About Hillhurst/Sunnyside



A piece of Calgary's history lies wedged between 10th street and 14th street NW and Memorial Drive, north to 5th avenue. The first homesteads appeared here in the 1880s – the most notable being that of Felix McHugh. In 1883, he established his homestead in Section 21, now known as Hillhurst. The site of his house is now a playground at corner of 9A Street and Memorial Drive. Ezra Riley acquired the land, and sold it to the city in1904. He also donated a 20 acre parcel, which is now Riley Park, and a stone structure where St. Barnabas Church is now located.

The city set the size of the lots to 25 feet with lots selling for about \$300 each in 1907. In the early days, much of Hillhurst was a slough. One of the biggest pools was on the site of the Safeway parking lot, a popular swimming hole and skating pond. As more and more people came, the dirt trails and wooden sidewalks gave way to paved roads; cement side walks, and lit roadways. Now, Hillhurst is a community with a population of approximately 6000. The small well-kept houses and tree-lined streets are the result of over 80 years of care and hard work. The community has since lost some of the intimacy of the old days, but much remains to keep a spirit and sense of belongingness alive. Because of its close proximity to downtown, a short 10-minute walk, Hillhurst is sought after by many developers and homebuyers. But fortunately, with the help of the residents and some important revitalization programs, the community has retained its small town historic atmosphere. You can still find a vibrant mix of social, cultural, and economic groups.

There is an abundance of unique and trendy shops, bookstores, and restaurants. On any Saturday morning you can see a crowd of shoppers enjoying what the stores have to offer along, and around, 10th street and Kensington Road, just adding more excitement to an already vibrant community. One of the other virtues of this 'village like' community is that

you really don't need a car. If you work downtown, you can walk there in no time, there are numerous pathways along the river and through out the community, a number of bus routes pass through the neighbourhood, and there is a C-Train station next door in Sunnyside. The 25 foot lots, in fact, really weren't made for cars, just people and community. Just some of the treasures that you can find are the Hillhurst Elementary School on 7 avenue, one of Calgary's few sandstone buildings, the old Fire Hall No. 6 on Memorial Dr., and the Plaza Theatre on Kensington Road – originally a garage – that use to charge its patrons 10 cents a show. And if you have time, check out the flea market on Sundays.

The neighbourhood has been transformed from a place in the early 1900s, for those who toiled for the CPR and Eau Claire saw mill, to the now home of many urban professionals. What was once a 'working class' neighbourhood is now being replaced by many upscale homes. You can still find a condo in the high 80s, but some condos go as high as \$400,000 or more, and even the older homes are expensive, what once sold for around \$10,000 in the 50s is around \$225,000 at least. Some of the newer, high-end properties, are approaching the million dollar mark. On average, the price of single-family homes, based on the last 12 months, is about \$360,000. The once little village has grown, through the efforts of many, and etched by the hands of time, into one of Calgary's most desirable neighbourhoods, where inner-city and old-world charm unite.

This information and the photographs have been provided by Duane Page.



