



Interim Alternative Uses of Blue Line and Green Line LRT Rights-of-Way - Possibilities

The purpose of this document is to describe how The City might consider proposals for temporary uses on future LRT lands. Public lands serve several uses around Calgary. Welcoming temporary uses requires special consideration for fit, likelihood of success and ability to deliver the long term goals. Before allowing partner organizations to undertake interim projects, a few core questions need to be addressed:

- Will the interim uses be valued?
- Will the project be sustainable over the time the land is available?
- Will the interim uses hinder the ultimate intended use of the land?

In order to develop criteria to assess potential ideas, a cross-Corporate team generated a series of more than 200 interim use ideas to guarantee variety. Once the list was developed, draft criteria were developed and a mock evaluation was conducted. Based on what was learned from this process, two kinds of criteria emerged: screening criteria that represent must-have elements of any interim use project and scoring criteria that measure the merit of the idea.

Screening criteria	Meaning
Easy to remove	Is there an exit strategy?
Partner led	Can The City take a back seat to launching and operating?
Scoring Criteria	Meaning
Family & Diversity Friendly	Is it fun and inclusive?
Return on Investment	Is it low cost or high excitement?
Longevity / Sustainability	Will the materials last?
Feasible	Will implementation go well and stay looking good?
Meets community or ecological need	Does someone want or need this?

Once the list of sample ideas were evaluated and ranked, themes emerged which also inform the framework on what sorts of projects The City might expect from applicants:

1. Education / Community Engagement
2. Environmental / Ecological / Parks
3. Festival / Cultural
4. Leisure / Recreation
5. Public Art / Theatre
6. Structures / Commercial

Possibilities

Some of the most interesting ideas involved multi-partner proposals that addressed more than one of these categories of community interest. It is expected that partner organizations will also approach The City with ideas that have not been considered, the above criteria will assist organizations in understanding what The City is looking for as they develop project proposals.

To assist stakeholders in understanding how an idea, matched with a suitable parcel and led by an appropriate partner, can result in dynamic enhancements of unused community spaces, three demonstration projects have been summarized on the following pages. These mock projects display the range of possibilities and show how the criteria inform an assessment of project potential. The specific sites explored are:

- Blue Line: 128 Avenue N.E.
- Blue Line: 128 Avenue North at 60 Street East
- Green Line: Centre Street East at 41 Avenue North

For any interim use of a site, understanding the full life of the project, including its end, is an important aspect of assessing its feasibility. The City has had previous experiences with difficulty advancing the intended permanent use of a site (whether that is transportation infrastructure, a school, land development or another project) when nearby residents have become emotionally invested in the interim use of a site (even when that interim use is as an empty green space).

While the ideas presented in the following pages focus on the potential value to communities, their removal is also discussed. As shown, there are a number of tools and mechanisms that can be used to ensure an effective exit from a site, including relocating the use to another site in the community, incorporating the use into the future life of the site, or simply ending the project in an orderly way. By considering relocation or incorporation as possible exit strategies, The City and partners can gain additional value from interim use projects by considering them experiments to prototype and refine ideas in advance of more significant investment.

Another aspect of exit strategies is addressing risks of project failures. There are established mechanisms The City of Calgary may use to remove private enhancements of public lands, two principal approaches being to require a deposit that covers the potential removal costs or to limit the type of enhancements to those that can be easily removed. These tools will be applied on a case by case basis based on a shared understanding between The City and partners around the risks associated with the project. Clear communication with communities and partners along with the correct mechanism will allow frozen assets to be both enjoyed on an interim basis and protected for their ultimate use.



PLACE-MAKING POSSIBILITIES

A framework for evaluating project ideas and sample ideas for activating future transit rights-of way

SITE 1

BLUE LINE NORTH—128 AVE NE



LOCATION

Land has been protected along the north side of 128 Avenue N between 60 Street and beyond Métis Trail. For this example, a linear strip flanked by 128 Avenue on the south and a noise barrier on the north is adopted by a partnership consortium. For this example, it is supposed that this land will not be used for LRT service for approximately 20 years.

INTENT

Because this site is located in a community that is still developing, strong proposals for the site will address community assets that have yet to be developed, which in a mature community would typically provided at a Community Association facility.

PROPOSED USES FOR SUBJECT SITE

This demonstration concept for the site includes a group of partners, bringing together a variety of skills and interests. This constellation of uses might emerge over time, but given the length of time that the land is expected to be available, there is sufficient time for a robust project to develop.

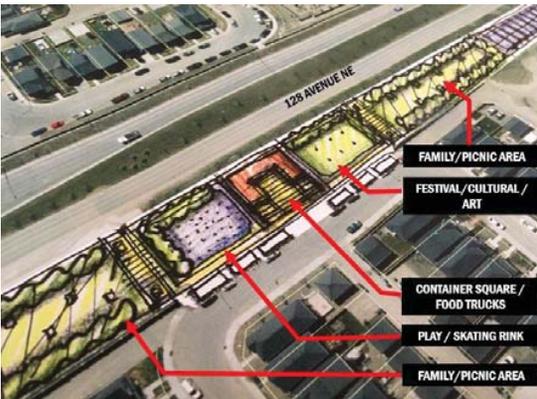
For this demonstration site, it is imagined that a local developer and a fledgling community association collaborate to provide amenities that bring character to the area including picnic sites, a temporary skating rink / bocce site, and container square/food truck court to allow residents to experiment with micro-retail and draw people to the site on weekends. It is also imagined that a group of motivated residents partner with an energy startup to try out a solar power cooperative adjacent to the site.

SITE SCORING

	SCORING					TOTAL
	Family & Diversity Friendly (fun and inclusive)	High Return On Investment (low cost or high bang for buck)	Longevity / Sustainability (upfront efforts be rewarded long term)	Feasible (easy to implement / maintain)	Meets community or ecological need (someone will want it)	
Solar Farm	Low	High	Low	Low	High	Med

While the consortium proposal scored high on all accounts, certain elements of the solar farm scored lower. The scoring flagged that the use may mean a high initial investment. Reviewing the proposal reveals that several partners including a startup solar energy company have signed on to steward the land. The construction plan requires no major landscaping and can be undertaken by volunteers.

CONCEPT (DETAIL)



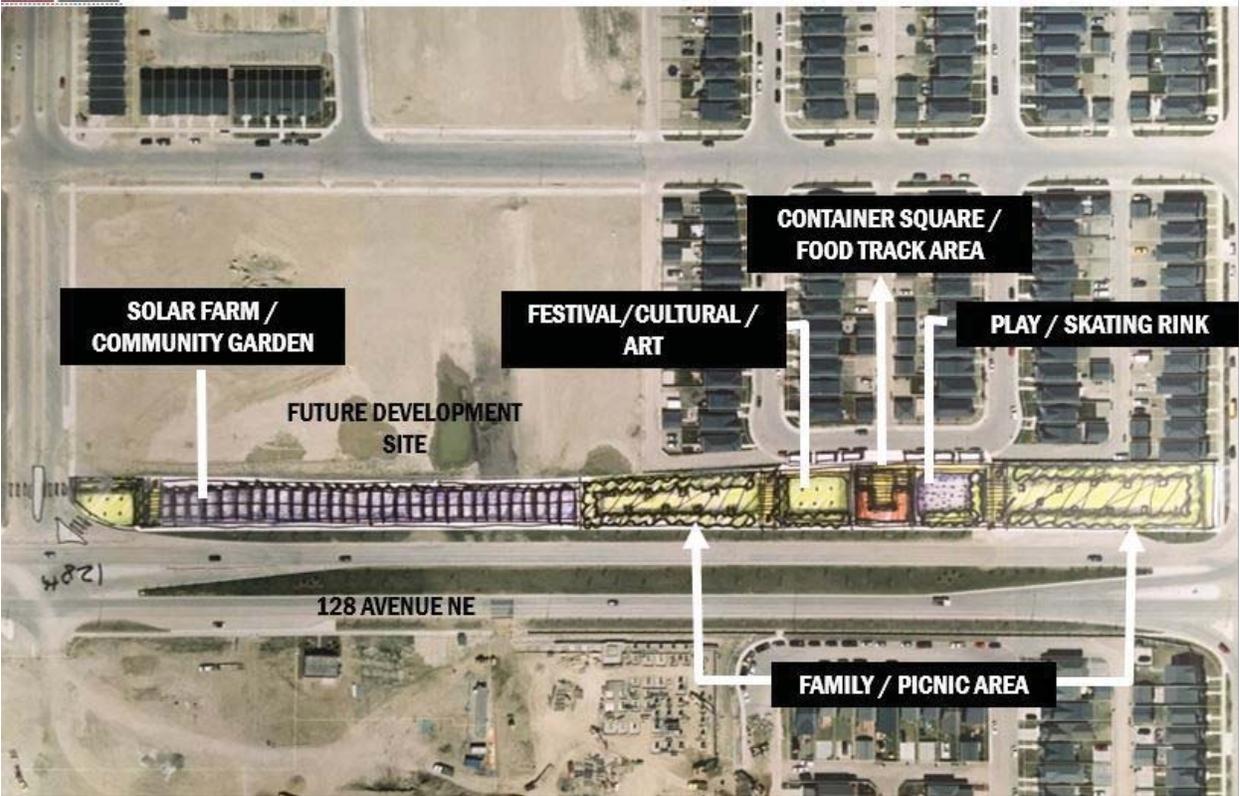
SCREENING CRITERIA / PARTNERS

Screening Criteria	
Easy to remove or accommodates LRT (has an exit strategy)	Community group or partner will own / operate / maintain / (hands off approach)
Yes	Yes

For a site like this one, an effective exit strategy would identify the future permanent home for these types of facilities, likely a future Community Association building site. If the container and/or Food Truck component is successful, it could be incorporated into the future LRT Station design as kiosk retail.

SITE 1

Urban Design Concept



APPLICABLE PRECEDENTS

Artistic yet functional picnic sites can add colour and fun to a linear grass area. Built in awnings provide shielding from noise of the nearby roadway.

The community solar farm includes information and helps educate on Alberta innovation in green energy. As part of the partnership, it is imagined that the solar farm provides a percentage of the energy generated to support pedestrian-scale lighting for the other uses, extending the usability of the site into the evening hours.





PLACE-MAKING POSSIBILITIES

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SITE 2

BLUE LINE NORTH—128 AVE & 60 ST NE



LOCATION

Blue Line has acquired a large, triangular parcel on the southwest corner of 128 Avenue N and 60 Street E. The site will one day be divided by an LRT tunnel as the line turns from the north-south 60 Street E alignment to east-west travel along 128 Avenue N. For the purpose of this demonstration project, it is assumed this land is expected to be available for a ten year period.

INTENT

The communities near this site are developing and today do not include all of the amenities and businesses that will one day serve residents. It is hoped that a community partner might identify one of these missing ingredients and propose it on this City-owned site.

PROPOSED USES FOR SUBJECT SITE

For this site, a hypothetical partner group consulted local residents and developers on what would most contribute to the liveability of this evolving area. The discussions formed the basis of a proposal that would combine natural elements with opportunities for multi-generational physical activity.

Combined, a corn/hedge maze provides screening from the street as well as a whimsical experience for all ages. The maze frames other active spaces including a basketball court, which was a use that best served the current demographics of the community.

SCREENING CRITERIA

Screening Criteria	
Easy to remove or accommodates LRT (has an exit strategy)	Community group or partner will own / operate / maintain / (hands off approach)
Yes	Yes

In this proposal, the corn/hedge maze scores very well against the screening criteria. The application identified that a variety of vegetation could be considered, especially those that might tolerate salt spray from the road. Further, a number of community members joined their expertise together, which included design and landscaping. In exchange for some time they are able to advertise their services via a thank you sign at the maze which also serves to communicate the temporary nature of the installation.

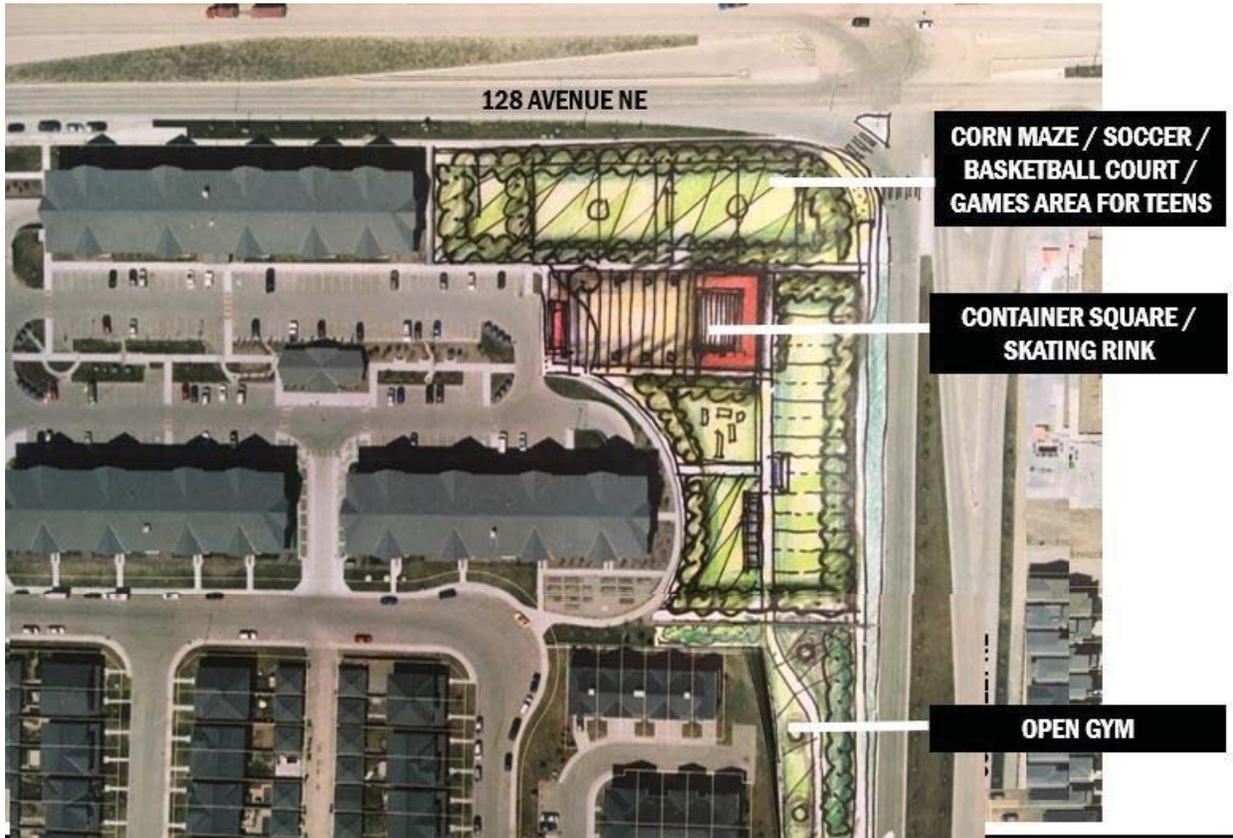
SCORING CRITERIA

For this demonstration project, the evaluation of the project proposal was done assuming the proposal closely matches the results of an imagined community workshop. Further, the ideas complement rather than compete with other amenities available for community use, including a nearby tot lot. The plan shows a broad set of partners, support by the local developer and simple parts that connect to enhance the site. The largest challenge is the need for ongoing maintenance of the maze which requires the partnership to persist for a number of years.

	SCORING					TOTAL
	Family & Diversity Friendly (fun and inclusive)	High Return On Investment (low cost or high bang for buck)	Longevity / Sustainability (upfront efforts be rewarded long term)	Feasible (easy to implement / maintain)	Meets community or ecological need (someone will want it)	
Corn Maze	High	High	Medium	High	High	High

SITE 2

Urban Design Concept



This concept sketch for a mature site project helps give a sense of scale of the site and number of uses that could be made available to residents. This particular critical mass of ideas is intended to appeal to many including multi-generational opportunities that attract a rich community mix.

APPLICABLE PRECEDENT



These precedent images show how adding angular features, such as those found in a maze, invite residents in and create social spaces for adults/seniors while children play nearby.

Other precedent focus on active uses that can be applied in smaller or large settings. In the case of this site, focusing on youth and independent exercise was a priority in the design.



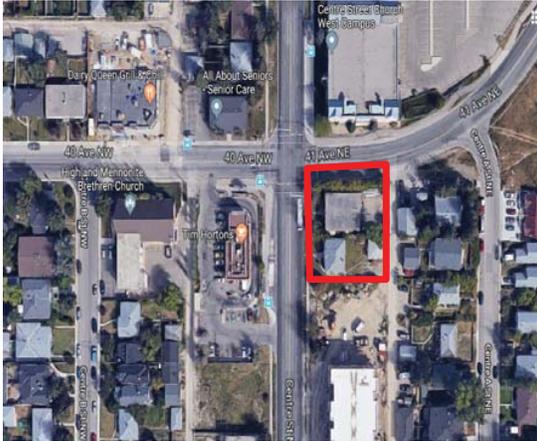


PLACE-MAKING POSSIBILITIES

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SITE 3

GREEN LINE NORTH—CENTRE STREET / 40TH AVE N



LOCATION

Green Line has acquired and cleared homes from two parcels at the southeast corner of Centre St and 40 Avenue N. More than 30,000 transit customers pass this site each day as well as community pedestrians, and visitors to other intersection destinations including Calgary's largest church and several businesses. For the purposes of this example, the site is expected to be available for a period of six years.

INTENT

Given this location falls along a future phase of Green Line construction and no longer generates revenue as a rental property, it is desired that this site be available for community use. Use will reinforce a sense of place at this future station location.

POTENTIAL USES FOR SUBJECT SITE

A partner proposal for this site is a joint application between local community groups. A local skateboarding enthusiasts group has fundraised and is collaborating with a local sports store to obtain the right infrastructure.

Local businesses have also together sponsored the seating area as a way to extend their business and invite clients to stay and enjoy their foods in the neighbourhood. Their intent is to become a walking destination, and the space can also function as an outdoor classroom.

SCREENING CRITERIA / PARTNERS

Though the mobile skate park equipment is easily moved, depending on the partner there could be some need for City participation in maintenance. A fulsome conversation with the applicant and businesses should confirm maintenance and upkeep of the skate park area follows best practices.

For example, creating a design that can be closed allows the partners to set hours of operation to minimize social disorder.

SITE SCORING

The site has been scored for the hypothetical use of skate park. A skate park scores high as a desirable community use for many to enjoy. Implementation can be quick and is low cost given the large anticipated user base.

Screening Criteria	
Easy to remove or accommodates LRT (has an exit strategy)	Community group or partner will own / operate / maintain / (hands off approach)
Yes	To investigate

SCORING						
	Family & Diversity Friendly (fun and inclusive)	High Return On Investment (low cost or high bang for buck)	Longevity / Sustainability (upfront efforts be rewarded long term)	Feasible (easy to implement / maintain)	Meets community or ecological need (someone will want it)	TOTAL
Skate Park	High	High	High	High	High	High

SITE 3

Urban Design Concept



This hypothetical partner submission shows several recreational uses that could be complimentary to the nearby businesses and housing. Further, the application makes use of existing features and edges including vegetation on the north border. The concept is developed to a point where it can explain the intent or further conversation with nearby stakeholders.

APPLICABLE PRECEDENTS



Informal gathering spaces reinforce this parcel as an outdoor space for nearby businesses.

Vibrant hangouts can entice those taking a break to pause and watch skateboarding.

