

Edmonton CityTrends

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104th Street Promenade ...a great place in the remaking

Bounded by 100th Avenue to the south and 104th Avenue to the north, 104th Street Promenade is a fascinating case study of urban design, heritage preservation, and a combination of public/private reinvestment in action. In the 1997 Downtown Plan, which is currently undergoing an update, 104th street fell within the *Warehouse District* and was identified as a target area for future civic investments and incentives to attract residential and mixed-use development. Today, there is a growing residential community living in the converted lofts of industrial warehouses and in new high-rise buildings set back above commercial store fronts. Add to this mix a new grocery store with upper level office space on the corner of Jasper Avenue (Cecil Place), a series of boutiques and restaurants along a walkable street, excellent LRT and bus access, and a bustling farmer's market that takes over the public realm on Saturdays in the summer and what you have is a "complete street" in the making.

Change over time

The *Warehouse District*, which houses 104th Street, was a crucial part of Edmonton's early development. The economic boom in Edmonton and the surrounding area in the early 1900's led to rapid growth and new-found wealth, transforming the City from a modest pioneer settlement to a larger successful metropolitan area. Emerging and expanding businesses at the time required new buildings to stock and supply goods and services.



[Click Here for a video of 104th St](#)

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As a result the *Warehouse District* emerged, which was strategically located next to the former railway line.

The area's commercial Edwardian architecture was typical of the time, drawing from many styles, but it still followed traditional architectural principles with brick and stone being the favoured materials. The buildings had a base or pronounced main floor on which the upper floors sat, the bays featured rows of evenly spaced operable windows, and the top of the buildings were capped with a notable cornice or parapet. Typically, pilasters defined each bay and windows were recessed with lintels or sills made of different materials or decorative brick patterns. Store frontages had extensive glazing and sign bands above them.

The architecture was creative in simple ways, using building materials to create features that became architectural details. The buildings were also an extension of the businesses/owners' image and their warehouses are now the strongest defining legacy for this area. Although the warehouses were not initially intended to be retail outlets or residential buildings, the buildings all have active frontages with large openings which has enabled greater opportunity for the adaptive reuse of existing spaces today.

After the heritage buildings, the streetscape along 104th is one of the strongest character-defining elements in the area and it links the whole street together. The design features added to the street at the tail end of the 20th century reflect on the area's the 19th century past, reinforce its pedestrian friendly character in the present, and provide an elegant template for future

development. The streetscape design includes patterned brick paving and uses 'heritage' style benches, light posts, bollards, etc. Brick entrance features with interpretive historic plaques are located at the north and south entrances and mature trees line both sides of the road.

Public and private initiatives

A planned roadway rehabilitation project along 104th Street in 1999 presented the City of Edmonton with an excellent opportunity for streetscape improvements and a chance to enhance the pedestrian realm of this important, if somewhat understated, street. The City called this project the "Fourth Street Promenade" and it was prepared in collaboration with the private sector as an initiative of the 1997 Capital City Downtown Plan.

The roadway and sidewalk rehabilitation was funded by the City and additional streetscape improvements were assessed to adjacent property owners through a local improvement levy. The project has been cited as a tribute to successful public/private partnership.

The concept was developed by the City's Planning and Development Department and the Transportation Department in partnership with the Downtown Business Association. Public input was sought from local property/business owners and public meetings were held to review plans and receive comments on the proposed design. There was substantial support for this project from the community.

The goals of this project were to enhance the heritage of the street, to create a pedestrian friendly environment, and to

Selected Snapshots



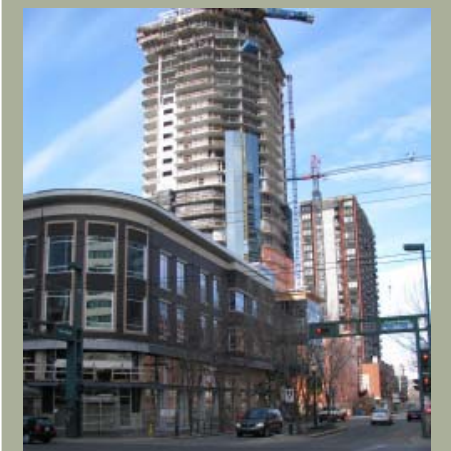
Market Day on 104th Street



Phillips Lofts, residential re-use of an historic building



Attention to detail: brick paving treatment and stylized street amenities



New grocery store, office space, and condo tower under construction along 104th Street

Glossary of Architectural Terms

Bay: a vertical division of a building marked by arches, buttresses, columns or ranges of windows.

Cornice: in Classical architecture, the uppermost division of an entablature.

Parapet: a low protective wall on a bridge, gallery or balcony or above the cornice of a building.

Pilaster: a structural or decorative rectangular pier projecting slightly from the face of the wall it buttresses.

Lintel: a horizontal piece of wood or stone which bridges the opening for a door or window

Sill: the horizontal base of a door or window frame.



provide the space and amenities required to host festivals and special events. Another goal was to encourage and foster the local business community by contributing public money to the improvement of an historically significant street.

In addition to the streetscape improvements, the City consciously pursued the owners of historic buildings to designate their structures as historic resources and offered incentives for building rehabilitation. Today four buildings have been legally designated as heritage resources (the Phillips Building, the Armstrong Building, the Canadian Consolidated Rubber Company Warehouse, and the Metals Building), which represent roughly half of the buildings that the City identified as having heritage value along the street. The City also provided financial incentives, valued at approximately \$4,500 per unit, for residential conversion of unused warehouses to help stimulate the development of a local residential community.

As the result of these efforts many new businesses have opened over the last decade and there are now people living along 104th Street in the Cobogo lofts (20 units), the Phillips lofts (42 units), the Century building (160 units), and soon in the new Icon towers (277 units).

What is old is new again

104th Street is in the process of becoming a place that many planners, business owners, developers and local residents

aspire to be a part of. It provides a transit accessible and walkable mixed-use environment, which supports a variety of functions, and it reflects upon its past while striving to meet the needs of the present and future. It is rapidly becoming both a special place to live and an interesting destination to visit, thanks to public and private cooperation.

Streetscape Design Elements along 104th

- Main entrances at 100th Avenue and 104th Avenue feature brick columns with plaques depicting the street's heritage.
- Heritage style decorative light poles.
- Luminated trees.
- Double wide sidewalks with dropped curbs.
- Heritage style furnishings featuring turn-of-the-century architecture and design.
- Small landscaped islands at the entrance of every block, some of which are equipped with power outlets to accommodate special events.
- Parallel parking along the street.
- Banners and special street signs.

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