**Greater Downtown Plan**

**January 20 Information Session Q&A**

**General Project**

1. **Is The Future of Stephen Avenue not included as a placemaking investment or is there a different category for the master plan?**

The Future of Stephen Avenue is included as a placemaking investment in the Greater Downtown Plan. To learn more about The City’s Future of Stephen Avenue project, please visit [Calgary.ca/stephenavenue](https://www.calgary.ca/stephenavenue).

1. **How will the arts focus on diversity and inclusiveness? How will we invest in grassroots orgs that can make downtown so much more vibrant? I.e. places like Arts Common are not accessible (monetary means and cultural relavance) to many Calgarians.**

These conversations have started with our arts partners to understand and find ways to become more inclusive of the community. We want to find ways to make better use of our venues to be more open to all members of community. We’re still early on in this process due to the pandemic. Please connect with the project team if you have any ideas because we continue to look to build partnerships related to diversity and inclusiveness.

1. **Are there frameworks in place that will allow and pursue the inclusion of all of Calgary’s BIPOC communties to be represented in downtown Calgary and in public space?**

We are looking at ways to better engage our diverse populations to prioritize inclusion in our downtown, something we haven’t done a great job of in the past. Our commitment is to take this as one of our core principles when we develop any project or initiatives, including the Greater Downtown Plan and projects like [Tomorrow’s Chinatown](https://engage.calgary.ca/tomorrows-chinatown).

1. **Will there be consideration for the growing demand to accomodate festival/event beer gardens/recreational cannabis consumption?**

One of the Greater Downtown Plan strategic moves includes the consideration of different uses within park spaces. We want to be more flexible in how The City and Calgarians utilize park spaces.

1. **Have any external stakeholders/groups been involved in this Greater Downtown Plan without a business/profit interest in the downtown core? Such as community-level/non-profit.**

Yes, over the past two years the project team has engaged with community associations, the downtown business improvement areas, arts and culture organizations, and social organizations. Feedback and ideas from the these groups has been incorporated into the Greater Downtown Plan.

1. **How have children and seniors been considered in the downtown strategy especially as we consider adding a residential focus?**

The Greater Downtown Plan places an emphasis on a 5A Network (Always Available for All Ages and Abilities) for cycling and wheeling that is accessible and accommodates all. We are working to create better separated spaces for the various movement modes and improve crossings at key intersections. Additionally a variety of downtown amenities are key to attract all kinds of people and are considered in the Plan.

1. **That parks strategy did not sound like investment. It sounded like a move to offload costs instead of build. To reinvigorate downtown we need to build and invest especially in park space. Are there opportunities to critique these plans?**

Parks recognizes the need to invest in downtown park spaces. Significant investment has been made on downtown parks in the past 10 years and the intention is that the investment in the area will continue moving forward, both on developing new park spaces and upgrading existing ones. The proposal to investigate alternative methods of parks management and operational funding strategies is intended to supplement City investment to ensure Greater Downtown parks become even more vibrant and can have an even higher standard of maintenance than they are currently receiving.

1. **All great ideas and aspirations - but are these really bold and inspirational and future focused? Maybe for Calgary they are, but these are ideas that all cities are implementing. What is unique, bold and visionary that distinguishes Calgary? Maybe this is the the sensible and right vision but would love to see some crazy ideas.**

We shared our strategic moves today to understand if they go far enough and if they are bold enough. We intend the Greater Downtown Plan to be a living and evolving document that gets updated regularly. Ongoing conversations with Calgarians, through new projects in Greater Downtown, will influence actions to keep them inspirational and future-focused. Please stay tuned for information on reviewing the Plan prior to it being presented to the City’s Planning and Urban Development Committee.

1. **Will you be doing any stakeholder specific consultations? Specifically curious about post-secondary students?**

There will be a chance to review the Plan prior to it being presented to The City’s Planning and Urban Development Committee. Please visit [Calgary.ca/greaterdowntownplan](https://www.calgary.ca/greaterdowntownplan) to learn more about the project schedule and when the draft plan will be available for review.

1. **Seems that all focus has been on east Downtown, with our largest core area, West Beltline, with little to no placemaking and or activation. How can we shift to creating a full downtown core not simply the east side?**

A lot of investment has gone into the east end of downtown because of the use of the Community Revitalization Levy and the creation of Calgary Municipal Land Corporation as an implementation organization. Because of this existing investment, it is important to build off that work by making better connections to the Rivers District from the rest of Greater Downtown. This can be done by improving connections along the Bow and Elbow rivers, 17 Avenue S. connecting to Stampede Trail and Stephen Avenue. Also, over the next decade, this plan will focus investment in the Downtown Core and Downtown West with improved connections to the Beltline.

1. **How about live/work places? Hubs for folks who could work and live in the same place? Like artists?**

Many of the land use districts in downtown allow live work units. This allows a business to be operated from a residential unit. The [Centre City Enterprise Area](https://www.calgary.ca/pda/pd/mybusiness/centre-city-enterprise-area.html) may allow a change of use to allow more live work opportunities.

1. **How does the City actually promote development consistent with the plan? We are trying to promote residential development in our community but observe that high land values drive the development industry to favour waiting for eventual high density office development?**

At December 14, 2020 Combined Meeting of Council a Notice of Motion for Administration to investigate providing incentives to residential development in the Downtown Core and report back to Council no later than the end of April 2021 was tabled. Findings from this work should incentivize residential development.

1. **Can you talk about the types of innovation and living lab activations you are envisioning for this plan? Will there be a program/funding for this as there is for the future of Stephen Avenue?**

The City owns many assets across our community. As a Living Lab, the City aims to offer City infrastructure for companies, researchers and individuals to test and try ideas and products in a real-life environment. The Plan is flexible enough to support ideas from companies, researchers and individuals.

1. **Can the city do more for youth/young adult culture? Many vibrant cities centres spend a ton of effort on the night economy (venues, festivals, bars, theatre) to really cater to the young adult/student crowd under 25 years old. How are we looking to support that nightlife component that doesn't typically make it to "safe" plans written by well-meaning - but older - citizens and planners?**

When you plan, design and build for all citizens, this supports and attracts businesses that cater to people of all ages. Youths and young adults and their place downtown are being considered during the development of this plan. The Plan and the Downtown Strategy are also being written and set-up to enable the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of the younger demographic by supporting the development and implementation of initiatives that attract young people.

1. **As an aspiring builder, dreamer, does the city have any plans to ease the height and river shadowing restrictions, to go super tall, so lower cost units can be built, such as dorm style lower and larger units higher up? One upside would be public space higher up. Such as a park, campground.**

As a winter city, prioritizing sunlight is a key principle for our downtown to make it a liveable place, where people want to spend time. Additionally, sunlight is important for the enjoyment and ecological health of our rivers. However, through individual applications, proposals for unique development that may deliver on other plan objectives can be considered through our development application review process.

1. **We so need to educate our youths of all cultures, citizen or immigrant and our growing city and what it offers. How is the COC looking at implementating and ensuring this is integrated into our youth school system and also into our international focus for students?**

This plan may not direct specific programming, but it is flexible enough to support a range of programs. Principles outlined in the Plan enable decion-making and action in this regard.

**General Downtown**

* 1. **It's hard to spend much time downtown when there are so few public washrooms. Can we add more?**

Public washrooms are a priority for the [Downtown Strategy](https://www.calgary.ca/downtown) team and our equity approach to how we deal with public spaces. We’re looking at solutions to this issue over the next few years.

* 1. **What about the crime in the downtown and CPS presence in the inner core? What about the homeless and how the community responds to their needs? They are a part of our inner community!**

The foundational issue we need to deal with in our downtown is safety. It requires vigilance because safety and security issues are constantly changing. The City is working with its downtown partners to pilot new ways to measure and analyze how safety and security issues occur and then provide responses through our partnerships. An example is The City’s partnership with the Calgary Downtown Association to create the [Downtown Ambassador program](https://downtowncalgary.com/news/downtown-ambassador-program/).

* 1. **I am so concerned about our property taxes. How is this going to change? if commercial property taxes are not available? are residential taxes going to get the hit of the reduced revenue for the City of Calgary?**

When you have a weak downtown the rest of the city suffers. Downtown is the economic driver and it covers the cost of a lot of City services. The impact of downtown vacancy has impacted how and how much The City collects in taxes. We can ameliorate the issue if we strengthen the downtown core by attracting more businesses and residential investments downtown.

* 1. **What is the timeline plan for the new events centre in Victoria Park? (phases, expected completion date)**

Event Centre construction is set to begin in late 2021 with completion anticipated in 2024.

**For more information, visit** [**www.calgarymlc.ca**](http://www.calgarymlc.ca)

* 1. **Can Stephen Avenue become an open air beer hall like some European cities?**

This is something The City is looking into as part of our [Future of Stephen Avenue project](https://www.calgary.ca/stephenavenue). The City will need to work with the Government of Alberta, who regulate Alberta’s liquor laws.

* 1. **Can downtown vacancy be addressed by allowing the conversion of unused office space to classrooms for students?**

Yes – there have been post-secondary institutions, school boards and charter schools exploring this opportunity. The City is continuing to have these discussions, as they are a significant attractor of residential development.

* 1. **Are there any further flood mitigation strategies and planning to prevent a repeat of the 2013 June floods? If so, what are some of those plans and strategies?**

Protecting Calgarians from floods is a top priority for our city, and we're doing so while enhancing the Eau Claire area at the same time. We're implementing flood mitigation measures from [Calgary's Flood Resilience Plan](https://www.calgary.ca/uep/water/flood-info/mitigation-and-resilience/flood-projects.html) approved by Council in 2017.  These include flood barriers and stormwater improvements to ensure Calgary is protected against a 2013-level flood on the Bow and Elbow Rivers. The Downtown Flood Barrier will extend from The Peace Bridge to Reconciliation Bridge and lower the risks of flooding in the downtown, Chinatown, East Village and Eau Claire communities.

The City will continue working on building the downtown flood barrier and riverfront promenade in Eau Claire, Chinatown and East Village. Work resumes this year and will continue to 2023. Please visit [calgary.ca/eauclaire](http://calgary.ca/eauclaire) to learn more about the project and for updated construction information.

* 1. **How are we going to expand the lexicon of what DT means to someone who lives in Seaton or Tuskany = currently they think Stephan ave is "Downtown" - So how do we integrate place like Vic Park into the Greater Big D downtown?**

This will come through better communications and marketing of the Greater Downtown by both The City and its partners. The Downtown Strategy team is committed to trying to change public perception of our downtown.

* 1. **What are the typical financing tools used to fund projects in the downtown area?**

The City uses many different financing tools to fund projects in the downtown. The tools range from development levies and density bonus contributions (money paid be developers in exchange for additional density) to money set aside in operating and capital budgets specifically for downtown programs and infrastructure. This funding is often used in combination with funding from other Provincial and Federal funding sources. Having a clear plan and rationale for specific projects is the foundation for developing the City’s budget and for making applications for grants through other levels of government.

* 1. **Where will you get the money to bring downtown back? Could the City sell off some of its industrial or other properties?**

The City is considering many ways to fund investments in downtown projects and programs. The first step is clearly understanding the priorities and outcomes that we are driving toward. This then leads to identifying the best sources of funding for those types of projects. Administration will be requesting that Council invest in implementing the Greater Downtown Plan and the plan includes advocating to other levels of government to contribute. Specifically where that money comes from is part of the City’s regular budget preparation process.

* 1. **Being bold: Can we take a proportion of taxes generated from the downtown area and specifically dedicating a set percentage every year (that automatically resets without Council) to fund downtown initiatives? It would likely bump up taxes elsewhere in the city, hence would take some courage to do.**

In November 2018, City Council identified the need for a Financial Task Force. The project team will flag this with them as it might be an idea for them to investigate.

* 1. **With the city's revenue not as much as before, have there been shifts towards new financing methods?**

In November 2018, City Council identified the need for a Financial Task Force after changes in the economy that started in 2015 and that have resulted in a prolonged decline in demand for downtown office space and a growing supply of inventory that negatively impacted property valuations. This is a problem The City continues to actively manage.

* 1. **Given the future of travel is driven by tourism rather than business travel can we think of retrofitting office spaces to hotels? Airbnb type accommodations etc. Where these residences offer daily transportation to Banff and Canmore or the ski hills for example. Calgary could easily become the base for anyone that wants to come visit the Rockies.**

The City is supportive of conversion of office space to other uses, whether it is residential, hotel, or other uses that can support a revitalized downtown.

* 1. **Chinatown has not changed since 1976. I know plans are in place to make it better, please note its been 43 since we talked about making it better. Please dont take 43 years to make it happen.**

The City is currently in the middle of a two-plan project called [Tomorrow's Chinatown](https://engage.calgary.ca/tomorrows-chinatown), which will create a new cultural plan and a new local area plan for Chinatown. The project is anticipated to be completed by early 2022.

**Transportation**

1. **Can the Calgary Tower be turned into a train station and transit hub with the abandoned via rail station? Opening up the region to easy car free access and revitalization similar to Denver Union or Toronto Union station can be extremely beneficial to property. Rail transit and development go hand in hand, you've already brought up the green line.**

Terminals for potential high-speed and regular rail, along with connections to LRT systems have been considered in planning for downtown, including the Victoria Park area. That is an idea that has been part of a more long-term, grander vision for rail that could serve the downtown and Calgary as a whole.

1. **Could the +15s turn into social hubs with basic necessities needed? Exchange corners, convenience shops, etc.?**

Yes – once we are in a position where the key connections in the +15 network are completed there is a potential and opportunities for amenities to be added and for the +15’s to come back to life and contribute to the downtown community.

1. **Can laneways be more utilized for art installations (legalized graffiti), shops and bars. Australian cities like Melbourne and its Hosier Lane have turned unappealing alleys into trendy and welcoming areas that attract tourist and business.**

Art installations such as murals are great ways that the city has seen and funded thoughout the downtown and could include that into our laneways. There would be opportunity to exploring making the unappealing alleys more active as suggested. That would require The City to look at safety codes to start but a great idea to look into.

1. **New York has made outdoor dinner possible by closing roads and adding outdoor tents. Do we have plans like that so restaurants can open? My examples points to New York K-town.**

The short answer is yes. Pop-up patios were an opportunity we took during the pandemic and we’ve learned a lot from them. We’ve started to create tools to further this idea, including the opportunity to quickly close streets to help businesses set up patios, have street festivals and community events. The Greater Downtown Plan allows for this to occur.

Additionally, East Village allows the closing of the following streets to support pedestrians, festivals and other events:

* Riverfront Avenue
* Riverfront Lane
* 8 Avenue
* 5 Street
* 6 Street

1. **Green network to get from Prince's Island to Core is great, but also need public transit. Public transit mostly goes East-West, hard to get North-South.**

The Greater Downtown Plan is exploring options for better north/south transit connections. Key corridors for transit are identified in the plan, with particular focus on Centre Street and connections to future Green Line stations.

1. **So I view the biggest hazard in downtown the CTrain system with multitude of accidents and the railroad with all sort of railed fuels that go right through the middle of this city. Any ideas on how to remove these hazards?**

The CTrain system is a critical component of public mobility in the Greater Downtown, and the speed of the trains is limited in the core, allowing for immediate stopping if necessary. The City is working on a pilot project to improve safety at downtown crossings. The first location to be evaluated will be 7 Avenue S.E. at Macleod Trail, and the first phase of this project will include enhanced signage and pavement markings. A subway on 8 Avenue is identified in the long-range RouteAhead transit vision, as a way to move the Red Line underground, though this remains un-funded for the foreseeable future.

1. **Can Route 3 use 4th Street SW southbound as a bus only lane through the core to speed it up & use excess roadway on 4th Street in the core?**

As part of moving this plan forward, we will continue to explore options on how the road right of way/lanes are being used and how to make the best use of the existing lanes to efficiently and effectively move people in and through downtown.

1. **Most metro cities, like Las Vegas has a bus that loops to all attractions that visitors or locals can take witout taking a vehicle. Is there a reason why we dont offer that?**

This is a great suggestion that we will explore further. Historically, we have moved people into and out of downtown, but to promote a vibrant downtown where people stay and recreate, we need to be thinking about just these types of movements.

1. **Is the plan to make all the avenues one ways?**

There is no such plan at this time. That type of move would require some network analysis to better understand the impacts on all modes of transportation.

1. **What is being done to improve active and pedestrian transportation? The downtown was excluded from the speed limit study to reduce speed limits. You can't talk about making streets more pedestrian friendly while still continuing to prioritize automobiles.**

This plan supports the [Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP)](https://www.calgary.ca/transportation/tp/planning/calgary-transportation-plan/calgary-transportation-plan-ctp.html) in making pedestrians and cyclists a bigger priority in downtown, which will require building better spaces to accomodate these user groups. Emphasis is being placed on improved sidewalk space, separated bicycle space, and improved crossings at intersections.

1. **How can we create vital streets when the +15 network removes people from street level?**

The +15 network allows for an active population to move around downtown without exposure to the elements. By better connecting the network to amenities and businesses, we can succeed in creating a second level of vibrancy in the downtown core. The connections at that level will be less visible and potentially more community-based than those at street-level, but it is definitely a balance we will need to be thinking of as we move forward.

1. **Sidewalks in city centre are often too narrow, in poor quality and with too many slopes/ramps. What can we do to widen them and make them consistent for whole streets/districts so pedestrians can pass each other and snow clearing is more consistent?**

This plan supports the [Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP)](https://www.calgary.ca/transportation/tp/planning/calgary-transportation-plan/calgary-transportation-plan-ctp.html) in making pedestrians and cyclists a bigger priority in downtown, which will require building better spaces to accomodate these user groups. By better understanding the way we are currently using our road right of way, we can re-allocate existing space to create better corridors and connections, while also creating interesting and vibrant spaces for people to linger.

1. **How is the proposed/pending Green Line LRT plan going to positively and negatively affect the Greater Downtown Plan, if it continues to be executed?**

The Greater Downtown Plan accounts for the Green Line to be built and that it’s not just building a train line, but a community feature and enabler. It’s going to have a sense of place and will inspire businesses to locate in its proximity.

1. **Can you add a pedestrian only street like Stephen avenue that goes from Eau Claire area south to the shopping area on Stephen Avenue?**

While this may not be entirely possible, the plan calls for multiple new green corridor (i.e enhanced for pedestrians) connections between the Bow River Pathway and the 13 Avenue Greenway.

**Parks**

1. **What about more exercise activities at Princess Island? What about horticulatural acivities? Love the concerts.**

Exercise equipment is a trend in parks and has been discussed by The City. We are starting to implement these in new communities, but if we want to attract people to live downtown, this is something The City needs to consider installing in its downtown parks.

1. **What is the plan re Inglewood and Beltline pools? These serve greater downtown residents, but there does not seem to be a plan to ensure that these rec facilities will continue. If we want more people to live downtown then we need those amenities.**

Absolutely, great communities are built on opportunities to connect and get active. Through a Motion in late 2019, Council asked Administration to deliver a program of work related to these facilities, including: consulting with community members, exploring the market’s interest in operating (or proposing innovative uses for) these facilities, trying new hours, programs, and pricing in these facilities, and also exploring long-term, sustainable service alternatives and targeted investments in the Beltline, Inglewood, and Ramsay communities.

Through the summer and fall of 2020, The City sought to understand the social and recreational needs of Calgarians who live, work, and play in the Beltline, Inglewood and Ramsay communities. The City consulted with the community, released a Request for Information (RFI) to learn if there was third-party interest in operating (or proposing innovative uses for) either of the facilities, and conducted a Calgary-wide study of City and Partner-operated pools to determine service gaps and overlaps. We learned a lot. We learned what role the Beltline and Inglewood facilities in meeting social and recreational needs and we also learned about the limitations of these facilities. While these facilities have a role to play in how community members get active and make social connections, our consultation, RFI, and pools study learnings paint a picture of a broader mix of activities, programs and services desired by the community.

Right now, we’re narrowing what we’ve learned from the community into plans for social and recreational services and amenities that can be delivered in the short and long-term, including the long-term futures of these two facilities. Please stay tuned: we’ll summarize these plans in a report back to Council this May.

1. **Why do we not have public and community gardens downtown?**

Currently there are a few parks that have gardens in Greater Downtown, including Devonian Gardens and Beaulieu Gardens. There is also a community garden in East Village. The plan has policies to encourage a variety of uses on park spaces, which could include community gardens, and also encouraging partnerships where vacant lots could be used for open space purposes temporarily – a community garden would be a great use on these spaces.

1. **Also can you start bringing weekly farmers market to Eau Claire area? or the courthouse park? and add more seating for people to make a half day activity out of it?**

Parks works with a variety of festival and events in order to activate our park spaces but most events only occur for a short period of time, they are not ongoing as suggested. There are examples elsewhere in North America where alternative Parks management and operations models are used that would enable a more consistent/long term use of open space. In investigating alternative operations and management options this type of ongoing use that activates park spaces will be considered.

**Environment and Sustainability**

1. **Is Calgary ready to embrace the transition to renewable energy and technology? Chicken or egg?**

Yes Calgary is ready. We are proposing a net zero 2050 energy standard, deep energy retrofit program, creation of district energy strategy, and support for on-site renewables and low-carbon energy systems.

1. **Has the city considered putting a housing/population cap tied to what amount of water we can sustainably take from the Bow? Similar to Okotoks?**

We have not considered this at this point. We are aware there are limitations on the city’s water supply, but we have worked hard to ensure we put back the same amount of water that we take out of the Bow.

1. **Is there a specific year in mind to reach net zero emissions?**

The City is proposing a net zero 2050 energy standard for the Greater Downtown. We are currently investigating how we can reach this goal.

1. **Is it technically possible to retrofit buildings to achieve 80-100% reduction in GHG? Is Calgary actively measuring GHG emissions from buildings right now?**

Probably not for high-rise buildings, they would likely need off-site renewables to reach 100%. We are currently benchmarking energy consumption through the City of Calgary’s Commercial and Institutional Building Energy Benchmarking program.

1. **is the city contemplating regulations for futures constructions to be more environmentally friendly?**

The City recognizes climate change has implications for our city both now and in the future. We know Calgarians are concerned about climate change, and we’re committed to building a climate-resilient community. Builders and developers must submit a sustainable development inventory form when projects are at the conceptual stage. It is required for commercial building permits as part of the building permit application.