

CONTEMPORARY CALGARY ARTS SOCIETY

Mandate: To exist for the purpose of engaging the public with contemporary works of art.

One Calgary Line of Service: Arts & Culture

Registered Charity

2023 City Investment

Operating Grant (one time): \$900,000

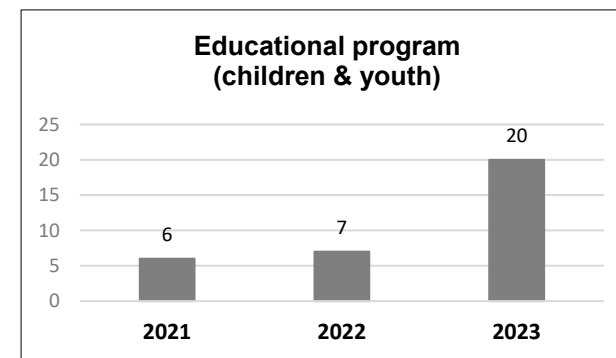
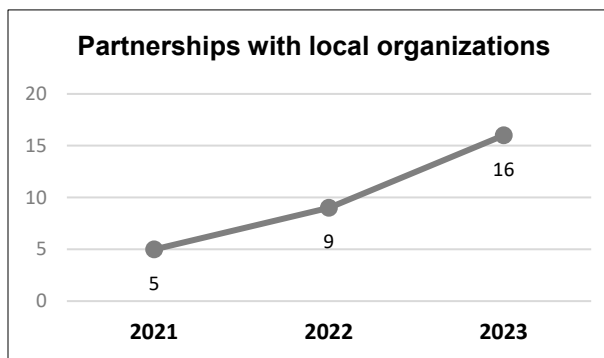
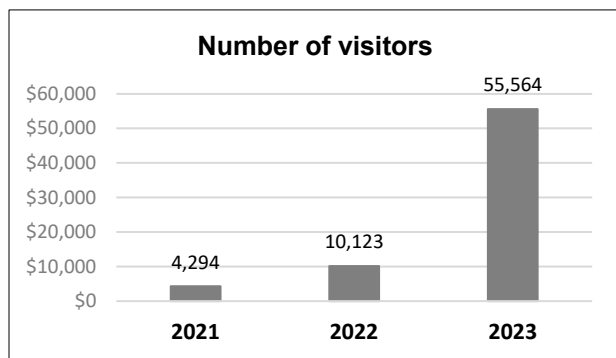
Capital Grant: \$38,899

Capital Grant (Observatory project):

\$ 1,049,861

City owned asset

2023 Results



The story behind the numbers

- Consistent growth in attendance demonstrates the public’s desire to access meaningful art experiences.
- Partnerships allow Contemporary Calgary to support like-minded organizations through the sharing of space and resources. Partnerships help develop new audiences and create connected communities while leveraging each organization’s skill sets and resources.
- The TD Educational Initiative, along with support from The City, increased the quality and amount of children and youth programming.

Benchmarks

- Using comparative data from other organizations, Contemporary Calgary benchmarks for representative content, admission fees and attendance. In 2023, 82 per cent of the featured artists were black, indigenous, and other people of colour (BIPOC). Admission fee strategies are reviewed frequently to ensure the use of best practices in a changing economic environment and reflected in a 2024 change in admission structure.
- Attendance numbers reflect the success of Contemporary Calgary’s exhibitions, programs and partnerships.

Looking ahead: 2024 highlights

- The Morris and Ann Dancyger Observatory Gallery will open in March 2024. The renovated space expands the available exhibition area and will allow visitors to explore frequently changing exhibitions.
- Contemporary Calgary joined Canoo in early 2024 to support newcomers by offering free access to cultural experiences.



**CONTEMPORARY CALGARY ARTS SOCIETY
(CONTEMPORARY CALGARY)
2023 Civic Partner Annual Report**

Civic Partner Name: Contemporary Calgary Arts Society

Legal Structure: Independent External organization (Societies Act)

Fiscal Year End: July 1 to June 30

Manage/Operate City Owned Assets: Yes

Mandate: Contemporary Calgary exists for the purpose of engaging the public with contemporary works of art.

1. What 3-5 key results did your organization achieve in 2023 that contributed to:

a) one or more Council Strategic Directions- economic resilience, social resilience, climate resilience?

Contemporary Calgary's activities primarily support Council's Strategic Direction of social resilience and socio-economic resilience. Three key results are:

1. The provision of exhibitions and programs that explore experiences and ideas from a wide range of perspectives. Examples include: *Human Capital*, a group show that highlighted the humanity of economic migrants, considering their individual experiences instead of just their economic value; *Chitra Ganesh: Astral Dance*, which drew upon Southeast Asian iconography to explore a range of contemporary concerns; and *Diane Arbus: Photographs, 1956 – 1971*, which offered Calgarians the rare opportunity to see Arbus's work in western Canada and provided insight into the lives of people pushed to the fringes of society in 1960s and 70s. We also ran *Perspectives*, a monthly film series featuring Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous Peoples of Colour (QTBIPOC) narratives, directors, and actors. These diverse exhibitions and programs ensure visitors can see work by artists with whom they may share an ethno-cultural background or personal experience. Visitors with less in common with the artists can gain insight into different lived experiences. Together, these opportunities foster empathy, understanding, and social connections.
2. In 2023, we launched *Ksahkomiitapiiks*, our Indigenous residency and mentorship program that pairs an experienced Indigenous artist with an emerging Indigenous artist. Adrian Stimson, a celebrated, established artist and member of the Siksika Nation, mentored Star Crop Eared Wolf, an emerging artist from the Kainai Nation. She ultimately produced *Niitoyis*, a photo-based installation situated in Contemporary Calgary's spiral ramp — the heart of the building. A fresh and dynamic take on land acknowledgements, this exhibition ensures that almost all visitors to the building experience a visual version of a land acknowledgement. This program contributes to social resilience by prominently featuring the work of contemporary Indigenous artists and encouraging consideration of different ways of thinking about land and our relationships to it. Equally as important, it broadens Calgarian's and visitors' access to and understanding of our regional Indigenous creative context.
3. The provision of access to the visual arts and visual arts activities through low-cost or complimentary admission. In addition to low admission fees (\$10 for an adult, \$20 for an unlimited membership, and free access for children), we also offered many opportunities to access the galleries for free, including exhibition openings, Free First Thursdays, our Stampede breakfast,

children's educational experiences (supported by the TD Ready Commitment), and other special events, including partnerships with organizations like Beakerhead, a celebration of art and science. These opportunities ensure that citizens can participate in community-building events without economic barriers, which in turn develops social resilience and deepens community connections. Through our partnerships, we expand the capacity of both organizations to provide opportunities that positively impact the local community.

b) Your own organization's strategy?

Contemporary Calgary's Strategic Plan outlines four key priorities:

1. Strengthen the cultural community in support of art and artists
2. Build, grow and support our audience and membership through our exhibitions and programs that create connection
3. Grow our foundations of support to increase organizational sustainability and resilience
4. Advance capital renovations and expansion projects to support expanding our capabilities, increase service to the community and shape the future of the Downtown West

We made clear advances in all four priority areas. We strengthened the cultural community through the many exhibitions, talks, openings, and partnership events that we carried out. Examples of these exhibitions and events are highlighted throughout this report, and include things like our Free First Thursdays, artist talks, film screenings, and exhibition openings, as well as strong advocacy for artists and arts organizations at all three levels of government. On the second item, growing our audiences, we are pleased to report an increase in our attendance, as well as the addition of more arts education programming aimed at children, youth, and people who are age 55+. These educational programs are helping us reach and grow new audiences, and are discussed in greater detail in section 2 of this report.

Here, we would like to highlight specific results around items 3 and 4, growing our foundations of support and advancing capital renovations.

In late 2022, we requested operating support from the City of Calgary in recognition of the impact of our work, our important role in revitalizing the Downtown West End, and the significant costs associated with appropriately operating and maintaining this building. We were fortunate to receive a one-time operating grant in the amount of \$900,000 for 2023, the majority of which supported operating costs for this historic facility.

The impact of this funding has been significant, allowing us to better maintain the building and better support our operations. Specifically, it has allowed us to carry out preventative maintenance, increase the quality of our landscaping and snow removal, and address damage and debris caused by anti-social behaviour. It has allowed us to take a proactive approach to stewardship of the building and to become better neighbours in the Downtown West End: our building contributes to a sense of place through its distinctive and well-kept appearance.

Financial support from the City marks a turning point in our relationship and in Contemporary Calgary's growth as an organization. We are pleased to be increasingly involved as a Major Civic Partner and look forward to working together as we continue to provide meaningful art experiences and contribute to the ongoing efforts to provide a safe and culturally active environment for those who live in and visit downtown Calgary. We also wish to acknowledge the ripple effects of the City's funding: this support is a vote of confidence in our organization and helps us demonstrate our stability, longevity, and potential to other funders.

To that end, we are happy to report significant support from new funders, or from existing funders in substantially increased amounts, for both capital projects and operations. The City of Calgary, Calgary Foundation, and PrairiesCan all supported renovation projects, described below, while Morris and Ann Dancyger pledged \$500,000 over ten years for support of our operations.

2023 saw significant advancement of our capital plans. We completed renovations to our Auditorium, improving accessibility and adding a stage, curtains, and essential technology to an underutilized space. This revamped space provides additional capacity for our own programming, including films, performances, and panel discussions, and adds to the number of spaces available in the city for other cultural organizations. For example: we worked with the Sound Atlas Music Festival to support their programming, and look forward to working with other groups in the future.

We also began renovations on the Observatory Gallery in 2023. Originally an outdoor space with a retractable roof, a permanent metal roof was added when the LRT line was extended. However, no further work was completed to bring this area inside the building envelope, leading to inadequate temperature controls and damaging freeze-thaw cycles. Work was completed in early 2024, and will be detailed in next year's report.

In addition to increasing the building's functionality, these projects help us build momentum as we secure support for larger renovation projects that will help us better serve our mandate and community. We wish to thank you for your support, which has been transformative for our organization and will continue help us grow and reach out potential as a significant cultural destination that creates a safe and welcoming community in the Downtown West End.

2. Performance measures help demonstrate the return on The City's investment in a partner's operations, and support continuous improvement for Partners. What performance measures reflect your organization's impact in 2023?

	Performance Measure Name	2021 results	2022 results	2023 results	How does this measure reflect your organization's impact?
How much did you do?	Number of Visitors (per calendar year) *numbers from 2021 and 2022 were impacted by pandemic-related restrictions	4294*	10,123*	55,564 (17,564 core; 38,000 Beakerhead partnership)	Consistent growth in attendance demonstrates the public's desire to access meaningful art experiences.
How well did you do it?	Initiatives to grow our visitorship (like membership drives and advertising) are helping us to steadily increase our attendance.				
How are Calgarians better off?	Calgarians have access to a wide range of cultural experiences at various price points. Revenue generated through admission helps us in maintaining and expanding the diversity of our programming.				

	Performance Measure Name	2021 results	2022 results	2023 results	How does this measure reflect your organization's impact?
How much did you do?	Partnerships (Number of partnerships with other local organizations, per calendar year) *Data from 2021 and 2022 for partnerships was not formally tracked during these years. Numbers are an estimate.	5*	9*	16	Partnerships allow us to support like-minded organizations through the sharing of space and resources. They help us grow and reach new audiences and create connected communities. Partnerships allow us to leverage each organization's skill sets and resources.
How well did you do it?	Steady growth in the number of our partnerships reflects the quality of our partnerships. Local organizations are happy to work with us because we achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.				
How are Calgarians better off?	Calgarians are better off because civic resources are being used wisely. We share our space in order to build community and provide services in an underserved area of Calgary.				

	Performance Measure Name	2021 results	2022 results	2023 results	How does this measure reflect your organization's impact?
How much did you do?	Educational Programming for children and youth. Numbers represent the number of drop-in programs offered. *2021 and 2022 reflect limited programming due to pandemic restrictions.	6*	7*	20	Mid-2023 saw the start of our TD Educational Initiative, which, along with support from the City, has allowed us to increase the quality and amount of programming we offer for children and youth.
How well did you do it?	Having a coordinator dedicated to creating programs based off our exhibitions has led to innovative and fun programming that receives consistently positive feedback. It has also allowed us to pursue new partnerships, including with Campus Calgary / Open Minds.				
How are Calgarians better off?	Calgarians of all ages have access to free, quality arts programming in the Downtown West End.				

3. Are there any additional stories or information you wanted to share beyond performance measures that demonstrate the impact of your organization's programs or services?

While the number of partnerships we have is important, so too is the identity of our partners. We maintained several existing partnerships with groups such as BUMP (Beltline Urban Mural Project), Beakerhead (a celebration of art and science), the Exposure Photography Festival, Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth (an organization supporting newcomer youth), the University of Calgary, Calgary on Purpose (discussion panels that celebrate diverse voices in our community to consider a shared vision for who Calgary is and what it will become), Sound Atlas (a music festival), the People's Portrait Prize (a participatory art exhibition), and many other like-minded organizations that support community-building through their activities. Of note is our relationship with Beakerhead, where Contemporary Calgary partnered by sharing space in the entire building for three days in September. Playing off the building's history as both a Planetarium and Science Centre, the

Beakerhead partnership was very successful, bringing some 38,000 visitors over the weekend and demonstrating a public desire for engaging, free and family-friendly events.

Another highlight of this year was significant support from TD Bank to enhance our educational programming. At the end of our 2022 fiscal year, we hired a TD Educational Coordinator who has been developing and delivering outstanding programming for us. This key position has helped us better serve our youngest visitors while also growing our audience.

4. Does your organization use benchmarks to evaluate and improve performance and operations, and increase your organization's impact?

a) Examples of benchmarks:

Representative Content: many arts and cultural organizations offer programming that features artists from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Such choices enrich programmatic offerings, improve equity and representation, and reflect the communities in which the organizations are located. Demographic data from 2021 indicates that approximately 41% Calgary's population identifies as a visible minority. Contemporary Calgary aims to meet or exceed this level of diversity.

Admission Fees: in the post-pandemic environment, many cultural organizations are experimenting with admission strategies in order to increase earned revenue and increase attendance. While some organizations have increased admission prices, others are moving towards "admission-by-donation" models to focus on attendance. Admission fees for institutions comparable to Contemporary Calgary range from "by donation" to \$20.00.

Attendance: although the impacts of the pandemic are still being felt by some cultural organizations, attendance remains one of the clearest benchmarks for measuring organizational impact. Comparable organizations see yearly visitation numbers that range from 2000 to 190,000.

b) What is your current and targeted performance in comparison to these benchmarks?

Representative Content: Contemporary Calgary proactively chooses exhibitions and programs by diverse artists. We had six major exhibitions in the 2023 calendar year, featuring a total of 17 artists, of whom 14 were BIPOC. Approximately 82% of the artists featured were from BIPOC communities, which exceeds our target of 41%.

The major exhibitions were: *Chitra Ganesh: Astral Dance* (1 BIPOC artist), *Human Capital* (12 BIPOC artists), *Diane Arbus: Photographs, 1956 – 1971*, *Carol Sawyer: the Natalie Brettschneider Archive*, *Charles Stankieveh: The Desert Turned to Glass*, and *Ksahkomiitapiiks* (1 BIPOC artist).

Admission Fees: For 2023, Contemporary Calgary maintained the admission strategy it had in place since opening in early 2020. Admission prices were kept purposefully low (\$10 per adult, or \$20 for an annual membership) to encourage attendance. Starting in March 2024, however, we have moved to an "admission-by-donation" model for people 24 years of age and under. We will re-evaluate and compare these strategies in 2025.

Attendance: In the 2023 calendar year, Contemporary Calgary's attendance was 55,564, of which 17,564 were core attendees, and 38,000 were visitors from Beakerhead.

While we are pleased with this number, we plan to grow it through a revised admission strategy, increased children's programming, and carefully selected exhibitions. We also recognize that we can increase visitorship through the provision of onsite amenities, including a café. Our long-term capital plans include the creation of a new entrance pavilion which will include a café and gift shop, both of which are expected to contribute to attendance.

c) How this information is being used to support continuous improvement?

Contemporary Calgary's Board and senior management meet regularly to review these benchmarks. Areas of improvement are identified and strategies are put in place to help us better meet our goals. In the case of admission strategies and attendance, for instance, our Board and senior management reviewed the current practices of other organizations and evaluated them against our goal of growing both our attendance and revenue. It was ultimately determined that an "admission-by-donation" model for people 24 and under was an appropriate balance, allowing us to reduce barriers for people less likely to attend while not entirely sacrificing revenue generation. We look forward to re-evaluating this strategy in 2025.

5. How does your organization address equity, diversity or inclusion, or support racial equity?

Equity, diversity, inclusion and access are foundational values that inform all aspects of Contemporary Calgary's operations, including governance, staffing, exhibitions, and programming. We recognize that advancing these values is an ongoing and imperfect process and seek to continually evaluate and improve our actions as we grow.

Our Board currently consists of nine women and eight men, is ethnically and culturally diverse, and includes people who have diverse sexual identities. We seek to maintain this diversity on the Board by actively developing relationships with underrepresented people and groups in order to recruit new Board Members. Additionally, all Board Members undergo EDIA training facilitated by the EDIA Committee.

Our Leadership Team consists of four people, including three women, all of whom are from culturally diverse backgrounds. As the leadership team changes and grows, we will seek additional diversity by ensuring we help advance the careers of our existing diverse employee base.

To continue to attract wide range candidates, we offer an inclusive workplace environment with an equitable benefits package that covers affirming medication for trans, non-binary, and gender diverse people. We offer a flexible work environment that supports work-life balance and offer a generous leave policy that covers a wide array of life circumstances. Clear, current EDIA policies are in place, and staff members have access to EDIA training, including options to take the Indigenous Canada course offered by the University of Alberta.

We have been fortunate to be able to offer a number of grant-funded positions specifically for members of the BIPOC community. Our TD Educational Initiative has allowed us to hire three people of colour for a two-year period. We will be reopening conversations with TD Bank Group shortly to determine how we can maintain and grow this vital program.

Our exhibitions reflect diverse voices, including those from equity-deserving or underrepresented groups, as well as local artists from Calgary and Alberta whose voices are sometimes overlooked on a national scale. We also run an Indigenous mentorship program, *Kshakomiitapiiks*, which highlights the voice of a First Nations artist.

We offer a range of community building events. *Perspectives*, for example, is a film series that shares QTBIPOC experiences and points of view with a diverse audience. Selected by a BIPOC curator and offered once a month, this programming has been well received in the community. We also offer occasional late-night film screenings called *Drag Me to the Movies*. These events include commentary and performances by Drag Queens and Kings alongside cult-favourite films.

Our educational classes are designed and delivered by members of BIPOC communities. We have also developed an ongoing partnership with the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth, which gives newcomer youth the chance to access the arts but also to see other newcomers in leadership roles in the arts.

Our exhibition openings and Free First Thursday events, both of which are free to attend, help us build community and ensure admission fees—which are already some of the lowest for similarly-sized organizations in North America at just \$10 or \$20 for annual membership—are not a barrier to access. Newcomers may also access the gallery for free via the Canoo app.

Future programming and operations will continue to embody our values of being welcoming, inclusive, engaging and relevant. EDIA training will continue for Board and staff, and our exhibitions will continue to reflect the diversity of artists and artistic production. Our EDIA journey is continuous, and we are grateful to have the opportunity to reflect upon it and identify future directions as a result of this granting program.

6. How is your organization advancing Indigenous Truth and Reconciliation? (For example addressing specific calls to action in the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#) report or [The City's White Goose Flying Report](#))

The *White Goose Flying* report interprets call 69.iii as the need to “support public awareness programming in libraries, museums and archives.” Contemporary Calgary contributes to the realization of this goal through its programming. In 2022, we featured *Robert Houle: Red is Beautiful*, a significant retrospective of one of Canada’s most distinguished Indigenous artists and curators. In 2023, we launched *Kshakomiitapiiks*, an ongoing mentorship program that pairs an Indigenous mentor and mentee to produce a work of art that will be displayed in Contemporary Calgary’s atrium and act as a visual land acknowledgement. The first work produced in this series was by Star Crop Eared Wolf and was unveiled in June of 2023. We are currently in the process of producing the next work in this series.

Our programming is also aligned with Call to Action 63 (iii), which calls for “building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect.” *Kshakomiitapiiks*, as well as other programming that features Indigenous artists, is a jumping off point for the many school groups that visit the gallery.

We are also currently in discussions with CIF Reconciliation Society about how we can support their *Pokaiiks – The Children* event, held annually on September 30. Our tentative plan is to offer an indoor space for gathering following their walk from Fort Calgary.

RESOURCES

7. Please estimate how The City’s operating funding was allocated in 2023.

%	Advertising and promotion
33.4 %	Programs or services
%	Office supplies and expenses
%	Professional and consulting fees
%	Staff compensation, development and training
%	Fund development
%	Purchased supplies and assets
66.6%	Facility maintenance
%	Evaluation or Research
%	<i>Other, please name:</i>

8. Did volunteers support your operations in 2023? (including board and committee members)

How many volunteers?	54
Estimated total hours provided by volunteers:	3130

9. Did your organization receive any awards or recognition in 2023, or have any client or participant feedback that you want to highlight?

Contemporary Calgary is proud to contribute to Calgary’s rich artistic ecosystem. Many of our exhibitions and programs receive extensive print and radio media coverage, ensuring citizens and visitors are aware of the programs we offer while also contributing to larger art historical narratives. When academics look through Calgary’s artistic past, these articles, as well as our own records, will ensure Calgary’s impact is noted on a national scale.

Select examples of coverage can be found [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

We also often receive feedback about our educational programs. Although most of it is oral, people do sometimes take time to write. The quote below is from the parent of a child who attended several of our educational workshops:

“I also wanted you to know how much your programming means to us. The youngest is part of Embers (Girl Guides) and as part of an activity, took a doll with her for a visit and wrote about it. She also brought her art items to a meeting to share with her friends. The giant foam hat also went to school.” March, 2024

10. How did your organization address climate change in 2023, for example, operational or program changes that reduced green house gas emissions (GHG), air/water pollution, or waste that aligned with [The City’s Climate Change Program](#) including Council’s Climate Emergency Declaration?

Contemporary Calgary participated in Creative Green Tools Canada, a tracking program designed to measure an organization’s environmental footprint. As expected, the bulk of our footprint is related to building operations (and energy use specifically) and visitor travel.

We are fortunate to have a number of energy-saving fixtures already in place as a result of the base building renovation in 2019, including light sensors in washrooms and offices, low flow toilets, faucets that automatically shut off, and high efficiency boilers. Building automation systems, along with

preventative maintenance, help us maximize building efficiency. We also have recycling, composting, and waste diversion programs. We offer bicycle parking and are located immediately next to public transit.

While these fixtures and programs are beneficial, it remains that the greatest reductions in GHGs will be achieved through significant renovations, including increased insulation. To that end, we have revised our major capital plans to meet ambitious climate targets, reducing our energy usage by a forecasted 64% compared to a pre-renovation condition. We can achieve this energy reduction even whilst expanding our building footprint. Efforts to secure funding for these renovations are ongoing and remain an organizational priority.

To reduce the environmental impact of our staff, we offer options to work from home to reduce emissions from commuting. We also encourage our visitors to select methods of transportation other than private vehicles, and hope one day to have our name added to our closest C-Train station to further promote transit use: the Contemporary Calgary Station.

11. Are there any projects, initiatives or plans for 2024 that you want to briefly highlight?

- In March of 2024, we will open the Morris and Ann Dancyger Observatory Gallery. As mentioned above, this renovated area expands our available exhibition space. It will also offer a notable programming model, where frequently changing exhibitions offer visitors the chance to explore highly relevant events and ideas. The renovated space will also provide a source of rental revenue.
- We are currently working on an exhibition that will feature artists from the Calgary community, and are excited to showcase outstanding local artists.
- In early 2024, we joined Canoo, a program that supports newcomers by offering them free access to cultural experiences.
- We have partnered with the Calgary Public Library to provide an “art pass,” an innovative book that can be borrowed from any public library. Visitors sign out the book, use it for admission at Contemporary Calgary, and record their experiences in the book. The books will ultimately be filled with visitor experiences of Contemporary Calgary.
- We are developing a partnership with a number of schools and educational groups to expand our reach and the educational opportunities available to local students, including the Calgary Arts Academy and Campus Calgary/ Open Minds.
- We continue to develop our relationship with AUArts and their students, offering access to the building outside of regular opening hours to match their class schedules and ensure that they may visit the galleries with their instructor during class time.

THE FOLLOWING SECTION IS FOR CIVIC PARTNERS MANAGING CITY-OWNED ASSETS

12. CAPITAL PROJECTS AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

Asset: *Centennial Planetarium*

a) How did you use The City’s capital funding in 2023?

Project	City Funding (2023)	Benefit (service improvement, efficiency, improved condition)
Lifecycle Maintenance: Building Envelope	52,425	Improved building condition as a result of repairs to roof and exterior walls
Observatory Renovation	1,049,966	Increased building longevity by properly insulating and fully renovating the Observatory space. Improved service provision as a

		result of providing a comfortable and secure space suitable for the exhibition of works of art and for use by community groups through rental opportunities.
Auditorium Renovation	0	We renovated the former Pleiades Theatre with support of PrairiesCan and Calgary Foundation. While this project did not benefit from Civic funding support, it was a significant renovation to restore the theater to its original condition with a state-of-the-art A/V and lighting system to support CC and our partners in the community.