

2.1 Restoration & Revitalization

Downtown revitalization and restoration of historic buildings is a growing trend in the U.S.

Some firms are already active in these markets.

One of the strongest trends in urban development in the United States over the last few years has been towards restoring existing building stock and revitalizing downtown cores. Many Canadian architects are acknowledged world leaders in historical preservation and downtown revitalization. Some firms are already active in the U.S. The Zeidler-Roberts Partnership is designing the 25-acre Yerba Buena Gardens project in downtown San Francisco, Moriyama and Teshima have conducted a Main Street revitalization in Buffalo, and Arthur Erickson is architect of the 11-acre California Centre redevelopment in downtown Los Angeles. There is a significant market opportunity for Canadian firms in a wide range of U.S. cities including large metropolitan regions, intermediate cities and small towns.

2.1.1 The Recent Past

The post-war flow to the suburbs drained the cores of American cities.

The massive growth of suburbs in the 1950's and 1960's siphoned commercial facilities from the cores of American cities. Large suburban shopping malls and office parks became the norm with city centres degenerating into virtual wastelands of crime, vandalism and urban poverty. Building stock in the central cores deteriorated from dis-use or poor maintenance by owners unable to charge premium rents.

Small towns were also affected as Main Streets fell into disrepair.

The exodus from downtown cores was not limited to large cities. The "Main Streets" of many American towns were left to deteriorate as businesses closed or re-located to suburban malls and commercial strips. Property values and tax revenues plummeted as downtown buildings became dilapidated and storefronts were boarded-up. Once-vibrant streetscapes became empty.

The trend is reversing.

In the last decade, considerable effort has been made to reverse the degeneration of America's urban cores. High costs of gasoline and a gradual realization that suburban living had lost an intrinsic urban quality have led to a large number of revitalization projects. Some, such as Detroit's Renaissance Centre, attempted to wipe out the squalor and replace