



As at: May 1, 2023

# Activate + Experiment on Stephen Avenue: Report for Design Team

## Pollinator Planting Bed & Seating Area (1 Street & Stephen Avenue SW)

**About:** Pollinator friendly planter bed was installed along Stephen Avenue to test out alternative planting on this corner and to create a green oasis.

**Location:** Stephen Avenue & 1 Street SW

**Status:** Complete June 2021, replanted annually

### Cost

Item	Year	Cost
<b>Planter Bed</b>		
Design and drafting	2021	\$2,770
Plant material	2021	\$8,250
	2022	\$5,800
Planting & maintenance	2021	\$8,310
	2022	\$4,600
Boulder Install	2021	\$4,100
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$33,830</b>
<b>Seating Clusters (both on the 100 block)</b>		
Design	2021	\$10,500
Fabrication	2021	\$40,725
Refresh	2022	\$3,550
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$54,775</b>

### Findings

Item	Comment
<b>Planter bed</b>	Pollinator portion was very successful. At times there were what seemed like over a thousand bees teaming in this bed. There are a number of restaurants in the Downtown that have rooftop hives and this type of planting is very complementary to the area, as it supports the bees among the hardscape of the area, giving them a place to rest before moving on.
	Plantings were well loved. Received media attention and positive responses from the public.
	Planter bed design is flush with surrounding pavement. This caused issues in the winter, as vehicles were driving overtop of area on occasion. Boulders were installed at corners facing road, to create a barrier.
<b>Seating materials</b>	Cedar seating bleachers are fairing very well. Graffiti has been minimal, however when it occurs it can be sanded out.



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	Painted plywood seating boxes are less durable. Surfaces become scuffed after a month. In 2023 the CDA has offered perform paint touch ups periodically throughout the warmer season, to mitigate issues and keep them looking fresh.
<b>Seating design</b>	The Bigger trapezoid was well used as a BMX and skateboard ramp. This caused increased chipping and scuffing compared to the other items.
	Would consider orienting more seating towards the planting bed and the street, if project was repeated.
<b>Social Disorder</b>	Some businesses and individuals have commented on the benches in both these areas being used by the vulnerable population and creating unease and perceptions that the area is unsafe. Good Life has expressed concerns from their users that coming in and out of the gym can feel unsafe. We have observed a wide variety of different types of users, vs. one specific population.

### Survey result summary

101 responses to survey

- What do you think of this spot? (5 being great place and 1 being poor place to hang out)
  - 5 stars 49% - 4 stars 22% - 3 stars 11% - 2 stars 4% - 1 star 2%
- Would you like to see more planting like this integrated into the Avenue?
  - 86% of respondents chose 'yes please, love all the greenery!'
  - 7% of respondents felt that the installation was 'nice, but flower pots are good enough for me'.
  - 3% would like 'more pavement please'
- Themes for open ended comments:
  - More spaces like these along Stephen Avenue and downtown
  - Add trees into these spaces
  - Raise the planting beds
  - Use native plants
  - Winter friendly plantings
  - Orient benches towards plantings
  - Add bicycle infrastructure
  - Comments from users on their feelings of safety in this space due to types of people that occupy the space.

Raw data from survey also provided.

### Media & associated websites

[Buzz grows with pollinator garden sprouting from concrete on Stephen Avenue - LiveWire Calgary](#)

[Buzz and benches: Feedback sought on Stephen Avenue pollinator space - LiveWire Calgary](#)



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## Centre Street Corner Seating Area

About: We're testing out different types of seating along the Avenue to understand what people are drawn to and to make more seating available. These seats will be reconfigured every summer and winter, to test out different configurations and learn what works best.

Location: Stephen Avenue & Centre Street

Status: Complete June 2021. Reconfigured June 2022

Item	Comment
<b>Seating Material</b>	Material gets dirty very quickly. Better to use an alternative material for longer uses, or partner with CDA to repaint on an on-going basis
<b>Comparison to other seating area</b>	In comparison to the pollinator bed, observational studies showed similar use. However, through the online survey results there was a clear preference for seating adjacent to pollinator planting bed. People appreciate the greenery. This design was not as well liked by respondents, who did not appreciate the aesthetics of the design and placement.
<b>Market stall considerations</b>	Seating located in this area did result in the area not being able to be used on market days to locate stalls. Adjacent business was concerned about this as they appreciate the weekly markets. Market stall areas may be a consideration for the new design.

### Summary of Survey Results

52 responses to survey

- What do you think of this spot? (5 being great place and 1 being poor place to hang out)
  - 5 stars 12% - 4 stars 8% - 3 stars 35% - 2 stars 14% - 1 star 12%
- Would you like to see more planting like this integrated into the Avenue?
  - 66% of respondents chose 'yes, love the additional seating options!'
  - 24% of respondents felt that the installation was 'this is nice, but existing seating options are good enough for me'.
  - 10% would like 'more pavement please, keep this area clear'
- Themes for open-ended comments:
  - The idea of seating is appreciated but design is not. Create something that is more inviting, comfortable (with back rests).
  - Use natural elements. Too modern for historic area.
  - More greenery combined with seating
  - Social disorder issues
  - Needs more maintenance
  - Picnic tables down Stephen Avenue



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## YYC/LRT: Community Based Art & Community Engagement

**About:** YYC/LRT is a research project of University of Calgary researchers and Contemporary Calgary, exploring how bringing contemporary art out of the gallery and into the streets can build community. Beginning in 2022 and continuing until August, 2023, YYC/LRT will be offering artmaking workshops and events in the Downtown West to build relationships and learn about what matters to folks in the Downtown West. YYC/LRT is a community studio and art sculpture created by a local artist, Bryan Faubert. It is constructed out of an old light rail transit car.

**Location:** 10 Street & Stephen Avenue SW

**Status:** Installed fall 2021. Programming runs until August 2023.

**Cost:**

Item	Year	Cost
LRT repair and updates	2021	\$10,670
Move & setup	2021	\$11,380
Deck infrastructure	2021	\$4,000
Furnishings	2021	\$2630
Project management	2021	\$6,000
Hoarding & parking costs	FT	\$36,250
Site repair	2023	\$1000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$71,930</b>

### Relevant Findings

Item	Comment
<b>Supportive infrastructure</b>	On street power availability was tricky, but the project group eventually partnered with an adjacent building for power. Available, metered power from poles would be supportive for on-streets installations. This is very expensive to do for each project (100-300k to meter a pole)
<b>Intersection safety</b>	There were some safety issues and site visibility difficulties that were mitigated throughout the project (movement of the centre line to allow for a greater turn radius). Site lines were still a bit challenging for turns. If considering flex zones within on-street parking areas (that are intended to be used by a variety of installations), consider their placement. Best to have 5 metres or more or more pulled back from the corner (stop line).
<b>Open up cultural and arts- based organizations at street level</b>	YYC:LRT created an opportunity to bring arts based organizations into the neighbourhood and directly onto the street. The University (project owner) partnered with Contemporary Calgary, Kerby Centre (senior's centre), Antyx (youth-based arts organization), Western Canada High School and nearby businesses to run workshops.
<b>Bringing people into the neighbourhood</b>	The LRT provided an on-street location for arts based workshops. Workshops attracted artists, residents and others into the neighbourhood. The majority of attendees were first timers to the neighbourhood. 30% of those reported returning after to explore what the neighbourhood had to offer. Others reported a change in perception of the neighbourhood from unsafe to comfortable.
<b>Creating partnerships</b>	University of Calgary partnered with a number of organizations for programming such as Contemporary Calgary, the Kerby Centre, Western Canada High School and Antyx.



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	Joint programming was successful in creating partnerships in and within the community amongst service and arts organizations.
<b>Communications &amp; Marketing</b>	When projects like this are held streetside whether vacant storefront or parking lane projects, consider marketing and communications, especially if the space is not always programmed. There were comments and questions received around its use, and many passerbys were not aware of the programming opportunities, or schedules or purpose of the installation. A sign was on site explaining the installation. However, for these types of projects: 1) listing a calendar of dates onsite and 2) renting the space out to other organizations while not in use, so that the space is more active more of the time.

### Survey Result Summary

57 responses to survey

What did you think of this spot?

5 stars 40% - 4 stars 12% - 3 stars 10% - 2 stars 14% - 1 star 24%

Would you like to see more art and seating integrated into the avenue? (5 stars being strongly supportive, and 1 star being strongly against)

5 stars 69% - 4 stars – 4 stars 2% - 3 stars 6% - 2 stars 6% - 1 star 15%

Did you feel safe at this location? (5 stars being very safe, 1 star being very unsafe)

5 stars 43% - 4 stars 17% - 3 stars 8% - 2 stars 13% - 1 star 19%

Open ended question: This corner (10 Street & 8 Avenue SW) is an important entryway into Downtown West from Stephen Avenue. With that in mind, how can we make this area even better? What else would you like to see here in the public realm?

- More lighting, seating, artwork and trees integrated into 8 Avenue and this area.
- Social disorder in this area is indicated as an issue
- Fix up streets
- Too many parking lots. Need more development in the area.

### University Preliminary Researcher

Programming Attendance Statistics:

Residents – 65

Workers – 9

First Timers – 179

Explorers – 52

Regulars – 49

Term definitions:

*Resident* refers to participants who live in the Downtown West.

*Worker* refers to participants who are business owners, service providers, professionals or employees whose work brings them to the Downtown West.



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*First Timer* refers to participants who came to the Downtown West for the first time to participate in one of the YYC/LRT programs

*Explorer* refers to a participant who came to the Downtown West for the first time for a program, is now returning for program, and has reported that they have visited the neighborhood voluntarily since that first time.

*Regular* refers to participants who regularly come to the Downtown West to use services, patronize businesses, visit residents.

Observations:

- Most participants were *First Timers*. Of these, 30% of participants in multiple programs reported that they had returned to the Downtown West after their initial visit to explore what the neighborhood had to offer.
- Explorers were predominantly University of Calgary students they report that participating in YYC/LRT program changed their perception of the neighborhood from a place that is unsafe, “sketchy” and “empty” in the words of several participants, to a place in which they can feel comfortable and find interesting and meaningful experiences.
- One participant moved to the Downtown West because of their participation in the Land Acknowledgement project. Spending four weeks, and 24 hours in the neighborhood, actively developing a relationship with the Downtown West led them to decide to move there when their lease was up in their former residence.
- Kerby members (also seniors) made up the majority of the *regulars*. They do not live in the neighbourhood, however extended their visits to the Kerby centre by visiting YYC/LRT and other spots in the neighbourhood.

## Media & associated websites

[YYC-LRT Home | University of Calgary \(ucalgary.ca\)](#)

[Can an old LRT car inspire a renaissance in Downtown West? A vision emerges | News | University of Calgary \(ucalgary.ca\)](#)

[What this colourful LRT is doing in Calgary's west downtown | CBC News](#)

[UCalgary students offer contemporary art experience to Kerby Centre members | News | University of Calgary](#)

[Alternative venues create opportunity for artists and musicians | Calgary Herald](#)

## Winter City Design Competition

**About:** Innovative winter design is needed for great public spaces to thrive in the colder months of the year. Winnipeg has its warming huts, Germany has its Christmas Markets. What interventions and activations could fit like a glove in Calgary’s climate and culture? Calgary’s Winter City Design Competition explores this question. The City invites designers, artists and students to imagine the possibilities for winter city design in our downtown. We want people to explore and push beyond the boundaries of what public spaces in Calgary can be during the winter season.

Winning submissions received funding to build and install their designs in two locations in Calgary’s downtown.



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**Location:** 100 block & 200 block Stephen Ave

**Status:** 2022 & 2023 complete

**Cost:**

Item	Year	Cost
Artist #1 design stipend	2021	\$10,000
Artist #2 design stipend	2021	\$10,000
Marketing & signage	2021	\$600
Artist #1 design stipend	2022	\$15,000
Communication	2022	\$600
<b>Total (for 2 years)</b>		<b>\$36,200</b>

**Relevant findings:**

Item	Comment
<b>Impacts on stationary activity</b>	Art installations that are interactive increase stationary activity on the streets.
<b>Design Competition</b>	Design competitions encourage new work from artists. Experts on jury panel provide valuable insight into constructability which has been integral to the success of selected projects.
<b>Durability</b>	Installations submitted must be durable. All installations built to date have fared well outside for 1-3 months without security required.

## Survey Result Summary

### 2023

97 responses to survey

What did you think of this space? (5 stars being a great space and one star being a poor space)

5 stars 73% - 4 stars 12% - 3 stars 6% - 2 stars 2%, 3 stars 1%

Do these types of spaces make winter feel more playful, cozy, bright or fun to you? (5 stars being strongly agree, 1 star being strongly disagree)

5 stars 84% - 4 stars 8% - 3 stars 4% - 2 stars 3% - 1 star 0%

Do winter friendly spaces like these encourage you to walk outside in public spaces?

100% of respondents indicated YES

Open ended question: What else would you like to see on the streets or in parks during the winter?

- Hot chocolate shacks
- More lighting
- More installations like these
- Less crime



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- Strategically dumped snow to build forts and snow castles
- More warming areas to gather
- Light arch

### Solar Warming Bench (not built)

About: The University of Calgary’s Schulich School of Engineering and the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape (SAPL) worked together to create a concept for a solar warming bench. It would have been a first of its kind intervention, based of solar heat transfer vacuum tubes with a glycol system and heat storage mechanism.

Location: A number of locations were explored in both Downtown West and along the pedestrian mall.

Status: unfortunately the project did not make it out of the Stage Gate 1 process (initial seed funding). The City and University team were unable to find a location where surrounding stakeholders would be supportive.

**Cost:**

Item	Year	Cost
<b>Planter Bed</b>		
Project coordination	2022	\$2,775
Architectural drawings	2022	\$675
Mechanical design, review and modeling	2022	\$4,575
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$8,025</b>

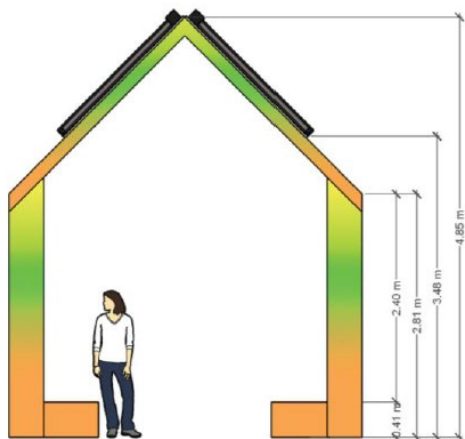
**Relevant Findings**

Item	Comment
<b>Concerns over location</b>	Many groups were supportive of the idea in general, however, once it came to sighting the piece of infrastructure there was concern about the attraction of social disorder, and the encouragement of loitering. Even a self-described ‘radically inclusive’ arts group felt this way. These items may prove very difficult to site if they are not accompanied with another element such as an information booth. Stakeholders suggested a monitoring program.
<b>Scale of installation</b>	The scale of the installation had to be increased as the building code inspectors indicated some requirements around tamper proofing for the solar cells.





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### Concrete Urban Furniture

About: An interdisciplinary team from the University of Calgary’s School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape partnered with a local concrete manufacturer to design and prototype a kit of parts for a modular seating system with three unique furniture components (stool, leaner, table) that can be used together or on their own. The intent is to explore hybrid digital design and robotic fabrication methods that result in more efficient and sustainable processes while adding character and visual identity to Stephen Ave. The urban furniture provides ways to accommodate different group sizes along the avenue and support surrounding programming (like the Globe theatre!).

Location: 627 8 Avenue SW (in front of Globe Theatre)

Status: Installed September 2022. Removal scheduled for September 2023.

Relevant findings:

Item	Comment
<b>Material</b>	Concrete benches are very heavy. Required special machinery for installation and cannot be easily moved.
<b>Siting location considerations</b>	Installation location underneath Globe’s marquee has created some challenges. The Globes marquee signage is manually updated and the bench locations impact the ability to change the front signage. Consideration for future street furniture locations around this particular site should consider marquee access.
<b>Use</b>	Observational surveys for this area were undertaken, however benches were not highly used during this time. It may be due to the seasons of observation. The space was observed as used well during the film festival in September 2022 (researchers took pictures) as there are many people waiting outside during these types of events.

### Survey results

- Survey is available online and QR code is listed on site of benches, however no responses were received.



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## Transformative Racial & Spatial Justice Workshop

About: The Transformative racial and spatial justice: Celebrating Black people's knowledges and contributions summer youth leadership program is a collaboration between the Faculty of Social Work Anti-Black Racism Task Force and the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at the University of Calgary in response and solidarity to ongoing calls for racial equity and racial justice. It is also part of the suite of Urban Alliance Future of Stephen Ave: Activate + Experiment research projects overseen by Prof. Taron. The youth program provided Black youth with a greater understanding of Black history, knowledges and cultures while building their leadership skills.

Status: took place over 8 sessions during Summer 2022

Location: 151 8 Avenue SW (vacant space on the pedestrian mall)

Findings from the workshop:

Need Assessment – What Problems Need to Be Addressed?

- Lack of representation and inclusivity
- Education, genre of music, leadership positions, business owners, SES
- Stephen Ave. connection- lacking leadership positions around the area
- Connected also to education
- Misrepresentation
- Negative stereotypes of Black people
- Marginalized
- Not always credited
- Dismissal of Black people's experiences, issues, and histories
- Lack of access and resources
- Black joy/self- security within ourselves is what we're improving
- Black mental health and well-being
- Offer diverse perspectives of Black people's experiences

The participants developed project ideas in response to their experience on the Avenue. Most notably participants wanted to experience more representation on the Avenue.

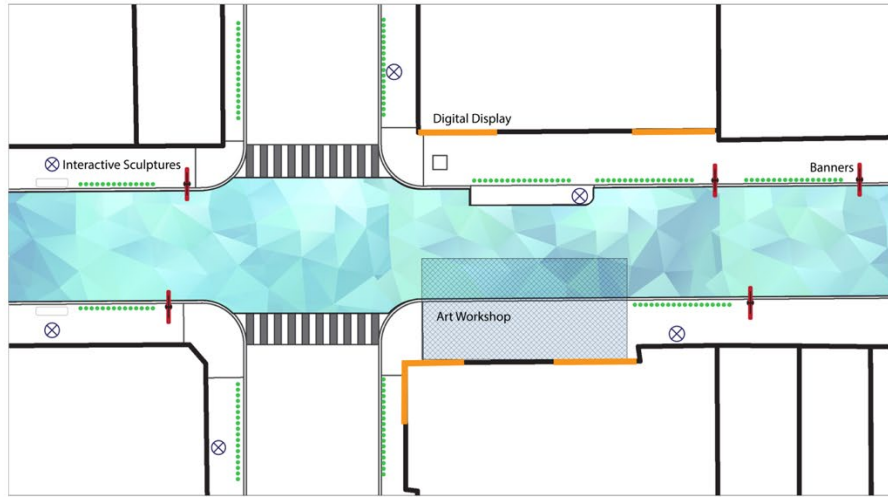
Unfortunately, security was called a number of times on the youth group, from a downstairs neighbour who sited noise issues.

Youth created various collage, mapping, and written/visual outputs. The images below are some of their visual production.



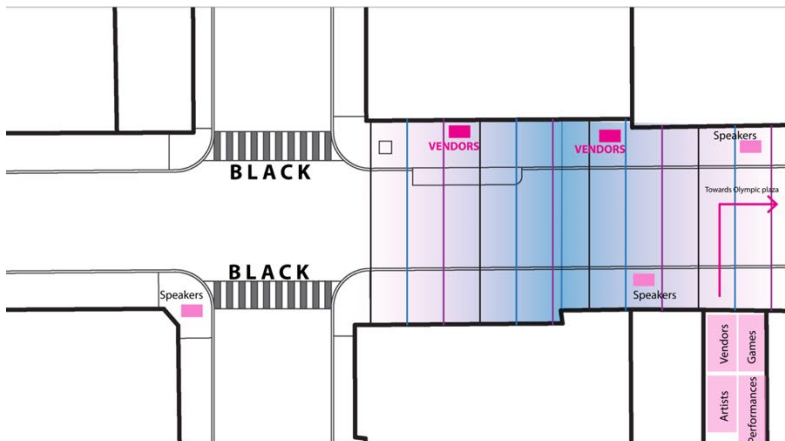
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### VISUAL ARTS GROUP



<b>1. Most important site conditions to respond to</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empty spaces</li> <li>Lack of culture-specific entertainment</li> <li>Lack of inclusivity</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of seating and small gathering public spaces</li> <li>Unwelcoming building facades</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of vibrancy at places</li> <li>Lack of day/night round activities</li> <li>Lack of representation</li> </ul>
<b>2. Desired culture/specific themes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Artwork from black artists representing their culture</li> <li>On pathways</li> <li>digital displays on building facades and windows</li> </ul>
<b>3. Desired qualities that the performance would express</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcoming</li> <li>Inclusive</li> <li>Active</li> <li>Inviting</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open spaces for art workshop on Stephen Ave to invite black individuals</li> <li>Culture specific interactive sculptures to display culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Representative</li> <li>Culture sensitive</li> <li>Community engagement</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lively</li> <li>Vibrant</li> <li>Attracting crowd</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing voice and space</li> <li>Sensitive</li> <li>Youthful</li> </ul>

### MUSIC GROUP



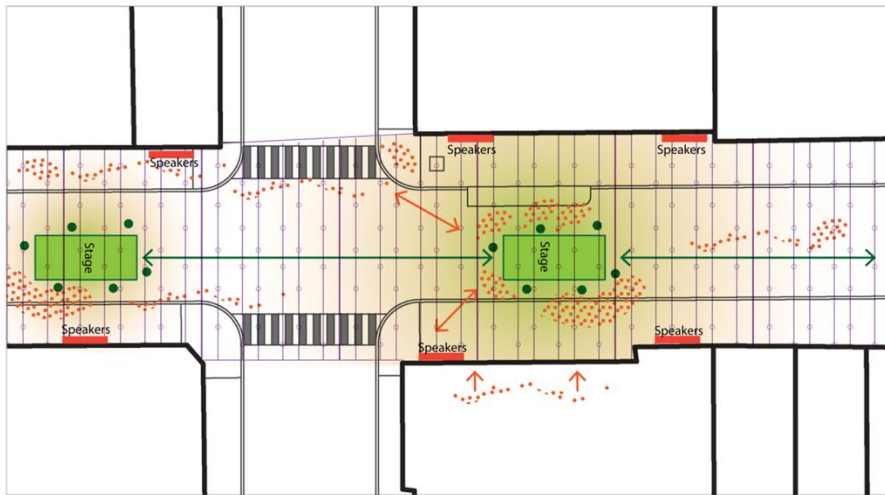
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Events</li> <li>central performance area on Steph. Ave</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistency</li> <li>area around steph ave</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attractions</li> <li>how to get black people to be interested in the event first (i.e. Black Fest)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More black ownership</li> <li>black restaurants</li> <li>Cultural music</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Black Artists</li> <li>African/ black wear</li> <li>Spoken word</li> <li>Dance</li> <li>Artistic element</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Black/African</li> <li>Indigenous</li> <li>Music</li> <li>Culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of inclusivity</li> <li>more black representation</li> </ul>
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NEW	UPBEAT	ENGAGING
YOUNG	PEACE	BLACK
MIXED CULTURES	JOYFUL	DIVERSITY
	YOUTHFUL	EMPOWERMENT



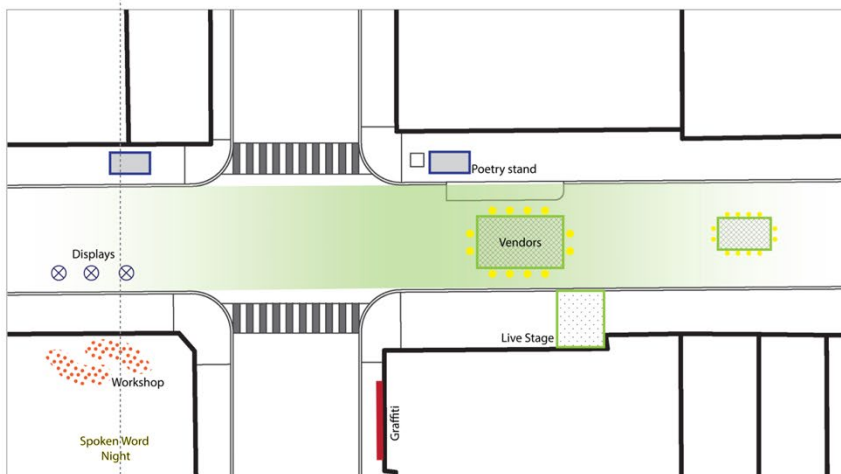
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### DANCE GROUP



- |   |   |  |  |   |  |
|---|---|--|--|---|--|
| <p><b>1.</b><br/>Most important conditions on site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having police on stanby for people who misbehave</li> <li>• crowd control</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seating if people get tired and want to site down</li> <li>• tent, incase it rains</li> <li>• food if people get hungry they can eat while enjoying the performance</li> </ul> |  |  |   |  |
| <p><b>2.</b><br/>Desired culture/ specific themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beating</li> <li>• Afro</li> <li>• Hip hop</li> <li>• Spanish</li> <li>• Rap</li> <li>• Music that everyone can relate too</li> <li>• (except country music and rock)</li> </ul> |   |  |  |   |  |
| <p><b>3.</b><br/>Desired qualities that the performance would express</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• welcoming</li> <li>• creative</li> <li>• breaking</li> <li>• popping</li> <li>• contemporary</li> <li>• lively</li> </ul>                                    |   |  |  |   |  |
| <p><b>SITE OBSERVATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking photos</li> <li>• Welcoming (music playing)</li> </ul>   | <p><b>TOPICS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music History</li> <li>• story telling</li> <li>• culture clothing</li> <li>• dance circles</li> <li>• upbeat making people participate</li> </ul>        | <p><b>WAYS TO ORGANISE SPACE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the center so people stop and join</li> <li>• people coming either way can see and participate</li> <li>• Have seating when people get tired</li> </ul> | <p><b>FURNITURE PROPS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Props (drums, etc)</li> <li>• Drum sticks</li> <li>• Night time bright light</li> <li>• Have screen that displays just dance that way it attracts children</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusivity</li> <li>• Happiness</li> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Liveliness</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vibrant</li> <li>• Hip hop</li> <li>• west african music</li> <li>• upbeat</li> <li>• Desi music</li> <li>• Contemporary</li> </ul> |

### SPOKEN WORD GROUP



- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of creativity to showcase black youth</li> <li>• Empty spaces</li> <li>• Lack of representation</li> </ul>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of vibrancy at places</li> <li>• Lack of stories</li> </ul>  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poetry wall and stands</li> <li>• Public displays</li> <li>• Graffiti poem painted</li> </ul>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spoken word workshop</li> <li>• Funding from workshop distributed to homeless population</li> </ul>                       |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Randomised game where they make poem from certain words</li> <li>• vacant area poetry/ spoken word night</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drop-in center for public safety and providing resources</li> <li>• Create opportunities</li> </ul>                       |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of representation</li> <li>• Lack of Community</li> <li>• Not enough seating</li> </ul>                        | <p>Calgary a city of Words<br/>Word of the day- create art of that and make a poem collage "365 days" of spoken word to generate funding for black businesses.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Live Stage</li> <li>• Diversity Summer-vendors- food and drinks.</li> </ul> |