

**CALGARY
STARTS**

HERE

MANIFESTO

Olympic Plaza Cultural District Strategy

Calgary, Alberta, Canada, June 2007

www.culturaldistrict.ca

*Make no small plans – they have no magic
to stir humanity's blood... Daniel Burnham,
19th century architect*

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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Calgary AB Canada

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For information about the contents of this document, to share your ideas or to request a print copy:

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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IS IT GOOD ENOUGH FOR CALGARY?

A CHALLENGE FROM CHARLES LANDRY¹

World-renowned author, cultural planner and urbanist Charles Landry spent a week in the Cultural District in March 2006, meeting with and listening to Calgarians from all walks of life – politicians and city administrators, immigrants, youth, artists, business leaders, neighbourhood residents, police and social workers, and even a group of skeptics. He explored the city, took hundreds of photos, and was struck by the seeming disconnect between the energy and passion of Calgarians and the bland “nowhere-ness” of our city. His address to the community challenged us to take stock, then take action....



The world is watching Calgary. Becoming a city of one million citizens is an iconic moment which allows Calgarians to reflect on where you have come from, what you have achieved and whether it meets your ideals for a better urban life. It allows Calgarians to consider where you are now and whether you can do better, and to establish a new set of ideals for the 21st century city, ideals which are sustaining to both the emotional life of its citizens and the environment within which it fits.

At this time, as you create a long term strategy for the neighbourhood that surrounds Calgary's town square – The Olympic Plaza Cultural District – you stand at the cusp of a rare opportunity that cannot be grasped by a business as usual approach. It is an opportunity that requires clarity, motivation and will. It can only be achieved by working across boundaries, departments and sectors, giving full vent to artists and creators of all types, residents, and business; and by getting those concerned with the built environment to work with those concerned with social dynamics, culture and economy. Understanding the connections between “hard and soft infrastructure” (the machine of the city and the people) lies at the core of great city making. In successful places the physical is merely a platform that encourages interaction.

There are always ten reasons to say “No” to new ideas. In this instance – now, in the Cultural District – the challenge must be to say “Yes”, and the vision must articulate the rules and embody the spirit of the District Strategy. This is about coming together to create a gathering place where the disparate parts of Calgary feel as though they are one. Olympic Plaza and the Cultural District are the neutral territory for shared story making, where public values are more important than private values. You can speak to Calgarians' deeper yearnings for gathering places, community, and excitement, and the idea that there is more that brings meaning to a city than business and shopping. The Olympic Plaza Cultural District presents an unparalleled opportunity to interweave public and private values and entities, and to create an ethos that goes beyond the bottom line.

Now is the time to look at the contrast that exists between the spirit and energy of Calgary, and its physical reality. It is time to tap into peoples' aspirations and pose the question, “Is it good enough for Calgary?”

Great cities are known for their common wealth – their history and culture, their public places, neighbourhoods and public amenities. The Olympic Plaza Cultural District is part of Calgary's common wealth. We are committed to building a legacy that will excite Calgarians and visitors to our city long into the future.²

WHEN YOU VISIT GREAT CITIES

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT TO FIND?

Great streets to explore.
Signature culture, architecture and parks.
Surprises. Sights. People.

Put yourself in the Campo di Fiori in Rome, Las Ramblas in Barcelona, Greenwich Village in New York, Granville Island in Vancouver and you feel the passion for life - everyday life. These are great urban places, places you understand from your gut, that evoke a sense of their city, their country, their people – even to those who've never been there.

So what about Calgary? Calgary's business core is booming. But our downtown struggles to maintain its vibrancy outside business hours, and has but one lively, browsable street - Stephen Avenue. To take the next giant step to be a great city in the world - with all the economic and social benefits that entails - our urban centre must be a place that throbs with life long after the office workers have left, that melds living and history, social contact and relaxation, shopping and browsing, arts and culture and entertainment and conversation, life in the fast lane and slow time to savour it.

The place to start is here, at the heart of the city, in Calgary's most public place. And the time to start is now, while we are enjoying unprecedented optimism, influence and wealth. The neighbourhood that surrounds our "town square", Olympic Plaza, has the potential to join the ranks of the world's well-loved places. But it will require imagination, will, and above all, a deep understanding of what makes Calgary Calgary.

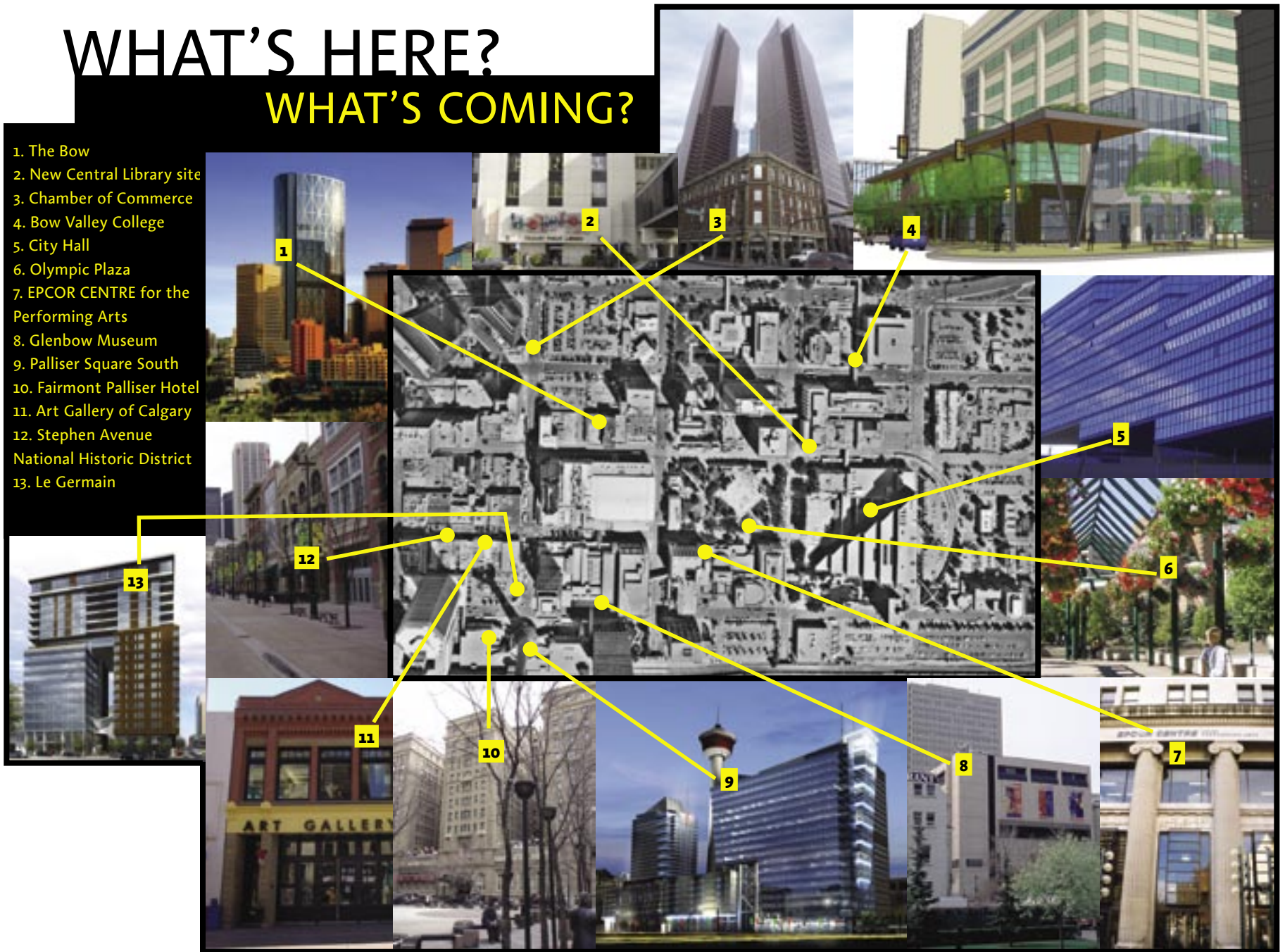


Over the last several years, a team of dedicated people has been reviewing this special part of Calgary. Believers in the city's potential, admirers of the achievements of the past and plans for the future, this group of business people, planners, politicians, architects, cultural leaders and residents have begun to explore how we might begin to create a new profile to benefit our city, its inhabitants and visitors.

WHAT'S HERE?

WHAT'S COMING?

1. The Bow
2. New Central Library site
3. Chamber of Commerce
4. Bow Valley College
5. City Hall
6. Olympic Plaza
7. EPCOR CENTRE for the Performing Arts
8. Glenbow Museum
9. Palliser Square South
10. Fairmont Palliser Hotel
11. Art Gallery of Calgary
12. Stephen Avenue National Historic District
13. Le Germain



OLYMPIC PLAZA CULTURAL DISTRICT BACKGROUNDER



Olympic Plaza

WHO?

The Cultural District Renaissance Society of Alberta, a non-profit Society operating as the Olympic Plaza Cultural District, is a consortium of property owners, business managers, workers and residents in the 14 blocks around Olympic Plaza, Calgary's "town square". We have worked together for over 5 years to animate and promote the Cultural District, working closely with many community partners, such as The City of Calgary, and the Calgary Downtown Association.

The District Strategy has emerged from 2 years of brainstorming with Calgarians and consulting with experts. Now *you're* invited to be included in the "who" by joining in the urban challenge outlined in these pages.

WHERE?

The Olympic Plaza Cultural District encompasses the blocks between 6th Avenue and the CP Rail tracks, 1st Street SW and 3rd Street SE. More than just a neighbourhood, it is the "common wealth" of all Calgarians, a hub that connects the entire city.

WHAT?

We're starting a movement.

Through inventive cultural, social, marketing and urban vitality initiatives, we are striving to create a great urban "people place", emblematic of the best Calgary can be – a place that reflects Calgarians' enormous zest for life and capacity for innovation, a place that matters in their lives.

We see this 14 block area at the heart of the city as an experimental zone for street and public realm vitality initiatives, where uneventful streets are transformed into fun places to browse, young city blandness into great city appeal. Let's re-imagine Calgary's signature cluster of cultural amenities and "main plaza" as a place so far beyond expectations that it jolts Calgary's stereotype. And perhaps most importantly, let's ensure that the Cultural District is a safe and appealing place to live and do business, and an ever-changing magnet for people from all corners of the city.

It is our goal – no, our *passion* – to make this neighbourhood Calgary's "post-card to the world".



Calgary Fringe Festival



WHY?

Calgary has advanced to the world stage. As an international player, we compete with the world's great cities to attract and keep workers and entrepreneurs, professionals and students, artists and leaders – people from around the globe, and of course, our own young people. And while they may come for jobs, they'll stay if Calgary is able to fire their imaginations and connect them in community. Visitors will stay longer too, when they find a city full of life and interest.

Boasting one of the highest concentrations of arts and cultural facilities for an area of its size in any city in Canada, many of Calgary's finest restaurants and three of its best hotels, the Calgary Tower, City Hall and Calgary TELUS Convention Centre, the district already attracts millions of people each year. Over \$2 billion in new development will be underway by 2010, dramatically transforming the Cultural District and downtown Calgary. A new Central Library, an Olympic Plaza design/build plan, new office/retail complexes including Encana's highly anticipated Foster buildings, three new office towers at Palliser Square (Calgary Tower complex), Le Germain (an exemplary mixed-use hotel/commercial/condo building), Bow Valley College's expansion to double its size, the University of Calgary's Urban Campus on the edge of the district and creative upgrades to the EPCOR CENTRE for the Performing Arts are already in the works.

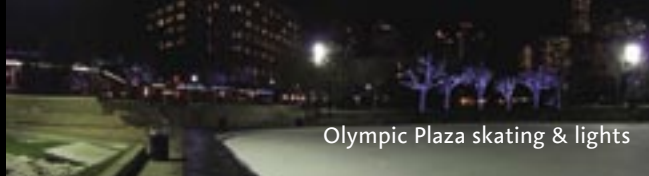
It is vital that it all be pulled together into a place that's greater than the sum of its parts, a place that matters to the city – and the world. We accept Mayor Dave Bronconnier's challenge to work together to shape a world-class downtown. The place to start is here, at its heart. And the time to start is now while we are enjoying unprecedented optimism, influence and wealth.

The pages that follow are alive with the hopes, imaginations, and hearts of hundreds of Calgarians who believe in the urgency of "re-enchanting our city".³

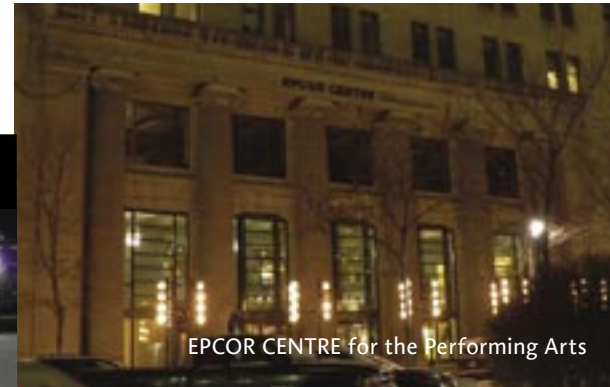
HOW?

The Cultural District Strategy is a pilot project for community-led, district-specific planning in conjunction with the Calgary Centre City Plan which was approved by City Council in May 2007. Based on extensive public input – and inviting much more – the District Strategy condenses the community's aspirations into Four Keys and identifies priority actions from common sense baby steps to giant leaps of imagination, gleaned from hundreds of ideas in the Idea Bank. Consultant Glenn Lyons' reports provided the groundwork for the District Strategy, with analysis of the existing conditions leading to 56 recommendations and related implementation strategies. Other consultants' reports analyze Olympic Plaza and 7th Avenue – two key public areas in the Cultural District – and their roles in the community.

THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY...AND THE ALTERNATIVES



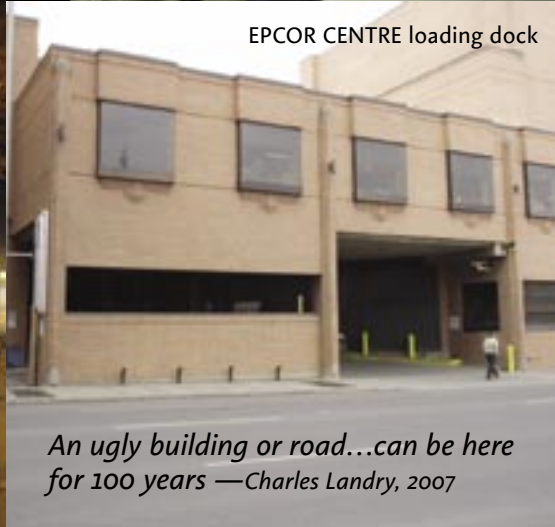
Olympic Plaza skating & lights



EPCOR CENTRE for the Performing Arts



Inglewood at night



EPCOR CENTRE loading dock

*An ugly building or road...can be here
for 100 years —Charles Landry, 2007*



Helsinki art installation



Gabriel's Wharf, London



trees by City Hall



The Bay arcade



Las Ramblas, BCN



Chicago's Millenium Park



Chicago's Millenium Park



7th Avenue



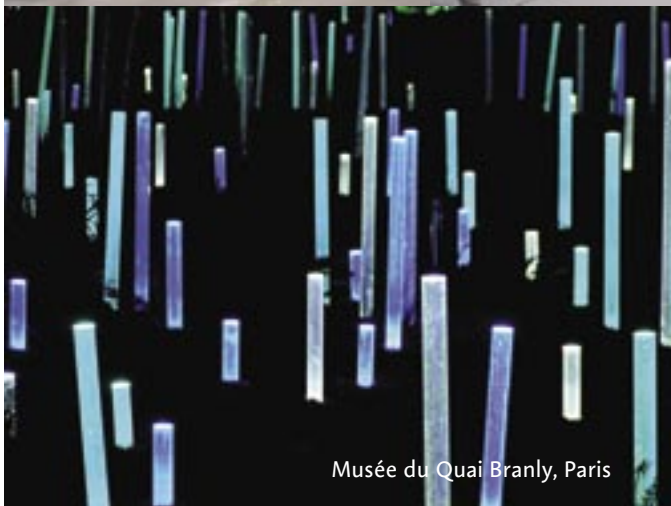
Glenbow loading dock



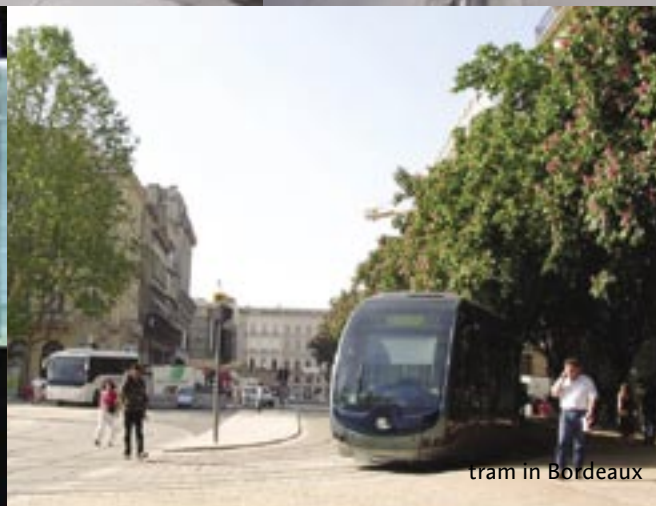
District underpass



9th Avenue



Musée du Quai Branly, Paris



tram in Bordeaux



Rome market

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 following vision⁴ for the benefit of all Calgarians...

MANIFESTO

OLYMPIC PLAZA CULTURAL DISTRICT STRATEGY

THE FOUR KEYS

A SURPRISE a beautiful place that looks and feels like nowhere else in the world

A lively and sensuous place, the Olympic Plaza Cultural District will be Calgary's postcard to the world. We take pride in fine architecture and thoughtful design, living history, great parks, intensive programming and art of all kinds in every nook and cranny.

A BROWSABLE NEIGHBOURHOOD where the original intimate street experience of Calgary's early downtown is reinvented for the 21st century

By filling the gaps with a continuous and tantalizing mix of things to see and do, a popular, browsable and livable neighbourhood will emerge.

A PUBLIC GATHERING PLACE AND CULTURAL CROSSROADS

The Cultural District will be Calgary's urban commons, where people from all parts of the city mix in markets and parks, on the street and in Calgary's major public spaces, generating excitement about the cosmopolitan soul of our city.

A HOT SPOT OF CREATIVITY AND EXPERIMENTATION

As Calgary's signature cultural cluster and an incubator of the creative process, the Cultural District will nurture the arts and the exploration of ideas.

the cultural district will be...

A SURPRISE

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

IMAGINE THIS PLACE IN 2012...

FRIDAY OCTOBER 5TH: SHOWING OFF THE CITY

It's a balmy September night. You've brought out-of-town friends to the Cultural District to show off your city. Arriving by C-Train, you point out 7th Avenue, once a bland transit corridor, now a colourful street of eclectic shops and eateries.

The buzz of an open-air Night Market draws you into the stunning Grand Plaza, a multi-layered cluster of plazas ringed by major cultural sites and busy bazaars. Café patios and theatre marquees beckon as you stroll through sky gardens, past waterfalls and spectacular light-based art, on your way to Calgary's much-loved new library.

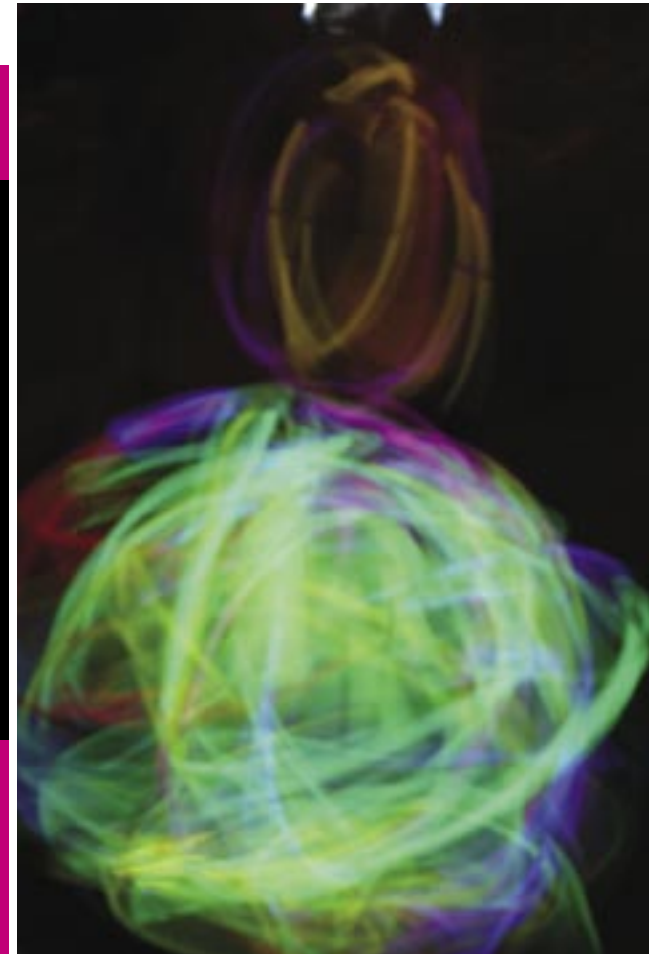
A great city glitters around you, a city of superb architecture, beautiful historic sites, more and more residences, theatres, galleries and museums, all connected with the Grand Plaza by lively streets, full of people and surprises. Everyone is impressed – even you.

2007/2008: GETTING STARTED – PRIORITY PROJECTS FROM THE IDEA BANK⁵

A GRAND PLAZA: Design and build Calgary's signature public place, a cluster of fabulous plazas surrounded and intersected by Calgary's major cultural amenities. Designed for intensive activity and visual impact, the Grand Plaza encompasses Olympic Plaza and all public spaces on its periphery, at ground, underground and roof level with new sky garden plazas, bridges and other creative links between the spaces. Proposed phase I completion Feb 2010 (Vancouver Olympics). Details p. 19

FALL in LOVE with 7th AVENUE: Spearhead an incremental, multi-partner plan to make 7th Avenue a bustling retail street and linear park, renowned for its public art with lively and informative C-Train platforms in character with the district. Pilot projects: Centre St Station and the North side of the 200E block including Paget Park.

FIRE & LIGHT Theme: Create a distinctive ambience with Light Art (public art by international artists who work in the medium of light or fire) marquees and big screens, a beautiful pedestrian-oriented system of street and building lighting, and seasonal lighting displays and events; initiate a signature festival based on fire and light, fireworks and lanterns.



A BROWSABLE NEIGHBOURHOOD

WHERE THE ORIGINAL INTIMATE STREET EXPERIENCE OF CALGARY'S EARLY DOWNTOWN IS REINVENTED FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

IMAGINE THIS PLACE IN 2012....

SATURDAY JANUARY 21ST: JUST BROWSING...

"Opening a shop on 7th Avenue was the best thing I ever did – especially since I got in before the rush. It's amazing how many great places are popping up everywhere in the Cultural District since the 7th Avenue makeover, not just on 7th, but everywhere, on sidestreets, on 6th and 9th. What really turned this end of town around wasn't just big projects like The Bow and the new library – it was the ingenious way space along the streetfronts was used, space you might not have even noticed.

Now the neighbourhood is dense with things to see and do, a great place to browse, with street markets and lots of temporary "tapas". The Light Art is a real "people magnet" too. And now I've got my eye on one of those funky new rooftop apartments. That's my dream - to live in the midst of all this activity and be able to walk to the river AND work...!"



2007/2008: GETTING STARTED

TAPAS & TENTS: Install imaginative temporary or permanent structures – remnants of Calgary's built history, clever new cabanas, fun market stalls, free-form tensile structures, architecturally repurposed shipping containers etc. (we call these tasty little starter spaces "tapas") – throughout the district to become innovative affordable spaces for a melange of unusual new businesses and projects.

STREET VENDORS & PERFORMERS: At C-train platforms and throughout the district, animate the street with food vendors (fresh produce and ethnic food), artisans at work, buskers, booksellers, night-time "fire and light" vendors, dancers, mini circus school and whatever else people can imagine.

FILL THE GAPS, BLOCK by BLOCK: Demonstrate how to create distinctive, continuously browsable streetscapes by filling underused or interstitial spaces with public art, great infill architecture, small retail, interactive programming, innovative performance stages, food outlets and other surprising installations. Pilot project: 200E block of 7th Avenue (N side) including Paget Park



A PUBLIC GATHERING PLACE AND CULTURAL CROSSROADS

IMAGINE THIS PLACE IN 2012...

JULY, DAY IN, DAY OUT: WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS YOUR PLACE?

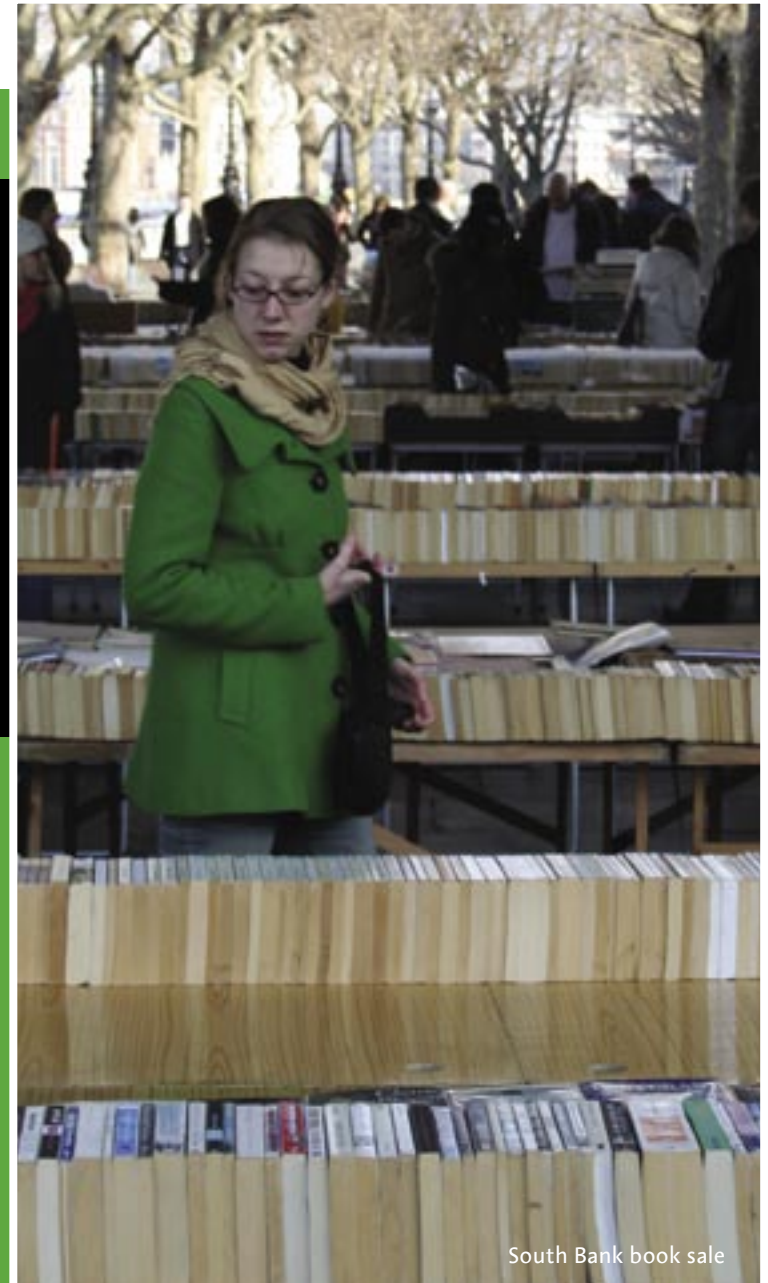
People from all over the city have made the Cultural District their place. At noonhour every day, downtown workers and residents gather in droves for board games for example and laughter yoga, live music and capoeira, sketch clubs and circus school. A large extended family of Italian origin gets together in the plaza most weekends in the summer - the kids love the Imagine Playground, the older folks play bocce, and the shared-food picnic goes on for hours. On Sundays, the City closes a few streets to traffic, creating a wildly popular bicycle route from the river pathway right through the Cultural District's Mad Market, then on through Chinatown and Eau Claire. Transforming one of the smaller plazas into a tiny village, a group of new Canadians sells fair-trade wares and ethnic finger-foods in dazzling little spaces designed by the winners of an international design competition. New mini ethnic festivals seem to sprout there weekly. It seems the more people bring of themselves here, the better this place gets.

2007/2008: GETTING STARTED

MARVELLOUS MARKETS: Develop a Markets Plan for traditional and non-traditional markets, inside and out, at various times year round, implementing at least 2 in the first twelve months, such as mini markets at C-Train platforms, Tailgate Markets, Ethno-cultural Festival Markets, a multilanguage used book market, Christmas Market, Mad Markets or an annual Native Art Market.

MEET ME @ OP (Olympic Plaza): Animate Olympic Plaza year-round with casual fun and activities such as festivals, music, markets, fitness classes, and a climbing wall to name a few; build a year-round concession for food sales, skate rentals and games to borrow (bocce, badminton and board games).

PATHWAYS: A fun crossroads of bike paths, meandering walkways, short cuts and secret passages leading from and to the river bikepath and neighbouring communities, and linking all the public spaces in the Cultural District.



South Bank book sale

A HOT SPOT OF CREATIVITY AND EXPERIMENTATION

IMAGINE THIS PLACE IN 2012....

APRIL 3RD: FIRST THURSDAY

Sample the treasures to be found in the Olympic Plaza Cultural District on First Thursdays – theatre, music, art, food, wine, talks, tours, street performers and dance at over 40 locations. Today's tour: Learn how to plant a green wall at the Sky Garden, play the fire organ outside the creatively updated EPCOR CENTRE for the Performing Arts, mosey through the new Candy Factory Arts Bazaar and ever-popular Art Central, then hop on the C-Train to see the stunning Art in Motion corridor. From there it's a tough choice between a cooking class at the Culinary Arts School, half-price theatre tickets from Last Minute Tix, the awards night for Calgarians' Bright Ideas at the Centres for Dialogue, or Circus School under the Little Top. You'll still have time to catch the end of the opening at the temporary Contemporary Art Gallery and watch the newest light show on the Tower from the gallery's top floor at 10. The bookstores and cafes are buzzing till midnight, and there's live music and dancing in the clubs till the wee small hours. It's impossible to do it all, but you'll have fun trying!



2007/2008: GETTING STARTED

CALGARY'S SIGNATURE CULTURAL CLUSTER: Work with Calgary Arts Development to identify new arts & cultural spaces, big and small, that should be added to the OPCD cluster of cultural amenities, such as a purpose-built dance theatre, arts & retail live/work/sell complexes and a cinematheque.

FUN FUND: Establish an endowment fund with a local foundation and/or the City of Calgary to support new and existing free programming in the district's public realm.



WHAT'S ON?: Experiment with new ways to announce what's happening in the district, such as marquees, digital signboards, big screens, building size banners, projections on buildings and a same-day discount tickets booth.

PLANNING AND ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES

Our cultural district will be constructed out of a million unique ideas. Some will be as big as Western Canada's biggest skyscraper, others as small as the shack that sells 99 flavours of flapjack 24 hours a day. —Calgary Herald's Swerve writer Chris Koentges

In addition to the 12 “Getting Started” projects on the previous pages, here are our 4 current organizational and planning priorities. As new ideas are brought forward by Cultural District neighbours, community partners and the public, our priorities may well change. The Idea Bank contains hundreds of city-building ideas from Calgarians.

PUBLIC REVITALIZATION ZONE (PRZ)

PUBLIC REVITALIZATION ZONE (PRZ): Develop a new not-for-profit corporation – the Cultural District Public Revitalization Zone - for the maintenance, governance, promotion and programming of the Cultural District and its public realm. The PRZ will implement the District Strategy and co-manage the district with a focus on public needs and values.

OPCD ANIMATEUR

Hire an Executive Producer to experiment with programming and animation strategies for the district, curating the neighbourhood itself like a festival, a jam, a work of art.



INCENTIVES

Establish density bonusing incentives specific to the Cultural District – (1) affordable space (“incubator” studio and rehearsal space for artists, performance or exhibition spaces, spaces for start-up independent shops or creative industries), (2) cultural facilities identified as priorities through Calgary Arts Development, (3) public art, and (4) the Fun Fund.

R&R

Develop a Retail and Residential Plan and zoning review to address the balance of uses in the district. First priorities are traditional and non-traditional retail development on 7th Avenue and mixed-use residential development North of 6th Avenue.

AND IN CASE YOU'RE WONDERING ABOUT THE EVERYDAY ISSUES

CRIME, SAFETY AND DISORDER

1. Initiate Community Support Officer (CSO) patrols and a staging point in an OPCD office that can be shared with the Calgary Police Service, Transit Police Service and uniformed park maintenance staff.
2. Employ second generation CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) practices in the design of all new buildings, parking facilities and public spaces.
3. Install imaginative lighting in places such as the NW corner of Olympic Plaza identified as feeling unsafe at night through annual safety audits.
4. Consider options for animation and imaginative safety elements at the C-Train platforms.
5. Remember Jane Jacobs' "eyes on the street" and ensure that there are active uses and frequent points of entry at ground level of all buildings.
6. Move telephone booths to highly visible, well-trafficked locations.
7. Work with Calgary Police Service and the Centre City Social Action Plan to reduce or eradicate overt drug dealing and use. Advocate for a Calgary drug court. Host annual CPTED II Safety Audit and planning sessions focusing on drug dealing in the Plaza

PARKING, ACCESSIBILITY AND LEGIBILITY

8. Provide increased, highly visible and affordable short-term parking, including street parking during non-peak periods. Provide legible parking signage and way-finding for drivers and cyclists; imaginative way-finding signage and maps for pedestrians.

9. Improve links to neighbouring residential areas, including upgrades to the CP underpasses as part of the Public Art program for the district, and form a review committee to solve the problem of connections between East Village and the OPCD.
10. Convert streets to two way wherever possible, starting with 9th Ave between 3 St SE and 1 St SW.
11. Provide bicycle access (particularly on Stephen Avenue), bicycle racks, bike lanes and if possible, a dedicated bike storage building with showers and lockers.

REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE

12. Repair broken pavement or replace it with eco-friendly paving materials using artists' designs.
13. Ensure rapid response to graffiti and vandalism.
14. Extend Downtown Calgary's maintenance of Stephen Avenue to Macleod Trail.
15. Support the City's Clean to the Core team and work with neighbours to keep the neighbourhood and transit corridor exceptionally well maintained.
16. Fill empty windows with art or information about what's on in the district.
17. Increase the frequency of cleaning out tree wells and other infrastructure where debris gets trapped.

SUSTAINABILITY

18. Strive for a balanced mix of uses, particularly at street level (e.g: no single use corridors such as the transit corridor, more retail and residential throughout the district and nearby).
19. Become a demonstration site for innovations in sustainable development, alternative energy and other best practices.

KEY INGREDIENTS

VITAL TO THE CHARACTER OF THE CULTURAL DISTRICT



World Cup street party in Montreal

VISUAL APPEAL

Art in the public realm – light art (works by artists and designers whose medium is light), live art, site-specific public art, ingenious stages (e.g. loading docks, sidewalk performance spots), art “happenings”, street performers, art in every nook and cranny

Beautiful tensile structures and tents (see plans for Teatro and Le Germain Hotel)

Clustering of arts & cultural places and activities in and around Calgary’s signature public space

Visible diversity

Calgary’s finest architecture, enriching both the street *and* the skyline

An imaginative infusion of colour, inside and out

Water features such as fountains, streams, waterfalls and reflecting pools

Artistic urban landscaping and street furniture

STREETSCAPE VITALITY

Browsability – surprises and discoveries in every block

Welcoming pedestrian-scale streetscapes with lots to do and frequent enticing entryways

Comfort and safety night and day

Interactive experiments in urban animation and vitality

Temporary uses for empty street-level spaces to reinforce the character of the district

Lively, fun and informative C-Train platforms and trains

Creative linkages between the district’s public spaces

Safe, fun walking and cycle routes into other parts of the city

A beautiful, user-friendly, pedestrian-oriented wayfinding system and other public signage using an artist-inspired universal language system and 3D signage whenever possible

Fewer NO, more YES messages

Minimized dependency on +15s, to ensure street-level vitality, and imaginative repurposing or removal of existing +15s.



Airport signage in Amsterdam displaying travel time to various departure gates

RETAIL

A retail corridor along 7th Avenue and independent shops wherever possible

Tapas – small, portable infill structures for interesting enterprises that need affordable space

Street vendors

Markets of many kinds

Experimental use of underutilized or overlooked space for art, retail, residential or other unexpected uses

FESTIVITY

Festivity and celebration, both pre-planned & spontaneous: parades, rallies, festivals

Fire and fireworks

THINGS TO DO

Intensive programming, inside and out, focusing on arts, leisure and multiculturalism, with year-round free public programming in the public realm

Public dialogue and debate, public protest and civic engagement

What's-on information on marquees, in poster kiosks, building-size posters and banners, digital signboards, LED screens

Public skating

Time out for slow food, reading, relaxing, browsing, sun worshipping, people watching...



Dragon dance in Calgary

SLOW FOOD, STREET FOOD, GREAT FOOD

Great food, inside and out, in all price ranges, with an increased focus on ethnic and street food

Outdoor patios and other interesting places to eat al fresco

NEW THINKING

Relaxed on-street parking rules and convenient, affordable, short-term parking

Interactive showcasing of experiments in green development, such as green roofs and walls, energy-efficient lighting, new building practices

Ongoing, highly visible, experiments in urban vitality

A GRAND PLAZA IN DETAIL

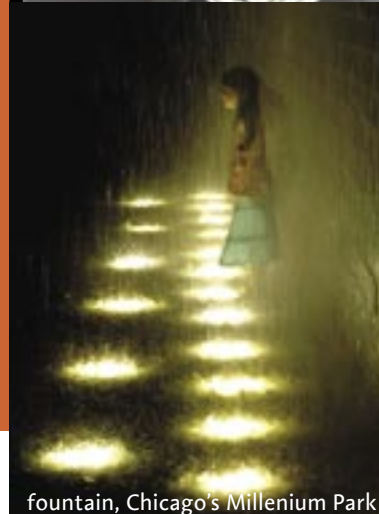
One proposed project integrates many of the District Strategy's 2007-2008 priorities and begins to address the biggest issue facing our downtown.

While Calgary's business core is booming and residential development is surging in the West end and the Beltline, our downtown struggles to maintain its vibrancy outside business hours.

It is time to rethink Calgary's urban core, starting at its hub, Olympic Plaza. The City of Calgary intends to initiate a design/build plan for Olympic Plaza when this District Strategy is released. We propose that the scope of the project be expanded beyond Olympic Plaza alone, to incorporate all nearby public space, and that we target February 2010 for first phase completion – when the eyes of the world will once again be on Olympic Plaza as a live feed site for the Vancouver Olympics. What will have changed in the 22 years since Calgary's 1988 Olympics?

DESCRIPTION

Calgary's signature public place, the Grand Plaza is envisioned as a cluster of beautiful plazas, big and small, up and down, with imaginative links between them. Designed for intensive activity and visual impact, the plazas are surrounded and intersected by Calgary's major arts and cultural institutions and mixed-use amenities that have broad public appeal. Imitating the rolling foothills as it follows through the planes of existing and new infrastructure, the Grand Plaza offers views of the city and mountains. It is a uniquely "Calgary" place.



fountain, Chicago's Millenium Park

To achieve its potential to drive economic development in the district and to shift the world's perception of Calgary, we propose that:

- the design area encompass all existing public spaces within close proximity of Olympic Plaza, including the transit corridor, and that any new public space (such as at the library, the Urban Campus or the EPCOR CENTRE for the Performing Arts) be integrated into the overall functionality and design;
- all new development on the edges of this cluster of plazas or nearby be required by the City to have active public uses at grade in keeping with the character of the Cultural District and the Grand Plaza,
- existing buildings be offered incentives to achieve more active uses at grade and on the second level;
- demonstration sites for Centre City Plan or imagineCALGARY tactics such as sky gardens, green roofs and energy conservation be incorporated;
- that the design of all elements be of a high international quality, as with Chicago's Millennium Park;
- the design team be chosen through a competition.



Musée du Quai Branly, Paris

Other District Strategy priorities to be incorporated in the design:

- Site-specific "light art" (art by artists who work in the medium of light) in every key space;
- Clusters of "tapas" and tents, unusual spaces for unusual uses
- Infrastructure to accommodate markets, festivals and events of all sizes
- Infrastructure to accommodate street vendors and performers as part of the daily life of the district;
- Dramatic interfaces with 7th Avenue and the C-train line;
- Enhancement and expansion of Calgary's signature cluster of cultural sites;
- Walking and bike paths linked to the river bikepath system and neighbouring communities;
- Intensified activity around and through the plazas, achieved by "filling the gaps".

The Cultural District looks forward to playing a key role in the design, development, management and programming of the Grand Plaza, in collaboration with The City and other stakeholders.

IMPLEMENTATION

The next step cannot & should not be business as usual.

—Charles Landry

Managing for change is very different from managing the day to day activities of a place, and both are required here. Managing for change often means challenging existing systems and rules. If the vision for this district is to be paramount, existing management and operating systems must bend to the greater purpose of making the cultural district one of Calgary's best-loved and most beautiful places.

There are two levels of management to address: coordinating the various private and public activities within the District and managing its major public spaces. The proposed new management model is only generally described, as it is clear that the details must be determined through discussions among the affected parties.

It is recommended that the City of Calgary, Downtown Calgary, and the OPCD become shareholders in a non-profit corporation to be known as the Cultural District Public Revitalization Zone (PRZ), with a mission to:

- Promote and improve the Cultural District with a focus on public values and needs;
- Coordinate the implementation of the Cultural District Strategy;
- Provide annual programming grants from the Cultural District Fun Fund; and
- Support the Cultural District Animateur (Executive Producer) and other programming initiatives

The transformation of the Cultural District is a long term project requiring will and perseverance, but a few key short term wins will build momentum and presage what's to come. In short order, we propose to:

- Introduce a variety of Meet Me @ OP* activities to bring people together in the Plaza;
- Develop a Public Revitalization Zone business model with our partners;
- Hire consultants to develop a concept plan for the signature "light art" collection and initiate a pilot project;
- Work with other stakeholders on a fast-action plan to begin to reclaim 7th Ave as a retail high street; and
- Get started with the City and other stakeholders on the expanded Olympic Plaza design/build plan (the Grand Plaza).

Over the next 2 years we will get started on all 16 priority projects, and as opportunities arise, we'll bring forward other projects from the Idea Bank for implementation.

ALIGNMENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

CALGARY CENTRE CITY PLAN (2007)

The Cultural District Strategy has been developed as a pilot project for detailed community-led local planning in collaboration with the Calgary Centre City Plan (CCCP). The Cultural District is seen as a place to begin to experiment with CCCP concepts.

The Cultural District plan is aligned with the key themes and ideas of the CCCP. As an “Experimental Zone” we applaud the strong stand on the importance of creativity and risk-taking, the call to action for design excellence, and the focus on great streets, vitality and a premier urban living environment. We welcome the formal recognition of entertainment and cultural districts.

The CCCP aims to “reinforce and enhance the role that the Olympic Plaza Cultural District contributes to the civic and cultural vitality of the Downtown and to provide flexibility in development guidelines to allow the OPCD to grow and evolve into a unique and exciting place.” It is our intention to maintain a strong working relationship with City of Calgary Land Use and Planning and other related City of Calgary business units, particularly those involved directly with the Centre City Family of Plans, including the Social Action, Public Art and Open Space Management Plans.

CENTRE CITY OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT PLAN (2006)

The Centre City Open Space Management Plan makes two key recommendations that affect the Cultural District Strategy: (1) a design-build plan for Olympic Plaza and (2) partnering with the existing Cultural District organization as the Citizen Stakeholder Committee for Olympic Plaza and other public spaces in the district. We appreciate Parks’ intention to incorporate the findings and recommendations of the OPCD District Strategy into the new Olympic Plaza plan and look forward to participating in the proposed Centre City Parks Alliance.

IMAGINECALGARY

The Olympic Plaza Cultural District will strive to be a demonstration site for implementation of the vision, goals and targets of the Long Range Urban Sustainability Plan for Calgary developed by imagineCALGARY. The Cultural District Renaissance Society has signed the imagineCALGARY Scroll of Partners and Friends.

CLEAN TO THE CORE

The Cultural District applauds the Mayor’s leadership and the City’s interdepartmental initiatives to make a more attractive and comfortable downtown. We are committed to partnering in these efforts.

CALGARY DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION

As “the catalyst for downtown vitality”, Downtown Calgary has aided the preparation of this District Strategy with generous financial and staff support. The OPCD in turn supports the CDA’s ambitions: “In partnership with others, the CDA will enhance Downtown’s vitality by increasing the diversity and density of attractions, activities, housing and employment opportunities.”

CALGARY ARTS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY: Reclaiming Calgary’s Cultural Identity: Arts Spaces Strategy and Capital Plan (2007)

The Arts Spaces Strategy recommends investment in two key areas of development, based on findings from 18 months of research and community consultation. One of them is key to the success of the OPCD: “forming a “cultural cluster” in the centre city region and surrounding neighborhoods through the development of anchor facilities with iconic architecture as well as incubator spaces to fuel the work of young and emerging artists.”

THE RIVERS

As the East half of the Cultural District falls within the boundaries of The Rivers District, we will establish a working relationship with the Calgary Municipal Lands Corporation.

That's the proposition in a nutshell.
Now it's up to all of us to think big
and act boldly – together.

There is no end to the ideas that
could be applied to achieving this
vision. We will continue to publish
updates every few months.

To submit YOUR ideas, write to
contact@culturaldistrict.ca.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Charles Landry (UK) is the acclaimed author of *The Creative City* (2000), *The Art of City-Making* (2006) and other writing of importance to city builders. For further information visit www.comedia.org.uk.
- 2 Excerpt from Olympic Plaza Cultural District Vision (2001)
- 3 Charles Landry, *The Art of City-Making* (2006)
- 4 This vision was condensed from years of public input, ranging from the Brainstorm charette in 1999 to the Landry Sessions in 2006.
- 5 The Idea Bank is a growing repository of ideas accumulated from public processes since 1999, organized into the 4 Keys