

Background and Planning Evaluation

Background and Site Context

The subject sites are located in the Downtown Commercial Core between 8 Avenue SE and 9 Avenue SE and between Macleod Trail SE and 1 Street SE. The subject parcel containing the existing Arts Commons building, one of the Downtown Core's primary arts and culture venues, is approximately 1.18 hectares (2.92 acres) in size and approximately 153 metres wide by 80 metres deep. The lands subject to the road closure are approximately 0.02 hectares (0.05 acres) in size. The irregular shape of this parcel has been determined by the amount of land needed to incorporate the encroachment of the approved Arts Commons Transformation (ACT) Expansion project into the 8 Avenue SE road right-of-way. This right-of-way currently facilitates primarily pedestrian and bicycle movement, but does allow for vehicular traffic for loading and unloading adjacent to Arts Commons and Olympic Plaza.

The subject sites are primarily surrounded by a concentration of institutional, civic and cultural uses. Directly to the west is the Glenbow Museum. To the south, directly across 9 Avenue SE, is Teck Place, an approved office-to-residential conversion project. To the east is the City of Calgary's Municipal Building, and directly to the north is Olympic Plaza, currently undergoing significant redevelopment.

The subject sites are in very close proximity to the commercial development along Stephen Avenue Mall and close to the commercial uses located in East Village, approximately 350 metres to the northeast of the subject site (a six-minute walk). They are also in relatively close proximity to both the Bow and Elbow River pathways. The Bow River pathway is 500 metres to the north of the subject sites (an eight-minute walk) and the Elbow River pathway is 900 metres to the east of the subject sites (a 15-minute walk).

There are two separate components to this application. The first is the closure of a small portion of 8 Avenue SE to enable the development of the ACT Expansion project. When this project was originally proposed, a small portion of the building (the south canopy and structural supports) extended past the property line into the 8 Avenue SE road right-of-way. The plan at the time was to then proceed with the full closure of 8 Avenue SE adjacent to Olympic Plaza. However, following an extensive evaluation of the complexities involved with pursuing a full road closure, it was determined that advancing a partial road closure specific to supporting the ACT Expansion development is the most appropriate approach forward at this time. This will then allow for further discussion on the long term strategy for the remaining portions of 8 Avenue SE and how this will support the overall vision for the Arts Commons and Olympic Plaza Transformation projects. The second part of this application is to redesignate the existing Arts Commons building on the south side of 8 Avenue SE to a new Direct Control (DC) District to allow for the provision of at-grade Plus 15 public easement space through the existing building.

Community Peak Population Table

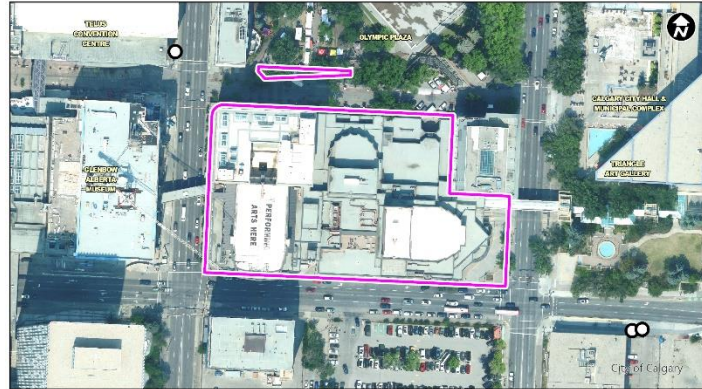
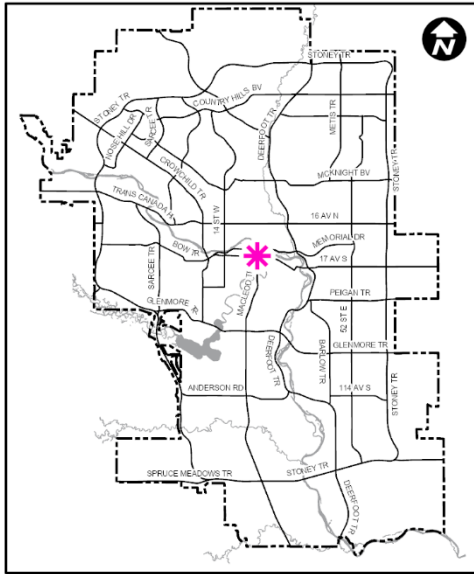
As identified below, the Downtown Commercial Core reached its peak population in 2015.

Downtown Commercial Core	
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*

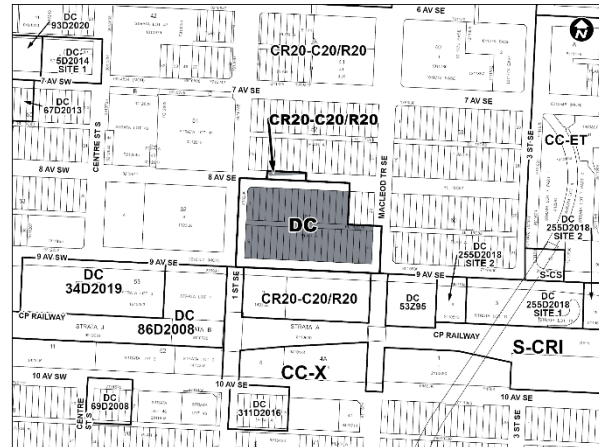
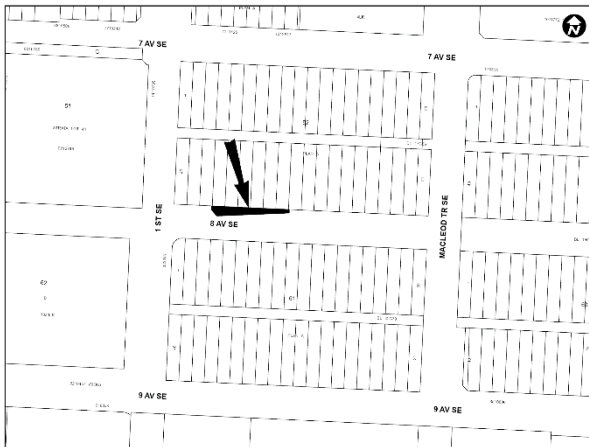
Additional demographic and socio-economic information may be obtained online through the [Downtown Commercial Core Community Profile](#).

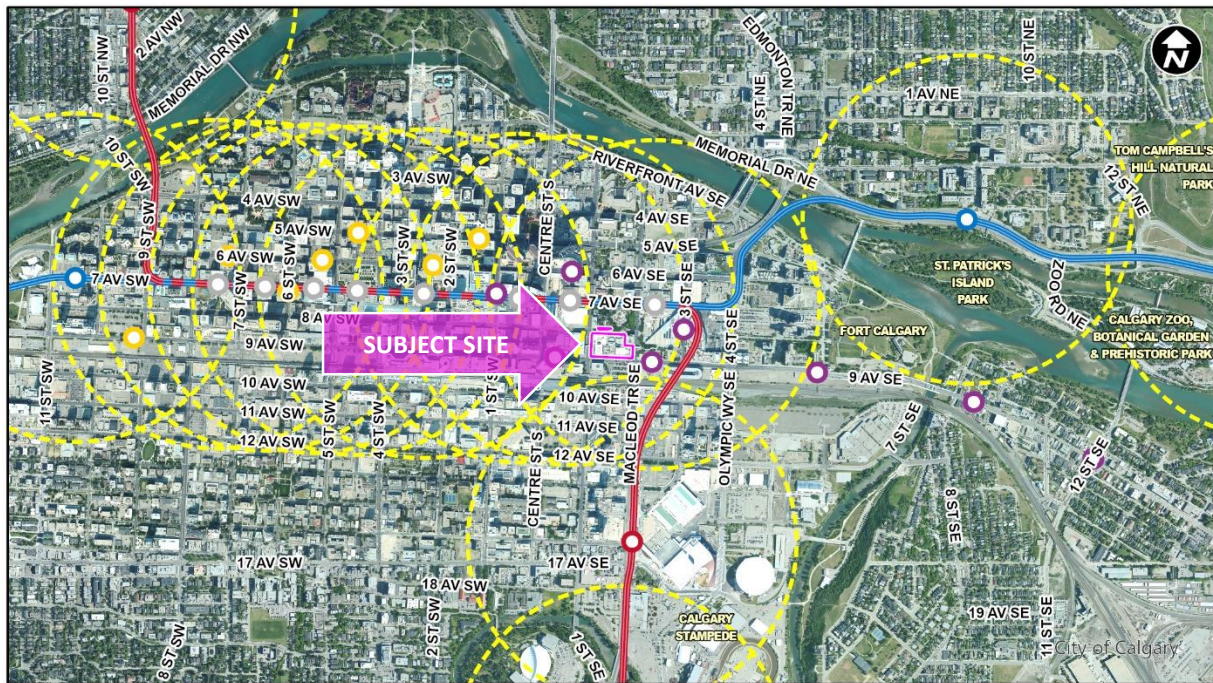
Location Maps



Road Closure Map

Proposed Land Use Map





Previous Council Direction

None.

Planning Evaluation

Road Closure

This proposal includes the closure of an approximately 0.02 hectare (0.05 acre) portion of 8 Avenue SE adjacent to 222 – 8 Avenue SE and between Macleod Trail SE and 1 Street SE. The closed portion of road would then be consolidated with the parcel directly to the north which will be the site of the new ACT Expansion project, subject to conditions.

Land Use

The subject site of the road closure is currently undesignated road right-of-way and would be assigned the Commercial Residential District (CR20 – C20/R20). This will then allow for consolidation with the parcel directly to the north which is currently zoned the CR20 District.

The subject parcels associated with the existing Arts Commons building are designated CR20 District. 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 DC District is based on the CR20 District and all rules of this district have been maintained, with the exception of the bonusing rules as found within Section 1332, Table 8, Item 8.0.4 of Bylaw 1P2007 which relates to provisions for the Plus 15 Network. The existing CR20 District requires Plus 15 Walkways, defined as publicly accessible pedestrian routes through and across the second floor of a building, to satisfy the requirements specifically of Item 8.0.4

(c)(i)(A)) as found in Bylaw 1P2007. However, the proposed DC District allows for both Plus 15 Walkways and At-Grade Pedestrian Walkways to satisfy this requirement.

Pursuant to Section 20 of the Land Use Bylaw 1P2007, this application for a DC District has been reviewed by Administration and the use of a DC District is necessary to provide for the applicant's proposed development due to the site specific regulations required to allow for this. This proposal allows for the applicant's intended development while maintaining the CR20 District base. The same result could not be achieved through the use of a standard land use district in the Land Use Bylaw.

The proposed DC District includes a rule that allows the Development Authority to relax Section 7 of the DC District Bylaw. Section 7 incorporates the rules of the base district in Bylaw 1P2007 where the DC District does not provide for specific regulation. In a standard district, many of these rules can be relaxed if they meet the test for relaxation of Bylaw 1P2007. The intent of this DC District rule is to ensure that rules of Bylaw 1P2007 that regulate aspects of development that are not specifically regulated in this DC District can also be relaxed in the same way that they would be in a standard district. In addition, the rules around the width of the proposed Plus 15 walkways and at-grade walkways have also been made relaxable, as the design of the pedestrian walkway route through the Arts Commons building has yet to be finalized.

Development and Site Design

If the road closure and land use redesignation is approved by Council, the rules of the proposed DC District would provide guidance for the future redevelopment of these sites. Given the specific context of the existing Arts Commons building, additional items that will be considered through the development permit process will include, but are not limited to:

- providing an engaging building interface between the redeveloped Arts Commons and Olympic Plaza; and
- ensuring the Plus 15 space at grade is welcoming and inviting.

Transportation

Pedestrian access to the subject sites are available from all sides of the development. The 8 Avenue SE frontage will be subject to surface improvements as part of the Olympic Plaza Transformation project. Vehicular access for all loading and unloading will be from the existing accesses off 1 Street SE.

The sites benefit from strong connectivity for all mobility modes. As these sites are in the downtown core, they are well served by a variety of transit routes. These include 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, 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 on 8 Avenue SE is directly adjacent to these sites, and connections to the east include Macleod Trail SE and 9 Avenue SE. The streets surrounding the development sites, including 1 Street SE, Macleod Trail SE and 8 Avenue SE, are all classified as Urban Boulevards.

Environmental Site Considerations

No environmental concerns have been identified at this time.

Utilities and Servicing

Public water, sanitary, and storm deep main utilities exist within the adjacent public right-of-way. Ultimate development servicing will be determined at the future development permit stage.

Legislation and Policy

South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (2014)

Administration's recommendation is aligned 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.

Municipal Development Plan (Statutory – 2020)

The subject sites are situated in the Greater Downtown 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 and the area in Calgary with the broadest variety of cultural activities.

Climate Strategy (2022)

This application does not include any specific actions that address the objectives of the [Calgary Climate Strategy – Pathways to 2050](#). Further opportunities to align development of this site with applicable climate strategies will be explored and encouraged at subsequent development approval stages.

Calgary's 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 important elements of the transformation of Olympic Plaza and Arts Commons, and it is part of the area that will continue to be the civic and cultural heart of the Greater Downtown.

Plus 15 Policy (Non-Statutory – 2021)

The subject site is located within the Plus 15 boundary, and as such, is guided by the policies as found within the [Plus 15 Policy](#). For example, this Policy outlines that parcels within the Plus 15 boundary are required to provide provision for connecting into the Plus 15 network, public easement spaces for Plus 15 level access and walkways and a Plus 15 Fund contribution. The policy then outlines the operations and maintenance requirements of the Plus 15. This application primarily aligns with these policies, with the exception of the proposed land use specifically including provision for at-grade pedestrian walkways rather than walkways at the Plus 15 level.