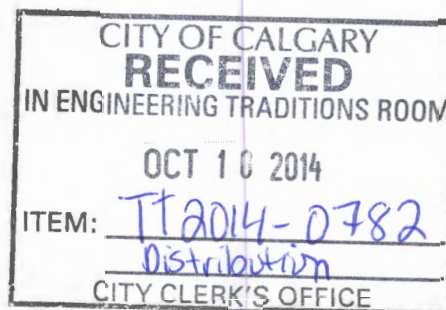


October 10, 2014



Response to Transportation and Transit TT2014-0782 Sidewalk Closures Update

The Calgary Downtown Association (CDA) would like to thank Administration for their commitment to improving the pedestrian experience in the downtown. In fact, we support this Transportation initiative, as we believe it to be one of the most important programs in play. Pedestrians are the top priority for the CDA, as nearly everyone coming into the downtown is a pedestrian at some point in their journey. We believe they are, and should be, the top of the City's Transportation triangle.

The CDA began asking for better construction site management in our comment letters for development permits back in 2007, and specifically asked that sidewalks and roadways be closed only when safety issues could not be mitigated, and then, only for the shortest periods of time possible. If people are not able to access businesses while construction sites are active, those businesses will suffer greatly, or fail completely. We were also one of the founding partners in the Boardworx project to beautify construction hoarding in 2008. Now that we are clearly in another construction boom in the downtown core, we are pleased that many construction companies and developers have taken up the challenge to keeping the pedestrian realm open and vital, while not compromising safety. The report refers to our Vitality Award program, and we were pleased to award two projects with Vitality Awards for their commitment to beautifying construction hoarding and keeping pedestrians moving. The CDA fully supports hoarding beautification and minimizing sidewalk closures being incorporated into Best Practices for the construction industry in Calgary.

The CDA believes there is still room for improvement. Some of the new, creative approaches to covering walkways to ensure safety have worked really well. The addition of lighting inside the enclosures is often done, and should be mandatory. If a sidewalk is closed, traffic signal resynchronization should be considered to improve the pedestrian flow. More thought must be given to accessibility. For people in wheelchairs, getting around the downtown is a challenge in the best of circumstances. When a sidewalk is closed, or remains open but utilizes stairs, is very narrow or has tight turns, it negatively impacts those in wheelchairs more significantly than anyone else. The removal of snow and debris is paramount to ensuring that when sidewalks remain open, but are modified in some fashion, that they are safe and easy to move through. Finally, temporary signage management needs to be greatly improved. Temporary sidewalk closures that are not properly marked are dangerous, and signage that is left in place after the sidewalk is reopened, is also of concern, as it teaches people to ignore signs.

M. A. (Maggie) Schofield
Executive Director

