

Stampede expansion will mark centennial

Officials hope some projects ready by 2005

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Calgary Stampede expansion is surging ahead with a new goal in mind, completing at least one of three major projects in conjunction with provincial centennial celebrations in 2005.



Anne Kurpe, Victoria Park Community Association

Warren Connell, senior manager for operations and community relations, says the Stampede has now purchased 55 of 94 properties designated for expansion in Victoria Park, and another six are close to being settled.

Stampede officials are also in negotiation with potential corporate sponsors to help fund expansion of the Roundup Centre, a new agricultural building and a multi-use green space designated for historical sites, rest areas and more green space just west of the Elbow River.

"We really hope to celebrate the centennial with one of these. It would be wonderful to market a project celebrating Albertans and their heritage," Connell says, stressing more corporate support is always welcome.

"The corporate community knows how much they benefit from the Stampede -- tourism is so important for this city, for this province," says Connell. "The only limit to the number of tourists that come into this city during the Stampede is the hotel space."

As the Stampede moves closer to buying up all the land in the eight-block expansion zone between 14th and 12th avenues S.E. north of the grounds, the complete \$120 million three-phase expansion plan moves closer to reality.

Anne Kurpe, president of the Victoria Park Community Association, says the community is pleased with how the Stampede has handled land acquisition and involved them in expansion plans.

"It's actually being handled quite well," Kurpe said.

"The Stampede is helping people move, and helping them find other accommodation . . . sometimes people end up in places more affordable than where they were.

"I really haven't heard many complaints from the community -- but we all know it's a foregone conclusion that the Stampede will eventually be here. Everyone has accepted that."

Kurpe has lived in the community for more than 20 years and has been involved in the community association for 15 years. She is still negotiating the sale of her property along 12th Avenue.

The multimillion-dollar expansion will include a \$60-million addition to the existing 380,000-square-foot Roundup Centre, which would include two more exhibition halls and a second floor, a 225,000-square-foot addition to the existing building.

The upgrade is touted to make a major statement as the entrance to the exhibition area of Stampede Park and as a southern anchor to the convention and trade show corridor that links to the Telus Convention Centre downtown.

Up to \$10 million will go toward creating a multi-use park with green space, rest areas and historical sites just west of the Elbow River for a Youth Campus, celebrating youth in the centennial within a festival atmosphere. The park would provide about 12 hectares of open space, six within the designated expansion area and about six hectares of parkland along the east bank of the river, in place of the old chuckwagon barns.

Close to \$50 million is needed to build a new agricultural pavilion on the western edge of the Youth Campus, dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of Alberta's agricultural and historical legacy.

The new building would accommodate a new indoor show ring, stalling area and classrooms that would be part of Olds College's agricultural program and southern Alberta Campus.

The college is already on board to help with costs.

Connell says construction for the Roundup Centre and the Agricultural Building must begin within six to eight months to be completed by 2005.

Work on the multi-use park, however, needn't start for another year. Much of it would simply involve landscaping.

Connell says he couldn't say how much of the needed funding has been secured because of the sensitivity of the negotiations.

But he says he looks forward to the day when Stampede-goers will have more room to enjoy a larger exhibit space, learn more in a new agricultural site and relax in a multi-use green space.

Park attendance during the 10-day Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth, Connell admits, has remained steady at a total of 1.2 million visitors for the past several years, simply because there just isn't any more room and locals may stay away because of the crowds.

"Expansion is critical in order to deal with overcrowding.

"People don't like coming down when it's too crowded -- we're well aware of that, but people still want to enjoy all our programs."

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On the Stampede Trail

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