-use?)

**C.** *The following questions surround the concept of revitalization:*

- What is your definition of revitalization?
- What is your opinion of revitalization? redevelopment?

- What makes revitalization successful?
- What makes revitalization unsuccessful?

***D. The following questions relate to the revitalization of Edmonton's Downtown East:***

- In your opinion, how successful have past attempts at revitalization in the area (such as the Boyle McCauley ARP or Old Towne Market) been?
  - Why/why haven't they been successful?
- In your opinion, what should be done in the area?
- Who should be involved in the decision making process for the revitalization of Downtown East?
- What is your opinion of the City's most recent vision for Downtown East?
- What, in your opinion, must happen for Downtown East to experience successful revitalization?
- What, in your opinion, would be the most appropriate vision for Downtown East?
- What do you think are important or vital elements of the area that should be preserved? Why?
  - How might these elements be maintained through the process of revitalization?
- What do you think are important or detrimental elements of the area that should be mitigated or eliminated? Why?
  - What might some solutions be to negative elements in the area?
- What do you think is missing from the Downtown East that would be beneficial or positive for the community or city?
- What should happen to the local population of Downtown East?
- What will happen if nothing is done?
- What might a redeveloped downtown east look like?
- Who might your target market be for a development in Downtown East?

## **Semi-Structured Interview Guide FOR PLANNERS AND ARCHITECTS**

*For Planning Downtown Revitalization: The Case of Edmonton's Downtown East*  
Student Investigator: Katrina Szekely, M.A. Candidate  
University of Waterloo, School of Planning

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*These questions will form the basis of the interview. Follow-up questions will be asked when necessary.*

---

**A.** *The following questions surround the interviewee's expertise and relationship to the area of study:*

- What is your job title? Can you give me a brief description of what your job entails?
- In what capacity have you been involved with the area of Downtown East in Edmonton?

**B.** *The following questions are about the downtown east:*

- What is your opinion of Downtown East?
- How would you describe the community in Downtown East?
- How would you describe the physical environment of Downtown East?
- In your opinion, what has shaped Downtown East?
- Do you believe the area is in need of revitalization? Why/why not?
- As these maps illustrate, the City has created a new boundary to define downtown East that does not follow the traditional neighborhood boundary of Boyle Street. Why do you think that is? What do you think of the newly defined area?
- What can you tell me about the history of Downtown East?

**C.** *The following questions surround the concept of revitalization:*

- What is your definition of revitalization?
- What is your opinion of revitalization? redevelopment?  
(Prompts: *is it positive, destructive, helpful...?*)
- What makes revitalization successful?
- What makes revitalization unsuccessful?

*D. The following questions relate to the revitalization of Edmonton's Downtown East:*

- In your opinion, how successful have past attempts at revitalization in the area (such as the Boyle McCauley ARP or Old Towne Market) been?
  - Why/why haven't they been successful?
- If you believe redevelopment should occur in the area, in your opinion, how should it occur?
- Who should be involved in the decision making process for the revitalization of Downtown East?
- What is your opinion of the City's most recent vision for Downtown East?
- What, in your opinion, must happen for Downtown East to experience successful revitalization?
- What, in your opinion, would be the most appropriate vision for Downtown East?
  - What is your vision for Downtown East?
- What do you think are important or vital elements of the area that should be preserved? Why?
  - How might these elements be maintained through the process of revitalization?
- What do you think are important or detrimental elements of the area that should be mitigated or eliminated? Why?
  - What might some solutions be to negative elements in the area?
- What do you think is missing from the Downtown East that would be beneficial or positive for the community or city?
- What should happen to the local population of Downtown East throughout the process of revitalization?
- What will happen if nothing is done?
- Are there examples in other cities that you are aware of that a revitalization scheme for Downtown East could be modeled after or take cues from?
- What are the obstacles to implementation for the revitalization of Downtown East?
- Who should be the target market for a revitalized Downtown East?

- What linkages should be formed or emphasized to surrounding areas? (Should Downtown East be an enclave? Should it be a continuation of the downtown?)
- In your opinion, are there important themes that should guide the revitalization of the area?
- Are the City's mechanisms for implementing revitalization initiatives effective? (ARPs, vision documents, etc.)



## **Semi-Structured Interview Guide FOR POLITICIANS**

*For Planning Downtown Revitalization: The Case of Edmonton's Downtown East*  
Student Investigator: Katrina Szekely, M.A. Candidate  
University of Waterloo, School of Planning

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*These questions will form the basis of the interview. Follow-up questions will be asked when necessary.*

---

**A.** *The following questions surround the interviewee's expertise and relationship to the area of study:*

- What is your job title? Can you give me a brief description of what your job entails?
- In what capacity have you been involved with the area of Downtown East in Edmonton?

**B.** *The following questions are about the downtown east:*

- What is your opinion of Downtown East?
- How would you describe the community in Downtown East?
- How would you describe the physical environment of Downtown East?
- In your opinion, what has shaped Downtown East?
- Do you believe the area is in need of revitalization? Why/why not?
- As these maps illustrate, the City has created a new boundary to define downtown East that does not follow the traditional neighborhood boundary of Boyle Street. Why do you think that is? What do you think of the newly defined area?
- What can you tell me about the history of Downtown East?
  
- Edmonton is subject to booms and busts. How do you believe this cycle affects Downtown East? Is Edmonton's current boom affecting Downtown East?

**C.** *The following questions surround the concept of revitalization:*

- What is your definition of revitalization?
- What is your opinion of revitalization? redevelopment?  
(Prompts: *is it positive, destructive, helpful...?*)

- What makes revitalization successful?
- What makes revitalization unsuccessful?

**D.** *The following questions relate to the revitalization of Edmonton's Downtown East:*

- In your opinion, how successful have past attempts at revitalization in the area (such as the Boyle McCauley ARP or Old Towne Market) been?
  - Why/why haven't they been successful?
- In your opinion, what should be done in the area?
- If you believe redevelopment should occur in the area, how should it occur?
- Who should be involved in the decision making process for the revitalization of Downtown East?
- What is your opinion of the City's most recent vision for Downtown East?
- What, in your opinion, must happen for Downtown East to experience successful revitalization?
- What, in your opinion, would be the most appropriate vision for Downtown East?
- What do you think are important or vital elements of the area that should be preserved? Why?
  - How might these elements be maintained through the process of revitalization?
- What do you think are important or detrimental elements of the area that should be mitigated or eliminated? Why?
  - What might some solutions be to negative elements in the area?
- What do you think is missing from the Downtown East that would be beneficial or positive for the community or city?
- What should happen to the local population of Downtown East?
- What will happen if nothing is done?
- Why should the City focus on Downtown East for revitalization?
- What is your vision for Downtown East?
- How can the City make revitalization happen in Downtown East?

## APPENDIX III INFORMATION LETTER

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**School of Planning  
Faculty of  
Environmental Studies**

University of Waterloo  
200 University Ave West  
Waterloo, Ontario  
Canada N2L 3G1

519-888-4567  
Fax 725-2827

August 25, 2008

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my Master's degree in the School of Planning at the University of Waterloo under the supervision of Professor Pierre Filion. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

Revitalization has long been used as a tool to improve quality of life in areas of decline in Canadian cities. The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of underlying causes of areas of decline focusing on Edmonton's Downtown East and develop an appropriate vision that could be a vision that may help to guide revitalization initiatives for this area. While the City of Edmonton is currently examining options for the revitalization of this area, it is hoped that the thesis resulting from this study will offer additional insight on Downtown East and its revitalization. Located directly adjacent to downtown, it has been the target of many revitalization initiatives and yet remains largely underutilized.

In developing an understanding of this area and appropriate means for its revitalization, it is important to understand the perspectives and values of the various stakeholders. Therefore, I would like to include you as one of several stakeholders to be involved in my study. I believe that because of your involvement with Downtown East, you are an important voice for speaking to the various issues, such as the history of the area, the perception of the area, its community and past and current initiatives intended to revitalize the area.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately an hour in length to take place at a mutually agreed upon location. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate collection of information. All information you provide is considered completely confidential unless you give explicit verbal consent indicating otherwise. Your name will only appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study with your permission. You may choose whether quotations to be used in the thesis are attributed to you or are anonymous, or that no quotations are used. Should you decide that you would like to designate some of your interview for non-attribution after it has taken place you may do so by informing the student researcher. Data collected during this study will be retained for two years in a password protected file on a password protected computer that only researchers associated with this project will have access to. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 780 [REDACTED] or by email at [klszekel@fes.uwaterloo.ca](mailto:klszekel@fes.uwaterloo.ca). You can also contact my supervisor, Professor Pierre Filion at 519-888-4567 ext. 33963 or email [pfilion@fes.uwaterloo.ca](mailto:pfilion@fes.uwaterloo.ca).

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes of this office at 519-888-4567 Ext. 36005.

I hope that the results of my study will be of benefit to the stakeholders in Edmonton's Downtown East, the planning community, as well as to the broader research community.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Yours Sincerely,

Katrina Szekely, M.A. Candidate  
Student Investigator

## APPENDIX IV SCRIPT FOR VERBAL CONSENT

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### Verbal Consent

*The researcher will read the following out loud to the participant and will record their responses on a new copy of the script for each participant.*

You have now read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by myself under the School of Planning at the University of Waterloo. You have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to your questions, and any additional details you wanted.

You have the option of allowing your interview to be digitally audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of your responses.

Excerpts from the interview may be included in the thesis and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous unless you give permission for the use of attributed quotations.

You may withdraw your consent at any time without penalty by advising me, the researcher.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from participation in this study, you may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo at 519-888-4567 ext. 36005.

Do you, with full knowledge of all foregoing, agree, of your own free will, to participate in this study.

YES    NO

Do you agree to have your interview digitally audio recorded.

YES    NO

Do agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

YES    NO

Do you agree to the use of attributed quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

YES    NO

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX V THANK YOU LETTER

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**School of Planning  
Faculty of  
Environmental Studies**

University of Waterloo  
200 University Ave West  
Waterloo, Ontario  
Canada N2L 3G1

519-888-4567  
Fax 725-2827

February 4, 2008

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I would like to thank you for your participation in this study. As a reminder, the purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of Edmonton's Downtown East and to develop an appropriate vision that could help to guide revitalization initiatives for this area.

The data collected during interviews will contribute to a better understanding of the nature of Edmonton's Downtown East and appropriate direction of future revitalization initiatives in the area.

Thank you for suggesting \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ as a potential sources.

I hope you will get in touch with me if further thoughts occur to you about the subject of our interview, particularly if you decide in retrospect that you would like to designate some of it for non-attribution as you have given permission for the use of attributed quotations. If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the results of this study, or if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at either the phone number or email address listed at the bottom of the page. If you would like a summary of the results, please let me know. When the study is completed, I will send it to you. The study is expected to be completed by Summer 2008.

As with all University of Waterloo projects involving human participants, this project was reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes in the Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, Ext., 36005.

Katrina Szekely

University of Waterloo  
School of Planning

780 [REDACTED]

klszekel@fes.uwaterloo.ca

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## FIGURE SOURCES

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