

CALGARY STARTS HERE

IDEA BANK

Olympic Plaza Cultural District Strategy

Calgary, Alberta, Canada, June 2007

www.culturaldistrict.ca

the IDEA BANK is a growing repository of ideas for the revitalization of Calgary's Olympic Plaza Cultural District, gathered from public processes since 1999 and organized into the Four Keys of the Cultural District Vision, general requirements of a great "people place", strategies for implementation, and development guidelines.

CALGARY STARTS HERE: Olympic Plaza Cultural District Strategy 2007

The Manifesto
The Idea Bank

Working Reports

Lyons Reports	I: Olympic Plaza Cultural District Strategy: from the Nitty-Gritty to the Fabulous II: Implementation (Lyons, Venini & Associates)
Boutin Report:	Design & Programming Strategies for the Future of Olympic Plaza and Paget Park (Marc Boutin Architect)
West Report:	A Seventh Avenue Analysis (Mieka West)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In a project of this scope, it's impossible to give everyone who deserves credit their due. That said, here are a few highly deserved kudos: Glenn Lyons, author of the major reports and recommendations of the District Strategy, who not only knows Calgary better than most, he understands the balance that makes great places work and shares his time and wisdom with great generosity; Charles Landry (UK), urban guru, who guided our team with skilled questions and careful listening; Daryl Betenia and Colin Jackson, the Cultural District Renaissance Society's Co-chairs – Daryl for chairing the District Strategy process with diligence and heart, Colin for championing the project within the district and beyond; Alderman Druh Farrell, a truly brave and visionary urbanist, who luckily also happens to be our ward alderman and project champion; Alderman Madeleine King, doyen of the arts, who asks the right questions; David Down, Brent Toderian, Thom Mahler and other members of the Calgary Centre City Plan team for unflagging guidance and encouragement; the Calgary Downtown Association, which has supported this project from its inception both financially and by sitting on all key committees, starting with Richard White and Jackie Flegel – many of Richard's ideas are in this document - and continuing with the exciting new team of Maggie Schofield, Janet Jessiman and Caralyn Macdonald; the City of Calgary's Dennis Lafreniere, Garth Jones and Beth Gignac, and many more supportive City folks; Mieka West, designer of this document and member of the Working Group, whose input since 1999 has been consistently savvy. We are grateful for funding from the City of Calgary's Planning Department and the Province of Alberta's Community Initiatives Fund. A big thank you goes to the many Calgarians who shared their perspectives with Charles Landry, the alliance of neighbours whose commitment never flags, and above all, the members of the District Strategy Working Group, whose initial three month commitment stretched to over a year as our project grew in depth and resonance. The rich sense of community that has grown out of this process is perhaps the best outcome of all.

Meg Van Rosendaal
General Manager, Olympic Plaza Cultural District

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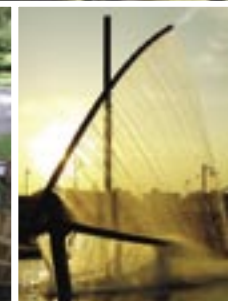
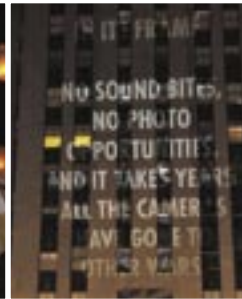
Manifesto and Idea Bank: \$20 CDN in colour, \$5 B/W including shipping

Working Reports may also be available on request

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A SURPRISE – A BEAUTIFUL PLACE THAT LOOKS AND FEELS LIKE NOWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD

LIGHT and FIRE THEME



- Light art - public art by national & international artists who use light as a medium
- Projections (film, text or other images) on problematic buildings
- A master plan for a district-wide system of dramatic, pedestrian-oriented lighting
- A conference hosted by OPCD: new thinking about urban lighting
- Creative lighting in areas identified through safety audits as feeling uncomfortable or unsafe
- Gobos on the sidewalk and at C-Train platforms (see EPCOR CENTRE's)
- Christmas lighting displays: district-wide plan and related programming (e.g. Christmas Tree lighting party)
- Light- or fire-based festivals such as:
 - A Fire & Light Festival as a signature event
 - Lantern festivals summer and winter
 - New Year's Eve Festival of Light
 - Canada Day Fireworks and street event
- Expansion of the Songlines installation of fiberoptic light "drawings" on buildings around the Plaza
- Lighted marquees
- Sunlight protection: protection of sunny public space from shadowing
- Big screens showing what's going on inside (plays, concerts, chefs etc) and big events like the World Cup
- Bright Nights: celebrate nights when the district is particularly busy with spot-lights, performers, food events

FALL IN LOVE with 7th AVENUE as a destination pedestrian area and Calgary's next great DT retail street

- Light art on 7th Ave (see above) in conjunction with the Art in Motion public art/transit corridor
- A longterm retail plan for 7th Ave in collaboration with Downtown Calgary, Calgary Transit and stakeholders
 - Use of under-utilized, empty or temporary spaces to provide affordable non-traditional retail space
 - Use of empty lots as small plazas with activities such as a community garden, lawn-bowling
 - Incentives for imaginative redevelopment of existing retail & new development to enhance street experience
 - Street markets and other outdoor retail such as bookstalls, food vendors, artisans at work
- An appealing pedestrian experience along the length of the corridor
 - Official designation as a pedestrian corridor or linear park, renaming the street to signal its transformation
 - Variation in materials and colour - materials that say "touch me" (no single expanses of concrete for instance)
 - Quality custom street furniture that reflects the district character, commissioned through a design competition
 - Art, artistic landscaping, innovative sustainability demos etc in nooks and crannies in each block
 - Thermal comfort - solar gain, motion activated heating units, wind screens
 - Loose chairs (colourful painted chairs that people can move anywhere)

- Multi-modal transport along the corridor, including a bike path and bike racks
- C-Train Stations that are as dynamic as the District: distinctive design, lots of activity
 - Comfortable seating with backrests facing pedestrian flow for people-watching (see West report)
 - Light art (art in the medium of light), theatre lighting, lanterns or artist designed chandeliers
 - Commercial activities: cafes, newsstands and kiosks, roving vendors
 - Entertainment: music by Calgary musicians, live performers, artists at work, short Calgary-made films etc
- Roving entertainers on C-trains
- Actor “tour guides” on C-trains, telling stories of Calgary downtown’s past, present and future
- Artist(s) on the station design teams from the beginning of the process
- Creative greenscaping as an expressive artform, such as green screens, walls, roofs, living 3-D sculpture
- First Street Station improvements:
 - Sculpture Garden or children’s garden in front of WR Cushing School (coordinated by the school)
 - Colour in the canopy: transparent coloured film on the 1st St canopy
 - Elimination of bus lay-by on South side of 1 St SW block to allow wider sidewalks, more seating & vendors
- Centre Street Station Pilot Project using ideas above plus
 - Program empty storefronts (e.g. Same Day Tickets Booth, artist studios, produce market etc)
 - Dinner-to-go kiosks (high quality, related to Cultural District restaurants)
 - Giant playbills wrapped around the station posts, and What’s On info on a marquee, digital signs and gobos
 - Stage area, possibly with sound setup, for entertainers
 - Multilanguage or universal signage, Urban Braille System
 - Something interesting to see across from the station such as local films/animation, tiny sun-reflecting mirrors

TAPAS & TENTS: IMAGINATIVE STRUCTURES (see also Fill the Gaps, below)

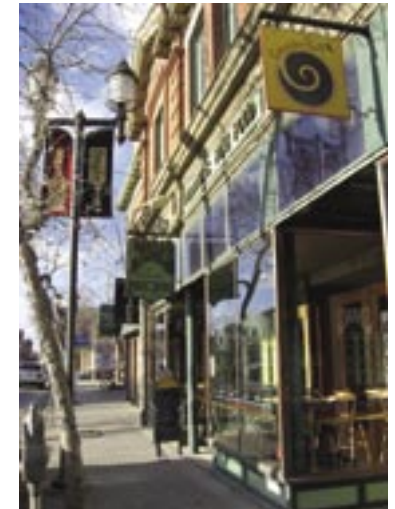


- Cluster(s) of temporary custom-designed cabanas or small winterized structures leased out as studios/shops
- Tent-like portable structures unique to the District to be used as vendor stalls, food kiosks, artist spaces etc
- Freeform tensile structures on buildings to create a carnival-like atmosphere, e.g. Teatro, Le Germain Hotel
- Shipping container complex in vacant lot for use as business startups, artisan spaces, public issues forums etc.
- Found structures, remnants of Calgary’s history, inserted in “found space” in the district
- ArtCity Peep-Show pavilions - in permanent locations
- “Tapas” brigade to find appropriate structures, sites for them and uses to go in them

A BROWSABLE NEIGHBOURHOOD WHERE CALGARY'S ORIGINAL FINE-GRAIN STREET EXPERIENCE IS REINVENTED FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

FILL THE GAPS BLOCK BY BLOCK with RETAIL, ART/ARTISTS, RESIDENTS, STREET VENDORS

- An increase in retail and residential development to correct the imbalance of uses in the district
- A reality TV show based on the block by block makeover of the district
- Interesting public uses at street level: something tantalizing to see or do every 50' or less with street entries
 - Map of interstitial, underused or vacant spaces, including the underground C-Train station under City Hall
 - Artists' studios and rehearsal spaces in unexpected places, inside and out
 - Temporary uses for empty or underused spaces, with affordable short-term leases (focus on street level)
 - Lantern lofts (Sturgess concept from 1999 Brainstorm Charrette) hung/mounted in unexpected places
 - Art of all kinds in every nook and cranny (performances, visual art, dance, readings, poetry ++)
 - Locations and special incentives for food and art/crafts vendors
 - A precedent study of ways to improve the effect on the street of big box buildings with few entryways
- Markets:
 - Arts & Crafts Market (Art in the Park)
 - Tailgate Markets (weekend boot sales)
 - Five O'Clock Markets with rotating themes, e.g. used books, flowers, ethnic foods etc
 - Asian Night Market that wraps around the Plaza (see Richmond Night Market)
 - Christmas Market (see Bryant Park, NY)
 - International food and arts
 - Indian Art Market (see Santa Fe precedent)
 - Mini Markets on C-Train platforms and in small plazas such as Paget Park
 - Mad Markets - odd things to buy and surprising interactive things to do
 - Custom market stalls or pushcarts (see Faneuil Hall Marketplace's "Bull Market")
 - Indoor market for year-round activity (see Urban Fare, Vancouver)
 - Area for used book sales outdoors (see Waterloo Bridge, London; along the Seine, Paris)
 - Roving parade of market/vendor carts along 7th Avenue
 - Winterized market stalls along the Glenbow block of 8th Avenue, perhaps made of glass
- Paget Park Plan: Gabriel's Wharf (London)- and/or Greenacre Park (NY)-type development
- Retail:
 - At least two new Art Central- or Toronto Artscape-type complexes
 - Street vendors: food everywhere, in all price ranges, plus artisans and interactive things to do
 - Seasonal restaurant, coffee shop or wine bar, or a row of food vendors, under the Plaza pergola
 - Focus on small, independent boutique shops, artist work/sell studios
- Affordable spaces for small specialty retail
- New inventive locations for residential development, including live-work studio spaces



- City regulations for new developments' responsibility to street environment (see implementation, below)
- Inside Out: make what's going on inside visible outside (windows, big screen, outdoor events etc)
- Public Art Plan for the district in conjunction with the Centre City Public Art Plan

IRRESISTIBLE ENTRYWAYS

- Entries and doorways that are easy to find, irresistible, surprising, beautiful

STREET LEVEL PRIMACY and GREAT SIGHTLINES

- A special OPCD Plus 15 plan - repurposing, removal or improvements of existing bridges, no new bridges
- Sightline protection for key Calgary sights such as Old City Hall and other historic buildings

A PUBLIC GATHERING PLACE AND CULTURAL CROSSROADS

GRAND PLAZA: OLYMPIC PLAZA DESIGN/BUILD PLAN integrated with all surrounding public spaces

- International model of excellence in urban & public space design, embracing Olympic Plaza & surrounding public space
- Multiple levels: at grade, sky gardens and roof parks, +15s, underground space with imaginative ways to get from one to another
- Opportunities for active edges: EPCOR CENTRE, Teatro, new library, Calgary Public Bldg, "tapas" & tents
- Infrastructure to accommodate myriad active uses, both casual & programmed, from small gatherings to large festivals
- Restaurants surrounding the Grand Plaza, from street kiosks to fine dining
- Overlapping events to encourage a mix of people
- Access: parking under the Grand Plaza; bike and walking access that's highly appealing
- Option to close Macleod Trail to create one large integrated space for large events
- NW corner or N edge of Plaza: mixed use building (food, arts, residents) such as Quincy Market, Boston
- 7th Ave at Olympic Plaza integrated into the Plaza design (see West report)
- Intensive programming and options for casual use (see below)
- More imaginative and interactive water features
- Loose bistro-style tables and chairs in all areas
- Skating rink reconfigured to allow more alternative uses in the park or moved to Municipal Plaza
- Eliminate the severe changes in elevation of the Plaza (without making it flat)
- Lights on in all three parks from 6am till at least midnight



OPCD as a CROSSROADS (not a dead end)

- A creative alternative system of walking routes - laneways, +15s like a system of rivers meandering through DT
- Bike route links to the river pathway and character districts such as Chinatown and Eau Claire
- Fun, interesting walking routes to East Village, Chinatown, Eau Claire, Beltline
- Underpass improvements based on major Cultural District themes
- Development over the CPR tracks - new buildings, access routes and views entering the district
- Physical and programmatic links to U of C's Urban Campus
- Walking tours (historical, art, Liar's Tours, children's tours etc)
- Open route through Municipal Bldg and over tracks to connect 8th Ave in the OPCD with the Urban Campus
- Shuttle buses or street cars into the district
- Jogging routes to and from the YWCA and YMCA, amenities for joggers and walkers
- Conversion of 9th Avenue to 2-way West to 1 St SW, and other conversions to 2-way where possible
- Experiment with auto access on Stephen Avenue in winter
- Encourage continuous development along the CPR tracks to make the corridor an attraction rather than a barrier
- New LRT route along C-Train tracks with at least one station in the district
- Friendly Streets Campaign to engage the neighbours in making it fun to walk along their block
- New small plazas/squares connected in some way to the Grand Plaza - no more than 2 blocks between
- Multilanguage (or universal language) signage and print materials
- Multicultural festivals, events and performances, with a focus on a fusion or mix of cultures
 - World Music Festival, perhaps associated with EPCOR CENTRE's World Music Series
 - Weekly summer mini-ethnic festivals
 - Invite CBC's Combo to Go program outdoors
- Multicultural markets and food
- Annual multilanguage used book market
- Intercultural Advisory Committee



CENTRE FOR DIALOGUE

- Develop program at multiple sites, e.g. EPCOR CENTRE, Glenbow Museum, U of C Urban Campus, library, BVC, restaurants, bookstores etc. - variation: Centre for Interfaith Dialogue & Action
- Speakers' corner
- Lecture series
- World Café discussions re bringing more groups of people to OPCD to work & play and more global issues

WHAT'S HERE? INFORMATION and PROMOTION

- Lighted marquees as a district-wide theme
- Digital signboards showing what's on daily



- Same day discount tickets booth at a C-train station
- Building-size banners
- Info kiosks and poster frames
- What's On pamphlets and marketing, including a semiannual Arts & Dining Guide & Family Activities Guide
- OPCD website with restaurant menus, arts guide etc.
- Restaurant menus posted on building facades
- Signage: "yes" messages, multilingual signage, child-friendly and handicapped friendly design guidelines
- Hours of operation signage at all sites
- District maps and wayfinding systems updated annually
- Changes to City maps to include mention of the OPCD (i.e. kiosk in front of City Hall)
- Creative gateways into the OPCD (C-train platforms, 6th Ave, 9th Ave, Stephen Ave, underpasses)
Gateway signage or visual indicators: you are now entering the Olympic Plaza Cultural District
- Uniformed maintenance staff who can also offer public information and informal security support
- Creative names for streets, +15s, laneways etc in the district (e.g. Bridge of Sighs)
- A more creative and user-friendly name for the district
- Marketing of the plaza to people who WILL use it: new immigrants, nearby residents who don't have yards
- C-Train announcements: Olympic Plaza Cultural District Station and news re what you'll find at each stop

A HOT SPOT OF CREATIVITY AND EXPERIMENTATION

INTENSIVE PROGRAMMING

- A high profile animateur or producer to curate the whole district as if it were a festival or jazz jam
- Cultural District Free Public Programming Trust Fund administered by OPCD with City or Parks Fdn
Amendment of Land Use Bylaw to incorporate a development bonus for contributions to the Trust Fund
Outdoor programming strategy
- Markets (see above)
- Expansion and promotion of First Thursdays and other events that integrate the district
- Street performers and vendors: part of the expected day-to-day experience as well as during special events
Unrestricted busker zone (remove Busk Stop sign/annual Street Performers Festival)
- District-wide theme-based programming & marketing, tying into major museum, gallery or theatre events
- District Specialties such as:
Vertical Dance performances and training on buildings in the district ("Vertical Dance Capital of Canada")
Puppetry (Animated Objects) "Capital of Canada"
- Regular scheduled events year round that, like the Children's Festival, become Calgary traditions:
New Year's Eve Festival of Light and Fire, perhaps targeting families
WinterFest Opening Night Lantern Celebration
Canada Day fireworks and street festival



Halloween pumpkin carving contest, pumpkin display (see Port Alberni), pumpkin parade
 Expanded Brown Bag Lunch Series (more days of the week, longer season, more of a festival atmosphere)
 Annual street fair and street performers festival
 Annual event to launch the Fall Arts Season (see Carnival of the Arts [Scotland], Night of Museums [Berlin])
 Movies in the Park and on blank walls, including series of foreign-language films & documentaries
 Art encounters on the street: Street Lab experimental street events, guerrilla art events etc.
 Guided tours: historical/architectural tours, Liars' Tours, public art tours
 Self-guided tours: expansion of [murmur] project throughout district, Janet Cardiff installation (self-guided)
 "Ride your bike", "bring your dog" days
 Small specialty festivals such as yodelling and accordions
 Chefs' outdoor chili (or stew) cook-off in February (\$5 a bowl)
 Hobby clubs: e.g. remote control boats and planes every Sunday morning, garden club events/shows
 Wellness activities: Bombay-style laughing club, yoga and tai chi free to all
 Programming in the Plaza by neighbourhood arts groups, restaurants etc. (e.g. Gallery Week, Food Week)
 Sports and play:
 Big sports events such as World Cup Soccer on a big screen
 Skate rentals and hot chocolate in the Plaza November to March
 "Skating Week" program in the Plaza between Christmas and New Year's
 Figure skating demos and promos by local skating clubs and an annual invitational event
 Bocce, badminton, table tennis and board games to borrow in the Plaza
 Climbing wall and playgrounds (children's and adults') created by artists, encouraging physical ingenuity
 Basketball court or hoop
 Jogging/walking route from YWCA through and around the Plaza
 Dry pool events when there is no water in the pool: bumper cars, dances, chalk art, giant chess board etc.
 Family Fun Sundays: discount tickets or entry, story times, kids' flea markets, skating programs etc

- 7th Avenue animation through programming
- Popular displays in the public realm, such as the weekly Concept Cars parked in the Champs Elysee
- "Public Campus" concept: a place for lifelong learning
 - Clustering and promotion of existing classes
 - Redevelopment of Calgary Public Building as a cultural centre or arts high school
 - Cathedral as multi-faith centre for religious dialogue
 - Outdoor art classes, storytelling, discussion groups, political rallies, ESL programs
 - Cooking classes at OPCD restaurants or a new Culinary Arts School, with a focus on ethnic cooking
 - Physical and programmatic links to U of C's Urban Campus in East Village
 - Increased visibility of children from WH Cushing School and City Hall School, etc.
 - Support for Bow Valley College expansion & encouragement to other learning institutions to locate in OPCD
 - Bow Valley College and Library educational programs in the Plaza
 - Surprising things to learn, e.g. Circus School

- SLOW movement: slow food and other opportunities for savouring the passage of time
- “Urban” games: orienteering, great race etc.

ATTRACT NEW ARTS & CULTURE PRESENTERS AND FACILITIES



- Affordable space in new developments for art and artists or other creative business startups
Public activity such as free drop-in noonhour classes in exchange for lowered rent of these spaces
- Tapas & Tents (see above) - imaginative structures, temporary or permanent, “found” or site-specific designs
- The Candy Factory: an Artscape-type arts complex
- Bazaars: complexes of small one-off shops, eateries, arts spaces and other unusual uses
- With Calgary Arts Development, assess what new arts facilities are needed (using a broad definition of art):
Dance stage and rehearsal space
A purpose-built dance theatre
cinemathèque
Spaces for multicultural artforms not accommodated in existing facilities
Dedicated class A contemporary art gallery, perhaps starting with a “Temporary Contemporary”
- Create places for fun things to happen
Creative thinking about places that can be transformed into temporary stages or exhibition spaces
“On demand” films or puppet theatre in the EPCOR CENTRE’s 8th Ave windows, with outdoor seating/sound
Band-friendly zone: places and infrastructure for bands to perform, such as loading docks, rooftops & parks
Use of alleys for markets, small festivals, art installations or performances
Macleod Trail closure during festivals and events
Plus 15 Museum of Migration - a walk-through museum of immigrants’ stories
Poetry, prose and humour imbedded in the infrastructure (a “readable” neighbourhood)
- Guerrilla art - temporary interventions and sudden transformations
- Active recruitment of new festivals and events (small to large), particularly intercultural, for public spaces

EXPERIMENTAL ZONE



- Experimental Zone Plan & designation
- Experimental zone for new ways to achieve urban vitality
- Incubator program & spaces for professional development for artists, arts technicians & creative start-ups
- Demonstration site for best practices in green development: green roofs & walls, energy conservation etc.
- Experimental landscaping: it doesn’t all have to come out of the ground (hanging gardens, green walls etc)
- Support for risk-taking and innovation in all fields of endeavour

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS OF A GREAT “PEOPLE PLACE”

FREQUENCY OF USE AT STREET LEVEL

- Requirement for publicly accessible use at ground level with entries from the street in new developments

RESIDENTIAL MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT

- Residential development wherever possible, from single units to multiple unit buildings
- Affordable housing above municipal parkade and on other city owned land
- Residential zoning review of the area north of 6th Avenue

MAINTENANCE

- Repair or replacement of damaged sidewalks
- Support for the City’s Clean to the Core program, especially on pedestrian and transit corridors
- Exceptional maintenance and management (see South Bank London precedent)



ACCESSIBILITY (see also OPCD as a CROSSROADS above)

- Seasonal vehicle access to 8th Ave
- Dedicated cycle lanes on 8th Ave (controlled to protect pedestrians), 9th Ave, and 7th if possible
- Conversion of one way streets to two way where possible, starting with 9th Ave east of 1 St SW
- On street parking throughout OPCD during off peak hours and wherever possible during business hours
- Pedestrian scramble zones featuring music by Calgary artists to denote walk times
- Reduced short-term parking costs, new short-term parking locations
- Public parking signage system, including an electronic “spaces available” sign on CP bridge over Macleod Tr
- Parking machines vs meters to maximize number of vehicles
- Extended transit operation hours

COMFORT & SAFETY

- Community Support Officer (CSO) Program with provincial funding
- Identification and remediation of all areas that feel unsafe or uncomfortable in the District
 - Improved pedestrian experience in underpasses
 - Work with Calgary Transit on a transit safety plan to eliminate fears and concerns about use at night
- Improved availability of information regarding emergency and other city contacts
- Creative lighting for ambience and comfort in areas identified as feeling unsafe; NW corner of Olympic Plaza
- Public phones in safe, well-lit locations



- Winter firepits and heated C-Train platforms
- A local community CPS patrol program, coordinated with peak usage
- Olympic Plaza
 - Park staff visibility - identifiable uniforms
 - Removal of phone booths from locations in Olympic Plaza that are hidden from public view
 - Community Park Safety Handbook promoting community group actions, activities and resources
 - CPTED II Safety Audit and planning sessions focusing on drug dealing in the Plaza, annually if necessary
 - Video surveillance monitored by neighbouring organizations that have full-time security monitors
 - Enforcement of panhandling and nonsmoking bylaws (CSO program)
- Parkades
 - Corrective action for parkades that are reported to feel unsafe or uncomfortable
 - Design guidelines for new parkades based on CPTED II concepts
- Opportunities to involve street people in OPCD activities
- Implementation of Centre City Social Action Plan in the district & participation in Social Action Committee
- EMS bike patrols
- Rapid response to vandalism and graffiti (Clean to the Core program)
- Custom furniture as well as temporary moveable furniture that invites people to linger

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PUBLIC REVITALIZATION ZONE DESIGNATION and PLAN

- Long-term district business plan including funding sources and management plan
- Combined Cultural District, CPS and Transit Security office in the CTCC at the Centre St LRT platform

PLANNING and DEVELOPMENT

- OPCD inclusion on development review committees for all development in the District
- OPCD representation on public art, parks or other planning committees related to the district
- Demo Site / Experimental Zone
 - Demonstration site for best practices in green development
 - Innovative, high quality architecture and design in all new developments
 - Implementation of imagineCalgary and Centre City Plan recommendations
- Customized Development Bonusing and Incentives: funding for...
 - Affordable space for start-up retail and artists' studios
 - The Fun Fund: a Cultural District Free Public Programming Trust Fund
 - Inclusion of cultural facilities in new developments
 - Public Art that ties into the OPCD Public Art plan, particularly Light Art

Incentives for retrofits of existing buildings for small street-entry retail/comm'l/hospitality uses

- All properties must have active uses on the first 2 levels above grade
- Sunlight in public places: protection from shadowing
- Address safety issues in design of new parkades at development approval stage
- Plus 15 guidelines specific to the District:
 - Moratorium: no expansion of +15 system in the district until a review is completed
 - Plus15 bonusing review
 - Use of art, colour and activity to enhance the experience of the existing +15s
 - Inclusion of +15s in the Grand Plaza plan
 - Improved connections between the street and the +15s, particularly through wayfinding signage
 - Removal of non-functional +15s
- C-Train platforms: see Fall in Love with 7th Avenue
- Centre St as a “grand boulevard” with an enhanced pedestrian experience and protected sightlines
- 7th Avenue as a retail/pedestrian/transit thoroughfare, a linear pedestrian park and possibly a bike route
- Public Art plan for the district
- CPTED reviews of all proposed developments in the district including the Grand Plaza design/build plan
- Integration of all new development on the edges of Olympic Plaza (or Grand Plaza) with Plaza function, design and sightlines
- Residential zoning: anywhere in the OPCD, including on roofs of existing buildings
- No surface parking lots
- “Urban Forest” guidelines for the district
- Research
 - Mapping: locations for temporary interventions, light art, residential development, lantern studios etc.
 - Urban Ecosystem plan for a sustainable, balanced neighbourhood: what’s missing?
 - Calgary TELUS Convention Centre expansion possibilities
- Social planning
 - Affordable housing funding from provincial and federal governments
 - Increased Federal and provincial support for addicted and handicapped
 - Calgary drug court

There is no end to the ideas that could be applied to achieving this vision. We will continue to publish Idea Bank updates every few months. To submit YOUR ideas, write to contact@culturaldistrict.ca.

