

## Applicant Submission

February 5, 2020

On behalf of TELUS, O2 Planning + Design (O2) proposes to redesignate the parcel at 622 1<sup>st</sup> Street SW to enable the development of a unique digital art installation that will transform the 1<sup>st</sup> Street SW and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW streetscapes. The intent is to install an interactive digital display that is integrated into the first storey of the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue façade, with an additional screen setback within the concourse of the building at the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 1<sup>st</sup> Street SW. The displays will function predominantly as a public art piece while also providing community outreach and advertising services. Above all else, the displays form the centerpiece of TELUS' commitment to improving the public realm around the TELUS campus, creating a safe, engaging, and vibrant experience for the public.

Facilitating the proposed digital art installation requires redesignating from the current land use, DC 5D2014 Site 2 and 3, to a new DC that includes a newly defined **Digital Art Installation** use.

O2 will work collaboratively with administration to prepare a new DC district that includes a definition for the proposed use that balances the intent of the proposal with the requirements of the City.

7<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW is among Calgary's most important transit corridors as it transports the LRT through downtown. It is one of the most heavily travelled corridors in the City, used daily by tens of thousands of Calgarians. It also forms part of the first impression of downtown for many visitors to Calgary, as it is a component of the City's Civic District, anchored by the Municipal Building, Olympic Plaza, the new Central Library, and Stephen Avenue. However, with the LRT and all of its stations being at-grade, the public realm on 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW has historically suffered.

TELUS's 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Building contains key communications network equipment on the ground floor, which is securely protected and fronts directly onto the LRT platform. The rest of the façade at ground level is made up of lobby entrances and fire protected escape stairs. As a result, commercial uses cannot be provided within the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Building along the LRT platform edge. The result is a lack of activation along the LRT platform, leading to an unattractive and, at times, unsafe public realm. TELUS is committed to improving this and the proposed digital art installation represents a unique and fitting solution to improving safety, vibrancy, and interest along the LRT platform. With regards to the Len Werry Building, where TELUS have the ability to activate the façade, CRU spaces have been constructed as part of the ongoing ground level upgrades.

The proposed land use will allow TELUS to activate the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue LRT platform edge, creating a safe, unique, and attractive streetscape, connecting Brookfield Plaza in the west to TELUS Sky in the east. The proposal to integrate digital screens into the façade is part of a longer-term vision for the block which will revitalize both the public experience of the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue LRT station as well as vastly improve the quality of the surrounding buildings.

It is TELUS's intention to integrate the digital screens into the wider public art strategy on

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the site. TELUS have been keen to promote local Canadian artists by commissioning works inside the new and renovated buildings and they would also like to achieve this on the outside. By creating a dynamic façade which becomes an evolving art canvas, there is an opportunity to procure and promote a wide range of artists and site-specific public art. The proposal will revitalize the street frontage at the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue LRT Station and create an environment where the public can experience art on an urban scale. The large investment that TELUS has already made in the new TELUS Sky building, as well as the current ground level upgrades, shows the level of commitment TELUS is making to Downtown Calgary. As 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW is such a heavily used corridor by locals and tourists alike, the proposed improvements will undoubtedly reap large dividends for the City's and, in particular, downtown's image, and for 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue's economic and redevelopment prospects.

The proposed land use is well supported by existing policy and strategies. In 2016 the City of Calgary approved the Civic District Public Realm Strategy to establish an aspirational vision for the future of the area. Among the key strategies is the transformation of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW into a *Digital Corridor*. By re-purposing blank facades as interactive digital art surfaces, the strategy envisions a rich visual experience and interactive public realm for users of the corridor. The proposed Digital Art Installation, combined with the Douglas Coupland digital display on TELUS Sky, not only aligns with the City's vision of a digital corridor and establishes a cohesive digital art centerpiece in downtown Calgary, but also represents an enormous investment by TELUS into the Centre City's public realm.

The City is also in the process of updating the Centre City Plan which guides development in the downtown core. Among the emerging principles in the updated Plan are: prioritizing pedestrians; creating great streets, places, and buildings; enhancing the Centre City as the centre of culture, information exchange, and communication; and creating a lively, active, and animated environment.

The proposed digital art installation is consistent with the vision for the area as established in both the Civic District Public Realm Strategy and the emerging Centre City Plan update. It will continue to establish the Centre City as the heart of arts, culture, and entertainment in Calgary and a premier urban living environment, business centre, and tourist hub.

In summary, this application seeks a defined use of **Digital Art Installation**, which will enable:

- The transformation of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW into a one-of-a-kind digital corridor.
- A vastly improved public realm and, importantly, increased safety along the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue transit corridor.
- A vibrant, active streetscape connecting Brookfield Plaza to TELUS Sky

Throughout the application process, O2 will work collaboratively with officials at the City of Calgary, representatives from Councillor Farrell's office, and the Calgary Downtown Association (CDA). Feedback received will be incorporated into the application process.