

# Background and Planning Evaluation

## Background and Site Context

The subject parcel for this proposed development is located in the downtown core along 7 Avenue SE, between Macleod Trail SE and 1 Street SE. The subject parcel is approximately 1.23 hectares (3.04 acres) in size and approximately 153 metres wide by 85 metres deep. The site is currently occupied by Olympic Plaza, one of the downtown core's primary open spaces.

The subject site is surrounded by a concentration of institutional, civic and cultural uses. Directly to the west of the site is the Telus Convention Centre. To the south of the subject site, directly across Stephen Avenue is Arts Commons, a multi-venue arts centre. To the east of the site is the City of Calgary's Municipal Building and to the north of the site, across the LRT tracks for the Red and Blue LRT lines, is the Cathedral Church of the Redeemer and a 15-storey office building.

The subject site is in very close proximity to the commercial development along Stephen Avenue Mall and close to the commercial uses located in East Village, approximately 300 metres to the northeast of the subject site (a three-minute walk). The subject site itself is one of the primary public open spaces in Calgary's downtown core. However, it is also in relatively close proximity to both the Bow and Elbow River pathways. The Bow River pathway is 450 metres to the north of the subject site (a five-minute walk) and the Elbow River pathway is 900 metres to the east of the subject site (a 10-minute walk).

## Community Peak Population Table

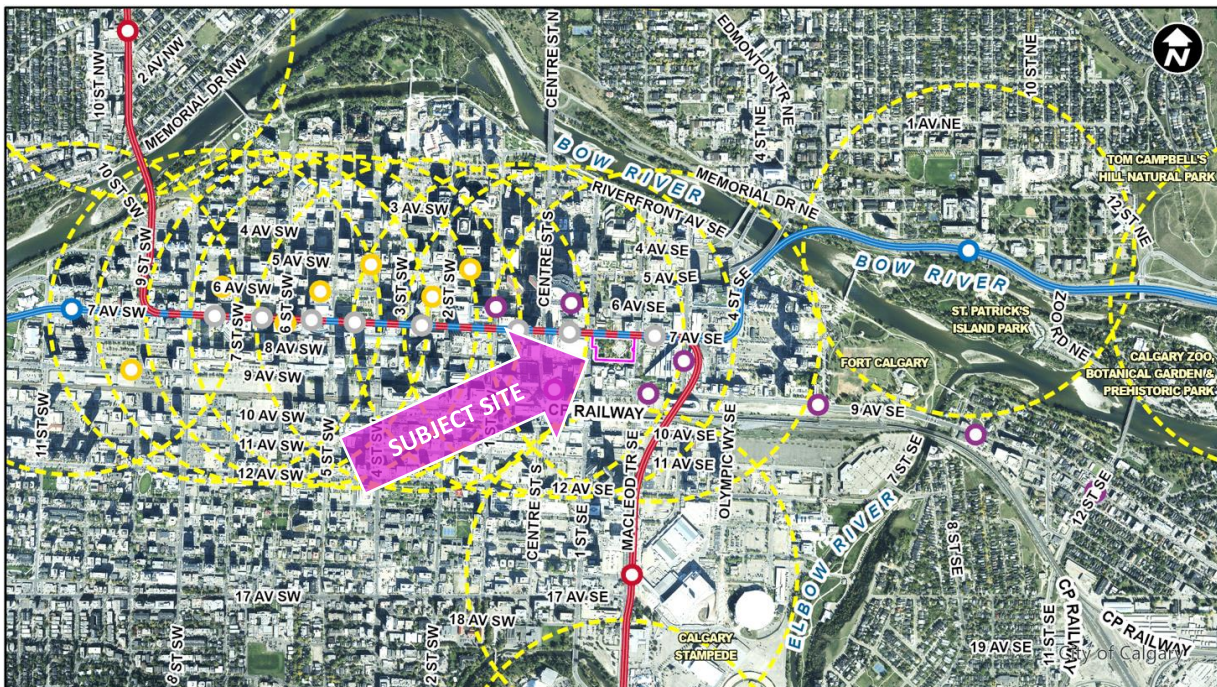
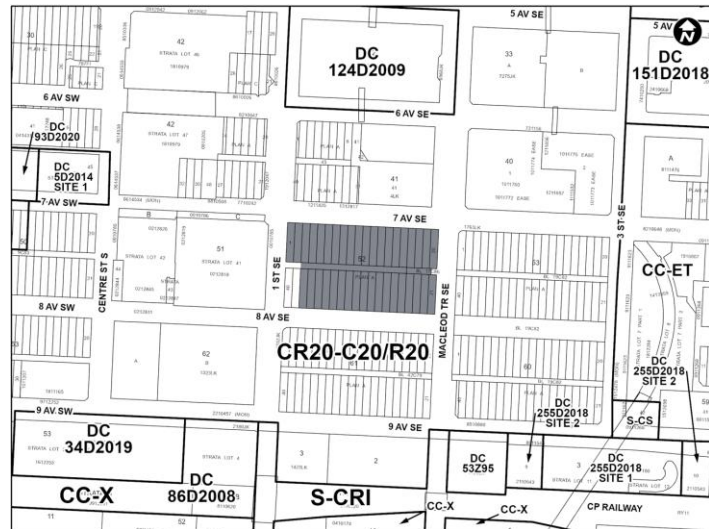
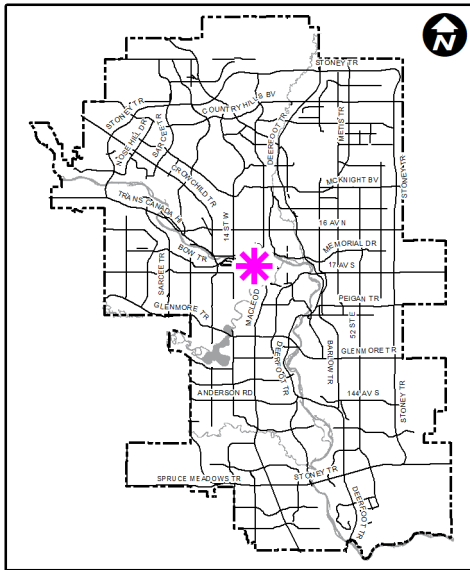
As identified below, the Downtown Commercial Core reached its peak population in 2015.

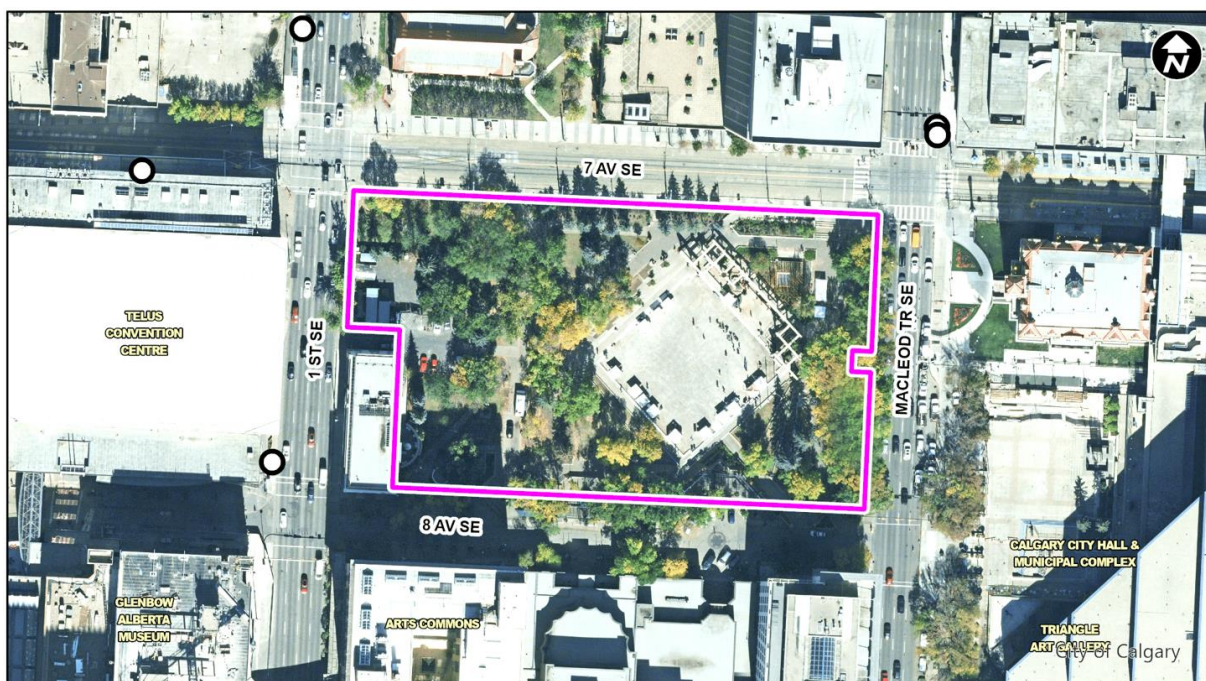
| <b>Downtown Commercial Core</b>    |        |
|------------------------------------|--------|
| Peak Population Year               | 2015   |
| Peak Population                    | 9,083  |
| 2019 Current Population            | 8,683  |
| Difference in Population (Number)  | -400   |
| Difference in Population (Percent) | -4.40% |

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

None

## Planning Evaluation

### Land Use

The subject parcel is designated the Commercial Residential District (CR20 – C20/R20). This is the primary land use district within the downtown core and allows for a wide range of uses, with the possibility of up to a floor area ratio (FAR) of 20 in accordance with the bonusing provisions as found within Part 13, Division 3 of Land Use Bylaw 1P2007.

The proposed development aligns with the overall purpose of the CR20 – C20/R20 District, as this performing arts centre will add to the cultural uses that can be found within the downtown core and contributes to continuing the Downtown's role as the predominant destination for cultural activities in The City.

### Density

The proposed FAR for this development is 1.40. Therefore, this development did not trigger any of the bonusing requirements of the CR20 – C20/R20 District which are required for any development over 3.0 FAR.

### Development and Site Design

This application proposes a performing arts centre and conference facility with ancillary café uses. However, this development permit is only for the building itself, and the facilities needed to allow for the functioning of it and does not include any aspects of the public realm, landscaping,

etc. that would normally accompany a development permit application. This application includes the removal of the trees from Olympic Plaza and the relocation of the Women are Persons! Monument. All further additional detail for public realm, landscaping etc. will form part of a future application that will be submitted as part of the Olympic Plaza Transformation (OPT) project.

Approval and funding for the Arts Commons Transformation (ACT) Expansion portion of the overall ACT project occurred prior to approval and funding for the OPT portion of the project. Therefore, the timing of the ACT Expansion is ahead of the timing for OPT. Administration was comfortable with allowing for the submission and review of the development permit just for the building portion of the ACT Expansion project, as preliminary designs of OPT were shared with Administration and the OPT project will be presented to the Urban Design Review Panel as well, allowing for an opportunity to assess both projects at once. Therefore, the following section discusses only the building itself.

### ***Site and Building Design***

#### **Building (At-grade Level)**

The primary entrance to the performing arts centre is located on the south face of the building, directly off of 8 Avenue SE. This provides access to the primary theatre space, in the centre of the building, designed to seat 1,000 people. There is a secondary entrance along the east façade of the building, directly adjacent to Olympic Plaza, which allows for access closer to the smaller studio theatre, intended to seat 200 people, situated in the northeast portion of the building. There are two small café/bar areas located at the interior entrances to both of the theatres. The ground floor also includes all of the back-of-house functions for the theatre, such as the waste and recycling areas and the loading facilities needed for the theatre performances. Access to both the loading areas as well as the waste and recycling is off of 1 Street SE.

The north façade of the building along 7 Avenue SE will feature a public art installation as a means of engaging with the pedestrians walking past the building.

The west façade of the building is partially adjacent to the Dominion Bank building. The space proposed between the two buildings would allow for waste and recycling functions that would be accessed from 1 Street SE as mentioned previously. In addition, the stage door access would be located along the west façade, intended for performers and employees to access the back-of-stage portions of the theatre.

The exterior of the building is composed of dark green lapped metal panels and brown metal battens with brown metal trim. There is floor to ceiling glazing on the ground level of the east and south façades, allowing for permeability between the building and Olympic Plaza as well as 8 Avenue SE. The portion of the north façade closest to Olympic Plaza also incorporates this floor to ceiling glazing. The primary entrance to the theatre along 8 Avenue SE is articulated with a sweeping steel structured canopy that encircles the building at the first storey level and then culminates at the corner above the south entry-way.

#### ***Urban Design and Open Space (UDOS)***

The proposed development was reviewed by the UDOS team, initially at the pre-application stage. There were a number of concerns identified, including the lack of a prominent main entrance along the south façade and CPTED concerns with the western façade adjacent to 1 Street SE. In addition, their comments included suggestions for changes to the somewhat blank north façade to improve its impact on the pedestrian experience, understanding that

the loading bays are behind this wall, so significant permeability of this façade is not possible. UDOS expressed the need to better animate this façade through the use of textured materials, extension of the public art feature further to the east or provision of additional landscaping elements to soften the interface between the building and the sidewalk.

This team also expressed concerns with the eastern edge of the building, adjacent to Olympic Plaza, highlighting the need for variation in articulation to provide more visual interest, more details on the lighting strategy to address CPTED concerns and better legibility and prominence for the one proposed entryway to help with wayfinding to the access points to the building.

### ***Urban Design Review Panel (UDRP)***

Administration brought the pre-application for this proposed development to UDRP on 2024 January 24. UDRP did have some concerns with the proposal as presented, and the comments from the Panel, as well as the applicant's response. One of the primary concerns expressed was the proposed interface with Olympic Plaza, as it was felt that the design did not provide an active interface and that the one point of entry with a non-prominent entry feature was insufficient. It was also noted that the interface was difficult to evaluate without having the details of the OPT project to review in conjunction with this application. The panel recommended that a comprehensive site planning process be undertaken between both projects to evaluate the public realm and edge conditions.

The panel also expressed some concerns with the north façade, commenting that this should be treated as a primary face of the project but at this point was a solid, impermeable wall. There was also some concern expressed about the west façade and the need for additional activation on this side of the building to make it feel more welcoming and inviting to visitors.

The panel also commented on the proposed design, suggesting that the current design was lacking a connection to the site and local culture of the city and that the building edges needed to better enhance the street character and public realm. They also suggested that due to the highly visible nature of the roof from the surrounding taller buildings, that the roof needs to be treated as a façade in itself and possibly consider the addition of a green roof. The panel also suggested that as this will be a Civic project, there could be additional environmental initiatives incorporated into it.

UDRP also commented on the need for additional uses within the building itself that could allow for a larger and more diverse demographic to make use of this facility.

In response to the comments from both the UDOS team and UDRP, Administration worked with the applicant to refine this development permit as much as was feasible to respond to the comments. However, given the complexity of this project, and the specific requirements of the program, not all aspects of the design were open to change and, therefore, not all concerns could be addressed. Changes were made to the north façade to wrap the glazing around the corner from the east façade as much as possible and the public art installation feature was added and expanded along the north façade as well. In addition, this project will be using District Energy for heating the building, addressing the request for additional green initiatives.

## **Transportation**

Pedestrian access to the subject site is available from all sides of the development, other than the 7 Avenue SE frontage. Street frontages will be subject to surface improvements as part of the OPT project.

Vehicular access for all loading and unloading will be from 1 Street SE.

The site benefits from strong connectivity for all mobility modes. As the site is in the Downtown Core, the site is well served by a variety of transit routes, including the Red and Blue LRT lines with access to the City Hall/Bow Valley College LRT Station approximately 100 metres east (a two-minute walk) from the site. Bus transit stops include the MAX Purple with a stop 350 metres east (a five-minute walk) on 3 Street SE and 7 Avenue SE, and Route 101 with a stop 150 metres (a two-minute walk) north of the site on 6 Avenue SE and 1 Street SE.

The on-street bikeway, which forms part of the Always Available for All Ages and Abilities (5A) Network, on 8 Avenue SE is directly adjacent to the site, and connections to the east include MacLeod Trail SE and 9 Avenue SE.

The streets surrounding the development site, including 1 Street SE, MacLeod Trail SE and 8 Avenue SE, are all Urban Boulevards.

## ***Bicycle Parking Facilities***

There are 26 bicycle parking stall – class 1 that have been provided as part of this development permit application, and these are located on the main level of the development adjacent to the west façade entrance.

## **Environmental Site Considerations**

No environmental concerns were noted for this site.

## **Utilities and Servicing**

Public water, sanitary and storm sewer mains exist in the adjacent public rights-of-way for development servicing purposes. Development servicing will be determined at the Development Site Servicing Plan circulation stage.

## **Legislation and Policy**

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

Administration's recommendations aligns 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.

### **Growth Plan (2022)**

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

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

The subject site is situated in the Centre City area as shown on [Map 1: Urban Structure](#) of the [Municipal Development Plan \(MDP\)](#). This application is in alignment with the policy direction in the MDP, as it will help to enhance the Downtown Core as a destination for arts, culture and celebration with the broadest variety of cultural activities.

**Calgary Climate Strategy (2022)**

Administration has reviewed this application in relation to the objectives of the [Calgary Climate Strategy – Pathways to 2050](#) programs and actions. This development permit application specifically addresses Program Pathway D: Renewable Energy – Implement neighbourhood-scale renewable energy projects, as this building will receive its heating energy from a District Energy System (DES) operated by Atlantica Sustainable Infrastructure. This building will join the network of existing buildings that uses DES, including Studio Bell, the Municipal Building and the new Central Library. DES is an approach to providing thermal energy more efficiently to networks of buildings than can be achieved by mechanical systems in individual buildings.

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

This application is supported by [Calgary's Greater Downtown Plan](#), as it will help to strengthen the importance of arts and culture within the Greater Downtown community, one of the goals of this plan. In addition, this application is one of the key parts to the transformation of Olympic Plaza which is highlighted in this plan, and it is part of the area that will continue to be the civic and cultural heart of the Greater Downtown.

**Land Use Bylaw (2007)**

Administration would highlight 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>Public Realm Setbacks</b> |                 |                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>RD / ST / AV</b>          | <b>Standard</b> | <b>Provided</b>                                                                                                                                       |
| 8 AV SE                      | 2.134m required | Plans indicate portions of the building are within the south ROW.<br><br>-No concerns, this proposal aligns with the overall plan for Stephen Avenue. |

| <b>Bylaw Relaxations</b>       |                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Regulation</b>              | <b>Standard</b>                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Provided</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 1303 Sunlight Protection Areas | Olympic Plaza must not be placed in greater shadow on September 21 from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Mountain Daylight Time than was already existing on the date the DP was applied for. | There is a small portion of additional shadow onto Olympic Plaza between these specified times.<br><br>-No concerns. Administration feels that the additional shadowing is minor, as it is right adjacent to the building and does not extend significantly into the useable area of Olympic Plaza. |

|                                 |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>1315 Ground Floor Height</p> | <p>The minimum height of the ground floor of a building is 4.5m as measured vertically from the floor to the ceiling.</p> | <p>Plans indicate a ground floor height of between 2.44m to 4.06m measured from the floor to ceiling.</p> <p>-No concerns, Administration is supportive of this requested relaxation as the design of the ground floor was very intentional to fit with the overall proposed design of the building</p> |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|