

HERITAGE & TOURISM SIGNIFICANCE  
OF  
DEWDNEY AVENUE  
REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN



city of  
**Regina**  
*Planning & Building Department*

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# DEWDNEY AVENUE

## SASKATCHEWAN'S HERITAGE STREET

In November, 1991, **Mayor Douglas Archer** convened a two-day **Workshop on Shaping Saskatchewan's Capital**. The purpose of the Workshop was to identify and explore potentials to enhance Regina's role, image and identity as the capital city of Saskatchewan. Approximately 100 invited delegates attended representing a broad range of business and community interests. The high profile of the Workshop was reinforced by the participation of representatives of the **National Capital Commission**. Another **Capital Cities Conference** is scheduled to be held in **Regina** in 1995.

One of the important conclusions of the 1991 Workshop was to examine Dewdney Avenue's potential for development as "**Saskatchewan's Heritage Street**". Several related themes were derived from the Mayor's Workshop including:

- 1) Making Regina an easier place to visit and explore (e.g. enhancement of linkages between and interpretation of places of interest).
- 2) Exploring ways to more fully realize Regina's tourism potential as a capital city.
- 3) Recognition of and building upon Regina's multicultural identity.
- 4) Recognition and interpretation of the contribution of the railways, and in particular the C.P.R., to Regina's physical and cultural heritage and its identity as a capital city.

Dewdney Avenue and its related history provide an exciting opportunity to present the formative period of Regina's heritage and Regina's development as Saskatchewan's capital city. Many historic landmarks are located along or in close proximity to Dewdney Avenue.

### DEWDNEY AVENUE - A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The settlement of the Canadian prairies was borne by the westward expansion of the Canadian Pacific Railway (C.P.R.) and Regina is no exception. Appointed as Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories (1881), Edgar Dewdney relocated the Territorial capital from Battleford to the C.P.R.'s crossing of Pile of Bones (Wascana) Creek in 1882. This crossing became "Regina" (officially named in 1883 in honour of Queen Victoria) and so began Regina's evolution to a modern city.



Several historic landmarks were erected during the early formative period including:

- the Lieutenant Governor's residence (Government House) originally erected in 1883 and replaced in 1891;
- the Territorial Council Building;
- the North West Mounted Police (N.W.M.P.) headquarters (relocated from Fort Walsh); and
- the Exhibition Grounds.

A trail was developed to connect these historic sites. This trail gained the distinction of being known as "Dewdney Avenue".

The North-West Rebellion (1885) led by Louis Riel sparked great interest in the western frontier and Regina. The N.W.M.P. doubled its force to 1,000 and its headquarters became the permanent training centre for new recruits. These events strengthened commercial enterprise with the N.W.M.P.'s increased need for supplies. The "Trial of Louis Riel" held in Regina attracted many prominent visitors with eager newspapermen focusing national attention on the new capital. Louis Riel was tried in the Regina Court House and held prisoner at the N.W.M.P. barracks. Through the course of the trial, Riel was transported under heavy guard between the Court House and the barracks, again along Dewdney Avenue.

In 1905, Regina's status as the capital of the newly formed Province of Saskatchewan was affirmed. Marketed as the "Last Best West", thousands of settlers migrated to the prairies with Saskatchewan and its capital enjoying great prosperity. Regina became a major shipping and distribution point with a boom in industry and wholesaling occurring in proximity to the C.P.R. station, along Dewdney Avenue and the rapidly developing "Warehouse District" immediately to the north. To the west along Dewdney Avenue, residential development took hold as the community grew in population. The developing residential area became the home of many working class people. Today this developed neighbourhood remains working class in character and houses a large portion of Regina's Aboriginal population.



## DEWDNEY AVENUE - AS A HERITAGE STREET

Existing events/attractions linked within the Dewdney Avenue corridor include:

- the R.C.M.P. Centennial Museum and Training Academy;
- Government House;
- Regina Exhibition Park, incorporating;
  - Canadian Western Agribition
  - Western Canada Farm Progress Show
- National level sports including CFL football; and
- the adaptive commercial reuse of architecturally prominent historic buildings of the Warehouse District;

The above are graphically presented on the attached map. The map displays Dewdney Avenue in three segments, each having its own unique attributes as described below:

a) Courtney Street to Lewvan Drive

This segment of Dewdney Avenue is characterized by the presence of the Government House and the RCMP headquarters, attracting both national and international visitors.

The R.C.M.P. Grounds include a Centennial Museum, Training Academy and historic Chapel. The site is a very popular tourist attraction hosting approximately 100,000 visitors annually. Enhancement of the Museum is occurring on an on-going basis. Future plans also include development of a traditional North West Mounted Police stable to reintroduce the use of horses in recreating the early history.

Development of a new museum is a long term consideration for this site.

Government House is a designated National Historic Site. Restored to its original use as a museum, it attracts 30,000 visitors each year for guided tours, school programs and other events.

Currently, the Government House Historical Society is planning to recreate an Edwardian Garden on the six acres land surrounding the House. Eleven different gardens would be integrated on the site at an estimated cost of \$150,000.



b) Lewvan Drive to Albert Street

This segment of Dewdney Avenue is characterized by mixed commercial and residential development. Commercial development is prominent at either end of the segment. Existing commercial zoning provides opportunity for further business development. Significant features located in this segment include the site of the original Territorial Government Buildings, Regina Exhibition Park, Pasqua Hospital, Sportsplex and Taylor Field.

The site of the Territorial Government Buildings is designated a Provincial Heritage Property. The Administration Building still stands on the site. The original Legislative Building and Indian Office were also located on the property. The site offers potential for enhanced cultural interpretation.

Regina Exhibition Park is the focus of agricultural related events. The 96 acre property includes the Agridome (home of the Regina Pats hockey club), the Queensbury Downs Racetrack and the Buffalo Buck Casino. Regina Exhibition Park is the venue for Buffalo Days (a week long summer fair), Canadian Western Agribition and the Western Canada Farm Progress Show. Many other special events are held on the Exhibition grounds each year.

Taylor Field is home to the Canadian Football League's Saskatchewan Roughriders with home games attracting 250,000 individuals each football season. The facility has 27,000 permanent seats and has the potential to be used for many large scale outdoor events. In 1995, Regina's Taylor Field will host the annual Grey Cup game.

The Sportsplex is a major athletic facility consisting of a Fieldhouse and Lawson Aquatic Centre. The facility has the potential for hosting major athletic events and competitions.

Potential exists for new business development associated with the Aboriginal community. Development interest had been expressed by Aboriginal-based investors for locations along this portion of Dewdney Avenue. The Aboriginal community is also well represented in the residential areas bordering Dewdney Avenue.

c) Albert Street to Winnipeg Street (Old Warehouse District)

This segment of Dewdney Avenue includes many historic and architecturally prominent multi-storey warehouses constructed between 1906 and 1930.



The Old Warehouse District's distinctive character is contributing to its revitalization as a focus for entertainment and unique shopping opportunities. Its role in Regina's historic development is significant and provides an opportunity for cultural interpretation compatible with commercial ventures. Currently, the City of Regina is working with interested businesses, property owners and residents of the area to further develop this opportunity. The on-going adaptive re-use of historic structures along Dewdney Avenue links the present with the past.

Street enhancement including store front improvements, sidewalk reconstruction, landscaping and improved parking are presently under consideration.

The former Union Station (VIA Rail) is located on the south side of the C.P.R. Mainline adjacent to Regina's Downtown. The Union Station will be renovated (at an estimated cost of \$20 million) for use as a major Casino slated to open in 1995. The hospitality industry that is now developing in the Warehouse District will compliment the casino development.

## CONCLUSION

Dewdney Avenue and its environs contain many historic attractions of local, national and international significance.

It is believed, however, that these attributes need to be linked through a carefully selected "theme" in order to realize their combined potential for tourism. This theming may also act as a catalyst in the enhancement of the existing land marks and the development of compatible new facilities.

"Theming of Dewdney Avenue is now under consideration".

Dewdney Avenue's attributes in combination with other attractions such as the Wascana Centre (Legislative Buildings and the University of Regina), Regina's Market Square (Downtown) serve to create a fuller appreciation of Regina as the capital city of Saskatchewan.



# HERITAGE & TOURISM SIGNIFICANCE OF DEWDNEY AVENUE REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN



Showcasing of:  
R.C.M.P.,  
Government House  
(1891)



Aboriginal Business  
Development  
Agricultural Shows  
Major Sporting/  
Cultural Events

Cultural/  
Entertainment  
(Reuse of 1906-1930  
Warehouses)



LEGEND  
Old Warehouse District  
Commercial  
Residential

