

Time to be smart about city's growth

JIM DEWALD AND BEV SANDALACK
FOR THE CALGARY HERALD

There are two basic ways to address city growth: the supply-side way or the smart way.

Let's compare these two approaches.

The goal of the supply-side approach is to build infrastructure (roads and services) ahead of demand, creating options for citizens to move freely through the city with limited delay.

To the average citizen, this is appealing because no one wants to sit in traffic longer than they have to.

More than anything, people hate being caught in congested roads, whether they are going to work, driving the kids to school, going shopping, or going to the theatre.

They want politicians to "do something," and the most logical something is to build more roads to allow more free-flow travel.

However, advocates of smart growth counter that freeways serve to isolate even more all the daily activities as jobs, schools, shops and entertainment become spaced further and further apart.

This only exacerbates the problem further. Consider what has happened to retail in most North American cities. Big box retailers focus on fewer stores located on major freeways.

They are able to cut their costs because they operate on a larger scale, serving more customers from one location that combines retail and warehouse/storage operations.

Customers are able to concentrate on one central location because, and only because, our taxes pay for freeways that allow us to travel to one location.

Big box retailers benefit, more or less receiving a subsidy from the taxpayer in the form of free transportation access for all customers.

The local community shop owner, who is not located on a freeway, does not have the economies of scale to build a big box, and therefore cannot match the prices of big box retailers.

Everyone likes to save money, but in fact we are paying for these supposed savings with our tax dollars, while killing the viability of the local shop.

Also, how do the poor of our city, who do not have their own vehicles, benefit from this subsidization?

Smart growth focuses on the time-tested principle of mixing uses in neighbourhoods so that they service as many of our needs as possible, reducing the time we sit in traffic by eliminating the very need to get into a car.

Smart growth is a natural opportunity when combined with today's technological gizmos that allow us to work anywhere.

Look around and you will notice that wherever people are, work is being done on cell phones, coffee shop meetings, BlackBerries, pocket PCs, wireless laptop networks, and so on.

These actions could happen in your neighbourhood just as easily as on a downtown street, 17th Avenue, or in Kensington.

Smart growth proponents argue that we would be better off to centre our lives on our neighbourhoods, in order to both enrich the vitality of our neighbourhoods and minimize our unproductive time sitting in traffic.

The City of Calgary practices both smart and supply-side growth principles. Smart growth was applied to the downtown by deciding not to go ahead with the freeways that had been planned to provide direct access into downtown.

In the city's recent 10-year review of this smart approach, it

was noted that if the city followed a supply-side approach, another 19 lanes of traffic, or four new Centre Street bridges would be required to support new job growth in downtown.

Instead, people have changed their patterns of travel, driving in off-peak periods and using alternatives such as transit, cycling, and walking.

The results save tax money for all Calgarians, provide more healthy alternatives for commuters, and create market incentives for residential expansion in and around the downtown. In a downtown setting, no question, smart growth works.

An example of supply-side growth in Calgary is the expansion of freeways in all quadrants of our city. Do they work?

Well, Statistics Canada recently reported that only one major city in Canada has had a reduction in daily commute time. Vancouver is the only city that fully abandoned supply-side growth by not building new freeways and bridges, and the result was reduced commute times.

While supply-side approaches provide a convenient

bravado for politicians ("we're doing something") they don't solve growth-related problems.

In fact, they just make matters worse. Further, it costs taxpayers considerably more to follow a supply-side agenda.

Doesn't sound too smart.

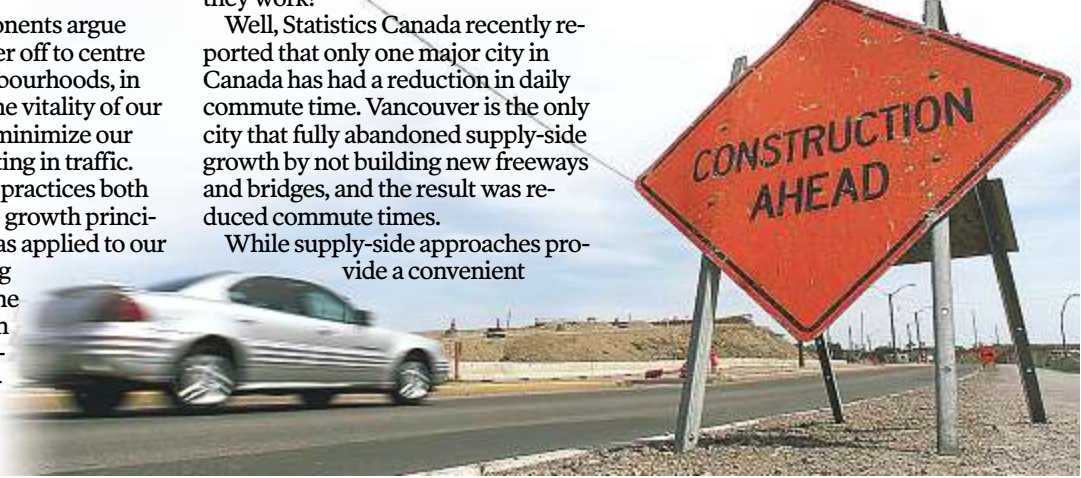
BEV SANDALACK, PH.D., IS CO-ORDINATOR OF THE URBAN DESIGN PROGRAM IN THE FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY, DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN DESIGN LAB AND DEPUTY CHAIRWOMAN OF THE CALGARY URBAN DESIGN REVIEW PANEL. JIM DEWALD, PH.D., IS ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, STRATEGY AND GLOBAL MANAGEMENT AT THE HASKAYNE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY, AND A PARTNER WITH PETERS-DEWALD LAND CO.



Bev Sandalack



Jim Dewald



Calgary Herald Archive



just breathe.

Imagine living in a place where the stress and pressures of everyday life disappear the moment you breathe in the air. A rare place filled with bright, sunny prairie space and silence so complete you'll forget you're just thirty minutes away from downtown Calgary. Gorgeous two-acre estate lots priced from **\$375,000**, close to the Elbow River, all with million dollar views. Year-round outdoor recreational pastimes abound. So take a breath and experience Swift Creek for yourself. Your space is waiting.

SALES CENTRE NOW OPEN
Noon to 5:00 daily. Closed Mondays.



Range Road 31, one km. south of Lower Springbank Road 403-240-9746 swiftcreekestates.com

AA591326

Now Selling in West Park \$707,620
includes house and lot
(also includes \$75,000 upgrades of your choice)

Official Builder of the Calgary Flames.
Visit us for details on how you can win!

ARTIST RENDERING

West Park is designed to inspire. Experience the beautiful streetscapes and extra wide home-sites, some of which back onto a pond.

The Pennington
2556 sq.ft.

Homes for living.
Homes for Life.

- | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| <p>Certified Master Builder
New Home Warranty Program
Member: Calgary Region
Home Builders Association</p> | West Park 536-7250 | Evergreen Estates 536-7225 | Copperfield 536-7260 | McKenzie Towne 536-7270 |
| | Panorama Hills 536-7210 | Silverado Concept 536-7275 | Lake Chaparral 536-7265 | Silverado 536-7255 |
| | Wentworth Point 536-7245 | Cooper's Crossing 536-7220 | Garrison Green 536-7235 | Panorama (duplex) 536-7215 |

homesbyavi.com

AA591204