

Development Permit in Downtown Commercial Core (Ward 7) at 222 – 8 Avenue SE, DP2024-02789

RECOMMENDATION:

That Calgary Planning Commission APPROVE Development Permit DP2024-02789 for a New: Performing Arts Centre, Conference and Event Facility and Restaurant: Licensed at 222 – 8 Avenue SE (Plan A, Block 52, Lots 1 to 38), with conditions (Attachment 2).

HIGHLIGHTS

- This development permit application proposes a new performing arts centre, conference and event facility and café uses as part of the Arts Commons Transformation (ACT) project in the Downtown Core, directly adjacent to what will be the remaining portion of Olympic Plaza. This application is solely for the building itself, and the facilities required for the functioning of it, and does not include the public realm areas that surround the building, as these areas will be included in the Olympic Plaza Transformation (OPT) project. However, this application does include, both the relocation of the Women are Persons! Monument and the removal of the trees from the entire Olympic Plaza site, as addressing tree valuation and removal comprehensively for all of Olympic Plaza was determined to be more appropriate than having two separate applications.
- The development permit complies with the relevant planning policies of the *Municipal Development Plan* (MDP) for the Greater Downtown Activity Centre.
- What does this mean to Calgarians? This application facilitates the development of a new performing arts centre and conference/event facility that will strengthen this eastern edge of the downtown core as a cultural hub and a destination for residents and visitors alike.
- Why does this matter? New cultural spaces add additional opportunities for entertainment venues and will strengthen this cultural hub in the downtown.
- There is no previous Council Direction regarding this proposal.

DISCUSSION

This application, in the southeast quadrant of the Downtown Core, was submitted by Hindle Architects on behalf of the landowner, The City of Calgary, on 2024 April 21. The subject site is on 7 Avenue SE, between 1 Street SE and Macleod Trail SE and it is currently occupied by Olympic Plaza. The proposed performing arts centre will be located on the western half of Olympic Plaza, directly adjacent to the Dominion Bank Building, a designated Municipal and Provincial Historic Resource, currently occupied by Teatro Ristorante. The facility will include a 1,000 seat multi-purpose theatre and a smaller, 200 seat studio theatre, along with supporting café space and an event facility. More information can be found in the Development Permit Plans (Attachment 3) and Applicant Submission (Attachment 4). The proposal aligns with the relevant policies of the MDP.

This development permit application for this new build, referred to as the ACT Expansion, forms the first part of the overall ACT project. The second part of ACT is the OPT project which is the redesign of the remaining area of Olympic Plaza. The third part of ACT is the ACT Modernization which is the redesign of the current Arts Commons building. There were two separate Development Management Agreements (DMA) initiated between The City of Calgary,

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Arts Commons and Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC), one for the ACT Expansion and one for OPT. However, approval of the DMA and funding for the ACT Expansion was completed in 2020, with design work beginning in 2021, but the DMA for OPT was not approved and the project not fully funded until mid-2023. Therefore, the ACT Expansion is moving in advance of the OPT project. However, the anticipated timeline for completion of both the ACT Expansion and OPT is 2028. The ACT Modernization project will proceed once a separate DMA for that part of ACT has been approved and funded.

As part of the review process, this application was reviewed at the pre-application stage by the Urban Design Review Panel (UDRP) on 2024 January 24. There were a number of concerns identified by UDRP. Administration worked with the applicant to make adjustments to the proposal as much as was feasible to address UDRP's concerns. Administration is ultimately supportive of the proposal. Comments from UDRP are included as Attachment 5.

A detailed planning evaluation of this application, including location maps, is provided in the Background and Planning Evaluation (Attachment 1).

ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

- Outreach was undertaken by the Applicant
- Public/interested parties were informed by Administration

Applicant-Led Outreach

As part of the review of the proposed development permit application, the applicant was encouraged to use the [Applicant Outreach Toolkit](#) to assess which level of outreach with relevant public groups and the community association was appropriate. Although there was no outreach conducted specifically in relation to this development permit, there was significant outreach undertaken in 2021 when the vision for the ACT project was first being considered. At that time, there were virtual, roundtable sessions held with impacted groups, meetings with the organizations affiliated with Arts Commons and an online public survey conducted. Please refer to the Applicant Outreach Summary (Attachment 6) for further details on the outreach conducted.

City-Led Outreach

In keeping with Administration's standard practices, this application was circulated to relevant public groups, notice posted on-site and published [online](#).

Administration received thirty letters in opposition from the public. Many of the concerns expressed were not directly related to this application and were focused on aspects of the OPT project instead. However, the comments that were directly related to this application included the following areas of concern:

- loss of green space and removal of trees;
- the reduction in size of the current Olympic Plaza area; and
- impacts of construction on the use and enjoyment of Olympic Plaza.

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No comments from the Calgary Downtown Association were received. Administration subsequently contacted the Calgary Downtown Association, and they confirmed that they have no comments at this time about this proposed development.

Administration considered the relevant planning issues specific to the proposed development and has determined the proposal to be appropriate. Following Calgary Planning Commission, Commission's decision will be advertised in accordance with the *Municipal Government Act*.

IMPLICATIONS

Social

This proposed development will enhance an area of Calgary that is already an important part of the city's arts and cultural landscape. This would help Calgarians and visitors alike maintain a high quality of life by having additional opportunities for participating in cultural and special events. This would also further Calgary's reputation as an active city by providing an additional facility that enables multi-purpose uses and a wide range of performances.

Environmental

The *Calgary Climate Strategy – Pathways to 2050* identifies programs and actions intended to reduce Calgary's greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate risks. This development permit application specifically addresses Program Pathway D: Renewable Energy – Implement neighbourhood-scale renewable energy projects, as district energy is being proposed as part of this project.

Economic

The development of this new performing arts centre is an investment in the future of this part of the Downtown Core and forms an integral part of the overall transformation of Olympic Plaza, one of the City's primary public gathering spaces. This would also further Calgary's reputation as a vibrant city with a strong sense of place and be a destination for visitors and Calgarians alike.

Service and Financial Implications

No anticipated financial impact.

RISK

There are no known risks associated with this proposal.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Background and Planning Evaluation
2. Conditions of Approval
3. Development Permit Plans
4. Applicant Submission
5. Urban Design Review Panel Comments
6. Applicant Outreach Summary

**Planning and Development Services Report to
Calgary Planning Commission
2024 October 31**

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Department Circulation

| General Manager (Name) | Department | Approve/Consult/Inform |
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