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The Cultural Heart

A legible, transformative, and animated space that unites Olympic Plaza and the Municipal Plaza as the Cultural Heart of the Centre City.

The Cultural Heart of the Civic District and of the city is the place to embrace the everyday activities of citizens and facilitate events that act as the landmarks in our collective history. Being legible, transformable, and animated are its hallmarks; ingredients that will breathe life into the space for decades to come. As the Cultural Heart, the plaza will connect to public spaces and cultural institutions around it.



CONNECTING TO WHAT WE HEARD

Citizen and Stakeholder Engagement, 2014

Olympic Plaza was identified by citizens and stakeholders as an essential destination and key priority for the Civic District Public Realm Strategy. A general consensus among Calgarians revealed that Olympic Plaza, as well as the Cultural Heart as a whole, could be a more vibrant, comfortable, and animated space for citizens and visitors alike.

One major improvement citizens and stakeholders identified was the need for an enhanced public space centered on Olympic and Municipal Plazas that could provide a memorable, beautiful focal point in the City. More activities, events, and amenities were identified as ways to attract people as well as accommodate a greater diversity of gatherings.

Centre City Parks & Public Realm Enhancements Plan, 2010

The Parks and Public Realm Enhancements Plan identified Olympic Plaza as a distinct place in our collective memory that is a stage to the world. The document recognizes Olympic Plaza as a unique emblem of Calgary, and the opportunity for it to be a destination hosting large scale events and festivals while also providing a venue for the everyday activities of citizens.

Centre City Plan, 2007

Referred to as the Olympic Plaza Cultural District (OPCD), the Civic District is identified in this document as Calgary's flagship cultural area, housing many of the major cultural institutions, as well as many eating and drinking establishments and retail stores.

Olympic Plaza and its surrounding spaces are recognized as a special area which contributes to the civic and cultural vitality of the Centre City through its programmatic and artistic opportunities. As such, Olympic Plaza is labelled as a key priority for the rejuvenation of the Civic District. The Centre City Plan emphasizes the highest quality of design in this area as well as the active integration of its surrounding land uses.

Olympic Plaza Cultural District Manifesto, 2007

In 2007, the Cultural District Manifesto set midrange goals for the area in and around Olympic Plaza. The goals stated that:

- > We will create a place where people not only have a wonderful experience, they expect it.
- > We declare this neighbourhood an Experimental Zone for urban vitality.
- > We are committed to creating a place of exemplary quality in all respects. "Is it good enough for Calgary?" will be the gauge for all new development.

- > Every plan, policy and action undertaken by the Cultural District, on its own and with its many partners, will move us closer to realizing the vision for the benefit of all Calgarians.



These goals set a precedent for the character of the Cultural Heart.

Cultural Heart | Guiding Principles

PRINCIPLE 1

A space for an intensity of use within the Centre City.



Director Park, Portland, US | Previously a parking lot the size of a city block, Director Park was envisioned as a welcoming public destination for all. The canopy, sitting space, lighting, and cafe create an animated porch space which also accommodates large gatherings during events. The center of Director Park provides for an intensity of occupation, while allowing programming and people to spill out onto the streets beyond.

PRINCIPLE 3

A destination with varying scale and density of public space.



Federation Square, Melbourne, AU | A sense of identity and place were the key drivers in envisioning Federation Square as a civic and cultural hub. Federation Square is built on top of working railways and the surrounding buildings produce a variety of scale and density through cascading and interlocking spaces. The space is successfully programmed with over 2000 events a year and the surrounding buildings contain 86% recreational/cultural use and 14% commercial use.

PRINCIPLE 2

A gathering space that embraces the everyday actions of its users.



Union Square, New York City, US | Union Square covers three blocks in Manhattan, and is best known for hosting regular market days throughout the week. Greenery and sunny seating spaces make it a welcoming, comfortable destination that embraces the everyday actions of its users. Markets and amenities attract not only tourists, but encourages locals to animate the square day and night.

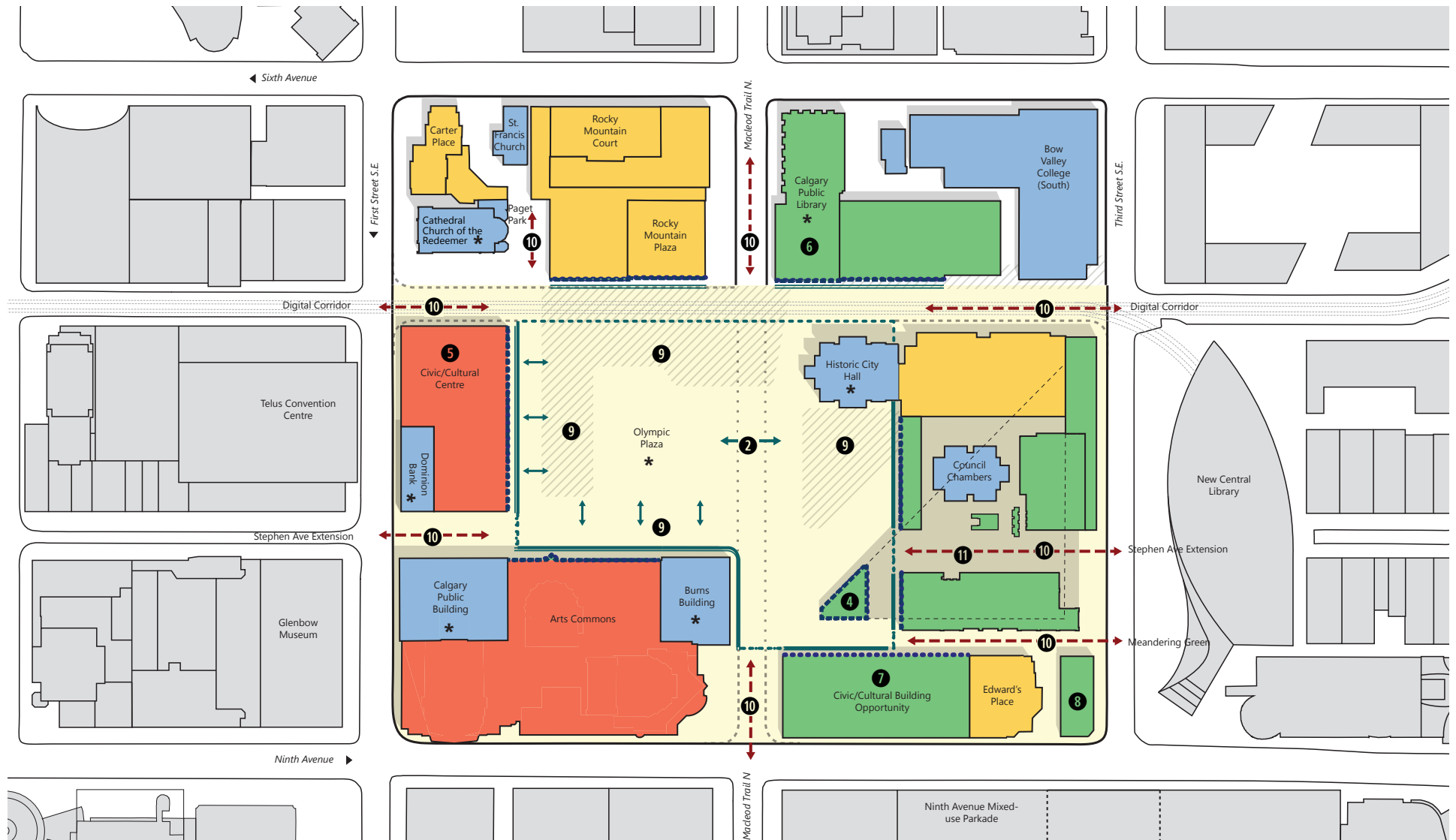
PRINCIPLE 4

A legible space defined by active edges and a diversity of program.



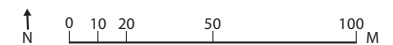
Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, US | Rittenhouse Square is a popular destination in Philadelphia surrounded by busy shopping areas, streets, and residential use. The edges of the park are well defined with active, multi-use building frontages. The park is animated with greenery, comfortable sitting space, and unique sculptures, in addition to having good connectivity to popular streets such as Walnut Street which make it an accessible destination for all.

Cultural Heart | Public Realm Criteria



Legend

- | | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| Existing Civic/Institutional | Proposed Development | Consolidated Plaza | Active Building Edges | Access Routes |
| Existing Office, Commercial, Residential, Hotel, Mixed-Use | Redevelopment Opportunity | Legible Edges | Sunlight Exposure | |
| * Approved Historical Resources | Perceived Space | | | |



Cultural Heart | Public Realm Criteria

CRITERION 1 Legibility

- ③ Redefine the edges of the consolidated plaza by joining the Municipal Plaza and Olympic Plaza to read as a whole.
- ② Allow Macleod Trail to act as a bridge between Olympic Plaza and the Municipal Plaza.

CRITERION 2 Active Edges

- ③ Activate the edges of the consolidated plaza with pedestrian oriented frontages.
- ④ Express the presence of the Triangle building with active edges.

CRITERION 3 Programming

- ⑤ Propose a new Civic/Cultural Centre that is programmed with cultural, recreational, and commercial use.
- ⑥ Program the current public library upon vacancy with a use which will contribute to the vibrancy of the plaza.
- ⑦ Propose a new civic, cultural, and/or commercial building/residential hotel at the existing Municipal Parkade.
- ⑧ Program the corner of Ninth Avenue and Third Street S.E. with use that will contribute to at-grade pedestrian activity.

CRITERION 4 Activity & Amenity

- ⑨ Activate the sunny outdoor space adjacent to the plaza edges and animate the spaces with public use and amenity. Minimize shading/shadowing Olympic Plaza and the open spaces throughout the Cultural Heart through all four seasons.

CRITERION 5 Access & Linkages

- ⑩ Frame the arrival into the plaza with memorable and welcoming entry ways.
- ⑪ Allow the Municipal Building Atrium to act as an extension of the plaza and a major connector into the East Village.

CRITERION 6 Historical Resources

- ⑫ Retain the existing historical resources as a source of identity.
- ⑬ Acknowledge Olympic Plaza as a Cultural Landscape and a historical resource and build on the Olympic Legacy through the recognition of significant milestones in Calgary's history.
- ⑭ Acknowledge the importance of our aboriginal heritage.

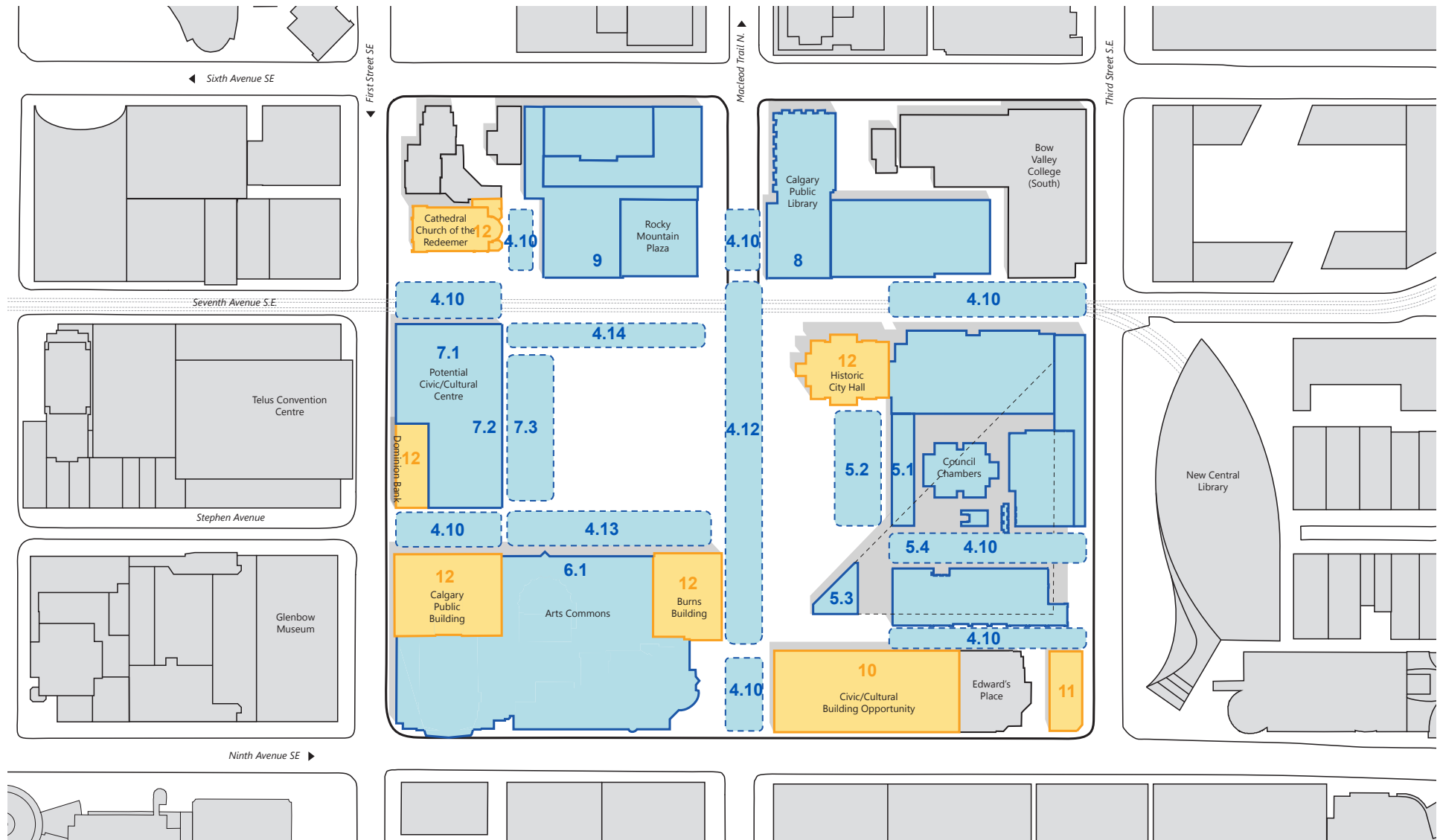


Millenium Park, Chicago, US | An urban park with strong public linkages that hosts public art, greenery, and wide variety of public concerts and events.



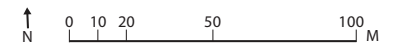
Schouwburgplein, Rotterdam, NL | A large urban room that transforms throughout the year to accommodate markets, festivals, art installations, and other events.

Cultural Heart | Actions



Legend

- Short-Term Actions
- Medium-Term Actions
- Long-Term Actions



Cultural Heart | Actions

Short-Term Actions

- 1 Undertake an integrated street furniture program in and around the Cultural Heart. Identify items such as fences, bins, newsstands, and utility boxes, and remove or renovate them to promote an attractive, unified, and welcoming public realm.
- 2 Support funding dedicated to managing the redevelopment, maintenance, and programming of the public spaces in and around the plaza.
 - 2.1 A website and marketing strategy should highlight the plaza's programming potential, and streamline the process of booking space for events. A marketing campaign should promote the Civic District as a centre of innovation at a local and global scale. The team should also be responsible for the maintenance of facilities, safety, and cleanliness of the area.
 - 2.2 Support a programming strategy to advertise and facilitate a diversity of festivals, events, temporary markets, food truck stands, and exhibitions which activate Olympic Plaza, the Municipal Plaza, and the Municipal Building during all four seasons, at day and at night. Identify with citizen input, a recreational, cultural, and civic programming needs list for the Cultural Heart.
 - 2.3 Investigate funding options, including partnering with the private sector.
- 3 Undertake a lighting strategy for the Civic District as a first step towards a Centre City Lighting Plan.

Medium-Term Actions

- 4 Refine, phase, and implement a comprehensive Master Plan for the Olympic Plaza, Municipal Plaza, and surrounding buildings to include the following:
 - 4.1 Undertake a cultural landscape evaluation for Olympic Plaza and the Municipal Plaza.
 - 4.2 Engage Citizens, Community Groups, Businesses, Institutions, and City of Calgary Business Units. The redesign of the plazas should be a community driven, collaborative effort of placemaking that advocates citizen ownership and public participation.
 - 4.3 Perform a land use study that identifies the major requirements for new or renovated development adjacent to the space. As part of the development permit applications bordering plazas, review applications to ensure active edges which contribute to the overall vision of the consolidated plaza.
 - 4.4 Study the capacity of the consolidated plaza to accommodate a large standing event and stage with integrated event service. Infrastructure should facilitate a wide range of plug and play events, including temporary seating, covered areas, equipment, and service accessibility. Additional exhibition services include integrated access to power, water, and gas. *[See Appendix C: Diagram C.1, Diagram C.2]*
 - 4.5 Create a strategy to facilitate everyday uses and programmed events that foster creativity and attract everyday interest by incorporating public art, buskers, vendors, water features, and greenery into the improved plaza.
 - 4.6 Define how the role of Olympic Plaza differs from other public spaces in the Centre City including Eau Claire Plaza, Prince's Island Park, and St. Patrick's Island. Develop a cohesive and integrated lighting plan for the plaza and its surrounding buildings. The lighting plan should activate the edges of the consolidated plaza, and create an animated, welcoming, and comfortable space at night. Host a design competition to reinterpret the Cultural Heart, and select a design team to develop a phased Master Plan for the plazas and surrounding buildings.

- 4.7 Follow sustainable design practices with LEED® certification in all new developments and renovations in order to achieve City of Calgary sustainability targets. This includes sustainable stormwater management, the reduction of GHG emissions through alternative energy sources, a waste management strategy, and the promotion of healthy, diverse ecosystems.
- 4.8 Explore the opportunity to create a consistent ground plane that promotes views, gathering spaces, and interconnected public spaces. The grading should reinforce pedestrian connectivity and accessibility within the plaza and provide new opportunities for public programming. *[See Appendix C: Diagram C.1]*
- 4.9 Locate food kiosks, amenities, pedestrian infrastructure, and public porch space in areas of high sun exposure. Amenities may include skate rentals, games rentals, washrooms, change rooms, sitting space, kiosks, and bicycle infrastructure.
- 4.10 Frame the arrival into the plaza at each of the eight potential access points, using programming, landmarks, lighting, wayfinding, public art, and/or civic/cultural buildings. *[See Stephen Avenue Extension, Ceremonial Boulevard, Meandering Green, Digital Corridor Strategy]*
- 4.11 Explore the removal of any existing trees that clutter or block views and pedestrian connectivity between the plaza and its active edges.
- 4.12 Develop a consistent at-grade paving plan across Macleod Trail that reinforces the integration of the two plazas. Develop a pedestrian crossing strategy across Macleod Trail that is safe, and reinforces the integration of the two plazas.
- 4.13 Explore the removal of the existing grade separation in the south end of the plaza and incorporate Stephen Avenue into the plaza footprint. *[See Stephen Avenue Extension Strategy]*
- 4.14 Explore the removal of the existing stand of coniferous trees along Seventh Avenue and re-grade the northern edge of Olympic Plaza to promote the connectivity of Seventh Avenue. Locate amenity along this renovated edge to activate both the plaza and Seventh Avenue (e.g. food trucks, ice skate

Cultural Heart | Actions

rentals, etc.).

- 5 Develop a renovation plan for the existing Municipal Building which reflects its role as a civic monument in the Cultural Heart and as an active contributor to the public realm and includes the following: *[See Stephen Avenue Extension Strategy]*
 - 5.1 Renovate the Municipal Building with an active west edge that spills programming into the plaza with civic, cultural, or commercial use. *[See Stephen Avenue Extension Strategy]*
 - 5.2 Locate outdoor public porch space with good sun exposure adjacent to the west face of the Municipal Building.
 - 5.3 Renovate the Municipal Building Triangle with inviting, exterior focused frontage and outdoor porch space that attracts citizens and visitors. Develop a strategy that utilizes signage, exterior programming, and a well-defined entrance to express its presence.
 - 5.4 Renovate the Municipal Building atrium so that it acts as an extension of the plaza and as a major connector into the East Village. Establish accessibility as a key metric for success. *[See Stephen Avenue Extension Strategy]*
- 6 Support the renovation of the Arts Commons into an externalized cultural hub that allows performing arts activity to spill into the plaza to include the following:
 - 6.1 The North face of the Arts Commons should be an interactive building edge that activates the outdoor space as part of the plaza and compliments the legibility of Stephen Avenue. *[See Stephen Avenue Extension Strategy]*
 - 6.2 Conduct stakeholder engagement to determine infrastructure requirements to enable performing arts programming along Stephen Avenue.
- 7 Support a new Civic/Cultural Centre on the west side of the plaza, whose façade is aligned with the west edge of Paget Park to include the following:
 - 7.1 Develop a needs assessment and programming strategy for the civic centre to include a mix of

cultural, recreational, and commercial use. Program the building to support uses which activate and animate the plaza.

- 7.2 Incorporate an engaging facade that integrates large-scale digital media for art, advertisements, or event screening. *[See Digital Corridor Strategy]*
- 7.3 Incorporate an outdoor space in the space East of the building that includes at-grade food and beverage, patio space, and public seating.
- 8 Investigate opportunities for the current public library to provide a source of animation, activity, and density to the plaza upon vacancy. *[See Digital Corridor Strategy]*
- 9 Support the renovation of Rocky Mountain Plaza and the Calgary Public Library to have engaging facades that animate the public experience day and night. *[See Digital Corridor Strategy]*

Long-Term Actions

- 10 Investigate the potential for a new civic and/or cultural building above the existing Municipal Parkade which frames the arrival into the Plaza from Macleod Trail, and to provide a consistent, active building edge along Ninth Avenue SE. *[See Sixth and Ninth Avenue Parades Strategy]*
- 11 Investigate the potential for developing the vacant lot on the corner of Ninth Avenue and Third Street S.E. to animate the street corner with active edges, and to complement the New Central Library with the open space to the east. Ensure that the proposed building height allows sunlight into the new plaza South of the New Central Library. *[See Sixth and Ninth Avenue Parades Strategy]*
- 12 Preserve, and, if necessary, rehabilitate the existing historical resources to accentuate their presence as a source of history, identity, and memory. The historical buildings which contribute to the character of the plaza include, but are not limited to:
 - Historic City Hall
 - Dominion Bank
 - Calgary Public Building
 - Burns Building
 - Cathedral Church of the Redeemer

N.B. To achieve some of these actions, policy and land-use may have to be revised.

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