

# Background and Planning Evaluation

## Background and Site Context

The subject site is located in the Downtown Commercial Core at the northeast corner of 4 Avenue SW and 5 Street SW. The site is approximately 65 metres wide by 37 metres deep (215 by 125 feet) and has a total area of approximately 0.17 hectares (0.64 acres). Vehicular access to the site is provided through dual accesses onto 4 Avenue SW as well as the lane north of the site which accesses 5 Street SW. The 5 Street SW cycle track runs along the site's western property line.

The site is currently developed with a single-storey commercial building featuring a mix of retail uses. Surrounding development consists of a mixture of high-density commercial and residential uses in buildings ranging between six and 32 storeys in height. A two-storey commercial building is immediately east of the site.

The site is a five-minute walk (350 metres) from 7 Avenue SW where transit service is available via LRT and BRT, as well as access to the CORE Shopping Centre. The Bow River Pathway is located a similar distance to the north.

This proposal began with a pre-application enquiry submitted to The City on 2020 June 01. At the time, a major concern was the separation distances for any future mid-block tower. The applicant responded with careful placement of balconies and windows, giving Administration greater comfort supporting smaller separation distances and ensuring the future livability of the entire block.

## Community Peak Population Table

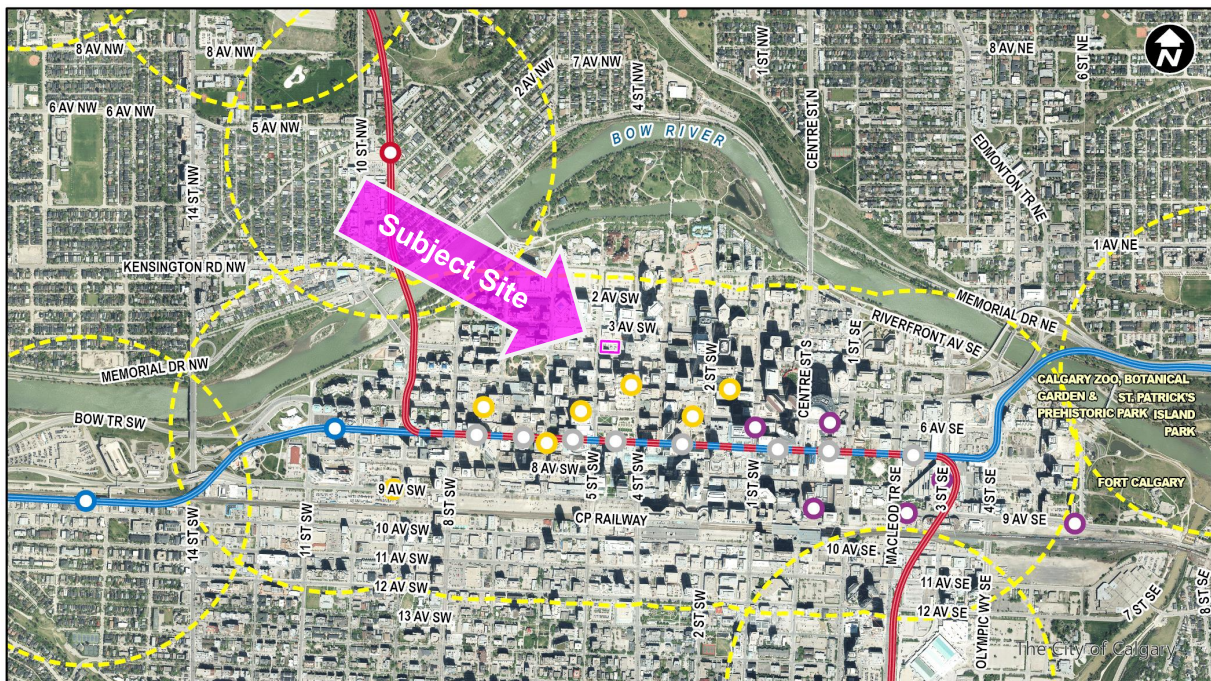
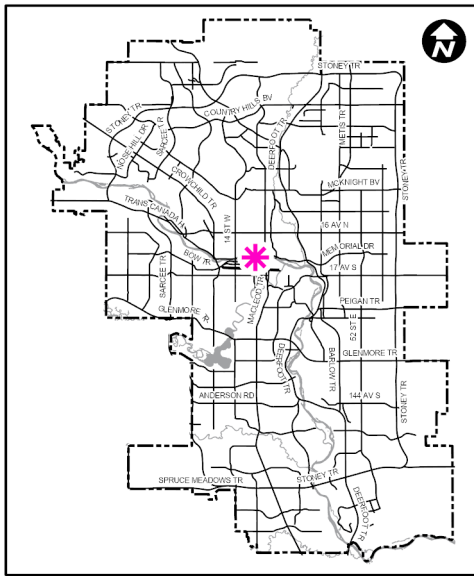
As identified below, the Downtown Commercial Core reached its peak population in 2015.

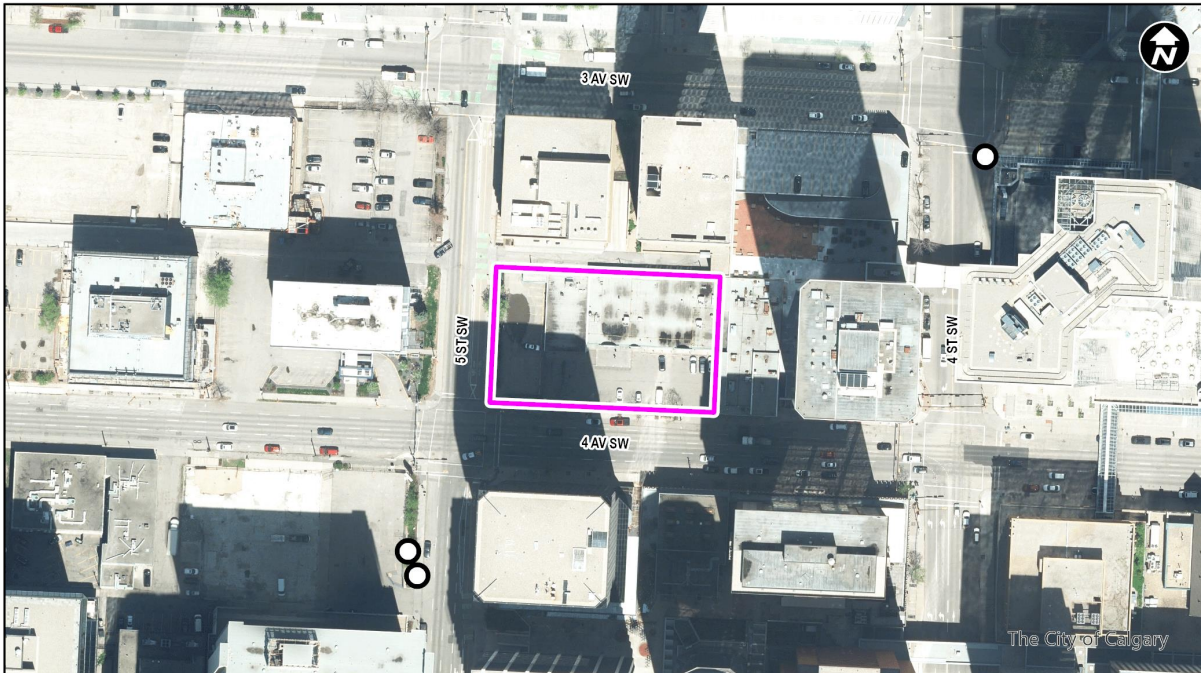
<b>Downtown Commercial Core</b>	
Peak Population Year	2015
Peak Population	9,083
2019 Current Population	8,683
Difference in Population (Number)	- 400
Difference in Population (Percent)	- 4.4%

Source: *The City of Calgary 2019 Civic Census*

Additional demographic and socio-economic information may be obtained online through the [Downtown Commercial Core Community Profile](#).

## Location Maps





## Previous Council Direction

On 2021 April 26 Council approved “Realizing Calgary’s Greater Downtown Plan – Initial Investments and Incentives” (C2021-0524), a \$200 million portfolio of investments meant to create momentum in Greater Downtown and further its revitalization. Key to this momentum is residential growth in the area which can offset lower commercial demand and create a critical mass of people to attract new amenities.

All significant residential development in the Downtown Commercial Core requires a mandatory contribution to the Plus 15 Fund; therefore, the contribution itself can serve as a financial barrier to development. As part of the Council-approved portfolio, a \$5 million fund was set aside to offset the required contribution. This application is the first to make use of the incentive fund and will be seeking to offset the required contribution of approximately \$1 million.

## Planning Evaluation

### Land Use

The site is designated as the Commercial Residential District (CR20 – C20/R20) which applies to most of the Downtown Commercial Core. The CR20 – C20/R20 District is designed to support high-rise, high-density developments that contribute to downtown’s role as Calgary’s pre-eminent destination for business, retail, entertainment and cultural activities. The District offers numerous opportunities for developments to earn bonus density through provision of desirable amenities such as connections to the Plus 15 system, a high-quality public realm at-grade, and publicly accessible private open space. Residential uses are particularly emphasized as being desirable.

This proposal makes use of available bonus incentives to achieve density as follows:

	Additional FAR	Total FAR
Base density (Dwelling Units)		3.0
On-Site Pedestrian Amenities (including Plus 15 connectivity)	12.0	15.0
Contribution to Central Business District Improvement Fund	0.12	15.12

### **Development and Site Design**

The proposed building consists of a three-story podium with a tower above for a total of 34 storeys. The placement of the building is constrained by the required 2.13 metre setbacks from both streets for public realm improvements, as well as an additional 2.2 metre setback required by the land use district. These setbacks, as well as the realities of parkade geometry below grade, have determined the location of the elevator core and therefore placement of the overall tower. A total of 268 residential units are proposed.

The south and west façades of the podium are recessed by 6.1 and 3.5 metres respectively, creating a wider public realm beneath the canopy, which is supported by four support columns. The canopy and columns serve to frame the main entrances to the residential lobby as well as the commercial retail units. In addition, the space creates opportunities for a plaza or semi-private patios should restaurant uses be desired.

The eastern third of the site is not envisioned for major development at this time but will be converted to a surface parking lot. This surface lot is to be screened by a decorative fence so as not to detract from the public realm.

The at-grade uses will extend into much of the second floor. A stairwell will provide access from grade to a future Plus 15 connection on the third floor. The third floor will also feature residential amenities including individual storage units, a co-working space as well as a gym. Additional common amenity space will be provided on the fourth floor in the form of an indoor lounge as well as an outdoor terrace. This additional outdoor amenity space is meant to offset the lack of private amenity space available to many units. The applicant proposed reducing the number of balconies to minimize heat loss via exposed floor slab, which Administration agreed to as a means of supporting energy efficiency.

### **Urban Design Review Panel**

The Urban Design Review Panel (UDRP) reviewed the application at its initial submission and provided comments. In general, UDRP's comments reflect an acknowledgement of what the project is trying to accomplish with its simplicity but urged the applicant to make several refinements to the plans. Comments from UDRP questioned the utility of the Plus 15 connection in this location. However, the Land Use Bylaw requires that all buildings seeking to make use of bonus density must design their buildings with Plus 15 connectivity in mind.

In response to UDRP's comments, the applicant provided additional articulation to the building façade (particularly at-grade to highlight the commercial entrances), continued the south façade treatment around to the west façade, and instituted several changes to the common outdoor amenity space.

## **Transportation**

The site benefits from strong connectivity for all mobility modes. Both local and rapid transit are available within 300 metres (a five-minute walk), a cycle track connection is immediately adjacent to the site, and the grid network of downtown provides multiple connection points for pedestrians.

Commercial loading and servicing bays will be accessed from the lane, as will the four-level underground parkade. Bicycle parking will be spread throughout the parkade as well as on the second floor, which will otherwise be used for mechanical and storage. At-grade bicycle parking will be clustered along the western façade of the building close to the cycle track.

## **Environmental Site Considerations**

The development has been designed such that the location of all electrical and mechanical equipment is above the 1-in-100-year flood level. An environmental site assessment was provided that identified no evident environmental concerns.

## **Utilities and Servicing**

Water, sewer and storm sewer connections are all available from both 4 Avenue SW and 5 Street SW. Relevant studies have been provided that confirm capacity exists to service the proposed development.

## **Legislation and Policy**

### **South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (2014)**

The recommendation by Administration in this report has considered and is aligned with the policy direction of the [South Saskatchewan Regional Plan](#) which directs population growth in the region to Cities and Towns and promotes the efficient use of land.

### **Interim Growth Plan (2018)**

The recommendation aligns with the policy direction of the Calgary Metropolitan Region Board's [Interim Growth Plan](#) (IGP). The proposed development builds on the principles of the IGP by means of promoting efficient use of land, regional infrastructure, and establishing strong, sustainable communities.

### **Municipal Development Plan (Statutory – 2009)**

This application falls within the Greater Downtown Activity Centre as identified on Map 1: Urban Structure in the [Municipal Development Plan](#). Policy for this area intends to support Downtown as the urban destination of choice for Calgarians by promoting residential development and livability.

### **Climate Resilience Strategy (2018)**

This application provides more efficient use of land in alignment with Program 6: Land-Use and Transportation Planning of the [Climate Resilience Strategy](#), but no other climate adaptation or mitigation measures are provided.

### **Greater Downtown Plan (Non-Statutory – 2021)**

This application aligns with the vision and principles of the [Greater Downtown Plan](#) primarily by advancing its first strategic move: strengthening neighbourhoods to create vibrant urban life. To that end, policies meant to make downtown living more attractive and to shift the image of the

Downtown Commercial Core rely on increased population downtown in order to increase demand for amenities and make them more cost-effective to provide.

The western portion of the Downtown Commercial Core is an area particularly hard-hit by economic recession due to its older supply of commercial floor space. This proposal can provide a substantial amount of additional foot traffic to help bolster local retail demand and can aid in attracting new office tenants who are seeking more livable areas in which to locate. The creation of a new public plaza in front of this building offers opportunities for place-making initiatives that can transform this block into a more desirable, vibrant location.

### Land Use Bylaw (2007)

This development permit requires the following relaxations to the Land Use Bylaw. Administration has reviewed each relaxation individually and considers each relaxation to be acceptable for the reasons outlined below.

<b>Bylaw Relaxations</b>		
<b>Regulation</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Provided</b>
1298 Residential Amenity Space	Common Amenity Space Outdoors (6)(c) must have a contiguous area of not less than 50.0m <sup>2</sup> with no dimension less than 6.0m;	Plans indicate outdoor amenity dimension of 5.0m (-1.0m).  <b>Relaxation supported. Additional information provided regarding design of the space.</b>
	Common Amenity Space Indoors (6)(c) must have a contiguous area of not less than 50.0m <sup>2</sup> with no dimension less than 6.0m;	Plans indicate indoor amenity dimension of 4.7m (-1.3m).  <b>Relaxation supported. Additional information provided regarding design of the space.</b>
1318 Locations of Uses within Buildings	(5) Only those uses listed in the Residential Group of Schedule A to this Bylaw, with the exception of Hotel uses, may share an area of a parking structure with residential uses.	Plans indicate shared parking between the residential and commercial uses within the parkade.  <b>Relaxation supported. The office use is only one possibility and consists of 2 stalls maximum.</b>
1325 Motor Vehicle Parking Stalls	(c) the <a href="#">visitor parking stall</a> requirement is 0.1 stalls per <a href="#">unit</a> .	Plans indicate 20 (-7) visitor stalls.  <b>Relaxation supported due to high degree of site connectivity.</b>
1331 Location of Bicycle Parking Stalls	Bicycle parking stalls – class 1 must be located at-grade or within the first parkade level directly below grade.	Plans indicate Bicycle – Class 1 stalls located below the first parkade level.  <b>Relaxation supported.</b>