

Cowboys' building sold to make way for Calgary underpass

BY KIM GUTTORMSON, CALGARY HERALD MARCH 6, 2009 8:01 AM

Cowboys will once again have to mosey along, after the property housing the famed bar was sold to make way for a new underpass.

The Calgary Municipal Land Corp.--charged with redeveloping the East Village for the city -- has purchased the building and land at the corner of Olympic Way and 11th Avenue S. E. for \$8 million.

That includes compensating the property owner -- who doesn't own Cowboys -- for the loss of business.

It's the last significant piece of land needed for work to begin on the \$70-million underpass, which will run underneath the railway tracks to connect the East Village and areas to the south, including the Stampede grounds.

"It will allow northbound traffic another alternative, which will be important during events like Flames games," said Chris Ollenberger, CEO of Calgary Municipal Land Corp. "There could even be lane reversals in the underpass that would clear people from Flames games faster."

The purchase of the building from a numbered company means the latest incarnation of the city's most well-known bar will be looking for a new home.

However, Calgary Municipal Land Corp. has extended Cowboys' lease on the venue until the end of the year.

Cowboys owner Paul Vickers is to hold a news conference this morning.

This will be the second time in two years the bar has had to move. In the summer of 2007, it left its original location on 9th Avenue S. W. because Penny Lane was torn down for the construction of an office complex. The bar's attempt to relocate in Eau Claire was shot down by area residents.

Last May, Cowboys reopened in space its owners had leased and operated as Coyotes Bar.

The 4th Street S. E. underpass is a key part of the redevelopment of East Village -- now referred to as the Rivers District.

Ollenberger said it will have two traffic lanes running in each direction, as well as dedicated cycling lanes and wide sidewalks for pedestrians.

This year, work will be done to lower the intersection at 9th Avenue and 4th Street S. E. so the underpass will have a less steep incline, which makes it easier for bigger vehicles such as buses to navigate. It would also be able to accommodate parade floats should the Stampede ever choose to use that route.

Work to dig out the underpass will begin in 2010, Ollenberger said, with traffic starting to flow by late 2011.

"I think a connection between the Stampede grounds and downtown is a positive development," Ald. Ric McIver said. "If it's done well, it could be an asset to the city."

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