

The Benefits of Protecting “Heritage Areas” for Urban Growth & Competitiveness

As Calgary continues to grow and to become more compact, maintaining historical neighborhoods is vital. In the past 20 years, a number of studies have sought to quantify the economic value of historical districts in cities around the world. Cities are taking notice of financial benefits to heritage protection and they are implementing policies that take these benefits into account. Designated and protected heritage districts:

- **Attracts talent and investment:** According to the World Bank report, *The Economics of Uniqueness*, “[heritage projects] contribute to urban liveability, attracting talent, and providing an enabling environment for job creation.”¹ Creative people are the talent that drives the new economy, and creative people are attracted to places that have authenticity. Businesses located in places that are perceived of as good places to live, with a sense of authenticity, have an edge in attracting talent and investment. Or as the World Bank report puts it: “...heritage is a differentiator that attracts talent to cities.”²
- **Create jobs:**
 - Dollar for dollar, historic preservation is one of the highest job-generating economic development options available.³
 - 2013 report commissioned by the Utah Heritage Foundation found that 7,313 jobs were created annually by the heritage portion of Utah’s tourism industry. Between 1990-2012, nearly \$300 million in private capital has been invested in historic buildings in Utah, creating 4,969 jobs. In Colorado, since 1981 historic preservation projects have led to the creation of nearly 35,000 jobs, generating nearly \$2.5 billion. For every \$1 million invested to rehabilitate historic buildings in Colorado, 32 new jobs were created.⁴
 - “Rehabilitation has a greater impact on the local economy than will the same amount of new construction. Suppose a community is choosing between spending \$1 million in new construction and spending \$1 million in rehabilitation. What would the differences be? \$120,000 more will initially stay in the community with rehabilitation than with new construction. Some 5 to 9 more construction jobs will be created with rehabilitation; 4.7 more new jobs will be created elsewhere in the community with rehabilitation; household incomes in the community will increase \$107,000 more with rehabilitation.”⁵
- **Are an asset for revitalization:** Heritage districts are the foundation of revitalization in our urban cores. Scarborough could be a part of the revitalization of the West End of

¹ *The Economics of Uniqueness: Investing in Historic City Cores and Cultural Heritage Assets for Sustainable Development*, Eds. Guido Licciardi & Rana Amirtahmasebi, World Bank Publications, 2012.

² Donovan D. Rypkema, “Heritage Conservation and Property Values,” World Bank Publications, 2012.

³ Donovan D. Rypkema, “Heritage Conservation and Property Values,” World Bank Publications, 2012.

⁴ National Trust for Historic Preservation, “Preservation & Economics: Creates Jobs.” Accessed Jan.14, 2020. <https://forum.savingplaces.org/learn/fundamentals/economics>

⁵ Donovan D. Rypkema, “Economics and Historic Preservation,” *Forum Journal*, 2012, Vol.27 (1), pp.46-54.

Calgary, including 14th Street, 17th Avenue, 10th Avenue and trails to the River.

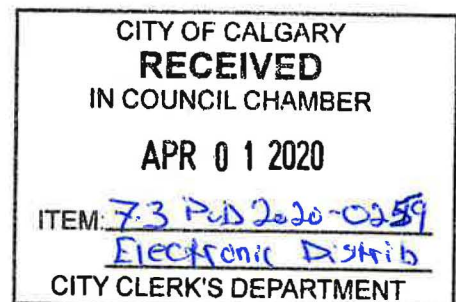
- **Attract film crews** looking for “quaint neighbourhoods” or neighbourhoods that have an authentic historical feel. Filming opportunities generate funding for municipalities and create local jobs.
- **Attract tourists** – heritage districts become destinations where people come and spend dollars (in coffee shops, stores, restaurants). “Heritage visitors stay longer, spend more per day, and, therefore, have a significantly greater per trip economic impact...” Tourism development requires less capital, infrastructure, and skilled labour.⁶
- **Attract people back to the downtown areas** who wish to live and/or raise families in an established heritage community. This increases use of existing businesses, restaurants and other amenities, which in turn, creates a higher tax base. It also increases service jobs.

As Stephanie Meeks observes in *The Past and Future City* (2016), “form-based” zoning puts form first, meaning both the form of the buildings themselves and their physical relationship to one another and to the street. A good form-based code is context-sensitive. It starts with a careful analysis of historic development patterns, tailoring zone districts and development regulations to align better with the character of valued older neighborhoods.”⁷

As Calgary weighs its options to grow and sustain a more compact liveable city, it would be remiss to underestimate the economic power and importance of its historical neighborhoods. In partnership, the city and its historical neighborhoods can bring revitalization and economic stability and growth for years to come.

Preservation is one of the most powerful tools for urban regeneration that we have.

- Stephanie Meeks



⁶ Rypkema, Donovan, “Heritage Conservation and Property Values,” World Bank Publications, 2012.

⁷ Stephanie Meeks, *The Past and Future City*, Washington: Island Press, 2016: 163.