

When Homes and Parks Collide

Written by Katie Wallbaum

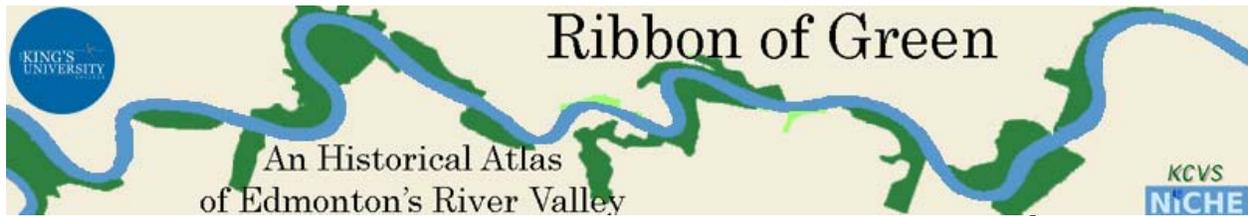
Unlike the sweet lyrics in Howie Day's song *Collide* where "even the wrong words seem to rhyme,"¹ the collision between river valley homes and the planned development for the North Saskatchewan river valley was a heated confrontation. The plan for the Capital City Recreation Park in the 1970s included purchasing residential properties located in the flats of the river. Edmonton's city council deemed it unnecessarily expensive to "repair or maintain a building with 'a relatively brief life expectancy,'"² and thus tore down many residences and buildings in the flats of the river valley. Citizens of Riverdale felt that their homes could become "an integral part of the park rather than being viewed as an intrusion."³ Citizens of river valley communities such as Rosedale, Lavigne and Cloverdale feared that their homes and communities would be demolished and these fears led them to take the city, and its proposed plan, to court. According to William Thorsell, the city ignored the communities' pleas to remain in the valley. On more than one occasion the river valley communities put forward a "loud, clear, well-documented and broadly based voice from the people that these communities should be permitted to survive and be integrated into the valley park system."⁴ In addition to voicing their concerns to city council, citizens of the river valley communities put on a River Valley Festival in June 1975 with the

¹ Lyrics from: <http://artists.letssingit.com/howie-day-lyrics-collide-jv2hlfp>.

² Dan Powers, "River valley residents set to air opposition to study," in the *Edmonton Journal*, November 29, 1974.

³ Dan Powers, "City land policy seen as peril to Riverdale," in the *Edmonton Journal*, May 25, 1974.

⁴ William Thorsell, "For valley residents, the sorrow is real," in the *Edmonton Journal*, September 22, 1975.



hopes of garnering support from other Edmonton residents to their lonely cause.⁵ River valley

residents put on their fighting gear and developed an 80-page brief calling the city out on its

plans to level their homes and replace them with parkland. Not only did the communities fight on

their own, but they also gained support and momentum from other Edmonton residents and

neighborhood groups, such as Action Edmonton and the Groat Estate Residential Association.⁶

The fight between river valley residents and the city became so heated that the conflict garnered national attention and media coverage.

⁵ "River Valley fete proves winner with barbecue," in the *Edmonton Journal*, June 16, 1975.

⁶ "New group behind fight," in the *Edmonton Journal*, May 16, 1975.