

extending Shanghai Alley and creating Canton Court, allowing for parking on Block 17 and including senior housing in the plan.<sup>73</sup> Unlike its previous approach to the urban renewal of Strathcona District, City Council gave the public ample opportunities to review any development plan before a final decision was made. However the development plan probably has been shelved or rescinded because of the sale of the Expo 86 site to Concord Pacific Development Ltd.

#### CALGARY'S CHINATOWN

During the 1950s, Calgary's Chinatown encompassed about ten city blocks on the south bank of the Bow River, bisected by Centre Street (Plate 13). It was vulnerable to destruction because of the popularity of shoreline beautification programs. As early as 1945, the Reverend C.E. Reeve, secretary of the Calgary Ministerial Association, suggested to City Council that Chinatown should be removed and replaced by lawns and trees. He felt that Chinatown was "a disgrace to the city."<sup>74</sup> The real threat occurred in 1966 when the Downtown Master Plan included a proposal to construct a parkway road between 2nd and 3rd Avenues South, which would have resulted in elimination of half of Chinatown.<sup>75</sup> Accordingly, a group of Chinese businessmen, professional people, and concerned Chinese citizens formed the Sien Lok Society (SLS) in November 1968, mobilizing the Chinese community to oppose the plan. After the proposal was shelved, the SLS temporarily lost its main *raison d'être*. Some Chinese community leaders felt that the society did not represent the interests of the entire community; thus, the United Calgary Chinese Association (UCCA) came into existence in August 1969. It was organized along the lines of the CBA in other Chinatowns and represented twenty-four Chinese associations, such as the Chee Kung Tong, the Mah Association, and the SLS itself. The objectives of the UCCA were to achieve unity in Calgary's Chinese community, to present a common front against further threats to the existence of Chinatown, and to promote Chinese cultural and social activities.

A 1971 survey of Calgary's Chinatown revealed that it had 811 residents, of whom 492 (333 males and 159 females) were of Chinese ethnic origin.<sup>76</sup> Nearly 30 per cent of the Chinese residents in Chinatown were over sixty-five years of age, and most lived cheaply in the dilapidated "tong houses" owned by various Chinese benevolent societies.<sup>77</sup> In 1973, the Chinatown Development Task Force, headed by George Ho Lem, prepared a design brief for Chinatown. The following year, City Council delineated an area of about twenty hectares (forty-nine acres) as "Chinatown," designating it a Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP) area.<sup>78</sup> The NIP plan, which was subsidized jointly by the city, provincial, and federal governments, was intended

for moderate-income, predominately owner-occupied areas that required rehabilitation. As most of Chinatown's old homes were owned by absentee landlords and were too derelict to be worth saving, plans to rehabilitate them were dropped. Instead, they were to be torn down to make way for new apartment and office buildings.<sup>79</sup> In 1974, two city blocks in the eastern part of Chinatown were levelled for construction of a federal government office complex.<sup>80</sup> The development resulted in the demolition of about thirty housing structures and the dislocation of about 200 Chinatown residents.

The Calgary Chinatown Design Brief, prepared by the task force, was approved by Council in 1976. This marked the beginning of the period of revival of Calgary's Chinatown. The brief recommended that Chinatown be retained and developed as a residential community and as a focal centre for both Chinese and non-Chinese.<sup>81</sup> The brief proposed different land uses on the western and eastern sides of Chinatown: family residential units, a multi-purpose community centre, and other local services would be on the west side of Centre Street; on the east side, non-family housing projects, restaurants, ethnic food stores, and professional services would be encouraged. The brief also called for an immediate provision of low-cost housing.

Within four years after approval of the brief, many old houses in Chinatown had been demolished to make way for redevelopment projects. The Calgary Chinatown Development Foundation (CDF), formed by George Ho Lem, was a non-profit organization of about 170 professional and non-professional Chinese people. The SLS left the UCCA and joined the CDF as its "sister" organization. The CDF received funding from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to construct Oi Kwan Place, a senior citizens' home, in 1976 (Figure 25). Bowside Manor, another project financed by the CMHC, was built jointly by the CDF, the Lee Association, and the Chinese Public School. The main floor of the building is reserved for the school, the Lee Association's office, and commercial use, and the upper floors are residential.<sup>82</sup> Next to Bowside Manor is the new Calgary Indian Friendship Centre, completed in 1979.<sup>83</sup> Other projects included the demolition of old tong houses to provide space for new association buildings (Plate 14). Multi-storey commercial and residential apartment buildings, such as Bow Central Plaza (now known as Five Harvest Plaza) and Ng Tower Centre, had also been built.<sup>84</sup>

As these redevelopment projects were in progress, dissension between the CDF and the UCCA surfaced. The UCCA argued that the CDF was controlled by one or two persons and had misled City Council to think it represented the Chinese community. The CDF countered that the UCCA was not representative of the Chinese community in Calgary. The discord between the two organizations probably originated from construction of the Bowside Manor Project. The Chinese Public School had given up its land in return for use of

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the manor's main floor as a school. The school board wanted to buy more space for the school, but its request was turned down by the CDF because the project's space had to be reserved for shops and residential suites. The dispute exemplified the division of the Chinese community that characterizes many Chinatowns in Canada as well as in the United States.

In 1982, the CDF asked City Council to permit high-density development in Chinatown, but the UCCA informed Council that Chinese people wanted Chinatown to remain a low-density area, as originally recommended in the 1976 design brief.<sup>85</sup> The UCCA also charged that the CDF request represented the self-interest of a small group of people rather than the whole Chinese community. Faced with the CDF on one side and the UCCA on the other, City Council could not obtain a unified opinion about Chinatown redevelop-

ment. The dispute was complicated further in 1982 when some Chinatown landowners and businessmen established another organization known as the Chinatown Ratepayers Association of Calgary and commissioned an architect to design a new redevelopment plan for Chinatown.<sup>86</sup> The plan called for high-density development for both residential and commercial use so that property owners would get full value from their land. The proposal was supported by the CDF, but was strongly opposed by the UCCA because it was contrary to the original design brief. The UCCA produced another plan for Chinatown which called for smaller buildings and more medium-sized apartment complexes. City Council thus had two plans which disagreed sharply about land use and intensity of redevelopment.<sup>87</sup>

The Calgary pattern of dissension in the Chinese community was repeated in Toronto, Winnipeg, and other cities when their Old Chinatowns were being revitalized. The internal community contention, complicated by politics, often delayed the revitalization program and forced the city government to look for a mediator. In Calgary, for example, City Council decided in October 1982 to hire an outside consultant to conduct a Chinatown design workshop, intended to provide a forum for identifying the major areas of controversy among various rival factions and to suggest realistic possibilities for achieving a vibrant Chinatown.<sup>88</sup> Based on the results of the workshops conducted by Gerald Forseth in March 1983, the Planning Department established a Chinatown Corporate Committee and a Chinatown Community Committee to resolve the outstanding issues of land use and density.<sup>89</sup> In consultation with the two committees, the Planning Department produced the Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan in 1984 as a framework to guide future development. The guidelines of the plan allowed medium- to high-density projects in the Chinatown core and higher density commercial land use at its perimeter.<sup>90</sup> The plan also proposed construction of the Chinese Cultural Centre at a site right across 2nd Avenue Southwest (Daqing Avenue) on the west side of the intersection of 2nd Street Southwest and Daqing Avenue.<sup>91</sup>

In March 1986, Calgary's Chinatown had a residential population of about 800, mostly senior citizens and recent immigrants; it had over thirty restaurants, sixty grocery stores, and other businesses. Wai Kwan Manor, which was built by the Oi Kwan Foundation for senior citizens, was officially opened in 1985, and Wah Ying Mansion, another senior citizens' home with 104 suites was completed in 1988 on a site next to the Chinese Freemasons' Building. Chinatown Park, also known as Sien Lok Park, was completed, and its entrance marked by a semicircular gate. The Centre Street Bridge underpass, joining 2nd Avenue West with 2nd Avenue East, links the park with the eastern section of Chinatown. In January 1988, the city began the street beautification project in Chinatown and is now considering a Chinese gateway project.