

Prices soar within inner-city area

Because of Calgary's rapid growth, it can be hard to keep track of all its neighbourhoods. The following is part of an ongoing series profiling communities in Calgary — from older, inner-city areas to the newest suburbs on the city's outskirts.

LAURA LOCKE
SPECIAL TO THE HERALD

Mount Pleasant is my 'hood. And though not really known for our financial savvy, this year marks the 20th anniversary of the best real estate decision my husband and I ever made.

Back in that magic Olympic year of 1988, we bought a cute bungalow, albeit a handyman's special, for \$79,000 in Mount Pleasant.

Of course, the challenge now is to keep smugness at bay, with the knowledge that our little chunk of inner-city heaven could supposedly fetch over half a million.

Herb Allard, 82, makes me look like a newcomer to the neighbourhood.

Born and raised in Mount Pleasant, Allard is now retired from 37 years as a judge in the provincial court system. He still resides in the community, living next door to the house where he grew up.

Across the street from Allard's boyhood home on 28th Avenue is the North Mount Pleasant Art Centre, a city-run facility that offers fine art and performing art experiences to Calgaryans of all ages.

Allard remembers when the historic building, constructed in 1913, housed Mount Pleasant School, where he and his brother attended from grades

Mount Pleasant resident recalls rural community

one to six. "It had four classrooms and the principal's name was Miss Howard," says Allard.

"Mount Pleasant School was really the centre of the community, along with Spiller Hall on 2nd Street where we had scouts and brownies, and St. Gabriel's Anglican Church. After

Grade 6, you either went to King George School or Balmoral School."

Spending a morning with Allard is a rich experience, hearing vivid

stories from his many years in the justice system, as well as early days in Mount Pleasant.

"It was really a rural area back then — half the families owned a cow, and most raised chickens and goats," says Allard.

"There was no indoor plumbing or gas heating, and

we got our water from stand pipes that were two blocks away from our house. Most of the roads in the neighbourhood were just dirt pathways.

"It pretty much stayed that way until the housing boom after the

Second

World War, when the veterans came home. Land was selling then for \$1 a front-foot."

Allard remembers when Queen's Park Cemetery was a dairy farm owned by the Hughes family, with a large Chinese market garden just be-

yond, and when bread, milk and ice were delivered door to door by horse-drawn wagons.

He has watched Mount Pleasant change from a mostly rural community into a flourishing suburb during the baby boom years, and then change again into a desirable inner city neighbourhood.

Confederation Park, on Mount Pleasant's northern border, was Canada's largest private citizen centennial project in 1967.

Hundreds of volunteers, spearheaded by Eric Musgreave, worked for over two years to transform an overgrown gully into a 24-hectare oasis, featuring over four kilometres of paved paths lined with large poplar, hawthorn and willow trees.

Whether out for a jog, bird-watching at the lagoon or walking the dog, the park is a community treasure for Mount Pleasant residents.

Holly Sinclair has only lived in Mount Pleasant for two years, but that's long enough to fall in love with the neighbourhood.

She now volunteers as president of the community association. Born and raised in Calgary, Sinclair moved away for 25 years.

Upon return, with her children grown, she picked Mount Pleasant as her new home.

"It's an established neighbourhood, with heart," says Sinclair.

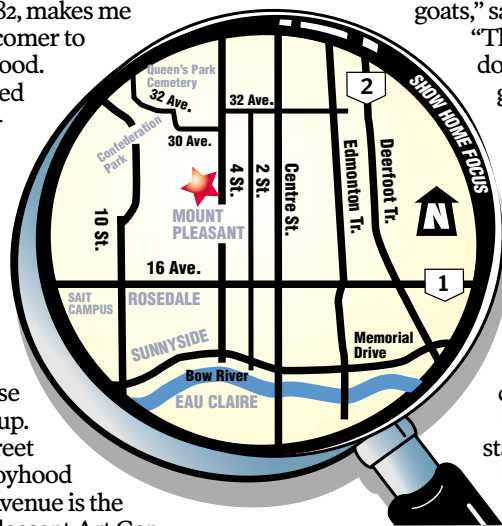
"I feel like I'm living in a quiet, laid-back niche of the city, yet there are lots of great amenities nearby. The easy access to downtown or Deerfoot is fantastic, too."

North Hill shopping centre is close at hand for Mount Pleasant residents, and the trendy Kensington shopping area, with river paths just beyond, is a short bike ride away.

The Southern Alberta Institute of Technology and its LRT station sit on the community's southwest corner.

Within the neighbourhood itself, 4th Street is beginning to blossom, with a coffee shop, restaurants, a pub, a bakery and Plantation Garden Centre, which fulfills the whims of lo-

Welcome to the NEIGHBOURHOOD



Adrian Shellard, Calgary Herald

Retired judge Herb Allard near the North Mount Pleasant Arts Centre, which was his old school when he was a student in the 1930s.

cal gardening buffs.

Across the street is Calgary's first MacDonald's restaurant, opened in 1968, sporting a vintage red-and-white decor.

In the heart of Mount Pleasant lies the community hall, a sportsplex with two busy arenas and one of the few remaining outdoor pools in the city.

Sports programs such as hockey, soccer and baseball are popular, and the community hosts a growing number of annual events such as Winter Fest, an Easter Egg Hunt and A Day in the Park.

Monthly Movie Nights are held in the newly-renovated hall, helping to foster community connections.

"I like the fact that it's an up-and-coming, changing neighbourhood and we're working hard to make the changes positive for our whole com-

munity," says Sinclair. "The recent construction along 16th Avenue will give that area a cleaner look, and hopefully attract more upscale businesses and developments along that corridor."

"Up-and-coming" describes the area well, as Mount Pleasant is definitely on the radar for young couples starting out and newcomers moving to the city.

Last year's hot real estate market drove the median sale price of homes in the neighbourhood to \$515,000, and construction of new infills is a common sight. The median is

the middle of the range of market prices.

Mount Pleasant is a community looking ahead to a thriving future, but it can also reflect with pride on its long and vibrant history.

IN SHORT

The boundaries of the community of Mount Pleasant in Calgary:

- North: Confederation Park, 32nd Avenue N.W.;
- East: 2 Street N.W.;
- South: 16th Avenue North;
- West: 10th Street N.W.