

Applicant Submission

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Applicant Submission

O2 Planning & Design, on behalf of the Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC), has submitted a Land Use Redesignation and Road Closure Application to support the continued progress of the Arts Commons Transformation (ACT) project in downtown Calgary.

Application Overview

This application includes two components:

1. A Land Use Redesignation for the parcels located at 205 8 Avenue SE and 215 8 Avenue SE, collectively known as *Arts Commons*; and
2. A Road Closure for a small portion of the 8th Avenue SE roadway to support the future construction of the ACT1 building, proposed on the south side of 222 8th Avenue SE, commonly known as *Olympic Plaza*.

Project Context

In October 2020, the Arts Commons Transformation (ACT) project was announced, focusing on expanding and modernizing Calgary's premier performing arts centre to support flexible, accessible arts and performance venues that offer diverse and relevant programming. The ACT project is structured in two phases.

- **Phase 1** involves the construction of the ACT1 building — a three-storey, 70,000-square-foot expansion that will include modern performance spaces, production support areas, and visitor amenities adjacent to Olympic Plaza.
- **Phase 2** entails the renovation of the existing *Arts Commons* facility to improve accessibility, upgrade infrastructure and technology, and enhance the overall visitor experience.

Road Closure to Support ACT Phase 1

A road closure is required for a 0.019-hectare portion of the 8 Avenue SE roadway to accommodate the construction and placement of the ACT1 building's south canopy and structural supports. These components are proposed to extend slightly beyond the current property line at 222 8th Avenue SE (Olympic Plaza) onto a small portion on the north side of 8th Avenue SE.

A road closure application is being pursued following extensive consultation with the City of Calgary's Real Estate & Development Services (REDS) and Legal Services teams. Based on their guidance, CMLC was advised to proceed with a formal road closure to ensure that future construction complies with all applicable building and legal requirements related to the extension onto 8 Avenue SE. The closed portion of 8 Avenue SE is proposed to be redesignated to the Commercial Residential (CR20-C20/R20) District to align with the adjacent parcels and maintain consistent land use across the site at 222 8 Avenue SE.

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Land Use Redesignation to Support ACT Phase 2

The second component of this application proposes the redesignation of 205 and 215 8 Avenue SE (Arts Commons) from the existing CR20-C20/R20 District to a Direct Control (DC) District, based on CR20-C20/R20. This redesignation is intended to support Phase 2 of the ACT project, which includes comprehensive renovations of the existing Arts Commons facility.

A key component of the proposed renovation involves modifications to the existing Plus 15 walkway connection. As part of the updated design, a portion of the walkway is proposed to be re-routed from the second floor to grade level to enhance accessibility and improve integration with the proposed amenities and future public realm.

However, the proposed rerouting of the Plus 15 walkway to include a portion of the pedestrian connection at grade presents a technical challenge related to the density structure of the sites current CR20-C20/R20 land use district. The CR20-C20/R20 district allows for a base Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 3.0, while the proposed design requires approximately 4.5 FAR. Under the incentive provisions of Part 13, Division 3 of the Land Use Bylaw, parcels of this size may increase the FAR to a maximum of 9.0 by incorporating three specified pedestrian amenities from Table 8, Item 8.0.4. Two of these amenities involve enhancing at-grade pedestrian circulation, while the third requires a direct connection to the Plus 15 Network via a publicly accessible second-floor Plus 15 Walkway.

The technical challenge identified is compliance with Section 8.0.4c.i.a, which requires a continuous Plus 15 walkway connection on the second floor. Currently, the existing building features a Plus 15 route on the second floor, connecting the Glenbow Museum to the west and the Calgary Municipal Building to the east. However, the current Plus 15 lacks natural light, does not meet City accessibility standards due to steep ramps, and is located away from high-traffic areas, limiting its potential for activation.

Proposed Solution

To align with the intent of the bonus density framework and resolve these existing challenges, the project team proposes an innovative approach: rerouting a portion of the Plus 15 connection to the ground level while maintaining the vital east-west connections between the Glenbow Museum and the Calgary Municipal Building. The new design would include elevators, large accessible ramps, and feature stairs to bring pedestrians from the second-floor East Plus 15 bridge down to the ground floor. A newly incorporated "At-Grade Walkway Connection" route will channel pedestrians through the new publicly accessible Centre Court gathering area adjacent to the Max Bell and Martha Cohen Theatres. The Centre Court will include pedestrian amenities such as a café, bar, public art, and seating. The at-grade route will also feature floor to ceiling glass along its north side, which will provide natural light and activation by the continuous, unobstructed, visual connection to the adjacent newly transformed 8th Avenue and plaza. Pedestrian traffic from the Plus 15 will, in turn, provide activation to the plaza and the south side of 8th Avenue. The at-grade walkway connection continues west through the north atrium of the Public Building, adjacent to the proposed renovated Jack Singer Lobby. The route turns south at the western edge of the Public Building atrium where the public can once again ascend via stairs or elevators to the West Plus 15

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connection point. This proposed approach effectively enhances accessibility by reducing the reliance on steep ramps and incorporates elevators at both Plus 15 connection points. Wide 'monumental' feature stairs will also offer direct access to the ground-floor walkway connection and publicly accessible Centre Court.

Land Use Amendment

To achieve this innovative solution, a land use amendment is required to redesignate the site to a Direct Control (DC) district, based on the existing CR20-C20/R20 land use district. The proposed DC bylaw introduces a new definition, "At-Grade Walkway Connection," referring to a pedestrian pathway at ground level that is connected to the building's second-floor Plus 15 Walkways and broader Plus 15 Network. This new definition will replace the current requirement in Section 8.0.4c.i.a of the Land Use Bylaw, which mandates a continuous Plus 15 walkway on the second floor, enabling the Plus 15 route to transition to ground level for a portion of its route within the building. The primary adjustment involves relocating a portion of the pedestrian connection to the ground level while preserving the overall intent of the bonus density framework and the integrity and connectivity of the Plus 15 network.

Despite this modification, the DC district will continue to meet the pedestrian amenity requirements outlined in Table 8, Items 8.0.4.a and 8.0.4.b of the Land Use Bylaw, ensuring strong at-grade pedestrian circulation. The bylaw will also comply with Table 8, Items 8.0.4c.i.b and 8.0.4c.i.c, addressing structural supports for the Plus 15 Network extension, vertical connections between grade and the second floor, and contributions to the Plus 15 Fund.

Direct Control Justification

Section 20 of the Land Use Bylaw 1P2007 states that Direct Control Districts should only be used to regulate developments that, due to their unique characteristics, innovative concepts, or unusual site constraints, require specific regulation not available in other land use districts. The proposed Direct Control (DC) district is justified to accommodate the distinctive characteristics and innovative design solution of incorporating an internal "At-Grade Walkway Connection" as an enhancement to the standard second-floor Plus 15 Walkway that is grounded in principles of community and placemaking. This modification is crucial for aligning with the intent of the bonus density framework in Table 7, Part 13 of the Land Use Bylaw, enabling a required increase in Floor Area Ratio (FAR) while ensuring overall pedestrian connectivity and circulation into and through the building, both at Plus 15 and ground level are continuous, convenient, comfortable, and safe.

Conclusion

In summary, the proposed land use and road closure application will:

- Accommodate the construction and placement of the ACT1 building's south canopy and structural supports.
- Resolve design challenges associated with the Plus 15 Network while enhancing essential

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pedestrian connections.

- Improve accessibility and create a lively, active pedestrian connection directly linked with the Plus 15 system.
- Align with the intent of the bonus density framework within the CR20-C20/R20 Land Use District.
- Support the modernization of the Arts Commons building, reinforcing its position as Calgary's leading performing arts centre.