

Additional Historic Information by Community

Hillhurst (1904)

Prior to residential or commercial development in the community, Hillhurst was the site of industry, utilities, and services activities. The Calgary Water Power Company, which supplied electric power to the city in the 1890s, built one of Calgary's first hydroelectric power plants in present-day Hillhurst. The Calgary Hydraulic Company's short-lived irrigation system traversed Hillhurst until it was badly damaged in the 1897 flood.

In 1904, Ezra Riley registered Plan 5609J and named it Hillhurst. The subdivision included portions of the former Indigenous trails, which were named Morleyville Road (the present 10 Street NW) and Gladstone Avenue NW (the present Gladstone Road NW).

Tenth Street NW follows the traditional route that the Îethka Nakoda Wicastabi Stoney Nakoda First Nations used to travel to the Rocky Mountains. The route was renamed the Morleyville Trail after Methodist missionary George McDougall established his mission at Morley. Gladstone Road NW parallels another trail that Indigenous peoples used to travel northeast from the Bow River.

In the interest of marketing this new neighborhood to potential buyers, Ezra's subdivision included a slough, which appears on the subdivision plan as a lake. The street names used in this subdivision recalled the Riley family's British heritage. Most streets and avenues were numbered either upon development or soon after, and only the names of Gladstone and Kensington roads remain. In the 1990s, street signage displaying both the names as well as the current day numbering system was installed to celebrate the history of the Riley family's impact on the area.

In 1906, Ezra registered Plan 5179O, which completed the southern portion of Hillhurst east of the section line formed by 14 Street NW. Ezra's fondness for British culture was also reflected through Ezra's endowment for St. Barnabas Anglican Church, where members of the Riley family are buried, through Bishop Pinkham College, a private Anglican boys' school that Ezra commissioned, and the ongoing presence of a cricket pitch in Riley Park, a park that Ezra donated to The City in 1910. Parks Superintendent William R. Reader installed three cricket pitches in the park in 1919 at Ezra's request.

Also in 1906, Georgiana subdivided land west of 14 Street NW as Plan 6219L, which was originally named Upper Hillhurst. This subdivision continued the British motif and imparted the notion of empire with the names of Colonial and Imperial avenues. That same year, Joseph Wilburn Campbell established a greenhouse and market garden, which was later repurposed as a florist business, on a four-acre site in 1710–8 Avenue NW. It closed in 1980.

Construction of the current-day Louise Bridge occurred in 1906, The City's annexation of the area and the advent of the Calgary Municipal Railway in 1909, set the conditions

for the Riley Communities' emergence as an established mixed-use district with transit access.

Within months of its inauguration, the streetcar network extended over the Louise Bridge and north along 10 Street NW to 5 Avenue NW, where a loop allowed electrically powered cars, connected to overhead power lines by a trolley pole attached to the roof, turn around and make the return trip downtown. By 1912, the streetcar formed a loop around Hillhurst (along 10 Street NW, 5 Avenue NW, 14 Street NW, and Kensington Road NW). The system also extended north along 10 Street to 16 Avenue (and from there to Crescent Heights), east to Sunnyside (along 2 Avenue NW, 7 Avenue NW, and 6 Avenue NW), and west along Kensington Road through Hillhurst and Grand Trunk (today's Hillhurst and West Hillhurst) and further to Parkdale and on to distant Bowness Park. By 1919, a larger loop encircled Upper Hillhurst (which is now the part of Hillhurst between 14 Street NW and 18 Street NW) and Grand Trunk along 14 Street NW, 7 Avenue NW, 8 Avenue NW, 24 Street NW (now Crowchild Trail NW), and Kensington Road NW.

As a result of the streetcar network, Kensington Road NW and 10 Street NW quickly became the mixed-use commercial and residential streets that remain to this day. Tenth Street NW, the area's main shopping district, became known as The Bridges. This nickname likely derives from a period in the 1920s when there were two bridges in the area: the original Louise Bridge and the adjacent Hillhurst Bridge. The Louise Bridge was eventually demolished, but the remaining Hillhurst Bridge carried its namesake until 1970 when it was officially renamed to the Louise (Hillhurst) Bridge.

The streetcar era ended in the late 1940s, when the renamed Calgary Transit System pulled up the streetcar tracks and introduced electric trolley coaches that used tires for the main routes and buses powered by internal combustion engines for other routes. By 1950, electric trolley routes were established across the Louise Bridge (and north on 10 Street NW to distant Rosemount), west on Kensington Road to Parkdale, west on 5 Avenue and 6 Avenue NW to what is now Crowchild Trail NW, and east on 2 Avenue NW into Sunnyside. An original trolley turnaround still exists in Sunnyside, encircling what is now a small park (748–5 Street NW). Calgary Transit withdrew its electric trolley fleet in 1974.

By the 1970s, traffic intensified on the major roads in the area, namely 10 Street NW, 14 Street NW and Memorial Drive. In response to this growing traffic management issue both within the Riley Communities and Calgary as a whole, Calgary Transit introduced the C-Train Light Rail Transit system with the inauguration of the southern portion of the Red Line in 1981. Calgary then won the bid for the XV Olympic Winter Games in 1988, which spurred development of the northwest portion of the Red Line, which served the Olympic venues at and near the university campus. Planning work soon commenced, but community concern over track alignment through Sunnyside and Hounsfield Heights resulted in a Council decision to pause construction of the northwest line and instead build the northeast portion of the Blue Line where the right-of-way land had already been established. When planning resumed for the northwest Red Line, City council-

initiated community consultation and input, resulting in a new track alignment that reduced Sunnyside house demolitions and the loss of park space in Lions Park. The two stations in the planning area, Sunnyside and Lions Park, were designed on a smaller scale that complemented their respective neighbourhoods.

A variety of architects were engaged to design the different stations, and urban designer Gary Andrishak provided overall direction regarding the scale and style of the Red Line, including bridges, substations, sound barriers, and other functional elements. Sunnyside and Lions Park stations were reduced in scale and designed to complement their respective neighbourhoods. Service began on September 4, 1987, in advance of the Winter Olympics in February 1988. The C-Train has benefited the Riley Communities, but it has also created a physical barrier between Hillhurst and Sunnyside.

Hillhurst, West Hillhurst, and Sunnyside include a natural open space between Memorial Drive and the riverbank. The Bow River pathway spans this area, providing an important active transportation link for both residents of the Riley Communities and the city at large.

The Riley Communities are some of the oldest developed areas in Calgary and as such, there are several historic buildings and sites within Hillhurst and other plan area communities, with notable examples including:

- Hillhurst Baptist Church (1110 Gladstone Road NW) was built in 1907.
- Fire Hall No. 6 (1111 Memorial Drive NW), built in 1909 as one of three identical satellite fire stations, remained in service until 1964 and has since seen adaptive re-use as a city garage and then as an outdoor recreation facility.
- AGT Building—Hillhurst Exchange (1510 Kensington Road NW), built in 1922, controlled telephone service in Hillhurst, Parkdale, Sunnyside, and West Hillhurst for six decades.
- Plaza Theatre, which was built in the late-1920s as a self-serve automobile mechanic's garage and was converted into a neighbourhood cinema during the Great Depression. In 1977, it became a popular repertory cinema.

Sunnyside (1907)

City Auditor Arthur Bennett (1865–1946), in partnership with businessman William Ross (1858–1914), subdivided Sunnyside and expanded it to the east in 1907. Both plans included roads and blocks aligned with the compass directions as well as areas positioned on an angle to follow a curve in the Bow River. The easternmost portion of the 1907 addition was originally named New Edinburgh. In 1907, Bennett and Ross also created the Broadview subdivision on a small portion of land across Kensington Road NW from what was then Hillhurst. Construction of the Louise Bridge in 1906, the annexation of this area to Calgary in 1907, and the inauguration of the Calgary Municipal Railway in 1909 (and its extension to Sunnyside by 1912) provide the context for the neighbourhood's establishment and development as a working-class residential district in the years leading up to the First World War in 1914. Some infill continued in the 1920s and the decades that followed.

In 1911, William Ross built two landmark buildings in the area. The Ross Block remained a significant building until it was destroyed by a fire in 1988. The Sunnyside Grocery, which his son William Ferguson Ross owned until 1939, remained a local landmark until it was demolished in 2018.

Sunnyside is partially located in the Bow River floodplain and contained several sloughs when it was first developed but have since been drained. The area was affected by floods that occurred in 1897 and 1902 (prior to development) as well as 1915, 1929, and 1932. Instability of the slope in Sunnyside created problems for residents in the 1930s and 1940s, including a notable landslide in May 1948. Construction of the Bearspaw Dam in 1953 allowed for better flood control, but subsequent floods in 2005 and 2013 have caused extensive damage.

Historically the bluff located along the north boundary of Sunnyside was informally known as the North Hill Escarpment. In 1990, the bluff became a new public park named McHugh Bluff, after Felix Alexander McHugh (1851–1912). McHugh was one of two homesteaders who settled on adjacent riverbank farms in the future Sunnyside district in 1883. Indigenous encampments had been situated here up to 1880, but on at least one occurrence in 1892, after the two men homesteaded, an Indigenous or Métis encampment was located on the riverbank at this point. Exposed sandstone led to a limited amount of quarrying activity on both McHugh property and this contributed to Calgary's emerging character in the late-19th century and early 20th as Canada's Sandstone City.

Sunnyside's rich history has a tangible benefit for its residents and Calgarians at large. In 2022, 22 of the buildings and sites on the City's *Inventory of Evaluated Historic Resources* are located in the neighbourhood. Notable examples include:

- The Smalley residence (440 Memorial Drive NE) which was once the home of James Smalley who built many of Sunnyside's original homes through his Calgary Home Building Company.

- The Cappy Smart Residence (446 Memorial Drive NW) was the final home of longtime fire chief James Smart (1865–1939), who had a fire alarm bell installed in the residence to alert him to any emergency. He kept it after his 1933 retirement, but from then on it was switched off at nighttime.
- The King Residence (518–7 Avenue NW) was the childhood home of Violet King (later Violet King Henry, 1929–1982), the first Black woman lawyer in Canada, the first Black person to graduate law in Alberta and the first Black person to be admitted to the Alberta Bar. When articling in Calgary in 1954, Violet publicly spoke out against racism as she broke barriers and continually acknowledged the struggle of people of colour in the workplace.
- Other historic buildings include apartment blocks along Memorial Drive and small commercial buildings on the east side of 10 Street NW. Two luxury apartment buildings on Memorial Drive, the Glenwood Manor and Donegal Mansions, added a touch of luxury living in 1928 and 1930 respectively. The elaborate Lido Cafe sign, retained before the cafe at 144–10 Avenue NW was demolished, recalls the fondly-remembered mid-century cafe that began as a fish and chips shop in the 1930s and that Chinese-Canadian owners Henry Fong, Len Hong, and Ken Lee converted into the Lido in the early 1960s.

The Calgary Curling Club, established in 1888 elsewhere in the city, first opened in Sunnyside in 1953. The club, which is located north of the Bow River, was rebuilt in the same location following a fire in 1976. North and east of the club is Sunnyside Bank Park, an open area established as a park in 1990. Each November since 2011, the park has been the annual site of the Field of Crosses, a charity-funded project that sees the temporary placement of thousands of markers, each with the name of an Alberta soldier who died while serving their country.

West Hillhurst (1906)

Agricultural settlement in present-day West Hillhurst began in the 1880s, when the area was settled by Thomas Riley (1842–1909), Samuel William Trott (1847–1891), Lawrence Herchmer (1840–1915), and William Duncan Kerfoot (1856–1908).

The northernmost portion of West Hillhurst was part of Thomas and Georgiana's original homestead, on which they settled in 1888. Samuel Trott's land was immediately to the south and east, stretching from 14 Street NW to Crowchild Trail NW between 8 Avenue NW and Westmount Road NW. Trott came from Collingwood, Ontario in 1883 and opened the Trott Brothers Drugstore on Stephen Avenue.

Most of present-day West Hillhurst was initially granted by the Crown to the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), including the area between Westmount Road NW and the Bow River (from 14 Street NW to Crowchild Trail NW) and the land west of Crowchild (from 8 Street NW south to Parkdale Boulevard NW and Westmount Road NW). By 1884, Archibald McNeill settled on part of the CPR land south of Westmount Road NW and east of Crowchild Trail NW. Lawrence Herchmer, a former commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police, acquired the property at an unknown date and turned it into a horse ranch. He also built a home for himself there.

William Duncan Kerfoot, hired in 1882 as manager of Cochrane Ranche, also owned what is now a small parcel framed by the Bow River, Crowchild Trail NW, and Westmount Road NW where a former ENMAX building that was later converted in 2001 to an extension building of the Calgary Drop-In Centre.

Subdivision development began in 1906, when lawyer Clifford Teasdale Jones (1873–1948) created two nameless subdivisions on the western portion of Trott's land (plans 371O and 710N). The area quickly became known as Grand Trunk, evidently for the Grand Trunk Railway or its proposed western extension, the Grand Trunk Pacific. Construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific started in 1905 and the new transcontinental line reached Calgary in 1914.

This land was annexed by the City of Calgary in 1907 and it was further subdivided in 1909 by plan 330AB into Happy Land (William Ross) and in 1910 by Plan 331AB into Parkdale (Scott and Hartronft). The future West Hillhurst area comprised Upper Hillhurst (between 14 Street NW and 19 Street NW), Grand Trunk (from 19 Street NW to 24 Street NW, now Crowchild Trail NW), Westmont (south of Westmount Road NW), Happy Land (west of Crowchild Trail NW), and a portion of Parkdale (north of Happy Land).

Road-paving began in 1910, and the streetcar network reached Upper Hillhurst by 1911. The following year, a new streetcar line traversed the neighbourhood along Kensington Road on its way to distant Bowness Park. In 1913, the Grand Trunk loop was added to the transit network, providing a circle route around the area framed by

Kensington Road NW, 14 Street NW, 7 Avenues NW, 8 Avenue NW, and 24 Street NW (Crowchild Trail NW).

Nineteenth Street NW remained lightly developed before the Second World War and did not completely connect the top and bottom of the hill until after such time. It first developed as a residential street, and businesses began locating there in the late 1940s. The landmark Dairy Lane Milk Bar (319–19 Street NW) opened in 1950, becoming the popular neighborhood business that it is today.

In 1927, residents of Grand Trunk successfully petitioned The City to change the community's name to West Hillhurst. The driving force behind the change was the fact that the district's namesake railway no longer existed. As a result of a federal decision to nationalize all railways during the First World War, the Grand Trunk Railway became part of the Canadian National Railway.

The original community association, the West Hillhurst Community Club was formed in 1927 and later became defunct. In 1945, a new West Hillhurst Ratepayers Association was formed, spurring interest in potential neighbourhood improvements. Out of this interest, the Grand Trunk Hot Shot League was formed to spearhead playground improvements. This league became the precursor to the present-day West Hillhurst Community Association, which was organized in 1948. Through community organizing with the City of Calgary, the land that is now known as West Hillhurst Park was granted in 1950, and the association's community hall in constructed in 1951. An arena was built in 1971 and the community hall was redeveloped in 1982. The tradition of revitalizing park space continued in 2009, with the West Hillhurst Community Association, The City as well as corporate and private donors redeveloping an existing playground as Helicopter Playground, a helicopter-themed tot lot inspired by the work of STARS Air Ambulance.

There are four buildings within West Hillhurst that are on the City of Calgary's Inventory of Historic Resources:

- Grand Trunk Cottage School (2422–5 Avenue NW). Built in 1911, Grand Trunk was one of seven cottage schools that the public-school board built for temporary use and were designed to be convertible for residential use when they were no longer needed. In the event, the school remained in operation until 1958.
- Riley Lodge (843–27 Street NW). Built in 1911, this is the last remaining home of members of the Riley family. The house was moved to this site in 1987 from its original location at the northwest corner of 5 Avenue NW and Crowchild Trail NW to accommodate street widening.
- Fire Hall No. 6 (1940 Westmount Boulevard NW). Built in 1964, this building is a good example of Modern-style architecture.
- Guide-Scout Service Centre (2140 Brownsea Drive NW). Built in 1967, this building is a tangible symbol of the Boy Scout and Girl Guide movements within Calgary. This building is also representative of the national Centennial Building program as it was expressed in Calgary during the Centennial of Confederation.

Hounsfield Heights/ Briar Hill (1910)

The land containing the existing Community of Hounsfield Heights was first used as part of a cattle range operation owned by two cousins, George Alexander (1858–1930) and Henry Bruen (Harry) Alexander (1860–1932). The Alexanders left Calgary permanently in 1901, selling this parcel to Georgiana Riley, wife of Ezra Riley, in 1902. Her sons Thomas C.W. Riley (1868–1927) and Edmund Riley (1880–1942)—inherited the property when she died in 1907. When The City annexed this land in 1910, the brothers subdivided the land, borrowing from their late mother’s maiden name when naming the subdivision: Hounsfield Heights. The land was promoted as an exclusive neighbourhood with a commanding view.

Only eleven houses were built during the economic boom leading up to World War One. It was not until after the Great Depression and Second World War had passed that the neighborhood as well as most of the Riley Communities, started developing again.

A notable exception that occurred just outside the plan area was the development of the Provincial Institute of Technology and Art (PITA) campus or “The Tech” as it was colloquially known. PITA included the Calgary Normal School, which was a teacher-training college. The Tech and the Calgary Normal School were displaced from 1940 to 1945 while the campus was used for the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan for its No. 2 Wireless School. After the war, the Tech and the Normal School—and, later, its university branch successor—made use of temporary wooden buildings constructed during the war that continued to dot the campus into the 1950s. The Calgary Normal School became a Calgary branch of the University of Alberta’s Faculty of Education in 1945. With the growing need for a larger university presence in Calgary, this branch relocated in 1960 and by 1966, became the University of Calgary that we know of today.

The PITA art department eventually separated and by 1973, was known as the Alberta College of Arts and had its own purpose-built facility. In 2019, ACAD became an accredited university and was renamed to the Alberta University of the Arts (AUArts).

The Walter Hargrave Residence (1732–13 Avenue NW), is one of two Hounsfield Heights buildings on The City’s *Inventory of Evaluated Historic Resources*. Built in 1913, this arts and crafts-style house represents the community’s origins. Three other original homes belonged to members of the Riley family, and only one of them remains. Thomas Riley lived as a widower in Hounsfield Lodge (17 Street NW and 8 Avenue NW), which was built in 1906–07 on a 4.75-acre lot. It remained a family home until 1945, when the Lutheran Welfare Society turned it into the Bethany Home for seniors. It was demolished a decade later. Harold Riley (1877–1946), another son of Thomas and Georgiana’s, lived in a 1912 home at 1011–17 Street NW (later redesignated 17A Street NW) with his wife, Maude (née Keene, 1882–1962).

After the Second World War, development in Hounsfield Heights restarted and its western portion, Briar Hill, started to develop in the early 1950s. Hounsfield Heights and Briar Hill comprised of primarily single-detached homes with a commercial zone along

16 Avenue NW, which was designated as part of the Trans-Canada Highway in advance of the national highway's formal completion in 1962. In that context, Motel Village and the University of Alberta in Calgary (later renamed the University of Calgary) emerged nearby. Just outside the plan area, the Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium was completed in Hillhurst in 1957 and was followed by Calgary's first purpose-built indoor shopping mall, the Calgary Centre (later renamed the North Hill Shopping Centre) in Hounsfield Heights in 1958. In 1959, The City partnered with the North Hill Lions Club and the Hounsfield Heights/Briar Hill Community Association to develop and beautify Lions Park, which was named for the club and included a floral planting depicting a lion. The Tech campus was further developed, and, at its southeast edge, the Senator Patrick Burns Memorial Garden was created in 1956.

Sixteenth Avenue NW, a section road that forms the northern boundary of Hillhurst and Hounsfield Heights, emerged as a major thoroughfare and commercial corridor. In the 1950s, it was designated as part of the Trans-Canada Highway. By contrast, 14 Street NW and 24 Street NW, despite being section roads, were slow to develop as major thoroughfares, as neither had a bridge across the Bow. The Mewata Bridge linked 14 Street NW with its counterpart across the Bow in 1953, and 24 Street NW was transformed into Crowchild Trail NW, complete with the Crowchild Bridge across the Bow, in the mid-1960s. Several automobile-related businesses located in the planning area after the Mewata Bridge opened.

The city's first purpose-built indoor shopping mall, Calgary Centre (later renamed North Hill Shopping Centre), opened at 14 Street NW and 16 Avenue NW in 1958. The former Simpsons Sears department store (1616–14 Avenue NW), the mall's original anchor tenant, is the second of two neighbourhood buildings on The City's Inventory of Evaluated Historic Resources. It represents the shift of commercial and retail activities from the city core to outlying neighbourhoods. North Hill Theatre, Calgary's only Cinerama movie theatre, opened in a stand-alone building north of the mall in 1967. Cinerama, a 1950s innovation, featured a screen curved at both ends to create a more immersive effect for viewers. The cinema was demolished in 1999 for mall expansion.

The Louise Riley Library (1904–14 Avenue NW) opened in Briar Hill in 1959. Its namesake, librarian Louise Riley, was a granddaughter of Thomas and Georgiana Riley, and this branch library is fittingly located on their original homestead. Louise ultimately became the Calgary Public Library's Assistant Chief Librarian. Both chief librarians under whom she served, Alexander Calhoun (1879–1979) and his successor, William R. Castell (1908–2004), lived in Hounsfield Heights.

Briar Hill School opened early in the 1950s, and the Bethany Auxiliary Hospital, controversial at the time it was built, opened in the late 1960s. The community association collaborated with The City in the 1980s to influence the routing of the northwest LRT through the neighbourhood to reduce the loss of park space in Lions Park. In 2006, the twin-tower Renaissance condominium project adjacent to North Hill Shopping Centre and Lions Park LRT station brought the transit-oriented development (TOD) planning concept to Hounsfield Heights.