

Applicant's Submission

June 26, 2019

To the City of Calgary and the Community of Ogden and partners.

Who we are:

I am Jane Wachowich, the Executive Director and founder of Youth Centres of Calgary – an organization focused on creating safe, nurturing after-school drop-in programs for Calgary's vulnerable youth (ages 11-15). Our model is to create a home-like environment for youth in Calgary's more vulnerable communities; we have initiated our efforts in Ogden, in the city's southeast.

While my background is in law and business turnarounds, throughout my entire career I have worked in the non-profit sector with at-risk youth. Many years ago I worked as a mentor in the inner city projects of Chicago. There, I learned that in order to truly thrive, kids need access to good food, an opportunity to learn, and they need to have a respectful, reliable relationship with at least one healthy adult.

In 2013, I sat on the board of a failing youth centre where I got a first-hand look at the significant challenges some youth in our city face. I came to understand that, as I witnessed in Chicago, many youth in our city don't have access to emotionally or physically nurturing environments; many don't even have access to safety. I took over the operations of that youth centre in 2014 and, with the help of numerous donors and qualified volunteers, went on to create a successful thriving centre where at-risk kids in the city's northeast came every day after school for homework help, sports, mentorship, music lessons, healthy snacks and food and games. Together we developed a simple and successful template that is easily replicated in other areas of Calgary. Replicating this model is our intention.

Youth Centres of Calgary aims to provide free programming every day after school, to that kids who need it the most so they thrive – so they can have fun, learn, and ultimately become capable, strong and resilient members of the community. Our model entails operating out of a converted home from 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm daily. Kids will come from school and will be within walking distance or a short bus ride from their homes. We started our efforts in Ogden as a result of a 2018 urban study that helped identify neighbourhoods that would benefit most from a youth centre. There is a clear need after school in Ogden that we intend to meet.

We have gathered together a Board of strong, experienced members and together we've incorporated Youth Centres of Calgary. We have bought a house (7400-23 St. SE), and found a tenant to oversee the home until we begin operations. Through our connections and past work, we've amassed a solid list of donors and excellent volunteers who are waiting for the opportunity to create this after-school opportunity for youth in Ogden. We have two families ready to provide sports equipment and turn the

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garage into a sport court. We have another group ready to create and furnish a music room in the basement. We're prepared to provide healthy food and excellent, qualified supervision five days a week.

Several months ago we began to engage the schools and the CPS as well as Ogden's community members and leadership to ensure we understand their needs and can address whatever concerns they might have. We're dedicated to ensuring that the execution of our project involves safety, enrichment and security for the kids and the community, that the supervision is constant. We consider it an imperative that the kids understand their responsibility to the community and that they behave respectfully towards each other, the neighbours and the Centre itself. We have been delighted by the enthusiasm we've encountered so far in response to our door knocking and December Open House. Because youth will access the Centre, there will be very limited parking needs. We have also been allowed to use the parking space at the Ogden United Church, across the street during hours of operation. We have met with MOCA intend to remain engaged with the community so that we can foster a relationship that will help us provide the best opportunities for community and the kids of Ogden.

This is an exciting and wonderful project and I look forward to opening the doors in the coming months.

I would be pleased to speak with you anytime should you have any questions in relation to this application.

Sincerely,

Jane Wachowich B.Com. LLB
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