

Future of Stephen Avenue Activate + Experiment Update

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Executive Committee recommend that Council:

1. Receive this report for the Corporate Record; and
2. Postpone Administration's report back on the outcomes of the Future of Stephen Avenue – *Activate + Experiment* program due Q1 2023, to return by Q4 2023.

HIGHLIGHTS

- On 2020 March 10, Council approved an application to the Council Innovation Fund for *The Activate & Experiment* program (PFC2020-0274) and directed Administration to report back on the outcomes by Q1 2023.
- “What does this mean to Calgarians?” *Activate + Experiment* is a two-year pilot to test ideas to create great public spaces. Lessons learned through the program will inform design and infrastructure considerations for the Future of Stephen Avenue project, as well as enhance downtown vibrancy in both the short and long term.
- “Why does this matter?” Short-term, experimental activations and infrastructure allow cities to pilot initiatives, at low cost and risk, to measure impact and success to inform long-term infrastructure decisions.
- *Activate + Experiment* aligns with the Greater Downtown Plan's strategic moves and the plan's call for short-term actions and ‘testing of ideas’.
- Since June 2021, *Activate + Experiment* has seen success with partnerships and events including: enlivening Downtown West, workshops on racial and spatial justice, urban furniture installations, a pollinator garden, two years of the Winter City Design competition and seed funding for the Downtown Ambassador Program.
- Due to the pandemic, the start date of *Activate + Experiment* was delayed until June 2021. Postponing Administrations report back on the outcomes to Q4 2023 allows for a full two-year implementation to complete final prototyping solutions, conclude research and report back on detailed findings.
- Background and Previous Council Direction is included as Attachment 1.

DISCUSSION

Activate + Experiment is an interim phase and program to complement the work of The Future of Stephen Avenue, funded through the Council Innovation Fund. The intention of the program is to prototype and test innovative ideas and enact change immediately on the Avenue, between The Future of Stephen Avenue's Phase 1: Public Realm Study and Phase 2: Conceptual Streetscape Master Plan. In May 2020, Council approved funding for *Activate + Experiment*, in the amount of \$300,000. All projects implemented under *Activate + Experiment* are aligned with the strategic actions identified in The Future of Stephen Avenue's Public Realm Study.

Work completed to-date includes:

- Urban Alliance partnership with University of Calgary to implement *Activate + Experiment* projects undertaken by multi-disciplinary teams.
- YYC/LRT: Brighten and enliven a key intersection of the Avenue leading into Calgary's densest residential neighborhood, Downtown West.

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- Transformative Racial and Spatial Justice participatory workshop series: events and design approaches to highlight intersections between race and urban spaces.
- Urban Furniture: Hybrid digital design and robotic fabrication.
- Pollinator planting bed: testing alternative planting, incorporating nature in the urban realm.
- 100 Block SW Seating clusters: colourful custom furniture to test different types of seating beyond regular park bench and social configurations.
- Winter City Design competition 2022 & 2023: inviting designers to imagine the possibilities for winter city design to enable public spaces to thrive in colder months of the year.
- Data collection through surveys and observational studies
- Provided initial seed funding for the Downtown Ambassador Program focused on outreach, safety, cleanliness and providing a welcoming presence throughout Downtown.

Administration will continue to work on the following projects:

- Creative Wayfinding mural installation: create a clear pathway and draw people from Stephen Avenue at MacLeod Trail SE through the Municipal Building strengthening the connection to the East Village.
- Bicycle infrastructure project (bicycle rack + seating)
- Additional surveying and observational studies and a detailed report on Activate + Experiment initiatives

Returning with an update on the outcomes of the Future of Stephen Avenue *Activate + Experiment* program by Q4 2023 provides Administration time to complete remaining projects, conduct research and analysis, and report back on findings.

EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Public engagement was undertaken | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Dialogue with interested parties was undertaken |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Public/interested parties were informed | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Public communication or engagement was not required |

Interested parties have been engaged on the postponement of the report back, notably The Future of Stephen Avenue project team.

IMPLICATIONS

Social

No implications created by postponement of report back

Environmental

No implications created by postponement of report back

Economic

No implications created by postponement of report back

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Service and Financial Implications

No anticipated financial impact

RISK

No risks have been identified with postponing the *Activate + Experiment* report back. This allows Administration more time to provide a more fulsome review and analysis of the program, without impacting or delaying the timeline for design and construction of The Future of Stephen Avenue project.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Background and Previous Council Direction
2. Presentation

Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform
Stuart Dalgleish	Planning & Development Services	Approve