



# 'Stigmatized' homes in Edmonton can be a tough sell, admit realtors

## Houses of death



BY PAMELA ROTH ,EDMONTON SUN

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**Police investigate the homicide of Wesal Arabi at the Beatty Lofts at 10265-107 St., in Edmonton, Alta., on Dec. 1, 2007. Shooting victim Arabi, 35, was the city's 30th homicide of the year. Arabi was murdered by two teens and cannot be identified under the Youth Criminal Justice Act. Edmonton Sun/QMI Agency**

Erika Sord and her husband always wanted to live in a loft.

So when the young couple came across a 1,200 square-foot property downtown with high ceilings and a huge bathroom, they jumped on the opportunity to purchase the home of their dreams.

The loft near 107 Street and 103 Avenue was listed for \$100,000 less than other comparable properties on the market. The only catch — it had been the scene of a murder.

In 2007, a 35-year-old cocaine dealer was shot multiple times in the home when two teens who worked for him opened fire with a high-powered semi-automatic assault rifle. One of the bullets went through the bathroom wall and a metal drawer, leaving a hole. A few bullets went through the island of the kitchen as well.

But the couple wasn't fazed.

"Obviously we cared that somebody lost their life, but the property didn't seem stigmatized to us. It was such a beautiful property," said Sord, who has since sold the home to move to Fort McMurray.

"I was shocked at the number of people who would not buy a place if they knew what happened. I just thought it was safer. What's the chance of it happening twice?"

With an average of 32 homicides in Edmonton each year, homes where murders or violent crimes have occurred can be found in all corners of the city. Some homeowners hold onto them, unfazed by the violent crime, while others choose to sell, which can sometimes be a challenge.

In the real estate world, such homes are called "stigmatized" properties. According to the Real Estate Council of Alberta, the term means different things to different people, but generally relates to an unfavourable quality in a property that makes it less attractive, such as a violent death, suicide or drug operation.

In order to sell such homes, some owners have to drop their price significantly or renovate to change the appearance.

Edmonton realtor Carol Selinger said selling these properties all depends on the market and the nature of the crime.

A realtor for 33 years, Selinger said it's rare to come across a murder home, but it has happened to her on one occasion when a grandson with medical issues killed his grandmother inside the family home.

When selling the property, Selinger kept no secrets that the home was stigmatized, even though realtors are not obligated to tell this to a potential buyer. The fact it was a family member who committed the offence and not a random act made a difference, she said, and the crime didn't seem to scare buyers away.

"If you are short of listings and it's a good area of town, people will overcome that," said Selinger, who would be more concerned with selling a former drug home.

"Usually there's a story behind it, why it happened. We hear the details and then you decide for yourself."

In her several years in the real estate business, Sarah Leib has also come across a murder home she had to sell. Some buyers didn't care about what happened, she said, while others were a bit hesitant, depending on their beliefs.

As the years go by, does the stigma attached to such homes truly ever fade?

"I think it depends how big of an issue it is and how well known it is," said Leib. "Eventually the neighbours move and things go by without another incident. I really think it would depend on the case."

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## POLL

Would you sell your home if you knew it was once a grisly crime scene?

- Yes
- No

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