

# Update on Downtown Initiatives Underway

## Incentive to offset Plus 15 Fund

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Following the 2021 April 26 Council meeting, Administration created a working group to develop the terms of reference for the Plus 15 fund incentive program. The team included representatives from Downtown Strategy, Planning, Law, Roads and Finance. The following summarizes the key principles of the incentive:

- Program will be delivered on a 'first-come, first-serve' basis;
- Payment of incentive funding will be through reimbursement upon project completion;
- Required Plus 15 Fund Contribution amount to be determined as per the recently approved Plus 15 Policy (July 2021);
- Full amount of required fund contribution, as per the above, will be reimbursed up to a maximum amount of \$1M per project

The Plus 15 Incentive Program will launch in September 2021 with communication to industry and the public in August.

## Downtown Vibrancy Capital Program

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### The Future of Stephen Avenue

Through the Downtown Vibrancy Capital Program, *The Future of Stephen Avenue* project will be able to proceed into design phase and construction.

- Next phase is to obtain capital funding to design the entire Stephen Avenue starting 2021. Which will be followed by a staged construction project targeting construction start in 2023.

### Downtown Public Market

The Downtown Public Market is envisioned as an ongoing community operated four season market located in Calgary's downtown and is intended to advance the goal of downtown vibrancy and reinforce downtown as a unique community to live and visit, creating a sustainable, versatile and dynamic public space.

- Identified as a priority project in the *Realizing Calgary's Greater Downtown Plan - Initial Investments and Incentives report (C2021-0524)*, The Downtown Strategy Leadership Team endorsed funding needed to hire a Project Development Manager to lead the development and delivery of this project.
- Administration is in the process of developing a Job Evaluation Questionnaire (JEQ) for the Project Development Manager to identify a candidate with the experience and skillset required to successfully lead this project.

## Programming

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There has been considerable interest in initiatives to programme and activate the greater downtown. Three projects that will receive funding and will proceed to implementation this year are outlined below.

### Green Alley Mural Gallery

- Funding allocated to support the Green Alley Mural Gallery and activation by the Calgary Downtown Association. The project will transform and program the alley between 7 Ave SW and Stephen Ave SW between Centre Street and 1 St SW. This project also includes involvement from the University of Calgary School of Architecture Planning and Landscape, the adjacent property owner, and the Beltline Urban Mural Program.

### West End Parknic

This is a project to create a bookable outdoor, licensed performance venue with food and beverages, food trucks, arts and culture and river connections. Key elements of the project will include:

- Temporary staging with production equipment
- Container bar to sell beverages and food (fully fenced to accommodate for AGLC)
- Surface mural & AstroTurf
- Dog friendly; washrooms on site; temporary seating with tables, fire pits, twinkle lights
- Branding and website
- Five event dates to showcase usage
- CDA Consultant to manage the project
- Engage Eau Claire displaced events

The initiative is planned to run from 2021 August to October.

### Downtown Ambassadors

The Downtown Ambassadors, recognizable by their red jackets, work as part of a team to connect Calgarians and visitors to services, information and build ties with local businesses, community organizations, and economically diverse citizens; and as a resource to the vulnerable population by helping connect them with social services.

- The Downtown Ambassadors are able to connect daily with Calgarians and visitors to provide information on services, places and supports in the downtown, along with creating an inclusive environment for all.
- To date the Ambassadors have already had over 4,470 interactions. This includes 2,725 interactions with individuals experiencing vulnerabilities, providing 697 referrals to individuals for social services.
- Ambassadors are also in regular communication with uniform, security and social services to ensure timely information sharing.
- Ambassadors have been a cornerstone to overall wayfinding and welcoming efforts for Alberta Health Services since the opening of the downtown immunization clinic.
- Ambassadors have also been able to create a welcoming presence on the transit system in the free fair zone and the program is exploring ways to support areas within the Plus 15s.

- The program is being expanded to include the piloting of additional routes: 8 Ave SW and 7 Ave SW to 8 St SW and 3 St SW to the river pathway.

## Dedicated Downtown Team

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The structuring and resourcing of a dedicated downtown team is well underway. The proposed team structure is built on the seven key areas of focus for the transformation of downtown:

- A new vision, a new vibe – marketing and communications;
- Regulatory initiatives, including approvals, to encourage development;
- Financial incentives to encourage development;
- Public realm and mobility changes and investments;
- Leveraging how our municipal-owned land can contribute;
- Programming; and
- Business Environment – Calgary in the new Economy.

Resourcing updates:

- In 2021 April, the position of Program Manager, Downtown Strategy was resourced. This position will focus on and manage the investments and incentive funding programs.
- A Director-level position for the Downtown Strategy business area has been approved by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and position development is underway. Recruitment will take place in 2021 August.
- Additional positions will be determined and resourced through 2021 Q3 and Q4.

## Advocacy and Partnerships

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- Mayor Nenshi sent advocacy letters to Prime Minister Trudeau and Premier Kenney in May 2021 on the need for federal and provincial support and investment in Calgary's downtown revitalization.
- Administration continues advocacy efforts with the federal and provincial government and departments including grants, funding opportunities, and enabling tools.
- The downtown strategy team presented to the provincial Calgary Office Revitalization and Expansion (CORE) Working Group on 2021 July 16 on areas for provincial support and investment.

## Other Work Underway

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### Rediscover Downtown Communications Plan

There is a great opportunity to welcome Calgarians back downtown and encourage them to support local businesses. At the same time, there is also a great opportunity to showcase the efforts that downtown businesses and community partners have undertaken to encourage COVID-safety and public health measures. By doing so, The City and its partners can reach Calgarians and encourage them to "Rediscover Downtown" at their own speed and own level of comfort.

"Rediscover Downtown" will celebrate Calgarians being back at their workplaces, old haunts and reconnecting in downtown gathering spaces, while also encouraging Calgarians to discover new places, businesses and opportunities for connection downtown, at their own level of comfort.

The “Rediscover Downtown” campaign will launch in early August in partnership with Downtown Strategy, community and business partners.

Transit & Parking Experiments (proposed)

Coordinated promotion of parking and transit deals, programs, availability and access to increase use and awareness of downtown mobility options. Key principles:

- Safety improves with greater ridership.
- Parking promotions to correlate with retail activity
- Corporations/Event hosts are willing to sponsor transit subsidies for promotional benefits
- Free day-park lot extensions for free evenings will encourage more people to stay downtown after work
- Transit/Parking deals/subsidies can direct ridership, increase user, drive app downloads and improve vibrancy of targeted areas

Experiments will run from July – October, with summary reporting and recommendations in 2021 October.