

a branded world

PODCAST

with
Luiza Campos



024 | BUILDING A VILLAGE WITH SUSAN
VERES

EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

marca strategy

A BRANDED WORLD PODCAST – 024 | BUILDING A VILLAGE WITH SUSAN VERES

Luiza Campos:	00:01	You're listening to a branded World Podcast, episode number 24.
Announcer:	00:08	Welcome to a branded world podcast where we explore great brands and give you tips, tools, hacks and guides to create brands that captivate clients and drive growth in revenue. And now your host, Luiza Campos.
Luiza Campos:	00:26	<p>Hello everyone and welcome to another episode of a world podcast. A branded world is a member of the Alberta podcast network, powered by ATB and talking about ATB, ATB has a program called ATB lendR, which is a really cool program that can help you if you need to find alternative funding ideas. So that's called ATB lender an ATB matches would you can raise from a crowd. So check it out because if you have a program or if you have a really cool idea and you need some funding, this may be the way to go. So check it out at [inaudible]. Lender.com to learn more. And that's ATB. LendR.ca. So again that's ATB l e n d r Dot ca. On today's episode, I am talking to Susan Veres and is the senior vice president for strategy and business development with [inaudible], which is the group that redeveloped East village in Calgary. It brings many years of experience from consumer products as well as land development. I was able through her brand extensive brand experience to really develop an amazing brand for East village and turn a space that had a very negative brand perception into the new place where everybody wants to hang out and live in. So this is a great episode for anyone who is trying to develop a brand and particularly those who are suffering with some negative brand perceptions. So without further ado, here is my conversation with Susan Veres. Hi Susan. How are you?</p>
Susan Veres:	00:26	Good morning Luiza, I'm doing really good today
Luiza Campos:	02:19	Awesome. I am so happy to have you here as part of a branded world and I've been following your work for a few years now and you have been doing amazing at establishing the brand for what is now known as East

village, which is an area within our community. So I am really eager to hear from you how you went about developing that branding, that place brand I should say, and, and attracting so many people, not just residents to the area, but I know a lot of other people around the city just are attracted to east village because of the energy, the atmosphere that it offers. So I am really excited to, to hear about your story, but before we get started on that, can you tell us a little bit about yourself and how you ended up, uh, working in this place brand for East village.

- Susan Veres: 03:18 It's really not that exciting, but, um, you know, I guess from a, from a brand perspective, I would've sort of honed my brand experience to the Coca Cola Corporation. So I spent, you know, a chapter of my life with, uh, with that agency and really began, you know, to delve into the science of brand and understand how, uh, how brand works and how you can successfully brand or commercialize a product for a specific consumer audience. And so, but, um, you know, but previous to that I did work, um, in, in Edmonton on a very large, very large developer who owns a, you know, Virginia Edmonton Mall and a large large land positions in Las Vegas and in New York and other places. And so I sort of started my career in development, but then, uh, you know, took, took a little bit of an angle when, uh, when I, uh, went to work with the Coca-cola Corporation.
- Luiza Campos: 04:16 Interesting. So you gained both perspectives, you know, from the experience in working in development already, but you also had imagined working with Coca Cola, a very sensitive skills developed around the end consumer.
- Susan Veres: 04:35 Yes, I never thought that those two worlds would collide. But let me tell you, it worked. Uh, certainly it worked for me because when this organization, you know, this organization was started in 2007, so Calgary Municipal Land Corporation was given the charge of, um, you know, sort of redeveloping East village. And so I was recruited into this position through a, through a head hunter and a really. They were looking for somebody who, interestingly enough, had a, an understanding of a development and, but how does sophisticated brand approach and so, um, you know, years ago when I started my career, I never would have imagined having this opportunity, but for me it was a perfect marriage and in many ways coming back to a lot of what I would, I knew it was, it was great. I was happy to take the role and

uh, and, and it's always interesting coming into a role with a brand new company and a brand new team.

- Susan Veres: 05:35 Um, at that time, you know, seven, the team was six people and so we each were recruited into our roles for certain specialties. So, you know, what mine was obviously a brand and a consumer marketing and communications, but my colleagues were specialists in construction and engineering and in finance. And so, uh, you know, here we were starting a brand new company starting a brand new project. We had not worked together before and really the company didn't have any sophisticated assistance system. So we were, you know, we were grappling with how do you start up a start-up company and then how do you build a brand at the, uh, a place brand at the same time. So I know I give an analogy, it was like building seven, 47 while we were flying the 7:47, but here we are 10 years later and uh, and we've had great success with East village project, so whatever we did, it seems to work.
- Luiza Campos: 06:35 And that's a really interesting point because you obviously CMLC being the new company that was formed to develop east village and being so new, no reputation. So how do you and, and the new team that came together to run that company. And I can imagine that of course as the keys it is for any company, you have to have a pretty strong brand and a positive brand perception to be able to attract the people that you need to attract, you know, so you can develop that product being east village. So how, how did you build that? 747?
- Susan Veres: 07:15 Well, um, yeah, you know what, I always, uh, you know, for those in your audience, and certainly for you with your sophisticated brand background, you would understand the challenge of building your brand simultaneously. I mean, it's, it's, uh, it's not for the faint of heart and certainly, um, you know, we, we did have a very strategic approach because, you know, uh, to your, to your point, we hadn't worked together. We had no, we had done nothing. And so we weren't able to stand on any type of the portfolio experience and say, Hey, look what we have done. This was our first, uh, our first project and so we were literally building the corporation's brand at the same time as we were building the, the, the place spread. And so, um, yeah, there were, there were very purposeful, um, different approaches. I mean from the corporate side, we were able to carve out a, a

reputation as a development company standing on all of the infrastructure work that we were putting into place in east village.

- Susan Veres: 08:30 And so, uh, you know, when we were in our early days, we were excavating, putting a new roads built, you know, putting in utilities, no, not the sexy work that most brand folks would understand. Um, but we were really, um, you know, we were putting in horizontal infrastructure and public realm improvements and every time we launched one of those improvements, of course we would come together with industry and with media and with our university colleagues and others to describe the work that we were undertaking. And that was pretty critical because, uh, nothing had happened in east village. I mean, to paint a picture for your audience. This was a community which had, uh, suffered from social disorder. Ailments had suffered from a lack of connectivity to the communities around it. And it actually had suffered from an infrastructure deficit. And so the reason, if you look at East village, it's 50 acres of primed real estate opportunity along to beautiful mountain rivers.
- Susan Veres: 09:46 And yet for years nothing happened here. And so because of those deficits, which I've previously described, we were able to start a conversation with Calgarians and industry partners and educators around the work that we were doing to address those issues so you know, what were we doing by way of infrastructure so that we could connect the community to other inner city communities and what could we do with our neighbors at the salvation army and the drop in center and back then something called the booth centre to address together issues around social disorder. So this community had a lot of prostitution, a lot of drug dealing and just a lot of average behavior. And so we, we would have partnered with those community neighbors in the early days to put in programs for homeland and to address issues around who is preying on those vulnerable populations and how can we bring that conversation forward.
- Susan Veres: 10:55 So we were having a conversation about the community before we even launched into the brand, the place brand to the village. And then so simultaneous to that, we came out in 2009 and said, OK, we're going to come out with are providence. And we're going to describe what the community is going to be and so technically we were

describing a master planned community in the center of Calgary and master planning communities are very common in suburbs but really on common in urban environments in North America. And the reason why they're so uncommon in those prime lands have already been developed or attributed to civic needs. And so it's very unlikely that you can amass 50 or more acres of land to tell a story. And so we had a very unique proposition where we could describe every block of, of our vision and how each block connected to the next. And so, um, it wasn't really until 20, 2010 after substantial amount of investment had been made in, I'll call it the public realm that we, we came out and described these village has Calgary's newest oldest, coolest, warmest community. And then we, and then we were off.

Luiza Campos: 12:20

As you were describing what you did, I think I want to pick on some of the things you said because I think they're very important, uh, for any brand, but particularly in this case, in developing a product. So to speak, that it and to give the listeners a bit of perspective is to be, as you described, is prime land, like it's a close to downtown is alongside this beautiful river, but it was as you described as well, it has had all of those problems. It was that part of town that he was behind city hall and it was no man's land. You didn't want to go there. Certainly, you know, it was just a place that had a very negative perception because of, of, of all the activity that was happening there. So one of the things that, I mean it's, it's incredibly difficult to launch a new brand and win the hearts and minds and the pockets of your audience, but it's significantly more difficult if not the hardest thing to do to actually completely changed from an existing negative brand perception to a positive one, which is what you did for that space.

Luiza Campos: 13:37

But I think one of the things that, as you described, that I think is really important for us to highlight is the fact that you didn't just come out and launch and, or presented what the brand for East village was. You took the steps of communicating, of dialoguing, of discussing, of engaging the community in what their needs were. And you didn't come out with this, you know, and, and as you were doing that, you were highlighting, I think, and making people see the potential for that area. And then after that, because it wasn't until 2010 when you actually released or, or launched the vision, the brand for four East village. So I think those were critical to your success and he was

incredibly smart if you guys do, to do so to engage the community in this conversation.

Susan Veres: 14:32 Well to your point, we needed to do something substantially different. We needed to, um, you know, sort of a departure of everything that had been previously done and turned it on its head and do something new. And, and, uh, we felt that only in those actions, a complete departure and a, that approach that we would get the type of interest and engagement from the community that we needed, we needed to demonstrate a new way. And so, uh, you know, you spoke about engagement. Well, we've, we're, I would say engagement experts now because we've really been engaging on the story of East village for, you know, over a decade now. And it's, it's a, it's a measured pragmatic approach. You know, people, uh, you know, as you know, Brian, Brian does a little bit of a science here and you need to sort of understand where you're going. But as I, as I say to our team all the time, when we're not branding for the sake of branding, we are creating a place brand.

Susan Veres: 15:33 This is a commercial exercise. If we do our job properly, then we will create a community, um, which is inclusive, which focuses on, you know, people entering home ownership and people exiting a, you know, big. You know, so we want to focus on all ages and sort of the buyer continuum. But um, you know, we, we want to make this a place to Calgary, Calgary can be proud of that. They, that they would want to come here on a weekend and spend some time here and give them that reason because previously they ran away from east village. They didn't flop to come and see it. So, you know, we w, w we needed to be very, uh, cautious of how we roll that out so that it was, you know, genuine and incredible. And so as we celebrated each investment in infrastructure, whether we were building a bridge or building an underpass or building a road, we absolutely took the time to invite Calgarians into the community to witness the transformation that was taking place.

Susan Veres: 16:41 But at the end of the day, we were engaging them in a, in a way that they previously hadn't been engaged in the community. Knowing that we would be coming to certain members of that populous and asking them to vote. I always say, you know, you have to vote with your wallet by choosing to live in east village. So we knew that we had a hill to climb. A, we wanted to take the

community and turn it into one of Calgary's most desirable inner city addresses and we were starting from a deficit position and so it took a while, but I think once people saw that we were taking a fresh approach and we were chatting about it and engaging them, they warmed to the idea of what is your promise, what are you going to deliver to us?

- Luiza Campos: 17:31 We'll include some pictures. Um, and thank you for sending those, Susan the before and after of the East village so that listeners can take a look. It will be in the show notes so that listeners can take a look at what we're talking about this space. I mean it was, it was really bare. There was nothing there.
- Susan Veres: 17:31 No, there were rabbits and fields. That's it.
- Luiza Campos: 17:58 So how do you go about, you know, and as we talk about engagement with the community, how did you know what type of place and brand to build around there? Because place branding usually is a reflection of the people who already are residents of that space. But in this case, this, they weren't really. There wasn't anything there. So how do you, how did you know how to develop, you know, which brand to develop for the right audience?
- Susan Veres: 18:26 Well, you know what, it truly does start with the urban planning, you know, so urban planning, uh, you know, uh, we, we dealt with again because we wanted a fresh approach to this community. We searched in internationally for an urban planning practice who we could work with side by side to help put the framework of the village in place. And so we chose a group out of London, England called Broadway Malian. And these are, this is a group of, uh, you know, they're urban planners, they're architects or designers, they're marketers, but you know, their, their practice is to develop an urban development and plans for aspiring communities. And so, um, you know, we, we work with them. They, you know, we studied the land parcels, it's amenities, you know, here we are along the Bull River and along the elbow rivers and we're surrounded by all this beautiful nature, but nobody could get to it. So we really started a dialog around how do we connect this community? Not only to its neighbors, petunias amenities like the rivers and on on the Far East side, there's four Calgary which is a 40 acre a designated park, a historical park areas. So

how can we, how can we use the natural components that exist around east village to put up a framework in place that describes the urban context and and so that, you know, I always say that's a fantastic 400 page read if you have a technical mind,

- Susan Veres: 20:07 You know you can just go and read it, it describes where roads should be and where utilities should be and you know it, it's a very technical document is quite difficult, but it is the foundation from which we understand the place that is east village and how it should function as a community. How do you get in, how do you get out those types of things. But layered on top of that team, I went to an urban or sorry to a net international marketing practice called Roland Berger. Enrollment. Berger was really critical in informing us with research around, you know, what was missing from a real estate in Calgary. So we worked for a year and a half honing this research and really understanding what, what, what is missing and what would make a master planned community so attractive to Calgarians and what Calgarians would be interested in living here. And really what that research informed was, we did a deep dive into, now this was 10 years ago into the demography of real estate buyers in Calgary.
- Susan Veres: 21:19 So what were they buying and why and what were they, what were their living needs? And so we were able to distill and discern that there were a group of Calgarians who were choosing to leave Calgary. They were exiting the city in search of a city experience that might be offered like a big metropolitan city, like let's say Montreal or Toronto or Vancouver or New York or other that they were really seeking and experienced. The Calgary couldn't or wasn't at the time offering. So that for us was opportunistic because we knew that we could, uh, if there was that need, we could fill that need with the master plan vision of East village and effectively retain those people in Calgary. Because at that time there was a lot of job opportunity, there's a lot of education opportunities, a lot of living opportunities, uh, cost of living opportunities that Calgary with offering, but still we were seeing this accident.
- Susan Veres: 22:22 So we started with a research and a really strong master plan vision of what the land could deliver and um, and, and, and, and the rest was, you know, and the rest is written, but you must inform yourself with research and

you must be brave enough to, when you identify who it is you're gonna Chase, you must be brave enough to chase that. And in our case, we call that user group for East village and urban explorer. These are people who they want to be surrounded by a city life. They want action on the streets, 24, seven. They, um, they like, uh, to be in direct and quick access to other amenities, whether it's a hockey arena or an arts facility or, um, you know, or, or festivals and events. So these are people who are choosing to live in close proximity and are choosing to live mostly with our heavy reliance on vehicles. And so we used all of that research to really begin to our attraction of investors and consumers.

- Luiza Campos: 23:35 Again, you said a lot of really important things because in a way you had to deal, as we mentioned before, with all the negative perceptions that that land off had already, but you also had a great opportunity because in a way, because there was nothing in their land, so you had a blank canvas where you could really write a could really build on it, what was needed, what the leading needs or desires of Calgarians. So research and I couldn't agree with you more and I think for any brand is so crucial to really be able to guide you on what is the right path to take, what are the real needs and the real opportunity and you match that with what the land had to offer. And I think also that's why you ended up with such an attractive product
- Susan Veres: 24:29 in an urban environment where you can block 50 acres of land, which is to use your word, a blank canvas that you can actually imagine. What would this block look like? How can the next block supported in what you did have and on and on and on you go. I mean, it just doesn't happen. It's so rare in the development world that you would have that type of opportunity. And so, uh, so we capitalized on that, you know, we capitalized on the fact that we were the first truly inner city or master planned urban community and that we were creating a village and that village, even in its name East village, we were asked years ago, Hey, do you want to change your name? Because our board was asking us, you know, there's so much bad, um, bad feelings and sort of negativity associated with east village. Is it, is it important maybe just to change your name and start fresh?
- Susan Veres: 25:31 And I was advocating at the time and others as well that that would be a, an erroneous step to take because if you

go further back in time, yes, there social disorder and yes we were dealing with that. It, let's say in the, in the nineties and in the, in, in maybe in the late eighties. But if you went back to the sixties and the seventies, you saw how this community was actually Calgary first community. I mean, even going back further than that, you know, the rail railway, the railroad coming through East village, I mean, it was a prosperous community at the turn of the century. And uh, you know, there were a lot of artists, there was a lot of creativity in the community. So we went back further and called forward all of that memory so that we could sort of establish the newer version of that.

Susan Veres: 26:27

But there was a point in time when we examined what we had here in the thought. Well, yeah, is it worthwhile to re to even change the name through the rebranding exercise? And what we landed on was, you know, we know our history is so significant and we can use that in our storytelling moving forward to compel to, to create authenticity and maybe to inspire our new real estate purchaser from to buy in our community and it's work, its workforce. But we, you know, we were even looking at different names back then and uh, thankfully we decided to stick with the name we were given.

Luiza Campos: 27:05

I can understand why the board and others were suggesting change in the name. You've fact a lot of brands do that and when they have a negative perception associated with your brand and you'd see one tactic to overcome that challenge, but the fact that you chose not to change the name, I think it also speaks to something you said earlier that I thought was really important and I have said here before in the podcast and I say to my clients all the time, you know, finding your why or your purpose in a way is just the beginning. You then, as you mentioned, you have to, once you identify that vision, you have to be brave enough to follow it through, you know, and for you guys keeping the name of talks about that, know that bravery in following through with your vision and really believing that you will be able to convince others, you know, to demonstrate to others that potential of that place. Can you tell me a little bit since then, because you also mentioned, you know, well you mentioned a little bit already the urban explorer, so can you tell us a little bit about that and what is sort of the overall vision and brand for East village?

- Susan Veres: 28:23 Yeah. Well, so, the Urban Explorer is less about a demographic and more about a psychographic. I mean urban explorers in our vernacular. They come in every size and shape and demographic. It's a mindset. It's, it's about, uh, how you are choosing to live and, and, and so you will find young urban explorers and you know, and folks that are maybe at the other, uh, the other end, but they're looking for an environment where they can work and live and play and raise their families in an area of allow that allows them to do it all. So, you know, they, they want to be, you know, uh, they want to have a vibrant streets Cape and they want to have access to a lot of different amenities and services and they want nearby. They want it nearby. So they want that. They want their needs met within their community. And so, uh, you know, you can imagine yourself, Calgary, before east village was really a community of suburban.
- Susan Veres: 29:31 I'm mostly focused development and in suburban development and mental changed in the last decade. But in older versions of suburban, you still had to exit your community at some point to access needs. Well, we kind of turn that on its head in East village, you know, what do you need a library? OK, we'll build a library. Do you need a shopping center? Will put the shopping center on this block, you know, do you need to work here? OK, well we're going to have access to work or because we are literally inside of the downtown core of Calgary, you can quickly jump on a light rail train service and move across town to your job. So this whole notion of, you know, urban explorers are those people that really want to be in it and have access at their needs, met in the community in which they are choosing to live.
- Susan Veres: 30:28 And so, you know, they're, they're very much interested in culture and they're there. They want to experience and they want to and they'll pay for it. So that's an urban explorer. The promise we made was that village. Yes, it's a master planned community. It's, it's an urban village in which 11,000 people would one day live, but our promise was that it would be Calgary's newest, oldest, coolest, warmest neighborhood. And those adjectives have actually deepened great meaning to us because in the concept of newest, we are imagining our future in east village. So we're, we're abandoning, you know, all of the negative perception and we're calling out a new plan for a village would be, but oldest is a direct compliment to um, you know, this was at one point in Calgary, history of

commercial viable community. Um, it's oldest community. And so we wanted to refresh that whole community with a new master plan vision, but in fact pay homage to its roots.

Susan Veres: 31:40

And then coolest when we use the word coolest, of course, that speaks a little bit to the living needs of the urban explorer, which I just outlined. But coolest is, is also about the amenities that you might find in east village. And the connectedness of East village. So, you know, I already mentioned there's a shopping center, there's the national music center here, there's Calgary's new central library. But what makes it super cool is the architecture is the energy of its retail and all of those retail heroes that are wanting to be here in east village now because of its, uh, its vibe. And then we say warmest because we do want it to be an inclusive community and that's a direct a response to some of that social, a disorder that I spoke about earlier. But it also speaks to the mindset of the young urban explorer who really, um, if you think about downtown developments anywhere in the world, there was always an issue of social disorder to some degree. There's always homelessness. There's always something that has been dealt with. So warmest is, is, um, in our vernacular that, that, that's what makes us included.

Luiza Campos: 33:04

I love those words because they're great, I mean they talk about your values, they talk about the vision. They talk about, you know, what the feeling and the atmosphere of the place is and you want it to, to keep in. And this image that you talk about in the respect for what it once was and these intention of renewing that are bringing you back right to, to its old glory. So for those of you who have, who are not from Calgary, if you come to visit our city, it is a must place to go and see and you will experience all of this. You know, as you were saying all these words, I was definitely saying, yeah, I totally feel that way and consensus at once. I mean that plays and some of the buildings you mentioned, the architecture of the new library of the music center. I mean they're amazing. It's really outstanding. And this, again, you can see that vision, you know, come to coming to fruition with some of those buildings that you guys have done a magnificent job.

Susan Veres: 34:12

You know, I think it's obvious. And thank you for saying that to anybody who enters the village that if there's

something different, you know what? Maybe it's, you can't put your finger on it immediately. But for us it starts, you know, it starts from the ground up, you know, for us it's what are they seeing, what is the public art? If East village it sounds funny, but what are the sidewalks at East village like this whole community, it's vision, as I noted earlier, it's 11,000 people are going to live in this community and by the way we've already started to populate. So for those of your listeners who aren't so familiar, we're already halfway through our vision and that means we're halfway through our construction of the community. So lots of people have moved into East village already, but as soon as you enter the community, things like the sidewalks, how wide they are, the street scaping, you know, it's cobblestone, the, the artwork, the retail.

- Susan Veres: 35:13 It's all different than what you might expect to see in other places of Calgary. I mean, we were very fortunate that we had an urban planning practice out of London, England who's known for this type of work, but they could imagine pedestrian only street because they have those in Europe. Many places of Europe have dedicated streets just for pedestrians. Well, in western Canada, certainly that had never been a focus, so when East Village we wanted pedestrians, we knew people didn't want to spend time in their cars and so we knew that we had to pay attention to things like sidewalks and bike paths in furniture for the street and art and so I guess for those of in your audience that are not familiar, it is palatable when you walk into East village that there's something different about it and literally it is from the ground up. Everything from the ground up is different.
- Luiza Campos: 36:16 It certainly isn't in the bike paths or the pathways on the furniture. As you mentioning every detail. You may not pay attention to every detail, but the combination of all of those things, that's what really adds to the experience and it's. It's amazing. Been there since then, you've mentioned a little bit already, you know, how you engaged with the community and how you were inviting Calgarians every time there was a new bridge or a new development being done, but how else did you promote is east village. Can you tell us about that? What was your strategy and what, what were some of the things that worked really well?

- Susan Veres: 36:56 I often describe that the east village has been in its programming and again, for those of us that love brand and understand brand, that programming must speak to your promise. It must support your attributes and it must have, you must be attractive to the demographic or to the audience that you're aspiring to, to endear yourself to. So our success came in programming and so our challenge was, well, how do we, because we are literally a community under construction, how do we bring people into the community to witness the transformation but do it in a way that speaks to our audience and that supports our brand. And so from literally for a nine or 10 years now, we have had a big focus on programming. And so an example of that would be, um, years ago, myself and a few other folks from a, not from east village, but just from, you know, sort of Calgary's a sort of business community.
- Susan Veres: 38:12 Um, we were talking about how can we take the river front of East village and turn it into a destination for Calgarian. So I was engaging with colleagues in the arts sector and we were talking through look is building this beautiful river walk system that connects people to the river banks, but how do we actually bring them in here in a way that, um, you know, entertains them and speaks to sort of some of their, um, their values. And so we, we, um, put forward this idea that creating an opera festival that would be on the banks of the beautiful bull river in an outdoor setting, but in east village along this river walk infrastructure that we were delivering. And so for three or four, you know, and, and I basically stole that idea to something that I had seen in, uh, in, in Venice and in Australia years ago.
- Susan Veres: 39:12 Um, I was watching, um, opera being simulcasts much the way we went simulcasts in NHL hockey game. I was watching that be simulcast to some of the public plazas. And I was just sort of really taken with it because I hadn't seen that in Canada, so, uh, you know, so anyway, we, we imagined that we would do an opera festival and because the offer as an organization, they were struggling with an aging group. They wanted to come up with, um, you know, festival events and different types of programming that would attract a younger audience. I wanted to showcase the infrastructure around the river and east village. So we, you know, we, we sort of joined our efforts and brought this festival, created the festival and then brought it into east village and then it became

synonymous with each village East village over the next three or four or five years.

- Susan Veres: 40:08 And so, uh, it was, uh, it was a real programmatic success because in its early days, uh, Calgarians were flocking to see, you know, what is his opera festival. But at the same time we're learning all about, you know, what, what East village, what it was. And so that the programming has been tremendously successful. Ah, we also in 2012 built, sent a center and experience center and we called it an experience center for that very reason. We wanted people to come in and have a look to cut to kind of understand what you could do in East village and if you chose to buy a home here what that would mean. And so, you know, with our developer partners we created this experience center which is 8,000 square feet of space and it's again on the river facing, you know, sort of, uh, the river walk area. And so anybody who's interested in understanding the story of the village and how it's going to be built out can come to that one building and learn from our team, um, how, how we're delivering it.
- Susan Veres: 41:20 And even in the team, which are our, I call them our brand ambassadors. Those brand ambassadors are employees of the MOC and they are always on message with what it is we're trying to deliver here. So in short, we have engaged in many ways, but I think the programming side of the story of East village has been the most successful because it's really introduced people to what we want to become and now the success of it is that they are choosing to come here to build their own programs. So for me, that's brand adoption now and, and rather than us having to do all of the heavy lifting, others are choosing to come here and program East village with their own ideas.
- Luiza Campos: 42:07 Yes. That was very smart of you to use programming to create a reason to attract people to the space and having that experience center. I think it's really want to. Because it's a way. I mean your product is not finished yet and it's halfway through and as you said, there's lots of residents and it's amazing at the moment. I mean a lot of people go to east village, including myself because it's just a great space and just feels like an escape from the city, but you're right next to downtown. But it's. And it's an amazing, beautiful space with a amazing energy and lots of different things to do, but it's still halfway through, so you, through that center, a bit of a taste of what this

product will look like in the end and what it should feel like and selling that story. Right? Getting people involved in, in the story of, of the East village. So I think those were brilliant, brilliant tactics.

Susan Veres: 43:06 I don't know if they're brilliant, Luiza or if they are just, you know. It's a commercial. You know, I think most brands, most marketers, particularly in brand marketers as well, you, we understand, you know, we have to, our job is to take a product or service into a marketplace for sale. It's, it's, we're not a non-profit business development is a complicated business. Uh, you know, I'm sure your listeners understand what it would be like to build communities, but we're not doing this, uh, you know, for, for non-profit reasons. This is a commercial enterprise and a commercial company. And our partners who are builders are commercially motivated. So it's, it makes sense that we would have an experience center, but it also makes sense that we're going to use that opportunity to educate about what the residential offerings are in east village because at the end of the day to be successful, we must have people living here and when people live here, they, they, they, they need to own a home here or they need to rent a home here. So I think it's important to impress upon your audience that is, as I described to my team, you know, this is a mathematical, you know, as much as branding is very, uh, different. We are commercializing a product which means that we need to be very smart marketers and we need to profit. And so, you know, always in my mind I have that as my underpinning of how I'm delivering the village.

Luiza Campos: 44:52 And you're absolutely right, I meant with any brand, we don't just build a brand so they sound nicer. It is about selling, it is about the bottom line. But there's a lot of people who, who don't bother to build brands. They build products and they tried to just promote them. And the whole aspect of w and, and the reason I say, you know, what you did was, was really smart. It's because it's effective first of all because you're not just selling apartments, you're not just selling homes or places for people to leave you selling the whole experience. You're telling a story and really making people envision what their life could be like if they lived in this place. And that's, you know, that's a big difference, right? Because that's what really gets people engaged and excited about a project like that. So that's why I think it was really good.

- Susan Veres: 45:42 Yeah, I mean, it, uh, you, you hit the nail on the head there. I mean we have a partner who are saying, you know, I'm shopping centers and they're building a residential towers and in their world that is their product. In my world, I'm talking about the community. And so in the very early days as we were in 2010 and 2011 selling land and choosing our partners, we were also describing for them that we would be responsible for stewarding the community brand and that their responsibility would be for the sale of their residential product or whatever product they were selling. But that the community story, and I hate using this word, but we were going to control our message ourselves and we weren't going to turn that responsibility over to somebody else that as Calgarians who were given this charge, we had the responsibility of making sure it was done properly because previous attempts to redevelop in east village failed. So we had, we had a considerable amount of vested interest in making sure that that community brand story was always paramount. And it was us controlling that and messaging it because we felt that developers who are would not do it justice. That's not that they're not sophisticated because they're very sophisticated. But we knew that, um, the product brand might be placed above the community brand and we couldn't allow that to happen in successfully deliver what we needed to deliver.
- Luiza Campos: 47:24 And that's an important point because to be able to build that community brand, I would, you had to be selective in choosing the right developers and the right types of development that will, will help you achieve that, that a vision for that community.
- Susan Veres: 47:43 It is a strategy all by itself, you know, uh, the developer and land strategy is a separate strategy, which, um, I have the pleasure of managing here and it's to use your words. Yes. Uh, we, we were hand selecting partners, um, based on their competencies and experiences. Um, you know, going back 10 years ago in urban guild edge, like East village was just being imagined for Calgary high rise density. Um, we probably didn't have that expertise in the development community here. We were just starting our builders and our developers of Calgary. We're just starting to get that skill set. So we went to other cities in North America. We looked at Toronto and Vancouver and Seattle and New York. And other cities that had large densified corps and we were looking at the developers that did that work because we knew that they knew how

to construct and high rise cement and obviously some match, but we knew that that capability didn't exist in Calgary.

- Susan Veres: 48:58
- Calgary's builders, we're very familiar with suburban development which match single-family homes and low rise density, maybe six stories and below, but we'd are high rise, high density community. And so at the time when we started to again research the types of organizations that could help us deliver the vision, we saw that most of them are outside of Calgary. And so we were not popular, you know, we did receive some negative pushback from the development community in Calgary who felt it was their responsibility to build these village or to say yes or no to any opportunity that I could put in front of them. But the fact was is that they really were just learning the skill set. And, and so, um, yeah, we, we weren't popular in those early days. So, uh, you know, we, we found our first couple of developers in Vancouver and another in Toronto who has a Netherlands based partner and those were the two first, a couple of developers that we'd get started with any village to build the high-rise product and then later we introduced Calgary developers. So now there are Calgary developers in, in East village and I'm happy to have them here, but starting back in 20, we couldn't afford another misstep. We needed to get expertise and we knew that that wasn't here.
- Luiza Campos: 50:33
- And again that speaks to, to what you said earlier, right, having, once you have that vision, you need to have the courage to see it through it. And you did that, you knew that going with the Calgary developers at first you would not be able to fulfill that community brand vision if you did so. So you had to endure some of the criticism of the steps and decisions you made back then. But you knew you were doing the right thing for the branch. So that's again, I think you guys did amazing work there and you also sent us a video a couple of years actually, so I'll include that in the show note. Um, so everyone can see, you know, what is the vision for East village and some of the things that are already there actually. But can you tell us, I mean, you half way through it, right? Can you tell us what uh, you know, what are the plans for the future? What, what should we keep an eye for it? Amy's Eddie's village?

- Susan Veres: 51:35 Yeah. Well, um, yeah, so really the next, because it's a 20 year vision that we have for the community and we're at the 10. We're at the halfway mark, so the next 10 years are really about um, the, the delivery of, of multifamily development here, mixed use multi-family development. But specifically this year our team has been building the new central library for the last six years and we're about to open the doors to that building in November
- Luiza Campos: 52:08 And its gorgeous. I can't wait to see it.
- Susan Veres: 52:10 It's so beautiful. I know, again, that's an international design team called Snohetta out of Norway paired with Dialog, a very capable local practice and so they're delivering that design, but the team, a few team is, is sort of the lead project manager and so we're going to be opening that building later this year after six years of construction and delivery. And so we're so proud. Um, and then, uh, so that's the end of this year and we'll have two more towers open this year. One of the residential tower, so more residents moving in and one is our second hotel which is near the river. Beautiful piece of land. So we have a developer out of Quebec who's building it and um, it's a boutique hotel and it opens also in November. So the back end of this year is quite busy for us, uh, at the end of 2019 our community, our urban shopping center opened and it's a fairly large undertaking and so it's right now well into its construction and delivery. So we'll be opening it, but the balance of our time here, um, you know, really will be around the multifamily mixed-use development because all of the park spaces, all of the art, it's all now delivered. And so what that means for our company who now have a reputation. So let's just say we've, we've, we've completed the, a successful rebranding of Calgary Municipal Land Corporation.
- Luiza Campos: 53:34 Yeah.
- Susan Veres: 53:36 In the same 10 years as we built a brand for East village and so now this team is being asked to lend its place making and programmatic skills to other communities. And so later this spring, in fact we'll be launching into a more public engagement around a 20 year vision for Victoria Park and Stampede park. And so for the last year our urban planners have been working through this and now our marketers are added. And so we are jumping off into public gate engagement on April the eleventh. And

so the future of our company will be around, continued to be around place branding and community branding. And for us, since East village as well as execution, some of us can turn our attention to the next community, which is south of east village and it's called Victoria Park.

- Luiza Campos: 54:30 That's exciting. I can't wait to see what you guys do there.
- Susan Veres: 54:38 It's going to be, um, different than East village, but some, I mean, some things are the same, but some things are different. I mean, obviously this is a home of our beloved Calgary flames, homophobic, not Calgary stampede. It has a lot of our warehouse uses and districts. And I'm talking about historical assets here. And so the community itself has great bones, really great bones. And so we have had now a year of study of that community. And so we have some ideas about some big gestures that can happen there to, uh, to transform it into an urban community.
- Luiza Campos: 55:16 Well, you have done such an amazing job at East village that I can't wait to see what you guys have. Any, anything else you wanna add, Susan?
- Susan Veres: 55:29 Well, I mean, obviously I wouldn't, uh, I, you know, I would miss the opportunity if I didn't say no to, you know, follow us on our channels, you know, um, you can find your silage Calgary on facebook and twitter and, you know, on our website, but there's lots happening and um, you know, there's more and more and more programming opportunities. I think if there's young retailer that's listening or young entrepreneur that's listening right now, there's a lot of opportunity, um, to start off in east village and so, um, you know, that's certainly where my attention is right now around the retail program. So, uh, no, I just would encourage everybody to check us out.
- Luiza Campos: 56:10 Perfect. And where can they do that? Susan? So just at East village is the handle for social media.
- Susan Veres: 56:17 Uh, you can find us at evexperience.com
- Luiza Campos: 56:17 evexperience.com.
- Susan Veres: 56:17 Yeah. Perfect.

Luiza Campos:	56:23	And I'll include that in the show notes as well so everyone can check it out. And if you are in Calgary and you haven't been in east village, seriously, you need to go. It is amazing. Thank you so much for this as an it's an amazing success story and you guys did a phenomenal job and thank you so much for sharing your story with us here.
Susan Veres:	56:47	Anytime I'm happy to. Thank you, Luiza, for including me today.
Luiza Campos:	56:50	Thank you. Bye Bye.
Susan Veres:	56:50	Ok, Bye now.
Luiza Campos:	56:55	And there you have it. I hope you enjoyed my interview with Susan Veres. They really did a brilliant job at East village and if you haven't checked it out, you really must do it. It's an amazing place with a great energy and so many things to do and speaking about things to do. Filbert podcast network powered by ATB is a sponsor of this year spot summit, which is western Canada's podcast conference.
Luiza Campos:	57:18	So if you are thinking of creating a podcast or perhaps you already have one, this is the place for you to be at. It is on May fifth at CKUA in Edmonton and it is a full day of learning, plus you get to connect with other podcasters like myself and there's some amazing giveaway's I know last year they had some great ones and I know they're planning for this year as well, so that's a bonus. So if you have a podcast, you will learn a lot about how to make it sound better, how to grow your audience, and how to create a show that your listeners will love and if you're thinking of creating one, you will learn a lot about how to start one and how to become part of this great community, which the Alberta podcast network certainly is. Tickets are just a hundred and \$50, but there's a limited amount of tickets. So if you are interested in going, please get your ticket as soon as possible and you can do so. Add parts summit.com. If you liked this podcast, please send it and share it with some of your friends and leave a review on itunes. Those reviews help others find it as well. Thank you so much. And until next time,
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