

Background and Previous Council Direction

Background

Downtown Calgary is a critical component to Calgary's resilience in the face of economic, social and environmental shocks. Our Downtown needs to transform to position it for success in the new economy and in a post-pandemic world. When the Greater Downtown thrives, so does the rest of the city. Calgary's Greater Downtown is an economic driver and employment centre, historically generating 40 percent of non-residential tax revenue and 25 per cent of city-wide employment. However, an economic downturn has had a significant impact on Calgary's Greater Downtown with high unemployment and office vacancy rates. To address the issues in Calgary's Greater Downtown, there is a need for a comprehensive and coordinated strategy that can leverage the efforts of The City and its strategic partners to invest in infrastructure and stimulate the economy.

Calgary in the New Economy

The economic strategy for Calgary, identifies four pillars of focus – Talent, Innovation, Place, and Business Environment – that are interconnected and an integral part of a prosperous economy – with investment in place-making important for each focus area. This Plan aligns with Calgary's economic strategy by providing the roadmap for placemaking in Greater Downtown to attract business, talent and residents, which supports growth in innovation. People are at the centre of vibrancy and putting people at centre of strategic action and decision-making in Greater Downtown will allow Calgary's downtown to be a more vibrant and prosperous place.

Downtown Strategy

The Downtown Strategy brings together civic and community partners through coordinated and collaborative work with the commitment to making life better every day for citizens, customers, residents and businesses through a focus on four pillars: place, work, live and connect. The Plan is an initiative of the Downtown Strategy with a focus on these pillars. The Downtown Strategy will be the principle driver and coordinator of implementation over time and will help coordinate future budget requests (both capital and operating) and prioritize corporate action across all Service Lines. It will also ensure ongoing community dialogue and alignment with other Civic Partners and partnerships.

Previous Council Direction

In 2020 December, Council approved *Notice of Motion C2020-1439 Providing Incentive to Residential Development in the Downtown Core*. That with respect to Notice of Motion C2020-1439, the following be adopted, as amended: NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Council direct City Administration to explore the potential creation of regulatory and financial investment incentives for the development of new high-density residential complexes and the conversion of office buildings to various forms of residential occupancy or other uses within the downtown generally, but with a focus on the Downtown Core, to coordinate with the work of the Real Estate Working Group and Urban Initiatives Downtown Strategy team. AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that Administration report to the Priorities and Finance Committee with its findings no later than the end of 2021 April.

In 2019 April and July, Council approved the Downtown Strategy (C2019-0425 & PFC2019-0664) with a focus on vibrancy. To date, the Downtown Strategy has been prepared and delivered through existing resources. A great deal has been accomplished relative to organizational preparedness, stakeholder partnerships and delivering projects and programs within existing approved operating and capital budgets.

Arts Commons Transformation Project

On 2019, September 30 Council approved ACA2019-0948 Arts Commons Transformation Project Update, endorsed the project as represented in the Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC) Project Program Assessment Report (Revised Attachment 1); and approved a capital appropriation to Capital Budget Program 639-010 by releasing \$22.5 million (2020-2021) of previously allocated funding from the Council-Approved and Committed Cultural Municipal Sustainability Initiative (CPS2011-48 Arts Commons Expansion & Renovation) for detailed design of the Arts Commons Transformation project, and further works.

On 2019 March 4, Council approved VR2019-0013 Consideration of Long-Term Unfunded Projects (Verbal), and approved “the financial strategy for all four unfunded long term projects (BMO Centre expansion, Event Centre, one phase of Arts Common, and Multi-Sport Field House) on the terms and conditions discussed during the Closed Meeting.”

On 2019 February 25 Council approved C2019-0293 Arts Commons Advisory Committee Terms of Reference.

On 2019 January 28 Council received C2019-0135 Consideration of Unfunded Long Term Projects. The Arts Commons Transformation Project was identified as one of the four major unfunded projects for Council consideration.

On 2011 September 19 Council approved CPS2011-48 The Calgary Centre for Performing Arts – Seed Funding, where an MSI contribution of \$25 million towards the renovation of the Calgary Centre for Performing Arts was approved in principle, of which \$2.5 million was approved for release towards feasibility planning and design. In that report, Council also approved exploring the use of lots adjacent to Olympic Plaza for a new theatre.

On 2007 April 4, Council received for information CPS2007-20 the Calgary Arts Development Authority’s Cultural Spaces for the Arts Strategy and Capital Plan where research showed that Calgary lagged significantly behind other Canadian cities in performing arts seats per capita.