

Parker: A city on the march can do its own jobs

By David Parker, Calgary Herald

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After 2009 one had to be a real optimist as we headed into the past year, but it did turn out to be a pretty positive one.

Reading back through my columns there were a few disappointments to record.

I have a real problem with work that can be done by Calgary companies being awarded to outsiders.

Many of us are still upset with the contract given to Spaniard Calatrava for the "bridge to nowhere" without Calgary architects being given the chance to compete, but it was the city-rebranding job being awarded to a California firm that really upset me. We have so many first-class creative shops here.

I believe the project has been presented and we wait to see what our new mayor and council will do with it.

I was pleased to report that Meals on Wheels had bought a building to take it out of its too tight quarters on Macleod Trail and am now sad to tell that money could not be raised, the building has been resold and it's back to Square 1.

And we all felt bad for Bernard Callebaut but there were so many good things to write about. One of the most interesting -- and could be most significant -- was the amalgamation of CTI and UTI into the newly formed Innovate Calgary to better service emerging technology companies. It was also announced that design is being worked on for a third building for the Alistair Ross Technology Centre.

Real estate is a good indicator of a city's health and although residential builders had their ups and downs, the commercial/ industrial/office sector finished off a good year.

One of the big successes was Quarry Park. It's become a flagship development of splendid office buildings, great retail properties and homes that are sold before they are built.

Downtown despite the scare of what will happen when the Bow is finished, we saw the completion of Centennial Place, Jamieson Place with its attractive Winter Garden, Keynote and its most welcome Sunterra Market. Construction is going well on 8th Avenue Place and it's expected to be 70 per cent leased by year-end.

I like the design of the university's downtown campus building and construction crews were kept



The U of C's new downtown campus on 8th Avenue S.W. at 8th Street. The university agreed to a \$100-million, 20-year lease at the six-storey building.

Photograph by: Photos, Ted Rhodes, Calgary Herald, Calgary Herald

working fast and furious at Bow Valley College, SAIT Polytechnic, Mount Royal University and University of Calgary.

Retail was big winner with the opening of the new wing at Chinook Centre, the expansion of The Core downtown and the opening of the well-planned Aspen Landing.

And we are so well served with good restaurants with 2010 additions such as West, another Redwater Grill, Stonehill Restaurant & Tavern and the cute Boxwood at Central Memorial Park.

Arts and culture have a direct relationship to the economy so I found it exciting that this city was able to attract some experienced and gifted leaders to Calgary organizations. Tony Luppino to A.C. Leighton Centre, Martin Bragg to Alberta Ballet, Daniel Doz to Alberta College of Art & Design, and Johann Zietsman very early in the year to the Epcor Centre.

We have also received international recognition from France with the opening of its first consulate here headed by Jean-Charles Bou, and we also welcomed Liu Yongfeng as our new Chinese Consul General.

I was also delighted at last to be able to publish renderings of the new Pump-house Theatres to be completed by the fall of 2012.

Perhaps my greatest pleasure was seeing how our tourism industry has pulled together again after too long a time at odds with each other.

Tourism Calgary is now well led by an active board and a great staff, and the hotel industry and Telus Convention Centre are working alongside them. And so is Travel Alberta, which moved into a swanky new office in Inglewood.

I can't leave tourism without a mention of the terrific asset we have in Heritage Park -- I took visitors there this summer and we stayed for over five hours.

We'll have another gem, a national treasure, at Canada Olympic Park when the Canada Sports Hall of Fame opens.

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